

SABBATH BIBLE LESSONS
Senior Division



*Insights From the Book of
Isaiah (II)*

Vol. 92, No. 4

October–December, 2016

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Sabbath Bible Lessons, a daily study program, is based solely on the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy without additional comments. The quotations are as brief as possible to provide concise, direct thoughts. Brackets [] are supplied in some cases to ensure clarity, proper context, and smooth readability. Further study in the source materials is strongly recommended.

Illustrations: Advent Digital Media on the front cover and Map Resources on pp. 4, 51, 72; Design Pics on pp. 31, 72.

Sabbath Bible Lessons (USPS 005-118), Vol. 92, No. 4, October–December, 2016. Published quarterly by the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement General Conference, Sabbath School Department. Copyright © 2016, printed, and distributed by Reformation Herald Publishing Association, 5240 Hollins Road, Roanoke, Virginia 24019–5048, U.S.A. Periodical postage paid at Roanoke, Virginia 24022–9993.

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Annual subscriptions in U.S.A.: U.S. \$16.95. Large print \$24.95. International (airmail) \$22.00. Single copies \$5.50. Large print \$8.50. Please send subscription requests and payments (in U.S. currency only) to the address below. Prices subject to change without notice. POSTMASTER, please send address changes to: *Sabbath Bible Lessons*, P. O. Box 7240, Roanoke, VA 24019–0240.

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Foreword

The *Sabbath Bible Lessons* for the next quarter will be concluding with Part 2 of the study of *Insights From the Book of Isaiah*. As we saw in the previous quarter, to the prophet Isaiah scenes were revealed that we really need to understand today. Much of this pertains directly to the last days of this planet's history—and some of it spans from before our world was created and after it will be remade. Such a broad, vast perspective can thus be gained by studying the writings of this major prophet!

For example, “in the forty-first to the forty-fifth chapters of Isaiah, God very fully reveals His purpose for His people, and these chapters should be prayerfully studied. God does not here instruct His people to turn away from His wisdom and look to finite man for wisdom.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 480.

“I have been instructed to direct the minds of our people to the fifty-sixth chapter of Isaiah. This chapter contains important lessons for those who are fighting on the Lord's side in the conflict between good and evil.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 23, 1904.

“[Isaiah 59:13–17 quoted.] The condition of the world previous to the first appearing of Christ is a picture of the condition of the world just previous to His second advent. The same iniquity will exist, Satan manifests the same delusive power upon the minds of men. He is setting his trained agents at work, and moving them to intense activity. He is securing his army of human agents to engage in the last conflict against the Prince of life, to overthrow the law of God, which is the foundation of His throne. Satan will work with miraculous presentations to confirm men in the belief that he is what he claims to be—the prince of this world, and that victory is his. He will turn his forces against those who are loyal to God, but though he may cause pain, distress, and human agony, he cannot defile the soul. He may cause affliction to the people of God as he did to Christ, but he cannot cause one of Christ's little ones to perish. The people of God in these last days must expect to enter into the thick of the conflict.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 4, pp. 1153.

It was at the cost of his life that Isaiah courageously carried out his prophetic office. He is among those faithful reformers that “were sawn asunder. . . . And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect” (Hebrews 11:37–40).

“Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience” (James 5:10). Considering the great suffering it took in order for these prophecies to be preserved for our salvation at this late hour, let us truly appreciate their value and profoundly take them to heart!

The General Conference Sabbath School Department

First Sabbath Offering for Vancouver, Canada

Canada is a country in the northern part of North America. Its 35 million people are spread across ten provinces and three territories. Canada's borders extend from the Atlantic to the Pacific and northward into the Arctic Ocean, covering 9.98 million square kilometers (3.85 million square miles), making it the world's second-largest country by total area and the fourth-largest country by land area.



British Columbia is a province located on the west coast. The largest city is Vancouver, the third-largest metropolitan area in Canada.

Like the rest of British Columbia, Vancouver has a low rate of church attendance compared with the rest of the continent; the majority of the population does not practice religion. The country's religious profile shows that 48.8% have no religious affiliation agnostics, atheists, and humanists; 36.2% are Christians categorized as Pentecostals, Protestants, and Roman Catholics; 5.7% are Buddhist, 2.8% Sikh, 2.2% Muslim, 1.8% Jewish, and 1.4% Hindu.

The religious liberty that the country offers facilitates greatly in the advancement of our message. We thank God that our church organization is recognized by the government and is officially registered. We want to keep the light of present truth shining in this place.

Following the evangelism project here in Vancouver in 2012, the interest of many souls was awakened and many visitors have attended our programs and conferences. Since May 2013, we have been renting a Lutheran church where we hold weekly Sabbath worship services, as well as offering Bible studies, and provide counselling services. We also present health lectures, public cooking demonstrations and classes, and distribute Christian and healthy-living literature here.

Our great need now is a house of worship and office space for our headquarters. This will also be a central point from which we can distribute our literature. Rentals are currently high and our finances are low. It is our earnest prayer that the Lord may impress your heart with the needs here in Vancouver as part of His great vineyard. Please give generously when this special mission First Sabbath Offering is collected, that a chapel may stand to God's glory in this part of Canada. Thank you, and may the Lord richly bless each gift and giver.

Your brethren and sisters from Vancouver

The Crisis in Heaven

“I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible” (Isaiah 13:11).

“The bulwarks of Satan will never triumph. Victory will attend the third angel’s message. As the Captain of the Lord’s host tore down the walls of Jericho, so will the Lord’s commandment-keeping people triumph, and all opposing elements be defeated.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 410.

Suggested Reading: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 33–43.

Sunday

September 25

1. WHO IS JESUS, REALLY?

- a. What must we realize about the role of Jesus Christ in the creation of the universe and its inhabitants? John 1:1–3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:1, 2.



“The Father wrought by His Son in the creation of all heavenly beings.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 34.

- b. What contrast exists between all creatures and Christ who was, by decree, to become our Saviour? Hebrews 1:6–8, 13, 14; Luke 1:30–35.



“From Jesus is our life derived. In Him is life that is original—unborrowed, underived life. In Him is the fountain of life.”—*The Review and Herald*, August 6, 1914.

“In speaking of His preexistence, Christ carries the mind back through dateless ages. He assures us that there never was a time when He was not in close fellowship with the eternal God.”—*The Signs of the Times*, August 29, 1900.

2. THE HEAVENLY GOVERNMENT

- a. **What are some attributes of the government with which the Creator has always ruled the universe? Psalm 89:14; Romans 7:12.**



“The law of God existed before man was created. It was adapted to the condition of holy beings; even angels were governed by it.”—*The Signs of the Times*, April 15, 1886.

“The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all intelligent beings depends upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. God desires from all His creatures the service of love—service that springs from an appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced obedience; and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service.

“So long as all created beings acknowledged the allegiance of love, there was perfect harmony throughout the universe of God. It was the joy of the heavenly host to fulfill the purpose of their Creator. They delighted in reflecting His glory and showing forth His praise. And while love to God was supreme, love for one another was confiding and unselfish. There was no note of discord to mar the celestial harmonies.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 34, 35.

- b. **What has always been the attitude of the unfallen, holy angels with regard to Christ? Revelation 5:11, 12. What did the Father, as King of the Universe, also declare concerning Christ? Hebrews 1:3–6.**



“The Son of God shared the Father’s throne, and the glory of the eternal, self-existent One encircled both. . . . Before the assembled inhabitants of heaven the King declared that none but Christ, the Only Begotten of God, could fully enter into His purposes, and to Him it was committed to execute the mighty counsels of His will. The Son of God had wrought the Father’s will in the creation of all the hosts of heaven; and to Him, as well as to God, their homage and allegiance were due. Christ was still to exercise divine power, in the creation of the earth and its inhabitants. But in all this He would not seek power or exaltation for Himself contrary to God’s plan, but would exalt the Father’s glory and execute His purposes of beneficence and love.”—*Ibid.*, p. 36.

3. THE ANOINTED CHERUB'S CHOICE

- a. Under the figure of the king of Tyrus, what can we learn about Lucifer, the anointed cherub, who later became Satan, the adversary? Ezekiel 28:11–15.



“Satan was once an honored angel in heaven, next to Jesus Christ. His countenance was mild, expressive of happiness like the other angels. His forehead was high and broad, and showed great intelligence. His form was perfect. He had a noble, majestic bearing.”—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1, p. 17.

“Satan had led the heavenly choir. He had raised the first note; then all the angelic host united with him, and glorious strains of music had resounded through heaven in honor of God and His dear Son.”—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 28.

- b. What led to the fall of Lucifer? Ezekiel 28:17 (first part).



“Little by little Lucifer came to indulge the desire for self-exaltation. . . . Though all his glory was from God, this mighty angel came to regard it as pertaining to himself. Not content with his position, though honored above the heavenly host, he ventured to covet homage due alone to the Creator. Instead of seeking to make God supreme in the affections and allegiance of all created beings, it was his endeavor to secure their service and loyalty to himself. And coveting the glory with which the infinite Father had invested His Son, this prince of angels aspired to power that was the prerogative of Christ alone.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 35.

- c. How uncontrollable is the spirit of envy and jealousy? Proverbs 27:4; 6:34. What happened when the Father, the Son, and the angels tried to reason with Lucifer?



“Lucifer’s disposition to serve himself instead of his Creator aroused a feeling of apprehension when observed by those who considered that the glory of God should be supreme. . . . But the warning, given in infinite love and mercy, only aroused a spirit of resistance. Lucifer allowed his jealousy of Christ to prevail, and became the more determined.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 35, 36.

4. SUBTLE DECEPTION

- a. What was Isaiah shown about the attitude that Lucifer strangely adopted? Isaiah 14:12–14.



“The angels joyfully acknowledged the supremacy of Christ, and prostrating themselves before Him, poured out their love and adoration. Lucifer bowed with them, but in his heart there was a strange, fierce conflict. Truth, justice, and loyalty were struggling against envy and jealousy. . . . The high honors conferred upon Lucifer were not appreciated as God’s special gift, and therefore called forth no gratitude to his Creator. He gloried in his brightness and exaltation and aspired to be equal with God.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 36, 37.

- b. How did Lucifer’s attitude disrupt heaven? James 3:16.



“The exaltation of the Son of God as equal with the Father was represented as an injustice to Lucifer, who, it was claimed, was also entitled to reverence and honor. If this prince of angels could but attain to his true, exalted position, great good would accrue to the entire host of heaven; for it was his object to secure freedom for all. But now even the liberty which they had hitherto enjoyed was at an end; for an absolute Ruler had been appointed them, and to His authority all must pay homage. Such were the subtle deceptions that through the wiles of Lucifer were fast obtaining in the heavenly courts.

“There had been no change in the position or authority of Christ. . . . Many of the angels were, however, blinded by Lucifer’s deceptions.

“Taking advantage of the loving, loyal trust reposed in him by the holy beings under his command, he had so artfully instilled into their minds his own distrust and discontent that his agency was not discerned. Lucifer had presented the purposes of God in a false light—misconstruing and distorting them to excite dissent and dissatisfaction. He cunningly drew his hearers on to give utterance to their feelings; then these expressions were repeated by him when it would serve his purpose, as evidence that the angels were not in full harmony with the government of God. . . . While secretly fomenting discord and rebellion, he with consummate craft caused it to appear as his sole purpose to promote loyalty and to preserve harmony and peace.

“The spirit of dissatisfaction [was] thus kindled.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 37, 38.

5. THE OUTCOME OF THE REBELLION

- a. When the archdeceiver finally instigated open rebellion in heaven, what was the outcome? Revelation 12:7–9. What will be his final end? Isaiah 14:15–17.



- b. What was the real object at stake in the war in heaven? Psalm 119:126.



“[Lucifer insinuated] doubts concerning the laws that governed heavenly beings, intimating that though laws might be necessary for the inhabitants of the worlds, angels, being more exalted, needed no such restraint, for their own wisdom was a sufficient guide.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 37.

- c. What reveals God’s perfect wisdom in handling this crisis? Jude 6; 1 Corinthians 6:3 (first part); Philippians 2:10, 11.



“Had [Satan] been immediately blotted out of existence, some would have served God from fear rather than from love. The influence of the deceiver would not have been fully destroyed, nor would the spirit of rebellion have been utterly eradicated. For the good of the entire universe through ceaseless ages, he must more fully develop his principles, that his charges against the divine government might be seen in their true light by all created beings, and that the justice and mercy of God and the immutability of His law might be forever placed beyond all question.”—*Ibid.*, p. 42.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How can we answer some common misconceptions about who Christ is?
2. Why can we say that God’s government is balanced and just?
3. What was the root of Lucifer’s problem?
4. Trace the steps that he took that spoiled the sweet harmony of heaven.
5. Why didn’t God simply blot Satan out of existence immediately?

The Voice in the Wilderness

“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God” (Isaiah 40:3).

“Our work of heralding the second coming of Christ is similar to that of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ at His first advent. We are to proclaim to the world the message, ‘The great day of the Lord is near.’ ‘Prepare to meet thy God.’ We are to do much more than we have yet done.”—*Reflecting Christ*, p. 201.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 9–13.

Sunday

October 2

1. HOPE FOR THE DESPONDING

- a. What is one of the most beloved messages Isaiah was ever directed to pen? Isaiah 40:1, 2.



“The covenant mercy of God led Him to interpose in behalf of His people Israel after their severe chastisement before their enemies. Israel had chosen to walk in her own wisdom and righteousness in the place of the wisdom and righteousness of God, and as a result her nation was ruined. God permitted them to suffer under a double yoke, that they might be humiliated and repent. But in their dispersion and captivity, the Jews were not left in a hopeless state. Encouragement was given them, for through this humiliation they were to be brought to seek the Lord. God gave to Isaiah a message for this people: [Isaiah 40:1, 2 quoted].

“When the Jews were dispersed from Jerusalem, there were among them young men and women who were firm as a rock to principle, men and women who had not pursued a course to make the Lord ashamed to call them His people. These were sad at heart for the backsliding which they could not prevent. These innocent ones must suffer with the guilty; but God would give them strength sufficient for their day. It was to them that the message of encouragement was sent. The hope of the nation lay in those young men and maidens who would preserve their integrity.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 4, p. 1144.

2. A PROPHESED MESSENGER

- a. With what description did Isaiah prophesy of John the Baptist? Isaiah 40:3; Luke 3:2–4. In what sense was John to be “a voice in the wilderness”?



“There was a great work appointed for the prophet John, but there was no school on the earth with which he could connect. His learning must be obtained away from the cities, in the wilderness.”— *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 5, p. 1115.

- b. What enabled John, like Isaiah and Elijah before him, to stand fearless before the people in carrying out his lifework? Isaiah 33:17; 6:5.



“John did not feel strong enough to stand the great pressure of temptation he would meet in society. He feared his character would be molded according to the prevailing customs of the Jews, and he chose the wilderness as his school, in which his mind could be properly educated and disciplined from God’s great book of nature. In the wilderness, John could the more readily deny himself and bring his appetite under control, and dress in accordance to natural simplicity. And there was nothing in the wilderness that would take his mind from meditation and prayer. Satan had access to John, even after he had closed every avenue in his power through which he would enter. But his habits of life were so pure and natural that he could discern the foe, and had strength of spirit and decision of character to resist him.”—*Ibid.*

“Under the guiding of the divine Spirit, [John] studied the scrolls of the prophets. By day and by night, Christ was his study, his meditation, until mind and heart and soul were filled with the glorious vision.

“He looked upon the King in His beauty, and self was lost sight of. He beheld the majesty of holiness, and knew himself to be inefficient and unworthy. It was God’s message that he was to declare. It was in God’s power and His righteousness that he was to stand. He was ready to go forth as Heaven’s messenger, unawed by the human, because he had looked upon the Divine. He could stand fearless in the presence of earthly monarchs, because with trembling he had bowed before the King of kings.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 54.

3. MAKING THE STRAIGHT HIGHWAY

- a. How does history's wise man summarize our fallen human condition? Ecclesiastes 1:15. Nonetheless, what hopeful message was John the Baptist to bring, in harmony with Isaiah's prophecy? Isaiah 40:4; Luke 3:5.



"Everything that God could do has been done in behalf of man. Every want has been anticipated; every difficulty, every emergency, has been provided for. The crooked places have been made straight, the rough places smooth, and therefore no one will be excused in the day of judgment, if he has cherished unbelief and resisted the workings of the Holy Spirit."—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 251.

- b. In the last days, how are we to allow the Holy Spirit to work through us in ways that we never thought possible? Isaiah 40:5; Luke 3:6.



"The Lord gave [John the Baptist] his message. Did he go to the priests and rulers and ask if he might proclaim this message?—No, God put him away from them that he might not be influenced by their spirit and teaching. He was the voice of one crying in the wilderness [Isaiah 40:3–5 quoted.]. This is the very message that must be given to our people; we are near the end of time, and the message is, Clear the King's highway; gather out the stones; raise up a standard for the people. The people must be awakened. It is no time now to cry peace and safety."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 410.

"Let those who have special aptitude, work for unbelievers in the high places as well as in the low places of life. Search diligently for perishing souls. . . .

"Let your light shine forth in such clear, steady rays that no man can stand up in the judgment, and say, 'Why did you not tell me about this truth? Why did you not care for my soul?'

"Then let us be diligent in the distribution of literature that has been carefully prepared for use among those not of our faith. Let us make the most of every opportunity to arrest the attention of unbelievers. Let us put literature into every hand that will receive it. Let us consecrate ourselves to the proclamation of the message, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God' (Isaiah 40:3)! . . . Now is the day of our responsibility."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, pp. 189, 190.

4. HUMBLENESS NOT TO BE SLIGHTED

- a. **What timeless principle shows how God can crown with success even the smallest efforts of those who are sincerely seeking to promote His cause? Zechariah 4:9, 10.**



“The way of the world is to begin with pomp and boasting. God’s way is to make the day of small things the beginning of the glorious triumph of truth and righteousness. Sometimes He trains His workers by bringing to them disappointment and apparent failure. It is His purpose that they shall learn to master difficulties. . . .

“If they will hold the beginning of their confidence steadfast unto the end, God will make the way clear. Success will come to them as they struggle against difficulties. Before the intrepid spirit and unwavering faith of a Zerubbabel, great mountains of difficulty will become a plain; and he whose hands have laid the foundation, even ‘his hands shall also finish it.’ ‘He shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it’ (Zechariah 4:9, 7).”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 595.

- b. **Through what means can we cooperate with God to enlighten the inhabitants of this dark planet? Zechariah 4:6.**



“The Lord will work in this last work in a manner very much out of the common order of things, and in a way that will be contrary to any human planning. There will be those among us who will always want to control the work of God, to dictate even what movements shall be made when the work goes forward under the direction of the angel who joins the third angel in the message to be given to the world. God will use ways and means by which it will be seen that He is taking the reins in His own hands. The workers will be surprised by the simple means that He will use to bring about and perfect His work of righteousness.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 300.

- c. **How does the message we are called upon to bear reflect the first part of John the Baptist’s message? Matthew 3:2; Luke 3:8–14.**



“[Matthew 3:2 quoted.] This same message, through the publications from our printing houses, is to be given to the world today.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 139.

4. NONE GREATER THAN JOHN THE BAPTIST

- a. Explain the goal of John's teaching. Matthew 3:4–12.



“Christ bore the same message that John bore. [Matthew 4:17 quoted.] But while John preached in the wilderness, Christ's work was done among the people. That He might reach sinners where they were, He encircled the race with His long human arm, while with His divine arm He grasped the throne of the Infinite, uniting finite man to the infinite God, and connecting earth with heaven.”—*The Review and Herald*, August 15, 1899.

- b. Which commandment did John present before Herod, and what was the result? Mark 6:17–29. What did Jesus say about John? Luke 7:28.



“Herod was affected as he listened to the powerful, pointed testimonies of John, and with deep interest he inquired what he must do to become his disciple. John was acquainted with the fact that he was about to marry his brother's wife, while her husband was yet living, and faithfully told Herod that this was not lawful. Herod was unwilling to make any sacrifice. He married his brother's wife, and through her influence, seized John and put him in prison, intending however to release him. . . . Soon John was beheaded, through the influence of Herod's wife. I saw that the humblest disciples who followed Jesus, witnessed His miracles, and heard the comforting words which fell from His lips, were greater than John the Baptist; that is, they were more exalted and honored, and had more pleasure in their lives.”—*Early Writings*, pp. 154, 155.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What hope does God offer to all who submit to His chastening rod?
2. What should we learn from John's concern about his surroundings?
3. How can our literature be especially helpful in the times in which we live?
4. Why will God surprise us with His manner of enlightening the world?
5. What are some things we can learn from the life and ministry of John the Baptist?

Meeting the Messiah

“He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young” (Isaiah 40:11).

“Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He cares for His feeble, sickly, wandering sheep. He knows them all by name. The distress of every sheep and every lamb of His flock touches His heart of sympathizing love, and the cry for aid reaches His ear.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 346.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 629–635.

Sunday

October 9

1. GOD’S MIGHT AND OUR MORTAL FRAILTY

- a. As we consider our plans for the future, what should we remember? Isaiah 40:6–8. What other illustration also shows God’s greatness and, at the same time, relates a piece of scientific information? Verse 22 (first part).



“At this time, before the great final crisis, as before the world’s first destruction, men are absorbed in the pleasures and the pursuits of sense. Engrossed with the seen and transitory, they have lost sight of the unseen and eternal. For the things that perish with the using, they are sacrificing imperishable riches. Their minds need to be uplifted, their views of life to be broadened. They need to be aroused from the lethargy of worldly dreaming.

“From the rise and fall of nations as made plain in the pages of Holy Writ, they need to learn how worthless is mere outward and worldly glory. Babylon, with all its power and its magnificence, the like of which our world has never since beheld—power and magnificence which to the people of that day seemed so stable and enduring—how completely has it passed away! As ‘the flower of the grass’ it has perished. So perishes all that has not God for its foundation. Only that which is bound up with His purpose and expresses His character can endure. His principles are the only steadfast things our world knows.”—*Education*, p. 183.

2. THE ONLY TRUE GOD

- a. As Isaiah prophesied of Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, what did he reveal about the work of the Messiah? Isaiah 40:9–11.



“The truths of the third angel’s message have been presented by some as a dry theory; but in this message is to be presented Christ the Living One. He is to be revealed as the first and the last, as the I AM, the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright and morning Star. Through this message the character of God in Christ is to be manifested to the world.—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 20.

“In Christ is the tenderness of the shepherd, the affection of the parent, and the matchless grace of the compassionate Saviour. His blessings He presents in the most alluring terms. He is not content merely to announce these blessings; He presents them in the most attractive way, to excite a desire to possess them. So His servants are to present the riches of the glory of the unspeakable Gift. The wonderful love of Christ will melt and subdue hearts, when the mere reiteration of doctrines would accomplish nothing. . . . Tell the people of Him who is ‘the Chiefest among ten thousand,’ and the One ‘altogether lovely’ (The Song of Solomon 5:10, 16). Words alone cannot tell it. Let it be reflected in the character and manifested in the life. . . . In everyone Christ’s long-suffering love, His holiness, meekness, mercy, and truth are to be manifested to the world.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 826, 827.

- b. Where are we to look for salvation, and why? Isaiah 45:21, 22.



“Come with your whole heart to Jesus. Repent of your sins, make confession to God, forsake all iniquity, and you may appropriate to yourself all His promises.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 634.

“Will not our church members keep their eyes fixed on a crucified and risen Saviour, in whom their hopes of eternal life are centered? This is our message, our argument, our doctrine, our warning to the impenitent, our encouragement for the sorrowing, the hope for every believer. If we can awaken an interest in men’s minds that will cause them to fix their eyes on Christ, we may step aside, and ask them only to continue to fix their eyes upon the Lamb of God. They thus receive their lesson.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1113.

3. AN ENDURING UNION

- a. **How does the Lord depict the tender care He has for His children? Isaiah 49:15, 16; Matthew 12:50; Galatians 3:29. How can we be sure to be included among those children?**



“Those who share Christ’s suffering and reproach now will share His glory hereafter. He ‘is not ashamed to call them brethren’ (Hebrews 2:11). His angels minister to them. His second appearing will be as the Son of man, thus even in His glory identifying Himself with humanity. To those who have united themselves to Him, He declares: ‘Though a mother may forget her child, “yet will not I forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands” (Isaiah 49:16). Thou art continually before Me.’ . . .

“A union with Christ by living faith is enduring; every other union must perish. Christ first chose us, paying an infinite price for our redemption; and the true believer chooses Christ as first and last and best in everything. But this union costs us something. It is a union of utter dependence, to be entered into by a proud being. All who form this union must feel their need of the atoning blood of Christ. They must have a change of heart. They must submit their own will to the will of God. There will be a struggle with outward and internal obstacles. There must be a painful work of detachment as well as a work of attachment. Pride, selfishness, vanity, worldliness—sin in all its forms—must be overcome if we would enter into a union with Christ. The reason why many find the Christian life so deplorably hard, why they are so fickle, so variable, is that they try to attach themselves to Christ without first detaching themselves from these cherished idols.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 230, 231.

- b. **As we surrender our entire being to the guidance of the Good Shepherd, what assurance comes to us? Psalms 36:7; 34:22.**



“He who took humanity upon Himself knows how to sympathize with the sufferings of humanity. Not only does Christ know every soul, and the peculiar needs and trials of that soul, but He knows all the circumstances that chafe and perplex the spirit. His hand is outstretched in pitying tenderness to every suffering child. Those who suffer most have most of His sympathy and pity. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and He desires us to lay our perplexities and troubles at His feet and leave them there.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 249.

4. MAGNIFYING THE LAW

- a. What work would Jesus have us do for souls who are in darkness? Isaiah 42:5–7.



“As a people we are to be reconverted, our lives sanctified to declare the truth as it is in Jesus. In the work of scattering our publications, we can speak of a Saviour’s love from a warm and throbbing heart. God alone has the power to forgive sins; if we do not speak this message to the unconverted, our neglect may prove their ruin. Blessed, soul-saving Bible truths are published in our papers. There are many who can help in the work of selling our periodicals. The Lord calls upon all of us to seek to save perishing souls. Satan is at work to deceive the very elect, and now is our time to work with vigilance. Our books and papers are to be brought before the notice of the people; the gospel of present truth is to be given to our cities without delay. Shall we not arouse to our duties?

“If we are making the life and teachings of Christ our study, every passing event will furnish a text for an impressive discourse. It was thus the Saviour preached the gospel in the highways and byways; and as He spoke, the little group that listened to Him swelled to a great company.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 63.

- b. How does God regard His law? Isaiah 42:21. What can we learn from this?



“We must strive to arouse church members, and those who make no profession, to see and obey the claims of the law of Heaven. We are to magnify this law and make it honorable.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 403.

“The very One who ages before had spoken the law from Mount Sinai, now came to magnify it and make it honorable. In His Sermon on the Mount He explained the law, showing what each precept comprehended. Covetousness was shown by Him to be idolatry, lust adultery, and anger murder. He made manifest the spirituality of the law, and pointed out that it reaches to every phase of life.

“Before the universe of heaven, before the fallen angels, and before those whom He had come to save, Christ lived the law of God. By His supreme obedience to its requirements, He exalted and enforced it. . . .

“As Christ lived the law in humanity, so we may do if we will take hold of the strong for strength.”—*The Signs of the Times*, March 4, 1897.

5. GUARDING OUR EYES AND EARS

- a. What does the Lord want us to do with our eyes and ears? Isaiah 42:19, 20. Why?



“God does not wish us to hear all that is to be heard, or to see all that is to be seen. It is a great blessing to close the ears, that we hear not, and the eyes, that we see not. The greatest anxiety should be to have clear eyesight to discern our own shortcomings, and a quick ear to catch all needed reproof and instruction, lest by our inattention and carelessness we let them slip and become forgetful hearers and not doers of the work.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 707, 708.

“It makes every difference what we give our minds and souls to feed upon. We can let our minds dwell upon romance and castle-building, and what will it do for us? It will ruin us, soul and body. . . . We want to have that power that will enable us to close our eyes to scenes that are not elevating, that are not ennobling, that will not purify and refine us; and to keep our ears closed to everything that is forbidden in God’s Word. He forbids us to imagine evil, to speak evil, and even to think evil.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 334.

- b. What does God want us to behold? Hebrews 12:1, 2.



“Let us look to Jesus and consider the loveliness of His character, and by beholding we shall become changed into the same likeness.”—*Ibid.*

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How does a sense of our own mortality give us a better perspective on life?
2. In what ways should we tell others of Jesus and His love?
3. Explain the depth of a genuine union with Christ.
4. In what sense did Christ magnify the law in His teaching and example?
5. To what things should we close our eyes and ears?

The Creator's Comfort and Care

"[God's Servant] shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law" (Isaiah 42:4).

"By studying the word of God we shall see that we are not left to our weakness, to our doubts, and that there is no occasion for sinking under discouragement. Talk faith; act faith. Cultivate the faith that works by love and purifies the soul."—*The Review and Herald*, May 19, 1896.

Suggested Reading: *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 29–43.

Sunday

October 16

1. A PATTERN FOR US

- a. Where does God the Father urge all of us to look—and why? Isaiah 42:1.



"Jesus was the fountain of healing mercy for the world; and through all those secluded years at Nazareth, His life flowed out in currents of sympathy and tenderness. The aged, the sorrowing, and the sin-burdened, the children at play in their innocent joy, the little creatures of the groves, the patient beasts of burden—all were happier for His presence. He whose word of power upheld the worlds would stoop to relieve a wounded bird. There was nothing beneath His notice, nothing to which He disdained to minister.

"Thus as He grew in wisdom and stature, Jesus increased in favor with God and man. . . . The atmosphere of hope and courage that surrounded Him made Him a blessing in every home. . . .

"He lived to please, honor, and glorify His Father in the common things of life. His work began in consecrating the lowly trade of the craftsmen who toil for their daily bread. He was doing God's service just as much when laboring at the carpenter's bench as when working miracles for the multitude. And every youth who follows Christ's example of faithfulness and obedience in His lowly home may claim those words spoken of Him, . . . 'Behold My Servant, whom I uphold; Mine Elect, in whom My soul delighteth' (Isaiah 42:1)."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 74.

2. THE UNIQUE MASTER TEACHER

- a. What is meant by Isaiah's prophecy about the voice of Jesus? Isaiah 42:2.



"The voice of Christ was not heard in the street, in noisy contention with those who were opposed to His doctrine. Neither was His voice heard in the street in prayer to His Father, to be heard of men. His voice was not heard in joyful mirth. His voice was not raised to exalt Himself, and to gain the applause and flattery of men. When engaged in teaching, He withdrew His disciples away from the noise and confusion of the busy city to some retired place more in harmony with the lessons of humility, piety, and virtue, which He would impress upon their minds. He shunned human praise and preferred solitude and peaceful retirement to the noise and confusion of mortal life. His voice was often heard in earnest, prevailing intercessions to His Father; yet for these exercises He chose the lonely mountain, and frequently spent whole nights in prayer for strength to sustain Him under the temptations He should meet, and to accomplish the important work He came to do for the salvation of man. His petitions were earnest and mingled with strong cries and tears. And notwithstanding the labor of soul during the night, He ceased not His labor through the day. In the morning He would quietly resume His work of mercy and disinterested benevolence."—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, pp. 30, 31.

"In marked contrast to the teachers of His day was the Saviour to conduct Himself among men. In His life no noisy disputation, no ostentatious worship, no act to gain applause, was ever to be witnessed. The Messiah was to be hid in God, and God was to be revealed in the character of His Son."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 693.

- b. What did those who heard Jesus' words say of His manner of speaking? John 7:46.



"Jesus is our example. His voice was musical, and was never raised in high, strained notes while He was speaking to the people. He did not speak so rapidly that His words were crowded one upon another in such a way that it made it difficult to understand Him. He distinctly enunciated every word."—*The Review and Herald*, March 5, 1895.

"[The disciples at the upper chamber] beheld the hands and feet marred by the cruel nails. They recognized His voice, like no other they had ever heard."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 803.

3. REACHING OUT TO OTHERS

- a. What else did Isaiah prophesy concerning Jesus? Isaiah 42:3. What did the Lord's work include? John 10:16; Matthew 12:20, 21.



“The church has not been properly educated to work outside of their own people. Many souls out of the church might have been enlightened, and a great deal more light brought into the church, if every church member in every country, who claims to have the advanced light of truth, had worked with heart and soul and voice to win souls to the truth. Altogether too little work is being done by church members for those who need the light, those who are outside of the church of Seventh-day Adventists. . . . The Lord has pointed out the duty of every soul. In the judgment no one will have any excuse to present for not doing his duty.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 127, 128.

“To the heart of Christ the very presence of trouble was a call for help. The poor, the sick, the desolate, the outcasts, the discouraged, the desponding, found in Him a compassionate Saviour, a Mighty Healer. . . . Christ identifies His interests with those of suffering humanity, and He tells us that whatever we do to relieve a sufferer, we do for Him.”—*Medical Ministry*, p. 121.

- b. For what purpose did Jesus come to this world? John 3:17. What shows His patience with sinners?



“When Judas joined the disciples, he was not insensible to the beauty of the character of Christ. He felt the influence of that divine power which was drawing souls to the Saviour. He who came not to break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax would not repulse this soul while even one desire was reaching toward the light. The Saviour read the heart of Judas; He knew the depths of iniquity to which, unless delivered by the grace of God, Judas would sink. In connecting this man with Himself, He placed him where he might, day by day, be brought in contact with the outflowing of His own unselfish love. If he would open his heart to Christ, divine grace would banish the demon of selfishness, and even Judas might become a subject of the kingdom of God.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 294.

“Jesus hungered for [Judas'] soul. He felt for him such a burden as for Jerusalem when He wept over the doomed city. His heart was crying, How can I give thee up? The constraining power of that love was felt by Judas.”—*Ibid.*, p. 645.

4. AN UNFAILING HELPER

- a. **What was Jesus' attitude toward difficult situations, and how can this example help us? Isaiah 42:4.**



“[Jesus] reached to the very depth of human misery and woe, to take man as He found him, a being tainted with corruption, degraded with vice, depraved by sin, and united with Satan in apostasy, and elevate him to a seat upon His throne. But it was written of Him that ‘He shall not fail nor be discouraged,’ and He went forth in the path of self-denial and self-sacrifice, giving us an example that we should follow in His steps. We should work as did Jesus, departing from our own pleasure, turning away from Satan’s bribes, despising ease, and abhorring selfishness, that we may seek and save that which is lost, bringing souls from darkness into light, into the sunshine of God’s love. We have been commissioned to go forth and preach the gospel to every creature. We are to bring to the lost the tidings that Christ can forgive sin, can renew the nature, can clothe the soul in the garments of His righteousness, bring the sinner to His right mind, and teach him and fit him up to be a laborer together with God.—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 199.

- b. **What assurance comes to all who are seeking to work for God in their sphere? Isaiah 40:30, 31.**



“Wonderful are the possibilities before the youth to grasp the assurances of God’s Word. Scarcely can the human mind comprehend the spiritual attainments which can be reached by them as they become partakers of the divine nature. Daily correcting mistakes and gaining victories, they grow into wise, strong men and women in Christ. . . .

“The man who waits upon the Lord is strong in his strength, strong enough to hold firm under great pressure. Yet he is easy to be entreated on the side of mercy and compassion, which is the side of Christ. The soul that is submissive to God is ready to do the will of God; he diligently and humbly seeks to know that will. He accepts discipline, and is afraid to walk according to his own finite judgment. He communes with God, and his conversation is in heaven.

“Linked to the Infinite One, man is made partaker of the divine nature. Upon him the shafts of evil have no effect; for he is clothed with the panoply of Christ’s righteousness.”—*My Life Today*, p. 277.

5. HOW GREAT A GOD WE SERVE!

- a. What does Isaiah tell us of the power of God? Isaiah 40:26–29.



“In the song of the bird, the sighing of the trees, and the music of the sea, we still may hear His voice who talked with Adam in Eden in the cool of the day. And as we behold His power in nature we find comfort, for the word that created all things is that which speaks life to the soul. He ‘who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ’ (2 Corinthians 4:6).”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 281, 282.

“The stars also have a message of good cheer for every human being. In those hours that come to all, when the heart is faint and temptation presses sore; when obstacles seem insurmountable, life’s aims impossible of achievement, its fair promises like apples of Sodom; where, then, can such courage and steadfastness be found as in that lesson which God has bidden us learn from the stars in their untroubled course?”—*Education*, p. 115.

- b. As we consider the greatness of God, what will this lead us to do? 1 Samuel 12:24; Mark 5:19; Psalm 31:19.



“The tree of the desert is a symbol of what God means the life of His children in this world to be. They are to guide weary souls, full of unrest, and ready to perish in the desert of sin, to the living water.”—*Ibid.*, p. 116.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How can Christians—including the young—fulfill Isaiah 42:1 in their daily life?
2. What made Christ’s style of teaching distinctive in this world?
3. How can we follow Christ’s example of helping those who are outside of the church?
4. As we grow in wisdom, what will we be doing every day?
5. What lesson can we learn from the stars?

Beholding the Lamb

“He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).

“Look, O look upon the cross of Calvary; behold the royal victim suffering on your account.”—*That I May Know Him*, p. 65.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 200–215.

Sunday

October 23

1. THE TONGUE OF THE TEACHER

a. How can we speak to others as Jesus did? Isaiah 50:4, 5.



“Naturally we are self-centered and opinionated. But when we learn the lessons that Christ desires to teach us, we become partakers of His nature; henceforth we live His life. The wonderful example of Christ, the matchless tenderness with which He entered into the feelings of others, weeping with those who wept, rejoicing with those who rejoiced, must have a deep influence upon the character of all who follow Him in sincerity. . . .

“All around us are afflicted souls. Here and there, everywhere, we may find them. Let us search out these suffering ones and speak a word in season to comfort their hearts. Let us ever be channels through which shall flow the refreshing waters of compassion.

“In all our associations it should be remembered that in the experience of others there are chapters sealed from mortal sight. On the pages of memory are sad histories that are sacredly guarded from curious eyes. There stand registered long, hard battles with trying circumstances, perhaps troubles in the home life, that day by day weaken courage, confidence, and faith. Those who are fighting the battle of life at great odds may be strengthened and encouraged by little attentions that cost only a loving effort. To such the strong, helpful grasp of the hand by a true friend is worth more than gold or silver. Words of kindness are as welcome as the smile of angels.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 157, 158.

2. A SCENE TO CONTEMPLATE

- a. What were some of the things which Christ suffered for us? Why did He do this? Isaiah 50:6; 52:13–15.



“The glorious Son of God . . . bore insult, mockery, and shameful abuse, until ‘His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men’ (Isaiah 52:14).

“Who can comprehend the love here displayed! The angelic host beheld with wonder and with grief Him who had been the Majesty of heaven, and who had worn the crown of glory, now wearing the crown of thorns, a bleeding victim to the rage of an infuriated mob, fired to insane madness by the wrath of Satan. Behold the patient Sufferer! Upon His head is the thorny crown. His lifeblood flows from every lacerated vein. All this in consequence of sin! Nothing could have induced Christ to leave His honor and majesty in heaven, and come to a sinful world, to be neglected, despised, and rejected by those He came to save, and finally to suffer upon the cross, but eternal, redeeming love, which will ever remain a mystery.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 207.

“Pride and self-worship cannot flourish in the soul that keeps fresh in memory the scenes of Calvary.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 661.

- b. Describe the appearance of Jesus as foretold by Isaiah the prophet. Isaiah 53:2. Why were many turned off by His plain appearance?



“Worldly associations attract and dazzle the senses so that piety, the fear of God, faithfulness, and loyalty have not power to keep men steadfast. The humble, unassuming life of Christ seems altogether unattractive. To many who claim to be sons and daughters of God, Jesus, the Majesty of heaven, is ‘as a root out of a dry ground: He hath no form nor comeliness.’”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 461.

“Prophecy foretold that Christ was to appear as a root out of dry ground. [Isaiah 53:2, 3 quoted.] This chapter should be studied. It presents Christ as the Lamb of God. Those who are lifted up with pride, whose souls are filled with vanity, should look upon this picture of their Redeemer, and humble themselves in the dust. The entire chapter should be committed to memory. Its influence will subdue and humble the soul defiled by sin and uplifted by self-exaltation.”—*The Youth’s Instructor*, December 20, 1900.

3. DESPISED AND REJECTED

- a. How do many respond to Jesus' love? Isaiah 53:3. What has He borne for us? Verses 4, 5.



“It was through infinite sacrifice and inexpressible suffering that our Redeemer placed redemption within our reach. He was in this world unhonored and unknown, that, through His wonderful condescension and humiliation, He might exalt man to receive eternal honors and immortal joys in the heavenly courts. During His thirty years of life on earth His heart was wrung with inconceivable anguish. The path from the manger to Calvary was shadowed by grief and sorrow. He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, enduring such heartache as no human language can portray. He could have said in truth, ‘Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow’ (Lamentations 1:12). Hating sin with a perfect hatred, He yet gathered to His soul the sins of the whole world. Guiltless, He bore the punishment of the guilty. Innocent, yet offering Himself as a substitute for the transgressor. The guilt of every sin pressed its weight upon the divine soul of the world’s Redeemer. The evil thoughts, the evil words, the evil deeds of every son and daughter of Adam, called for retribution upon Himself; for He had become man’s substitute. Though the guilt of sin was not His, His spirit was torn and bruised by the transgressions of men, and He who knew no sin became sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 322.

“How few have any conception of the anguish which rent the heart of the Son of God during His thirty years of life upon earth.”—*That I May Know Him*, p. 66.

“The Son of God was rejected and despised for our sakes. Can you, in full view of the cross, beholding by the eye of faith the sufferings of Christ, tell your tale of woe, your trials? Can you nurse revenge of your enemies in your heart while the prayer of Christ comes from His pale and quivering lips for His revilers, His murderers—‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do’ (Luke 23:34)? . . .

“We must not shrink from the depths of humiliation to which the Son of God submitted in order to raise us from the degradation and bondage of sin to a seat at His right hand. . . . It is high time we devoted the few remaining precious hours of our probation to washing our robes of character and making them white in the blood of the Lamb, that we may be of that white-robed company who shall stand about the great white throne.”—*Ibid.*, p. 65.

4. THE UNCOMPLAINING VICTIM

- a. What should we learn from the way Jesus responded to the abuse heaped upon Him at the time of the crucifixion? Isaiah 53:6–9; 1 Peter 2:19–24.



“We should take our fitting place in humble penitence at the foot of the cross. We may learn the lessons of meekness and lowliness of mind as we go up to Mount Calvary, and, looking upon the cross, see our Saviour in agony, the Son of God dying, the Just for the unjust. Behold Him who could summon legions of angels to His assistance with one word, a subject of jest and merriment, of reviling and hatred. He gives Himself a sacrifice for sin. When reviled, He threatened not; when falsely accused, He opened not His mouth. He prays on the cross for His murderers. He is dying for them. He is paying an infinite price for every one of them. He would not lose one whom He has purchased at so great cost. He gives Himself to be smitten and scourged without a murmur. And this uncomplaining victim is the Son of God. His throne is from everlasting, and His kingdom shall have no end.”—*That I May Know Him*, p. 65.

“In His humanity Christ was tried with as much greater temptation, with as much more persevering energy than man is tried by the evil one, as His nature was greater than man’s. This is a deep mysterious truth, that Christ is bound to humanity by the most sensitive sympathies. The evil works, the evil thoughts, the evil words of every son and daughter of Adam press upon His divine soul. The sins of men called for retribution upon Himself, for He had become man’s substitute, and took upon Him the sins of the world.”—*Ibid.*, p. 66.

- b. What was heaven’s purpose in the incarnation of Christ? Isaiah 53:10.



“The Majesty of heaven pleased not Himself. Whatever He did was in reference to the salvation of man. Selfishness in all its forms stood rebuked in His presence. He assumed our nature that He might suffer in our stead, making His soul an offering for sin. He was stricken of God and afflicted to save man from the blow which he deserved because of the transgression of God’s law. By the light shining from the cross, Christ proposed to draw all men unto Him. His human heart yearned over the race. His arms were opened to receive them, and He invited all to come to Him. His life on earth was one continued act of self-denial and condescension.”— *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 418.

5. FOOD FOR THOUGHT

- a. What inspired Christ to suffer such a disgraceful death? Isaiah 53:11, 12.



“The adorable Redeemer . . . did not die as a hero in the eyes of the world, loaded with honors, as men in battle. He died as a condemned criminal, suspended between the heavens and the earth—died a lingering death of shame, exposed to the tauntings and revilings of a debased, crime-loaded, profligate multitude! . . .

“All this humiliation of the Majesty of heaven was for guilty, condemned man. He went lower and lower in His humiliation, until there were no lower depths that He could reach, in order to lift man up from his moral defilement. All this was for you.”—*That I May Know Him*, p. 68.

- b. What should this amazing condescension cause us to consider? Hebrews 2:3, 14, 15.



“However sinful, however guilty you may be, you are called, you are chosen. ‘Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you’ (James 4:8). Not one will be forced against his will to come to Jesus Christ. The Majesty of heaven, the only-begotten Son of the true and living God, opened the way for you to come to Him, by giving His life as a sacrifice on Calvary’s cross. But while He suffered all this for you, He is too pure, He is too just, to behold iniquity. But even this need not keep you away from Him; for He says, ‘I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance’ (Mark 2:17).”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 251, 252.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What do we need to learn in order to be more of a blessing to others?
2. What will be the effect upon us if we commit Isaiah 53 to memory?
3. As we view the sufferings of Jesus on the cross, what will we be unable to do?
4. Why did Jesus remain silent on the cross, except for praying for His enemies?
5. How can we show our appreciation for what Jesus has done for us?

First Sabbath Offering Literature for Mission Fields

In the 21st century, while the Internet, e-books, and other media are modern ways to spread the gospel, there is still a uniquely versatile method of presentation that no other media type can replace: The printed page is one of the most effective ways for the gospel to reach even the remotest places on earth—without electricity. By this means the good news



is penetrating former communist, atheistic, and Islamic countries and can be shared on a one-to-one basis. The servant of the Lord has said: “Let the publications containing Bible truth be scattered like the leaves of autumn” (*In Heavenly Places*, p. 323). “Our publications should go everywhere. Let them be issued in many languages. The third angel’s message is to be given through this medium and through the living teacher. You who believe the truth for this time, wake up. It is your duty now to bring in all the means possible to help those who understand the truth to proclaim it” (*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 62).

“Publish ye, praise ye, and say, O Lord, save thy people, the remnant of Israel” (Jeremiah 31:7). God’s people, the remnant of Israel, are to publish the good news of salvation. While we have an ample supply of Bibles, books, and pamphlets for evangelism in many countries, still there are vast multitudes around the world that do not have the same privilege. It is our duty and honor to support the distribution of literature to various regions of the world. The Bible has been translated into many languages and dialects, yet essential books such as *Steps to Christ*, and *The Great Controversy* are not available to millions. How about if we share the *Sabbath Bible Lessons* with those who are searching for the present truth today?

Consider the Pacific islands and the African countries where the reform message has not yet entered. Let us remember the promise in Ecclesiastes 11:1, “Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.” We must spread the Word of God before it is too late. We may not see the results immediately, but it will not be long before we can witness the great harvest when the latter rain comes in fullness. Let us be wise stewards who store treasure in heaven—not on this earth.

We are very thankful for all that our brethren, sisters, and friends everywhere have done in the past—but the need is greater now than ever before. So let us be generous in this work!

The General Conference Publishing Department

Sharing With Our Neighbors

“Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any” (Isaiah 44:8).

“We should know individually and be able to tell others that every promise of God is true. It is by bearing a straightforward testimony in word and work, that we are counted as true, faithful witnesses for Christ.”—*The Review and Herald*, July 7, 1903.

Suggested Reading: *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 367–378.

Sunday

October 30

1. REACHING THE UNREACHED

- a. Describe the Lord’s plan for His sheep who are outside His fold. Ezekiel 34:12–14. What was the modern-day messenger of God bidden to say about this need?



“As I traveled through the South on my way to the Conference, I saw city after city that was unworked. What is the matter? The ministers are hovering over churches, which know the truth, while thousands are perishing out of Christ. If the proper instruction were given, if the proper methods were followed, every church member would do his work as a member of the body. He would do Christian missionary work. But the churches are dying, and they want a minister to preach to them. They should be taught to bring a faithful tithe to God, that He may strengthen and bless them. They should be brought into working order, that the breath of God may come to them. They should be taught that unless they can stand alone, without a minister, they need to be converted anew, and baptized anew. They need to be born again.”—*The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, p. 1750.

“The world is to be warned. Ministers should work earnestly and devotedly, opening new fields and engaging in personal labor for souls, instead of hovering over the churches that already have great light and many advantages.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 255.

2. STRENGTHENED BY SERVICE

- a. What saving light must be given to every person on earth? Isaiah 42:6; Mark 16:15. How have we as individual believers often neglected this duty—especially when assembled in larger congregations?



“The commission of Christ is to be carried out to the letter. God’s people must consecrate to Him their means and their capabilities. The faithful soldiers of the cross of Christ are to go forth without the camp, bearing the reproach and following in the path of self-denial trodden by the Redeemer.

“The ministers who are hovering over the churches, preaching to those who know the truth, would better go into places still in darkness. Unless they do this, they themselves and their congregations will become dwarfed. Our religion has become weak and sickly because the members of the church have left their first love. They might be strong men and women in Christ if they would obey the Lord’s directions. . . .

“The world is perishing in sin. How much longer will you allow yourselves to be held from the great, needy vineyard, when the history of this world is so near its close?”—*The Review and Herald*, February 9, 1905.

“There are many of the members of our large churches doing comparatively nothing, who might accomplish a good work, if, instead of crowding together, they would scatter into places that have not yet been entered by the truth.”—*Ibid.*, November 26, 1914.

- b. What must every minister and layperson keep in mind? Isaiah 43:11.



“The people of God who have had light and knowledge have not carried out the high and holy purposes of God. They have not advanced from victory to victory, adding new territory, lifting up the standard in the cities and their suburbs. Great spiritual blindness has been shown by those who have had great light flashed upon them by the Lord, but who have not advanced in the light to greater and still greater light. Church members have not been encouraged to use spiritual nerve and muscle in the work of advancement. . . .

“In every church young men and young women should be selected to bear responsibilities. Let them make every effort to qualify themselves to help those who know not the truth. God calls for earnest, whole-souled workers. The humble and contrite will learn by personal experience that *beside Him* there is no savior.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 139.

3. REFRESHMENT FOR THE THIRSTY

- a. **What does God promise to do for those who seek to carry out His will wholeheartedly? Isaiah 44:3, 4.**



“We are taught in God’s word that this is the time, above all others, when we may look for light from heaven. It is now that we are to expect a refreshing from the presence of the Lord. We should watch for the movings of God’s providence as the army of Israel watched for ‘the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees’ (2 Samuel 5:24)—the appointed signal that heaven would work for them.

“God cannot glorify His name through His people while they are leaning upon man and making flesh their arm. Their present state of weakness will continue until Christ alone shall be exalted; until, with John the Baptist, they shall say from a humble and reverent heart: ‘He must increase, but I must decrease’ (John 3:30). Words have been given me to speak to the people of God: ‘Lift Him up, the Man of Calvary. Let humanity stand back, that all may behold Him in whom their hopes of eternal life are centered.’ . . .

“It is to the thirsting soul that the fountain of living waters is open. . . . [Isaiah 43:3 quoted.] To souls that are earnestly seeking for light and that accept with gladness every ray of divine illumination from His holy word, to such alone light will be given. It is through these souls that God will reveal that light and power which will lighten the whole earth with His glory.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 728, 729.

- b. **Describe the folly of the world in trusting to their idols. Isaiah 44:9, 14–17; 46:5–8. What refreshing news do these idol worshippers need to hear? Isaiah 44:22; Psalm 103:11–13.**



“God longs to breathe into prostrate humanity the breath of life. And He will not permit any soul to be disappointed who is sincere in his longing for something higher and nobler than anything the world can offer. Constantly He is sending His angels to those who, while surrounded by circumstances the most discouraging, pray in faith for some power higher than themselves to take possession of them and bring deliverance and peace. In various ways God will reveal Himself to them and will place them in touch with providences that will establish their confidence in the One who has given Himself a ransom for all, ‘that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments’ (Psalm 78:7).”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 377, 378.

4. ENLARGING OUR BORDERS

- a. What does God want His despised, forsaken remnant to do? Psalm 5:11; Isaiah 54:1.



“All the fifty-fourth chapter of Isaiah is applicable to the people of God, and every specification of the prophecy will be fulfilled.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 4, p. 1148.

- b. Explain the assurance given to those who open their hearts and homes to others. Isaiah 54:2, 3; Hebrews 13:1, 2.



“God has given me a message for His people. They must awake, spread their tents, and enlarge their borders. My brethren and sisters, you have been bought with a price, and all that you have and are is to be used to the glory of God and for the good of your fellow men. Christ died on the cross to save the world from perishing in sin. He asks your cooperation in this work. You are to be His helping hand. With earnest, unwearied effort you are to seek to save the lost. Remember that it was your sins that made the cross necessary. When you accepted Christ as your Saviour you pledged yourself to unite with Him in bearing the cross. For life and for death you are bound up with Him, a part of the great plan of redemption.

“The transforming power of Christ’s grace molds the one who gives himself to God’s service. Imbued with the Spirit of the Redeemer, he is ready to deny self, ready to take up the cross, ready to make any sacrifice for the Master. No longer can he be indifferent to the souls perishing around him. He is lifted above self-serving. He has been created anew in Christ, and self-serving has no place in his life.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 7, pp. 9, 10.

- c. What amazing promises are associated with this type of missionary work? Isaiah 54:4, 5, 10, 17.



“God’s everlasting arm encircles the soul that turns to Him for aid, however feeble that soul may be. The precious things of the hills shall perish; but the soul that lives for God, unmoved by censure, unperverted by applause, shall abide forever with Him.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 328.

5. PROMISING PROSPECTS AHEAD

- a. What does God want us to be to those around us, and what assurances are there for those who undertake this work? 2 Chronicles 16:9; Isaiah 11:10–13; 57:13, 14.



“The groups of missionaries in heathen lands have been likened by the prophet to ensigns set up for the guidance of those who are looking for the light of truth. . . .

“The day of deliverance is at hand. . . . Among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, He sees men and women who are praying for light and knowledge. Their souls are unsatisfied; long have they fed on ashes. See Isaiah 44:20. The enemy of all righteousness has turned them aside, and they grope as blind men. But they are honest in heart and desire to learn a better way. Although in the depths of heathenism, with no knowledge of the written law of God nor of His Son Jesus, they have revealed in manifold ways the working of a divine power on mind and character.

“At times those who have no knowledge of God aside from that which they have received under the operations of divine grace have been kind to His servants, protecting them at the risk of their own lives. The Holy Spirit is implanting the grace of Christ in the heart of many a noble seeker after truth, quickening his sympathies contrary to his nature, contrary to his former education.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 375–377.

“The Lord sends the message, ‘Take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people.’ Earnest effort is to be put forth to counterwork the influences that have kept back the message for this time. A solemn work is to be done in a short space of time.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 4, p. 1148.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. If we are truly converted, what should we be willing to do in our churches?
2. Explain the disadvantage of large congregations.
3. To whom only will light be given, and what will they do with this light?
4. In what ways can I “enlarge” my “tent” for the Lord?
5. What steps can we take to help those who are blindly groping for light?

The Struggles of the Remnant

“Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings” (Isaiah 51:7).

“The law of God will stand fully vindicated. It will be seen that all the dealings of God have been conducted with reference to the eternal good of His people, and the good of all the worlds that He has created.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 338, 339.

Suggested Readings: *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 117–119. *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 121–143.

Sunday

November 6

1. TRYING TIMES FOR THE RIGHTEOUS

- a. In Isaiah’s time, what developments occurred in Judah during the reign of King Manasseh? 2 Kings 21:16; 2 Chronicles 33:9–11.



“The kingdom of Judah . . . was once more brought low during the long years of Manasseh’s wicked reign, when paganism was revived, and many of the people were led into idolatry. . . . The glorious light of former generations was followed by the darkness of superstition and error. Gross evils sprang up and flourished—tyranny, oppression, hatred of all that is good. Justice was perverted; violence prevailed.

“Yet those evil times were not without witnesses for God and the right. The trying experiences through which Judah had safely passed during Hezekiah’s reign had developed, in the hearts of many, a sturdiness of character that now served as a bulwark against the prevailing iniquity. Their testimony in behalf of truth and righteousness aroused the anger of Manasseh and his associates in authority, who endeavored to establish themselves in evil-doing by silencing every voice of disapproval. [2 Kings 21:16 quoted.]

“One of the first to fall was Isaiah, who for over half a century had stood before Judah as the appointed messenger of Jehovah.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 381, 382.

2. THE LORD MIGHTY TO SAVE

- a. **What should we all learn from Manasseh's repentance? 2 Chronicles 33:12, 13; 2 Peter 3:9.**



“In the case of Manasseh the Lord gives us an instance of the way in which He works. [2 Chronicles 33:9–13 quoted.]

“The Lord has often spoken to His people in warning and reproof. He has revealed Himself in mercy, love, and kindness. He has not left His backsliding people to the will of the enemy, but has borne long with them, even during obdurate apostasy. But after appeals have been made in vain, He prepares the rod for punishment. What compassionate love has been exercised toward the people of God! The Lord might have cut down in their sins those who were working at cross purposes with Him, but He has not done this. His hand is stretched out still. We have reason to offer thanksgiving to God that He has not taken His Spirit from those who have refused to walk in His way.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 3, p. 1132.

- b. **After God used Babylon to punish apostate Israel and then used Medo-Persia to destroy Babylon, how did He promise to deliver His nation after their period of chastisement? Isaiah 44:24, 28; 45:1–6, 13.**



“More than a century before the birth of Cyrus, Inspiration had mentioned him by name, and had caused a record to be made of the actual work he should do in taking the city of Babylon unawares, and in preparing the way for the release of the children of the captivity. Through Isaiah the word had been spoken: [Isaiah 45:1–3 quoted].”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 551.

- c. **How was this prophecy fulfilled? Ezra 1:1–4; 6:3–5. What principle should this fact cause us to remember? Numbers 11:23.**



“The Lord has resources. His hand is on the machinery. When the time came for His temple to be rebuilt, He moved upon Cyrus as His agent to discern the prophecies concerning Himself, and to grant the Jewish people their liberty.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 4, p. 1175.

3. REAL REFORMATION THAT LASTS

- a. What spiritual restoration prophesied to take place in our day was symbolized by the restoration in Nehemiah's day? Isaiah 61:4; 58:12, 13.



“The spiritual restoration of which the work carried forward in Nehemiah's day was a symbol, is outlined in the words of Isaiah: [Isaiah 61:4; 58:12 quoted].

“The prophet here describes a people who, in a time of general departure from truth and righteousness, are seeking to restore the principles that are the foundation of the kingdom of God. They are repairers of a breach that has been made in God's law—the wall that He has placed around His chosen ones for their protection, and obedience to whose precepts of justice, truth, and purity is to be their perpetual safeguard.

“In words of unmistakable meaning the prophet points out the specific work of this remnant people who build the wall. ‘If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it’ (Verses 13, 14).

“In the time of the end every divine institution is to be restored. The breach made in the law at the time the Sabbath was changed by man is to be repaired.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 677, 678.

- b. Why is it so important to have a good foundation in the work of reformation? Psalm 11:3. How does this apply to our work today in preparation for the Lord's return? Matthew 3:9, 10; 17:11.



“God's remnant people, standing before the world as reformers, are to show that the law of God is the foundation of all enduring reform and that the Sabbath of the fourth commandment is to stand as a memorial of creation, a constant reminder of the power of God. In clear, distinct lines they are to present the necessity of obedience to all the precepts of the Decalogue. Constrained by the love of Christ, they are to cooperate with Him in building up the waste places. They are to be repairers of the breach, restorers of paths to dwell in.”—*Ibid.*, p. 678.

4. PRESSING FORWARD

- a. **How humble are we to be in our work for others? Luke 17:10; Galatians 6:1; Isaiah 51:1.**



“We must lead the people along patiently and gradually, remembering the hole of the pit whence we were digged.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 21.

- b. **What promises to the spiritual children of Abraham are for us today? Isaiah 51:2, 3; Galatians 3:28, 29.**



“God’s people have a mighty work before them, a work that must continually rise to greater prominence. Our efforts in missionary lines must become far more extensive. . . .

“The vineyard includes the whole world, and every part of it is to be worked. There are places which are now a moral wilderness, and these are to become as the garden of the Lord. The waste places of the earth are to be cultivated, that they may bud and blossom as the rose. New territories are to be worked by men inspired by the Holy Spirit. New churches must be established, new congregations organized. At this time there should be representatives of present truth in every city and in the remote parts of the earth. The whole earth is to be illuminated with the glory of God’s truth. The light is to shine to all lands and all peoples. And it is from those who have received the light that it is to shine forth. The daystar has risen upon us, and we are to flash its light upon the pathway of those in darkness.

“A crisis is right upon us. We must now by the Holy Spirit’s power proclaim the great truths for these last days. It will not be long before everyone will have heard the warning and made his decision. Then shall the end come.

“It is the very essence of all right faith to do the right thing at the right time. God is the great Master Worker, and by His providence He prepares the way for His work to be accomplished. He provides opportunities, opens up lines of influence and channels of working. If His people are watching the indications of His providence and stand ready to cooperate with Him, they will see a great work accomplished. . . . Our work is reformatory, and it is God’s purpose that the excellence of the work in all lines shall be an object lesson to the people.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 6, pp. 23–25.

5. NOT TO BE LED ASTRAY

- a. What happens when people reject God's Word in order to promote their own agenda? Isaiah 50:11; John 12:48; 2 Thessalonians 2:11.



“The Lord has presented before me that those who have been in any measure blinded by the enemy, and who have not fully recovered themselves from the snare of Satan, will be in peril because they cannot discern light from heaven, and will be inclined to accept a falsehood. This will affect the whole tenor of their thoughts, their decisions, their propositions, their counsels. The evidences that God has given are no evidence to them, because they have blinded their own eyes by choosing darkness rather than light. Then they will originate something they call light, which the Lord calls sparks of their own kindling, by which they will direct their steps. . . .

“By many, the words which the Lord sent will be rejected, and the words that man may speak will be received as light and truth. Human wisdom will lead away from self-denial, from consecration, and will devise many things that tend to make of no effect God's messages. We cannot with any safety rely upon men who are not in close connection with God.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 4, pp. 1146, 1147.

- b. What key point must we keep in mind in this work? 1 Corinthians 14:8.



“Let the church arise and repent of her backslidings before God. Let the watchmen awake and give the trumpet a certain sound.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 126.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How far did King Manasseh plunge into the depths of wickedness?
2. Cite examples revealing the tremendous long-suffering of our Redeemer.
3. Many profess to be reformers—but what is God's basis for true reform?
4. What is the most important task we should be actively pursuing today?
5. Name the kinds of problems that lead people astray from the truth.

Cooperating With Heaven

“For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee” (Isaiah 41:13).

“An indwelling Saviour makes His power our property. The truth becomes our stock in trade. No unrighteousness is seen in the life. We are able to speak words in season to those who know not the truth. Christ’s presence in the heart is a vitalizing power, strengthening the entire being.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 71.

Suggested Reading: *Education*, pp. 169–184.

Sunday

November 13

1. WORDS OF COMFORT AND HEALING

- a. What comforting message to wayward Judah echoes down to us today in our desire to live for God and promote His cause? Isaiah 41:10–14.



“The Lord has pledged Himself to make His name a praise in the earth. What power He has promised to all who will work in cooperation with heaven! The three highest powers in the universe are pledged to labor with those who will seek to save the lost. God wants His people to claim His promised help for the accomplishment of His work in the world.”—*The Review and Herald*, August 12, 1909.

“Let us be hopeful and courageous. Despondency in God’s service is sinful and unreasonable. He knows our every necessity. He has all power. He can bestow upon His servants the measure of efficiency that their need demands. His infinite love and compassion never weary. With the majesty of omnipotence He unites the gentleness and care of a tender shepherd. We need have no fear that He will not fulfill His promises. He is eternal truth. Never will He change the covenant that He has made with those that love Him. His promises to His church stand fast forever. He will make her an eternal excellence, a joy of many generations.

“Study the forty-first chapter of Isaiah, and strive to understand it in all its significance.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 38, 39.

2. ENCOURAGEMENT IN OUR MISSION

- a. What assurances do we have of God's love and protection in carrying forward our mission, even amid trials? Isaiah 43:1–6.



“The furnace fires are not to destroy but to refine, ennoble, sanctify. Without trial we should not feel so much our need of God and His help; and we should become proud and self-sufficient. In the trials that come to you I see evidence that the Lord's eye is upon you and that He means to draw you to Himself. It is not the whole but the wounded, who need a physician; it is those who are pressed almost beyond the point of endurance who need a helper. Turn to the stronghold. Learn the precious lesson: ‘Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light’ (Matthew 11:28–30).”—*Ibid.*, pp. 123, 124.

- b. What lessons of cooperation and encouragement even among idolaters can we apply today in our work for God? Isaiah 41:6, 7.



“It would be helpful for the youth, and for parents and teachers as well, to study the lesson of cooperation as taught in the Scriptures. Among its many illustrations notice the building of the tabernacle—that object lesson of character building—in which the whole people united, ‘every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing’ (Exodus 35:21). Read how the wall of Jerusalem was rebuilt by the returned captives, in the midst of poverty, difficulty, and danger, the great task successfully accomplished because ‘the people had a mind to work’ (Nehemiah 4:6). Consider the part acted by the disciples in the Saviour's miracle for the feeding of the multitude. The food multiplied in the hands of Christ, but the disciples received the loaves and gave to the waiting throng.

“‘We are members one of another.’ As everyone therefore ‘hath received a (RV) gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God’ (Ephesians 4:25; 1 Peter 4:10).

“Well might the words written of the idol builders of old be, with worthier aim, adopted as a motto by character builders of today: [Isaiah 41:6 quoted].”—*Education*, p. 286.

3. IN TUNE WITH OUR MAKER

- a. How do both the psalmist and Isaiah declare the uniqueness of our Creator? Psalm 72:18; Isaiah 44:6–8; 45:11, 12. What should this cause us to consider?



“Let us have more confidence in our Redeemer. Turn not from the waters of Lebanon to seek refreshment at broken cisterns, which can hold no water. Have faith in God. Trustful dependence on Jesus makes victory not only possible, but certain. Though multitudes are pressing on in the wrong way, though the outlook be ever so discouraging, yet we may have full assurance in our Leader; for ‘I am God,’ he declares, ‘and there is none else.’ (Isaiah 45:22). He is infinite in power, and able to save all who come to Him. There is no other in whom we can safely trust.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 9, 1910.

- b. Instead of cooperating with our Creator in His purpose for us, what do we often do? Isaiah 45:9, 10. How did the heathen king, Cyrus, respond to God’s purpose for him? Verse 13.



“We believe in a general way, but we lose much because we do not trust fully and entirely in God our Maker. When we can, notwithstanding disagreeable circumstances, rest confidently in His love and shut ourselves in with Him, resting peacefully in His love, the sense of His presence will inspire a deep, tranquil joy. This experience gains for us a faith that enables us not to fret, not to worry, but to depend upon a Power that is infinite.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 9, p. 289.

“As the king [Cyrus] saw the words foretelling, more than a hundred years before his birth, the manner in which Babylon should be taken; as he read the message addressed to him by the Ruler of the universe [Isaiah 45:5b, 6a quoted], as he saw before his eyes the declaration of the eternal God, “For Jacob My servant’s sake, and Israel Mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known Me;” as he traced the inspired record, “I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build My city, and he shall let go My captives, not for price nor reward,” his heart was profoundly moved, and he determined to fulfill his divinely appointed mission (Verses 4, 13). He would let the Judean captives go free; he would help them restore the temple of Jehovah.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 557, 558.

4. THE CERTAINTY OF GOD’S WORD

- a. **When tempted to doubt the certainty of God’s Word, what should we remember about God? Isaiah 46:8–10.**



“It is impossible for the finite minds of men to fully comprehend the character or the works of the Infinite One. . . .

“We can so far comprehend His dealing with us, and the motives by which He is actuated, that we may discern boundless love and mercy united to infinite power. We can understand as much of His purposes as it is for our good to know; and beyond this we must still trust the might of the Omnipotent, the love and wisdom of the Father and Sovereign of all. . . . But God has given us in the Scriptures sufficient evidence of their divine character, and we are not to doubt His word because we cannot understand all the mysteries of His providence. . . . All that God has seen fit to make known we are to accept upon the authority of His word. Only a bare statement of facts may be given, with no explanation as to why or how; but though we cannot comprehend it we should rest content that it is true, because God has said it. All the difficulty lies in the weakness and narrowness of the human mind”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 698–700.

“In the annals of human history the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as dependent on the will and prowess of man. The shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition, or caprice. But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, behind, above, and through all the play and counterplay of human interests and power and passions, the agencies of the all-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will.”—*Education*, p. 173.

- b. **In His purpose to use Cyrus to deliver Judah from Babylon, what great spiritual deliverance was assured by God, and through whom would this come? Isaiah 46:11–13.**



“In word and in deed the Messiah, during His earthly ministry, was to reveal to mankind the glory of God the Father. Every act of His life, every word spoken, every miracle wrought, was to make known to fallen humanity the infinite love of God.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 696.

5. GOD'S HELPING HANDS

- a. What essential experience must we all have in order to cooperate with God in the blessed work of soul-saving? Psalm 51:10–13; 2 Corinthians 4:1–7. Why?



“Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary. He who drinks of the living water becomes a fountain of life. The receiver becomes a giver. The grace of Christ in the soul is like a spring in the desert, welling up to refresh all, and making those who are ready to perish eager to drink of the water of life.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 195.

“He who becomes a child of God should henceforth look upon himself as a link in the chain let down to save the world, one with Christ in His plan of mercy, going forth with Him to seek and save the lost.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 105.

“Have you so deep an appreciation of the sacrifice made on Calvary that you are willing to make every other interest subordinate to the work of saving souls? The same intensity of desire to save sinners that marked the life of the Saviour marks the life of His true follower. The Christian has no desire to live for self. He delights to consecrate all that he has and is to the Master’s service. He is moved by an inexpressible desire to win souls to Christ. Those who have nothing of this desire might better be concerned for their own salvation. Let them pray for the spirit of service.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 10.

“Our work has been marked out for us by our heavenly Father. We are to take our Bibles and go forth to warn the world. We are to be God’s helping hands in saving souls—channels through which His love is day by day to flow to the perishing.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 150.

Friday

November 18

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Name some ways in which God’s cause can be benefited by our mutual cooperation.
2. What should we remember when faced with fierce trials and difficulties?
3. If we rest in God’s love and commit ourselves fully to Him, what will we gain?
4. Why is prophecy so useful in laying the groundwork for belief in God?
5. Why is evangelistic zeal an accurate gauge of genuine conversion?

Called to Witness

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!” (Isaiah 52:7).

“By communicating to others the grace we receive, we shall be made partakers of the rich blessings of God.”—*The Review and Herald*, February 25, 1909.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies*, vol. 7, pp. 9–24.

Sunday

November 20

1. REVIVING OUR LOVE FOR THE TRUTH

- a. When tempted to waste our time in selfish pursuits or trivial matters, what should we consider? Isaiah 55:6, 7; Hebrews 3:12, 13.



“My brethren and sisters, seek the Lord while He may be found. There is a time coming when those who have wasted their time and opportunities will wish they had sought Him.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, pp. 106, 107.

- b. Why is it important to study the Word of God now? Amos 8:11, 12. What effect will personal Bible study have on us? John 8:31, 32; John 17:17.



“Those who study the Bible, counsel with God, and rely upon Christ will be enabled to act wisely at all times and under all circumstances. Good principles will be illustrated in actual life. Only let the truth for this time be cordially received and become the basis of character, and it will produce steadfastness of purpose, which the allurements of pleasure, the fickleness of custom, the contempt of the world-loving, and the heart’s own clamors for self-indulgence are powerless to influence. Conscience must be first enlightened, the will must be brought into subjection. The love of truth and righteousness must reign in the soul, and a character will appear which heaven can approve.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 43.

2. REVIVING OUR LOVE FOR CHRIST AND OTHERS

- a. **What will the constraining love of God lead us to do? 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15.**



“If the love of God is in the heart, it will surely be revealed in tender love for others. The Lord is honored by our acts of mercy, by the exercise of thoughtful consideration for the unfortunate and distressed. The widow and the fatherless need more than our charity. They need sympathy and watchcare, compassionate words, and a helping hand to place them where they can help themselves. All deeds done for those who need help are done to Christ. In our study to know how to help the unfortunate, we should study the way in which Christ worked. He did not refuse to work for those who made mistakes; His works of mercy were performed for every class, the righteous and the unrighteous. For all alike He healed disease and gave lessons of instruction.”—*The Signs of the Times*, July 14, 1909.

- b. **When this motive is lacking, what call to repentance must we accept—and why? Revelation 2:4, 5.**



“My brother, my sister, what are you doing for Christ? Are you seeking to be a blessing to others? Are your lips uttering words of kindness, sympathy, and love? Are you putting forth earnest efforts to win others to the Saviour?”

“It is a mystery that there are not hundreds at work where now there is but one. The heavenly universe is astonished at the apathy, the coldness, the listlessness, of those who profess to be sons and daughters of God. For years the work has been kept before us, but many have been asleep.”—*The Review and Herald*, August 7, 1913.

- c. **How can doing our “first works” in missionary lines improve our spirituality in the church?**

“Every departure from true missionary effort, every failure to cherish the missionary spirit, has reacted upon the church, and there has been a decline of spirituality. But every earnest effort that has been made in missionary lines has brought spiritual health to the church, and has not only increased the membership of the church, but has increased its holy zeal and gladness.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 205, 206.

3. REWARDING RESULTS

- a. What encouraging words illustrate the gratefulness that those who hear the message will have for those who bring the message? Isaiah 52:7.



“[God] wants you to institute meetings for those outside the churches, that the people may learn the truths of this last message of warning. There are places where you will be gladly received, where souls will thank you for coming to their help. May the Lord help you to take hold of this work as you have never yet taken hold of it.

“Let us begin to work for those who have not had the light. . . . What we need is a living faith, faith to proclaim over the rent sepulcher of Joseph that we have a living Saviour, one who will go before us and who will work with us. God will do the work if we will furnish Him the instruments. There needs to be among us a great deal more of prayer and much less of unbelief. We need to lift up the standard higher and still higher before the people. We need to remember that Christ is always at our right hand as we proclaim liberty to the captives and deal the bread of life to hungry souls. When we keep before our minds the urgency and importance of our work, the salvation of God will be revealed in a remarkable manner.

“God help us to put on the armor and to act as if we were in earnest, as if the souls of men and women were worth saving. Let us seek a new conversion.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 107.

- b. What can happen as we join hands in this great endeavor? Isaiah 52:8, 15.



“The Lord is calling upon His people to take up different lines of missionary work. Those in the highways and hedges are to hear the saving gospel message. Church members are to do evangelistic work in the homes of those of their friends and neighbors who have not yet received full evidence of the truth.”—*Reflecting Christ*, p. 202.

“If we teach the truth as it is in Jesus, we shall teach it in the spirit of the true Educator; and we will not have various opinions, and cling to our own ideas with tenacity, but will see eye to eye.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 914.

4. HEEDING THE WAKE-UP CALL

- a. How does the apostle Paul echo Isaiah's call to service? Romans 10:13–15.



“[Christ’s] life was one of unselfish service, and it is to be our lesson book.

“Human beings have no right to think that there is a limit to the efforts that they are to make in the work of soul-saving. Did Christ ever become weary in His work? Did He ever draw back from sacrifice and hardship? Church members are to put forth the continuous, persevering efforts that He put forth.”—*The Review and Herald*, August 7, 1913.

- b. Do we need to wait for a government decree or a General Conference resolution in order to wake up? If not, why not? Romans 13:11–14; 1 Thessalonians 5:4–8.



“The whole earth is to be lightened with the glory of God’s truth. The Lord will not close up the period of probation until the warning message shall be more distinctly proclaimed. The trumpet must give a certain sound. The law of God is to be magnified, its claims must be presented in their true, sacred character; that the people may be brought to decide for or against the truth. . . .

“You have long expected the wonderful startling events that are to take place just prior to the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Now I ask, Are you prepared to give the trumpet a certain sound? Do you know that you are connected with God, and living in the light of His countenance? Who feels day by day that he belongs to the great copartnership for honoring Christ by working out the Lord’s plan for the redemption of men? The best way to keep your own souls in the love of God is to become diligent workers for the salvation of others. . . .

“All heaven, if I may use the expression, is impatiently waiting for men to cooperate with the divine agencies in working for the salvation of souls. [Isaiah 52:7 quoted.] Who will arise and shine because the light has come, and the glory of the Lord hath risen upon them? Who have joined themselves to the Lord in holy covenant to become channels for the communication of heaven’s light and grace to our world?”—*General Conference Daily Bulletin*, January 28, 1893.

5. MAKING A GOOD CONFESSION

- a. What confession do we need to make while probation still lingers? Isaiah 45:23; Romans 14:11; 10:9, 10.



“Lose no time; confess Christ without delay. It is the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Spirit of truth that testifies of Christ. Jesus said, ‘Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth’ (Acts 1:8). To grieve the Holy Spirit which would make you a witness of Christ is a terrible thing. You know not when you may grieve the Spirit for the last time. The Holy Spirit does not work upon the human heart to compel you to give yourself to Christ, to force you to yield your conscience: but [the Spirit] shines into the chambers of the mind in a way to convict of sin, and to entice you unto righteousness. If you do not confess Christ now, the time will come when, overwhelmed with a sense of the great things that you have lost, you will make confession. But why not confess Christ now while mercy’s voice invites you?”—*The Youth’s Instructor*, August 1, 1895.

- b. When we confess Christ as our source of strength and righteousness, what effect will this have on our missionary efforts? Isaiah 45:24, 25.



“In a special manner truth is adapted to the necessities of every human heart. As the children of God comprehend the ability of the Lord to supply their needs, they will reach out to meet the needs of the souls who are perishing in sin. God will accept all who will exercise faith in Him and become doers of His word.”—*The Review and Herald*, August 12, 1909.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why is it important for us to know what is truth?
2. What happens to our spirituality if we fail to do missionary work?
3. When seeking to share Christ, on whom should we begin our focus?
4. What example has Christ given in daily life—and how can we follow it?
5. How can my personal confession of Christ be a more effective witness?

First Sabbath Offering for the Central American Union Education Department

We believe our highest work on earth is to form characters after the divine likeness. The formation of character is the work of a lifetime, and its development is to continue for eternity. A character formed after the divine similitude is the only treasure we can take from this world to the world to come. This is to be the goal of every true Christian. The work of the church in helping our character development is to “educate, educate, educate.”



The Central American Union has taken the education of our children and young people as one of its most important objectives. Sadly, many of our children and youth who currently lack the opportunity to attend our own church schools are leaving the church with the flow of the world. Aware of this great reality, our brethren and sisters are making a great effort in establishing primary and secondary schools to help our children and youth to have a holistic education, which is in harmony with the divine purpose of Christian education. Through these educational programs, many families have been benefited and more of them are coming to the feet of Jesus in this way.

Unfortunately, our resources are insufficient to continue this great work. However, we rely on the promises of the Lord that He will provide the resources needed to continue this important work we have undertaken with much enthusiasm, keeping in mind the value that “the work of education and the work of redemption are one.”

Dear brothers, sisters, and friends around the world: on behalf of all believers of the Central American Union, we appeal to each of you that your gifts and donations for this First Sabbath Offering be generous and, at the same time, be a great blessing for the education of our children and young people of Central America. Please give generously, and our prayer is that God will recompense you with a double portion of blessings.

The Central American Union Education Department

Reaching Out to Souls

“The next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God” (Acts 13:44).

“A tender spirit, a gentle, winning deportment, may save the erring and hide a multitude of sins.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 166.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies*, vol. 7, pp. 25–41; vol. 6, pp. 31–57.

Sunday

November 27

1. A MESSAGE FOR TODAY

- a. What work today was foretold in the prophecy of Isaiah 56? Verses 1, 2.



“The work of Sabbath reform to be accomplished in the last days is foretold in the prophecy of Isaiah. [Isaiah 56:1, 2, 6, 7 quoted.]”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 451.

- b. By what means can we best witness to those in large cities? Luke 14:23.



“It is our work to give to the whole world—to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people—the saving truths of the third angel’s message. But it has been a difficult problem to know how to reach the people in the great centers of population. We are not allowed entrance to the churches. In the cities the large halls are expensive, and in most cases but few will come out to the best halls. We have been spoken against by those who were not acquainted with us. The reasons of our faith are not understood by the people, and we have been regarded as fanatics who were ignorantly keeping Saturday for Sunday. In our work we have been perplexed to know how to break through the barriers of worldliness and prejudice, and bring before the people the precious truth which means so much to them. The Lord has instructed us that the camp meeting is one of the most important instrumentalities for the accomplishment of this work.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 31, 32.

2. REACHING BEYOND OUR CIRCLE

- a. **What was Isaiah shown about God's plan for precious, sincere souls outside the fold of Christ? Isaiah 56:3–5. How was this seen in the preaching of the apostles? Acts 13:44.**



“The Jews had come more and more to regard themselves as superior by divine right to every other people upon the earth; yet they had not been careful to maintain their separate and holy character by rendering obedience to all the commandments of God. Now the prophet declares that the stranger who will love and obey God shall enjoy the privileges that have belonged exclusively to the chosen people. Hitherto, circumcision and a strict observance of the ceremonial law had been the conditions upon which Gentiles could be admitted to the congregation of Israel; but these distinctions were to be abolished by the gospel.”—*The Signs of the Times*, February 28, 1884.

- b. **What selfish human tendency must we and our families determine to resist? Haggai 1:4.**



“Your interest, and efforts, and anxieties are for your family and your relatives. But you have not entertained the idea of reaching out for others around you, overcoming your reluctance to exert an influence outside of a special circle. You idolize yours, and shut yourselves within yourselves. That the Lord may save me and mine is the great burden. This spirit will have to die before you can flourish in the Lord and make spiritual advancement, before the church can grow and souls be added unto them of such as shall be saved.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 77.

- c. **How can we avoid the pitfalls of crowding together in one place? Luke 9:6.**



“How many towns and cities there are that are utterly neglected. Our people are injuring themselves by crowding into one place. When trees in a nursery are crowded thickly together, they cannot grow healthfully and sturdily. Transplant trees from your thickly planted nursery. God is not glorified in the centering of so many advantages in one place. Give room; put your plants in many places, where one will not lean for support upon another. Give them room to grow. This the Lord demands of you.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 147.

3. THE LINK TO OUR TASTES AND HABITS

- a. What is a wonderful promise given to new believers? Isaiah 56:6, 7. How are we to act a part in sharing the truth?



“Every church is in need of the controlling power of the Holy Spirit, and now is the time to pray for it. But in all God’s work for man He plans that man shall cooperate with Him. To this end the Lord calls upon the church to have a higher piety, a more just sense of duty, a clearer realization of their obligations to their Creator. He calls upon them to be a pure, sanctified, working people. And the Christian help work is one means of bringing this about, for the Holy Spirit communicates with all who are doing God’s service. . . .

“Make regular, organized efforts to lift the church members out of the dead level in which they have been for years. Send out into the churches workers who will live the principles of health reform. Let those be sent who can see the necessity of self-denial in appetite, or they will be a snare to the church. See if the breath of life will not then come into our churches.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 266, 267.

- b. What is the plague of the Pharisees, and how can we avoid it? Matthew 23:1–3; 7:24–29. How do our personal health habits affect our Christian witness? Isaiah 56:10–12; 1 Corinthians 9:26, 27.



“The Lord is not pleased with the backslidden state of His people in regard to health reform. If they do not arouse to the need of heeding the light on health reform, they will soon fail to see the importance of other phases of the message.”—*Spalding Magan Collection*, p. 418.

“If the churches expect strength, they must live the truth which God has given them. If the members of our churches disregard the light on [health reform], they will reap the sure result in both spiritual and physical degeneracy. And the influence of these older church members will leaven those newly come to the faith. The Lord does not now work to bring many souls into the truth, because of the church members who have never been converted and those who were once converted but who have backslidden. What influence would these unconsecrated members have on new converts? Would they not make of no effect the God-given message which His people are to bear?”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 370, 371.

4. TENDERNESS FOR THE OUTCASTS

- a. Describe the special care God has for those who need it most. Isaiah 56:8.



“Everyone who loves God in sincerity and truth will love the souls for whom Christ has died. If we wish to do good to souls, our success with these souls will be in proportion to their belief in our belief in, and appreciation of, them. Respect shown to the struggling human soul is the sure means through Christ Jesus of the restoration of the self-respect the man has lost. Our advancing ideas of what he may become is a help we cannot ourselves fully appreciate. We have need of the rich grace of God every hour, then we will have a rich, practical experience, for God is love. He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God. Give love to them that need it most. The most unfortunate, those who have the most disagreeable temperaments need our love, our tenderness, our compassion. Those who try our patience need most love. We pass through the world only once; any good thing we can do, we should do most earnestly, untiringly, with the same spirit as is stated of Christ in His work. He will not fail nor be discouraged. The rough, stubborn, sullen dispositions are the ones who need help the most. How can they be helped? Only by that love practiced in dealing with them which Christ revealed to fallen man. Treat them, you may, as they deserve. What if Christ had treated us thus? He, the undeserving, was treated as we deserve. Still we are treated by Christ with grace and love as we did not deserve, but as He deserved. Treat some characters, as you think they richly deserve, and you will cut off from them the last thread of hope, spoil your influence and ruin the soul. Will it pay? No, I say no, a hundred times no. Bind these souls who need all the help it is possible for you to give them close to a loving, sympathizing, pitying heart, overflowing with Christ-like love, and you will save a soul from death and hide a multitude of sins.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 281, 282.

- b. How can we work for the outcasts in our own midst? James 5:19, 20.



“There are many who err and who feel their shame and folly. They look upon their mistakes and errors until they are driven almost to desperation. These souls we are not to neglect. When one has to swim against the stream, there is all the force of the current driving him back. Let a helping hand then be held out to him as was the Elder Brother’s hand to the sinking Peter. Speak to him hopeful words.”—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 295.

5. FOLLOWING THE MASTER'S EXAMPLE

- a. How can Christ's compassionate ministry to sin-sick souls be reflected and imitated in the life of His followers? Isaiah 61:1-3.



"The mission of Christ was to heal the sick, encourage the hopeless, bind up the brokenhearted. This work of restoration is to be carried on among the needy, suffering ones of humanity. God calls not only for your benevolence, but your cheerful countenance, your hopeful words, the grasp of your hand. Relieve some of God's afflicted ones. Some are sick, and hope has departed. Bring back the sunlight to them. There are souls who have lost their courage; speak to them, pray for them. There are those who need the bread of life. Read to them from the Word of God. There is a soul sickness no balm can reach, no medicine heal. Pray for these, and bring them to Jesus Christ. And in all your work, Christ will be present to make impressions upon human hearts."—*A Call to Medical Evangelism and Health Education*, p. 23.

"We need not go to Nazareth, to Capernaum, or to Bethany, in order to walk in the steps of Jesus. We shall find His footprints beside the sickbed, in the hovels of poverty, in the crowded alleys of the great cities, and in every place where there are human hearts in need of consolation.

"We are to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and comfort the suffering and afflicted. We are to minister to the despairing, and to inspire hope in the hopeless.

"The love of Christ, manifested in unselfish ministry, will be more effective in reforming the evildoer than will the sword or the court of justice. These are necessary to strike terror to the lawbreaker, but the loving missionary can do more than this. Often the heart that hardens under reproof will melt under the love of Christ."—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 105, 106.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. For what specific aim were camp meetings originally designed, and why?
2. Why should we manifest interest in new souls with no family in the faith?
3. What do our personal health habits have to do with missionary success?
4. What happens when we treat people as they deserve to be treated? How does Jesus treat us?
5. Where can you find opportunities to minister personally as Christ would?

Persevering Missionaries

“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price” (Isaiah 55:1).

“Soon there is to be trouble all over the world. It becomes everyone to seek to know God. We have no time to delay. With earnestness and fervor the message must be given: [Isaiah 55:1; 56:1 quoted].”—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 228.

Suggested Readings: *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 385–389;
Ibid., vol. 6, pp. 14–29.

Sunday

December 4

1. PERSEVERANCE THROUGH DIFFICULTIES

- a. What message must be given to everyone today, regardless of the trying circumstances that may confront us? Isaiah 55:1, 2. Why does God permit trials to come upon His church?



“In all ages of the church God’s appointed messengers have exposed themselves to reproach and persecution for the truth’s sake. But wherever God’s people may be forced to go, even though, like the beloved disciple, they are banished to desert islands, Christ will know where they are and will strengthen and bless them, filling them with peace and joy. . . .

“God’s love for His church is infinite. His care over His heritage is unceasing. He suffers no affliction to come upon the church but such as is essential for her purification, her present and eternal good. He will purify His church even as He purified the temple at the beginning and close of His ministry on earth. All that He brings upon the church in test and trial comes that His people may gain deeper piety and more strength to carry the triumphs of the cross to all parts of the world. He has a work for all to do. There must be constant enlargement and progress. The work must extend from city to city, from country to country, and from nation to nation, moving continually onward and upward, established, strengthened, and settled.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, pp. 227, 228.

2. ARISE, SHINE!

- a. What light is to shine in the heart of all who hear the gospel message? 2 Corinthians 4:6. Upon whom and through whom will this light shine today? Isaiah 9:2; Philippians 2:15.



“Christ came to our world to reveal the Father amid the gross darkness of error and superstition which then prevailed. The disciples of Christ are to represent Him in their everyday life, and thus the true light from heaven will shine forth in clear, steady rays to the world; thus a character is revealed entirely different from that which is seen in those who do not make the word of God their guide and standard. A knowledge of God must be preserved amid the darkness that covers the world and the gross darkness that envelops the people. Age after age the pure character of Christ has been misrepresented by those who claimed to be believers in Him and in the word of God.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 152.

- b. How far-reaching is the light of the knowledge of Christ and His glory to extend? Isaiah 49:6.



- c. How will God’s glory be revealed in these last days? Isaiah 60:1, 2; Matthew 5:16.



“It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy, and truth.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 415.

“The lay members of our churches can accomplish a work which, as yet, they have scarcely begun. . . . Where there is an opening to obtain a livelihood, let families that are well grounded in the truth enter, one or two families in a place, to work as missionaries. . . . They can distribute our publications, hold meetings in their homes, become acquainted with their neighbors, and invite them to come to these meetings. Thus they can let their light shine in good works.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 245.

3. FILLING THE EARTH WITH GLORY!

- a. How does God depict the great final missionary thrust? Revelation 18:1–4. Why can't this work be done by proxy?



“God has sent message after message to arouse our people to do something, and to do it now. But to the call, ‘Whom shall I send?’ there have been few to respond, ‘Here am I; send me’ (Isaiah 6:8).”—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 46.

“Many professors of religion do nothing for Christ by personal effort. They are contented to have others do what properly belongs to themselves to perform, and, by lending a feeble influence for the workers, feel that they are doing good by proxy. Such persons do not possess that faith that works by love, and purifies the soul. They have no genuine religion that enters into their daily business and regulates every action of their lives. A living faith in Christ is demonstrated by good deeds in our families and our neighborhoods, by thoughtful, and practical consideration of the poor, by visiting and comforting the widows and the fatherless in their affliction, by keeping ourselves unspotted from the world, and by using our means and influence for the advancement of the cause of God. This must not be done grudgingly or murmuringly, but freely and cheerfully as Jesus gave all for us.”—*The Signs of the Times*, August 22, 1878.

- b. What are some of the ways in which we can be laborers together with God in this work? 1 Corinthians 3:9, 10.



“Never was there greater need of earnest, self-sacrificing labor in the cause of Christ than now, when the hours of probation are fast closing. . . . Brethren and sisters, will you answer the [Macedonian] cry? saying: ‘We will do our best, both in sending you missionaries and money. We will deny ourselves in the embellishment of our houses, in the adornment of our persons, and in the gratification of appetite. We will give the means entrusted to us into the cause of God, and we will devote ourselves also unreservedly to His work.’ . . .

“Thus they can contribute money to send papers and books to those who have not the light of truth; they can help pay the expenses of students who are fitting for missionary work. Let every dollar that you can spare be invested in the bank of heaven.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 732, 733.

4. ENLIGHTENING THE PEOPLE

- a. What assuring invitation of mercy are we called to give to all nations, and how are we to give it? Isaiah 55:3–5.



“I entreat the Lord’s people to cease to criticize one another, and to give themselves to the proclamation of the truth for this time. . . . We need now to bow before God in true humility of soul; for the day of clouds and thick darkness is fast approaching.

“The last great conflict is before us; but help is to come to all who love God and obey His law, and the earth, the whole earth, is to be lighted with the glory of God.”—*The Review and Herald*, April 19, 1906.

“This work is given to all who have had Christ set forth crucified among them. By the baptism of the Holy Spirit, God’s people are to do, through the instrumentality of their Master, the work that Christ did. They are to represent the benevolence of God to our world. Partakers of the divine nature, they are not only to save their own souls, through faith in Jesus; but Christ says of them, Ye are laborers together with God. As His witnesses, He has given to each his work. As His representatives, they are to bear to the world the message of invitation and mercy.

“Christ enjoins upon His disciples to lift up the world’s Redeemer. They are to have a sense of their obligation to devote their entrusted capabilities to the work of winning souls to the gospel of Him who has made so full a sacrifice for the enlightenment and recovery of the world.”—*Ibid.*, March 22, 1898.

- b. What should be remembered by those who are seeking to share with others the light of present truth directly from God’s Word? Isaiah 55:9–11.



“The plan of holding Bible readings was a heaven-born idea. There are many, both men and women, who can engage in this branch of missionary labor. Workers may thus be developed who will become mighty men of God. By this means the Word of God has been given to thousands; and the workers are brought into personal contact with people of all nations and tongues. The Bible is brought into families, and its sacred truths come home to the conscience. Men are entreated to read, examine, and judge for themselves, and they must abide the responsibility of receiving or rejecting the divine enlightenment. God will not permit this precious work for Him to go unrewarded. He will crown with success every humble effort made in His name.”—*Christian Service*, p. 141.

5. A DIVINE STANDARD LIFTED

- a. When the enemy overwhelms us with the temptation to give up in our efforts to reach souls, what will God do for us? Isaiah 59:19.



- b. What attitude of mind will enable us to press on in the face of difficult circumstances? Isaiah 50:7.



“In my youth I made up my mind that, should I allow myself to be controlled by circumstances, my life would be a failure; I went about whatever I regarded as duty, even though the surroundings were against me. My father would frequently say, ‘Ellen, if it were your duty to go to such a place, it would be made so plain that you could have no doubt in the matter. In consideration of your youth and feebleness, the Lord will give you clear evidence of your duty; and He will give you strength to do it without difficulty.’ ‘But,’ said I, ‘Father, if difficulties appear, I must summon greater resolution to meet them, and in doing this I shall gain a valuable experience, one that will help me to wisely use the abilities entrusted to my care.’

“Here is a work for every one of us to do. Never did I see and sense the value of souls as I do at the present time. How can we realize the importance of the work of salvation? In comparison with the value of the soul, everything else sinks into insignificance. This world and its treasures, this life and its happiness, are of little consequence, when we compare them with the joy of even one soul eternally saved. Until we have clear and distinct ideas of what that soul will enjoy when saved in the kingdom of glory; until we can fully comprehend the value of that life which measures with the life of God; until we can fully realize the riches of that reward which is laid up for those who overcome and gain the victory—we cannot know the inestimable value of the soul.”—*The Review and Herald*, March 25, 1880.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How can we be persevering in our missionary work today?
2. How can lay people do a tremendous work in spreading the truth?
3. How can we heed the Macedonian cry?
4. How does genuine religion work in the life?
5. When will the world and its treasures lose their significance to us?

Ultimate Triumph

“With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all” (Acts 4:33).

“At this very hour [God’s] Spirit and His grace are for all who need them and will take Him at His word.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 20.

Suggested Readings: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 47–56;
Christ’s Object Lessons, pp. 415–421.

Sunday

December 11

1. WITNESSING WITH POWER

- a. Describe the experience of the early church after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Acts 2:16, 17; 4:33.



“[In the time of the early apostles], hundreds proclaimed the message: ‘The kingdom of God is at hand.’ They could not be restrained or intimidated by threatenings. The Lord spoke through them; and, wherever they went, the sick were healed, and the poor had the gospel preached unto them.

“So mightily can God work when men give themselves up to the control of His Spirit.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 20.

- b. What prophecy will have a more complete fulfillment in these last days? Isaiah 60:3–5.



“When God’s people so fully separate themselves from evil that He can let the light of heaven rest upon them in rich measure, and shine forth from them to the world, then there will be fulfilled more fully than it has ever been fulfilled in the past the prophecy of Isaiah, [Isaiah 60:3–5 quoted].”—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 313.

“Let Christians put away all dissension and give themselves to God for the saving of the lost. Let them ask in faith for the promised blessing, and it will come. The outpouring of the Spirit in the days of the apostles was “the former rain,” and glorious was the result. But the latter rain will be more abundant.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 21.

2. THE TIMES OF REFRESHING

- a. What reassuring promise of revival and refreshing does Hosea give under the figure of the early and latter rains? Hosea 6:1–3.



- b. What are the conditions of receiving the “times of refreshing” promised—the full outpouring of the Holy Spirit in latter-rain power? Acts 3:19–21.



“The great work of the gospel is not to close with less manifestation of the power of God than marked its opening. The prophecies which were fulfilled in the outpouring of the former rain at the opening of the gospel are again to be fulfilled in the latter rain at its close. Here are ‘the times of refreshing’ to which the apostle Peter looked forward . . . [Acts 3: 19, 20 quoted].”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 611, 612.

“Those who receive the seal of the living God and are protected in the time of trouble must reflect the image of Jesus fully.

“I saw that many were neglecting the preparation so needful and were looking to the time of ‘refreshing’ and the ‘latter rain’ to fit them to stand in the day of the Lord and to live in His sight. Oh, how many I saw in the time of trouble without a shelter! They had neglected the needful preparation; therefore they could not receive the refreshing that all must have to fit them to live in the sight of a holy God.”—*Early Writings*, p. 71.

- c. In order to receive the power of the Holy Spirit without measure, what work must be done for us and by us? Isaiah 43:25; 44:22.



“We may claim the blessed assurance, ‘I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions’ (Isaiah 44:22). Thy ‘sins, which are many, are forgiven’ (Luke 7:47). O, how precious, how refreshing, is the sunlight of God’s love! The sinner may look upon his sin-stained life, and say, ‘Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died.’ ‘When sin abounded, grace did much more abound’ (Romans 8:34; 5:20). Christ the Restorer plants a new principle of life in the soul, and that plant grows and produces fruit. The grace of Christ purifies while it pardons, and fits men for a holy heaven. We are to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ until we reach the full stature of men and women in Christ.”—*The Review and Herald*, July 14, 1891.

3. THE GARMENTS OF SALVATION

- a. While we may feel unworthy, what assurance can we have that the Lord will accept us when we come to Him in repentance? Isaiah 61:10.



“Do not listen to the enemy’s suggestion to stay away from Christ until you have made yourself better; until you are good enough to come to God. If you wait until then, you will never come. When Satan points to your filthy garments, repeat the promise of Jesus, ‘Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out’ (John 6:37). . . .

“In the beautiful parabolic prophecy of Zechariah, the high priest Joshua, standing clothed in filthy garments before the angel of the Lord, represents the sinner. And the word is spoken by the Lord, ‘Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him He said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. . . . So they set a fair miter upon his head, and clothed him with garments’ (Zechariah 3:4, 5). Even so God will clothe you with ‘the garments of salvation,’ and cover you with ‘the robe of righteousness’ (Isaiah 61:10).”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 205, 206.

- b. What is soon to occur under the “latter-rain” power of the Holy Spirit? Isaiah 61:11; Joel 2:23, 28–31.



“We must not wait for the latter rain. It is coming upon all who will recognize and appropriate the dew and showers of grace that fall upon us. When we gather up the fragments of light, when we appreciate the sure mercies of God, who loves to have us trust Him, then every promise will be fulfilled. [Isaiah 61:11 quoted.] . . .

“The time of test is just upon us, for the loud cry of the third angel has already begun in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer. This is the beginning of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 984.

“A work must be done for the people, or many will not be prepared to receive the light of the angel sent down from heaven to lighten the whole earth with his glory. Do not think that you will be found as vessels unto honor in the time of the latter rain, to receive the glory of God, if you are lifting up your souls unto vanity, speaking perverse things, in secret cherishing roots of bitterness.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 1, p. 175.

4. PREPARING FOR THE RAIN

- a. How must we prepare our hearts to participate in the latter rain? Joel 2:12–14; Hosea 10:12.



“God leads His people on, step by step. He brings them up to different points calculated to manifest what is in the heart. Some endure at one point but fall off at the next. . . . Some are willing to receive one point; but when God brings them to another testing point, they shrink from it and stand back, because they find that it strikes directly at some cherished idol. Here they have opportunity to see what is in their hearts that shuts out Jesus. They prize something higher than the truth, and their hearts are not prepared to receive Jesus. Individuals are tested and proved a length of time to see if they will sacrifice their idols and heed the counsel of the True Witness. If any will not be purified through obeying the truth, and overcome their selfishness, their pride, and evil passions, the angels of God have the charge: ‘They are joined to their idols, let them alone,’ and they pass on to their work, leaving these with their sinful traits unsubdued, to the control of evil angels. Those who come up to every point, and stand every test, and overcome, be the price what it may, have heeded the counsel of the True Witness, and they will receive the latter rain, and thus be fitted for translation.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 187.

- b. Besides deep searching of heart and genuine repentance, what other duties do we have with regard to the latter rain? Matthew 5:6; Zechariah 10:1.



“Why do we not hunger and thirst for the gift of the Spirit, since this is the means by which we are to receive power? Why do we not talk of it, pray for it, preach concerning it?”—*Ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 22.

“Only those who are living up to the light they have, will receive greater light. Unless we are daily advancing in the exemplification of the active Christian virtues, we shall not recognize the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the latter rain.”—*The Faith I Live By*, p. 333.

“When we have entire, wholehearted consecration to the service of Christ, God will recognize the fact by an outpouring of His Spirit without measure; but this will not be while the largest portion of the church are not laborers together with God.”—*The Review and Herald*, July 21, 1896.

5. STRIVING FOR GOD'S SEAL OF APPROVAL

- a. What is to be the intensive focus of every follower of Christ—and why is this so necessary? Revelation 3:5; 7:1–4, 13, 14; 2 Corinthians 7:1.



“The seal of the living God will be placed upon those only who bear a likeness to Christ in character.”—*The Review and Herald*, May 21, 1895.

“When we become children of God, our names are written in the Lamb’s book of life, and they remain there until the time of the investigative judgment. Then the name of every individual will be called, and his record examined by Him who declares, ‘I know thy works.’ If in that day it shall appear that all our wicked deeds have not been fully repented of, our names will be blotted from the book of life, and our sins will stand against us. If the professed believer becomes self-confident, if in word or spirit he breaks the least precept of God’s holy law, he misrepresents Jesus, and in the judgment the awful words will be spoken, ‘Blot out his name from the book of life; he is a worker of iniquity.’ But the Father pities the self-distrustful, God-fearing soul, harassed though he may be with doubts and temptations. Jesus pleads for him, and confesses his name before the Father and His holy angels.”—*The Signs of the Times*, August 6, 1885.

“But those who are waiting to behold a magical change in their characters without determined effort on their part to overcome sin will be disappointed. We have no reason to fear while looking to Jesus, no reason to doubt but that He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto Him; but we may constantly fear lest our old nature will again obtain the supremacy, that the enemy shall devise some snare whereby we shall again become his captives. . . . As wax takes the impression of the seal, so the soul is to take the impression of the Spirit of God and retain the image of Christ.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 336, 337.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What results can we expect to see under the power of the latter rain?
2. Who only will receive the seal of God?
3. What prevents us from receiving the latter rain?
4. What do we need to overcome in order to receive the latter rain?
5. What should we fear with regard to overcoming sin?

Earth's Final Days

“With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked” (Isaiah 11:4).

“We are living in altogether too solemn a period of the world’s history to be careless and negligent.”—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 118.

Suggested Reading: *The Great Controversy*, pp. 603–614, 622–626, 635–644.

Sunday

December 18

1. AN AWESOME AWAKENING

- a. **Why is the latter rain to be such a joyous event in history?** Hosea 6:1–3.



“Servants of God, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given. Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers. Satan also works with lying wonders, even bringing down fire from heaven in the sight of men (Revelation 13:13). Thus the inhabitants of the earth will be brought to take their stand.

“The message will be carried not so much by argument as by the deep conviction of the Spirit of God. The arguments have been presented. The seed has been sown, and now it will spring up and bear fruit. The publications distributed by missionary workers have exerted their influence, yet many whose minds were impressed have been prevented from fully comprehending the truth or from yielding obedience. Now the rays of light penetrate everywhere, the truth is seen in its clearness, and the honest children of God sever the bands which have held them. Family connections, church relations, are powerless to stay them now. Truth is more precious than all besides. Notwithstanding the agencies combined against the truth, a large number take their stand upon the Lord’s side.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 612.

2. THE GREAT CONTROVERSY UNFOLDS

- a. What will be another result of successfully presenting the gospel under the power of the latter rain? Ecclesiastes 11:1, 2; 2 Corinthians 2:14–17.



“Men of faith and prayer will be constrained to go forth with holy zeal, declaring the words which God gives them. The sins of Babylon will be laid open. The fearful results of enforcing the observances of the church by civil authority, the inroads of spiritualism, the stealthy but rapid progress of the papal power—all will be unmasked. By these solemn warnings the people will be stirred. Thousands upon thousands will listen who have never heard words like these. In amazement they hear the testimony that Babylon is the church, fallen because of her errors and sins, because of her rejection of the truth sent to her from heaven. As the people go to their former teachers with the eager inquiry, Are these things so? the ministers present fables, prophesy smooth things, to soothe their fears and quiet the awakened conscience. But since many refuse to be satisfied with the mere authority of men and demand a plain ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ the popular ministry, like the Pharisees of old, filled with anger as their authority is questioned, will denounce the message as of Satan and stir up the sin-loving multitudes to revile and persecute those who proclaim it.

“As the controversy extends into new fields and the minds of the people are called to God’s downtrodden law, Satan is astir. The power attending the message will only madden those who oppose it. The clergy will put forth almost superhuman efforts to shut away the light lest it should shine upon their flocks. By every means at their command they will endeavor to suppress the discussion of these vital questions. The church appeals to the strong arm of civil power, and, in this work, papists and Protestants unite. As the movement for Sunday enforcement becomes more bold and decided, the law will be invoked against commandment keepers. They will be threatened with fines and imprisonment, and some will be offered positions of influence, and other rewards and advantages, as inducements to renounce their faith. But their steadfast answer is: ‘Show us from the word of God our error’—the same plea that was made by Luther under similar circumstances. Those who are arraigned before the courts make a strong vindication of the truth, and some who hear them are led to take their stand to keep all the commandments of God. Thus light will be brought before thousands who otherwise would know nothing of these truths.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 606, 607.

3. PROTECTION ONLY FROM GOD

- a. As church and state unite in defiant rebellion against God's moral law of Ten Commandments, what will befall the faithful few who will seek to adhere to its holy principles? 2 Timothy 3:12; Revelation 13:11–17.



“As the Sabbath has become the special point of controversy throughout Christendom, and religious and secular authorities have combined to enforce the observance of the Sunday, the persistent refusal of a small minority to yield to the popular demand will make them objects of universal execration. It will be urged that the few who stand in opposition to an institution of the church and a law of the state ought not to be tolerated; that it is better for them to suffer than for whole nations to be thrown into confusion and lawlessness. . . . This argument will appear conclusive; and a decree will finally be issued against those who hallow the Sabbath of the fourth commandment, denouncing them as deserving of the severest punishment and giving the people liberty, after a certain time, to put them to death. Romanism in the Old World and apostate Protestantism in the New will pursue a similar course toward those who honor all the divine precepts.

“The people of God will then be plunged into those scenes of affliction and distress described by the prophet as the time of Jacob's trouble.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 615, 616.

- b. When the normal channels of commerce are cut off and the protection of civil government is withdrawn, how will God's faithful few survive? Isaiah 43:18–21; 41:17–20; 33:16.



“The Lord has shown me repeatedly that it is contrary to the Bible to make any provision for our temporal wants in the time of trouble. I saw that if the saints had food laid up by them or in the field in the time of trouble, when sword, famine, and pestilence are in the land, it would be taken from them by violent hands and strangers would reap their fields. Then will be the time for us to trust wholly in God, and He will sustain us. I saw that our bread and water will be sure at that time, and that we shall not lack or suffer hunger; for God is able to spread a table for us in the wilderness. If necessary He would send ravens to feed us, as He did to feed Elijah, or rain manna from heaven, as He did for the Israelites.”—*Early Writings*, p. 56.

4. SOLID SECURITY

- a. What are God's people instructed to do in anticipation of the time of trouble—and how will they be sheltered? Isaiah 26:20, 21; 49:15, 16.



“Houses and lands will be of no use to the saints in the time of trouble, for they will then have to flee before infuriated mobs, and at that time their possessions cannot be disposed of to advance the cause of present truth. I was shown that it is the will of God that the saints should cut loose from every encumbrance before the time of trouble comes, and make a covenant with God through sacrifice. If they have their property on the altar and earnestly inquire of God for duty, He will teach them when to dispose of these things. Then they will be free in the time of trouble and have no clogs to weigh them down.

“I saw that if any held on to their property and did not inquire of the Lord as to their duty, He would not make duty known, and they would be permitted to keep their property, and in the time of trouble it would come up before them like a mountain to crush them, and they would try to dispose of it, but would not be able.”—*Early Writings*, pp. 56, 57.

“In the day of fierce trial [Christ] will say, ‘Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast’ (Isaiah 26:20). What are the chambers in which they are to hide? They are the protection of Christ and holy angels. . . .

“I saw the saints leaving the cities and villages, and associating together in companies, and living in the most solitary places. Angels provided them food and water, while the wicked were suffering from hunger and thirst.

“During the night a very impressive scene passed before me. There seemed to be great confusion and the conflict of armies. A messenger from the Lord stood before me, and said, ‘Call your household. I will lead you; follow me.’ He led me down a dark passage, through a forest, then through the clefts of mountains, and said, ‘Here you are safe.’ There were others who had been led to this retreat. The heavenly messenger said, ‘The time of trouble has come as a thief in the night, as the Lord warned you it would come.’

“In the time of trouble just before the coming of Christ, the righteous will be preserved through the ministration of heavenly angels; but there will be no security for the transgressor of God's law. Angels cannot then protect those who are disregarding one of the divine precepts.”—*Maranatha*, p. 270.

5. DELIVERANCE!

- a. Who will be safe at the hour of God's wrath? Isaiah 33:13–16; 52:9, 10.



- b. What awesome event will turn the world upside down—perhaps in order that every eye shall see it at approximately the same time? Isaiah 11:4; 24:1–6, 19–22; Revelation 1:7. What will the saints declare? Isaiah 25:9.



“It was at midnight that God chose to deliver His people. . . . Dark, heavy clouds came up and clashed against each other. But there was one clear place of settled glory, whence came the voice of God like many waters, shaking the heavens and the earth. There was a mighty earthquake. The graves were opened, and those who had died in faith under the third angel's message, keeping the Sabbath, came forth from their dusty beds, glorified, to hear the covenant of peace that God was to make with those who had kept His law.”—*Early Writings*, p. 285.

“Soon there appears in the east a small black cloud, about half the size of a man's hand. It is the cloud which surrounds the Saviour and which seems in the distance to be shrouded in darkness. The people of God know this to be the sign of the Son of man. In solemn silence they gaze upon it as it draws nearer the earth, becoming lighter and more glorious, until it is a great white cloud, its base a glory like consuming fire, and above it the rainbow of the covenant. Jesus rides forth as a mighty conqueror.” —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 640, 641.

“At the coming of Christ the wicked are blotted from the face of the whole earth—consumed with the spirit of His mouth and destroyed by the brightness of His glory. Christ takes His people to the City of God, and the earth is emptied of its inhabitants. [Isaiah 24:1, 3, 5, 6 quoted.]” —*Ibid.*, p. 657.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why can all who sow seeds of truth today do so with joy and confidence?
2. What will be the result of some being summoned to testify for their faith?
3. How can we be preparing now for the actual crisis of the time of trouble?
4. What will happen to our possessions when the real crisis strikes?
5. Why can we be thankful that God gives so many details about the future?

A Glimpse of Eternity

“Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind” (Isaiah 65:17).

“It is eternal loss if we gain the whole world, with all its pleasure and glory, and yet lose the soul. Heaven is cheap enough at any cost.”—*The Review and Herald*, March 18, 1875.

Suggested Reading: *The Great Controversy*, pp. 644–652, 658–678.

Sunday

December 25

1. HEAVENBOUND

- a. What will be the glorious reward of God’s faithful few? Isaiah 26:1, 2.



“Jesus’ silver trumpet sounded, as He descended on the cloud, wrapped in flames of fire. He gazed on the graves of the sleeping saints, then raised His eyes and hands to heaven, and cried: ‘Awake! Awake! ye that sleep in the dust, and arise.’ Then there was a mighty earthquake. The graves opened, and the dead came up clothed with immortality . . . and in the same moment we were changed, and caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air.

“We all entered the cloud together, and were seven days ascending to the sea of glass, when Jesus brought the crowns, and with His own right hand placed them on our heads. He gave us harps of gold and palms of victory. Here on the sea of glass the 144,000 stood in a perfect square. Some had very bright crowns, others not so bright. Some crowns appeared heavy with stars, while others had but few. All were perfectly satisfied with their crowns. And they were all clothed with a glorious white mantle from their shoulders to their feet. Angels were all about us as we marched over the sea of glass to the gate of the city. Jesus raised His mighty, glorious arm, laid hold of the pearly gate, swung it back on its glittering hinges, and said to us: ‘You have washed your robes in My blood, stood stiffly for My truth, enter in.’ We all marched in and felt we had a perfect right there.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 60, 61.

2. IN THE IMMINENT FUTURE . . .

- a. **Contrast the future of the wicked with the blessings of the righteous. Isaiah 33:24; 34:1, 2. What one thing will remind us of this world of sin? Zechariah 13:6.**



“Every trace of the curse is swept away. . . . One reminder alone remains: Our Redeemer will ever bear the marks of His crucifixion. Upon His wounded head, upon His side, His hands and feet, are the only traces of the cruel work that sin has wrought. . . . That pierced side whence flowed the crimson stream that reconciled man to God—there is the Saviour’s glory, there ‘the hiding of His power.’ . . . And the tokens of His humiliation are His highest honor; through the eternal ages the wounds of Calvary will show forth His praise and declare His power.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 674.

- b. **With what beautiful description does Isaiah depict the glorious hope of the ages—and how can we have a foretaste of it even now? Isaiah 35:1–10.**



“To everyone who offers himself to the Lord for service, withholding nothing, is given power for the attainment of measureless results. For these God will do great things. He will work upon the minds of men so that, even in this world, there shall be seen in their lives a fulfillment of the promise of the future state. [Isaiah 35:1–10 quoted.]”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 160.

“In our life here, earthly, sin-restricted though it is, the greatest joy and the highest education are in service. And in the future state, untrammelled by the limitations of sinful humanity, it is in service that our greatest joy and our highest education will be found—witnessing, and ever as we witness learning anew ‘the riches of the glory of this mystery;’ ‘which is Christ in you, the hope of glory’ (Colossians 1:27).”—*Education*, p. 309.

- c. **Where should our main focus be when planning our future? Isaiah 65:17–19; Revelation 21:1; Hebrews 11:8, 10, 13–16.**



3. PEACE AND QUIETNESS AT LAST!

- a. How did Isaiah describe the new heaven and the new earth? Isaiah 32:18; 60:18–22.



“A fear of making the future inheritance seem too material has led many to spiritualize away the very truths which lead us to look upon it as our home. Christ assured His disciples that He went to prepare mansions for them in the Father’s house. Those who accept the teachings of God’s word will not be wholly ignorant concerning the heavenly abode. . . . [1 Corinthians 2:9 quoted.] Human language is inadequate to describe the reward of the righteous. It will be known only to those who behold it. No finite mind can comprehend the glory of the Paradise of God.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 674, 675.

- b. How does Isaiah depict the peaceful atmosphere there? Isaiah 11:6, 7, 9; 65:25. Why should we seek to place ourselves and our families in as similar an environment as possible, even here and now? Isaiah 32:17.



“Again and again the Lord has instructed that our people are to take their families away from the cities, into the country, where they can raise their own provisions; for in the future the problem of buying and selling will be a very serious one. We should now begin to heed the instruction given us over and over again: Get out of the cities into rural districts, where the houses are not crowded closely together, and where you will be free from the interference of enemies.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 141.

“Take your families away from the cities is my message.

“The time has come when, as God opens the way, families should move out of the cities. The children should be taken into the country. The parents should get as suitable a place as their means will allow. . . .

“Before the overflowing scourge shall come upon the dwellers of the earth, the Lord calls upon all who are Israelites indeed to prepare for that event. To parents He sends the warning cry: Gather your children into your own houses; gather them away from those who are disregarding the commandments of God, who are teaching and practicing evil. Get out of the large cities as fast as possible.

“Parents can secure small homes in the country, with land for cultivation, where they can have orchards and where they can raise vegetables and small fruits. . . . God will help His people to find such homes outside of the cities.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 139, 140.

4. A REAL PLACE WITH REWARDING ACTIVITIES

- a. Describe some of the various occupations to be found in the new earth. Isaiah 65:21, 22. Explain how we are to enjoy a foretaste of them today.



“It would be well for you to lay by your perplexing cares and find a retreat in the country, where there is not so strong an influence to corrupt the morals of the young.

“True, you would not be entirely free from annoyances and perplexing cares in the country; but you would there avoid many evils, and close the door against a flood of temptations which threaten to overpower the minds of your children. . . .

“To live in the country would be very beneficial to them; an active, out-of-door life would develop health of both mind and body. They should have a garden to cultivate, where they might find both amusement and useful employment. The training of plants and flowers tends to the improvement of taste and judgment, while an acquaintance with God’s useful and beautiful creations has a refining and ennobling influence upon the mind, referring it to the Maker and Master of all.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 136.

“The mountains and hills are changing; the earth is waxing old like a garment; but the blessing of God, which spreads for His people a table in the wilderness, will never cease.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 200.

“Many are unwilling to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow, and they refuse to till the soil. But the earth has blessings hidden in her depths for those who have courage and will and perseverance to gather her treasures. Fathers and mothers who possess a piece of land and a comfortable home are kings and queens.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 326, 327.

- b. What else can be said about the new earth? Isaiah 64:4.



“There, when the veil that darkens our vision shall be removed, and our eyes shall behold that world of beauty of which we now catch glimpses through the microscope; when we look on the glories of the heavens, now scanned afar through the telescope; when, the blight of sin removed, the whole earth shall appear in ‘the beauty of the Lord our God,’ what a field will be open to our study!—*Education*, p. 303.

“There will be music there, and song, such music and song as, save in the visions of God, no mortal ear has heard or mind conceived.”—*Ibid.*, p. 307.

5. THE ULTIMATE FOCUS

- a. How are the power and love of God reflected in the new earth? Ephesians 3:17, 20.



“[In the new earth] the loves and sympathies which God Himself has planted in the soul shall there find truest and sweetest exercise. . . .

“Every faculty will be developed, every capacity increased. The acquirement of knowledge will not weary the mind or exhaust the energies. There the grandest enterprises may be carried forward, the loftiest aspirations reached, the highest ambitions realized; and still there will arise new heights to surmount, new wonders to admire, new truths to comprehend, fresh objects to call forth the powers of mind and soul and body.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 677.

- b. What great blessing will be experienced by the redeemed? Isaiah 66:22, 23. How can we be preparing for that right now?



“The years of eternity, as they roll, will bring richer and still more glorious revelations of God and of Christ. As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character.”—*Ibid.*, p. 678.

“It is high time we devoted the few remaining precious hours of our probation to washing our robes of character and making them white in the blood of the Lamb, that we may be of that white-robed company who shall stand about the great white throne.”—*That I May Know Him*, p. 65.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How do we know that all the redeemed will be content with their reward?
2. How can we experience the joys of heaven today?
3. If we can depend only on God in the great crisis, why move to the country?
4. How and why will the new earth be better than the old one?
5. As our knowledge of God increases, what will be the result?

Spiritual Israel—Called to Shine

When the promised Messiah was about to appear, the message of the forerunner of Christ was: Repent, publicans and sinners; repent, Pharisees and Sadducees; “for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:2).

Today, in the spirit and power of Elias and of John the Baptist, messengers of God’s appointment are calling the attention of a judgment-bound world to the solemn events soon to take place in connection with the closing hours of probation and the appearance of Christ Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords. Soon every man is to be judged for the deeds done in the body. The hour of God’s judgment has come, and upon the members of His church on earth rests the solemn responsibility of giving warning to those who are standing as it were on the very brink of eternal ruin. To every human being in the wide world who will give heed must be made plain the principles at stake in the great controversy being waged, principles upon which hang the destinies of all mankind.

In these final hours of probation for the sons of men, when the fate of every soul is so soon to be decided forever, the Lord of heaven and earth expects His church to arouse to action as never before. Those who have been made free in Christ through a knowledge of precious truth, are regarded by the Lord Jesus as His chosen ones, favored above all other people on the face of the earth; and He is counting on them to show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into marvelous light. The blessings which are so liberally bestowed are to be communicated to others. The good news of salvation is to go to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.

In the visions of the prophets of old the Lord of glory was represented as bestowing special light upon His church in the days of darkness and unbelief preceding His second coming. As the Sun of Righteousness, He was to arise upon His church, “with healing in His wings” (Malachi 4:2). And from every true disciple was to be diffused an influence for life, courage, helpfulness, and true healing.

The coming of Christ will take place in the darkest period of this earth’s history. The days of Noah and of Lot picture the condition of the world just before the coming of the Son of man. The Scriptures, pointing forward to this time, declare that Satan will work with all power and “with all deceivableness of unrighteousness” (2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10). His working is plainly revealed by the rapidly increasing darkness, the multitudinous errors, heresies, and delusions of these last days. Not only is Satan leading the world captive, but his deceptions are leavening the professed churches of our Lord Jesus Christ. The great apostasy will develop into darkness deep as midnight. To God’s people it will be a night of trial, a night of weeping, a night of persecution for the truth’s sake. But out of that night of darkness God’s light will shine.

He causes “the light to shine out of darkness” (2 Corinthians 4:6). When “the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep,” “the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light” (Genesis 1:2, 3). So in the night of spiritual darkness, God’s word goes forth, “Let there be light.” To His people He says, “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee” (Isaiah 60:1).

“Behold,” says the Scripture, “the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee” (Verse 2). Christ, the outshining of the Father’s glory, came to the world as its light. He came to represent God to men, and of Him it is written that He was anointed “with the Holy Ghost and with power,” and “went about doing good” (Acts 10:38). In the synagogue at Nazareth He said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18, 19). This was the work He commissioned His disciples to do. “Ye are the light of the world,” He said. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:14, 16).

This is the work which the prophet Isaiah describes when he says: “Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward” (Isaiah 58:7, 8).

Thus in the night of spiritual darkness God’s glory is to shine forth through His church in lifting up the bowed down and comforting those that mourn.

All around us are heard the wails of a world’s sorrow. On every hand are the needy and distressed. It is ours to aid in relieving and softening life’s hardships and misery. The wants of the soul only the love of Christ can satisfy. If Christ is abiding in us, our hearts will be full of divine sympathy. The sealed fountains of earnest, Christlike love will be unsealed.

There are many from whom hope has departed. Bring back the sunshine to them. Many have lost their courage. Speak to them words of cheer. Pray for them. There are those who need the bread of life. Read to them from the word of God. Upon many is a soul sickness which no earthly balm can reach nor physician heal. Pray for these souls. Bring them to Jesus. Tell them that there is a balm in Gilead and a Physician there.

Light is a blessing, a universal blessing, pouring forth its treasures on a world unthankful, unholy, demoralized. So it is with the light of the Sun of Righteousness. The whole earth, wrapped as it is in the darkness of sin and sorrow and pain, is to be lighted with the knowledge of God’s love.

From no sect, rank, or class of people is the light shining from heaven's throne to be excluded.

The message of hope and mercy is to be carried to the ends of the earth. Whosoever will, may reach forth and take hold of God's strength and make peace with Him, and he shall make peace. No longer are the heathen to be wrapped in midnight darkness. The gloom is to disappear before the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness.

Christ has made every provision that His church shall be a transformed body, illumined with the Light of the world, possessing the glory of Immanuel. It is His purpose that every Christian shall be surrounded with a spiritual atmosphere of light and peace. He desires that we shall reveal His own joy in our lives.

"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee" (Isaiah 60:1). Christ is coming with power and great glory. He is coming with His own glory and with the glory of the Father. And the holy angels will attend Him on His way. While all the world is plunged in darkness, there will be light in every dwelling of the saints. They will catch the first light of His second appearing. The unsullied light will shine from His splendor, and Christ the Redeemer will be admired by all who have served Him. While the wicked flee, Christ's followers will rejoice in His presence.

Then it is that the redeemed from among men will receive their promised inheritance. Thus God's purpose for Israel will meet with literal fulfillment. That which God purposes, man is powerless to disannul. Even amid the working of evil, God's purposes have been moving steadily forward to their accomplishment. It was thus with the house of Israel throughout the history of the divided monarchy; it is thus with spiritual Israel today.

The seer of Patmos, looking down through the ages to the time of this restoration of Israel in the earth made new, testified:

"I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

"And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts ["living creatures," R.V.], and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshiped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever."

"And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him." "He is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful" (Revelation 7:9-12; 19:6, 7; 17:14).—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 715-721.

First Sabbath Offerings



OCTOBER 1
for Vancouver, Canada
(See p. 4.)

NOVEMBER 5
Literature for
Mission Fields
(See p. 30.)



DECEMBER 3
for the Central American Union
Education Department
(See p. 51.)