

SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

For the First Half Year 2020

CONFLICT AND VICTORY



SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

For the First Half Year 2020

CONFLICT AND VICTORY

Published by the
General Conference
International Missionary Society
Seventh-day Adventist Church
Reform Movement

625 West Avenue / Cedartown, GA 30125
Telephone 770-748-0077 / Fax 770-748-0095
Email: info@sda1844.org / Internet: www.sda1844.org

© 2019 International Missionary Society, Seventh-day Adventist Church, Reform Movement, General Conference. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be edited, altered, modified, adapted, translated, reproduced, or published by any person or entity without prior written authorization from the International Missionary Society. Write to Publishing@sda1844.org for authorization.

Author: Antonino Di Franca

Review and editing of content
by the General Conference Ministerial Department

Translation, editing, and design
by the General Conference Publishing Department

Cover: <https://unsplash.com/search/photos/mountaintop>

CONTENTS

CONFLICT AND VICTORY

Introduction	7
1. Repeatedly Tested	9
2. A Night of Anxiety	13
3. Tempted and Victorious	17
4. Opposition among Leaders.	21
5. Removing Idolatry	25
6. God Will Save by Few	29
7. Unexpected Danger	33
8. Facing the King	38
9. A Despised Prophet.	42
<i>Missionary Report from Uruguay</i>	46
10. Consequences of Disobedience	48
11. Impossible Circumstances	52
12. Jerusalem's Deliverance after Siege.	56
13. Warning to Hezekiah from Elijah	61
14. Opposition from One's Own Countrymen.	65
15. Jeremiah Faces Hananiah	69
16. A Claim and Test of the Prophets.	73
17. Conspiracy and the Temple Foundation	78
<i>Missionary Report from Ecuador</i>	82
18. The Temple Completed Despite Enemy Opposition.	84
19. Reconstruction, Vigilance, and Defense	88
20. Success in Spite of Every Threat.	92
21. Defended and Cleansed	96
22. Victory after Temptation.	99
23. Drinking the Bitter Cup	103
24. Wrestling for the Faith	108
25. In Danger Among Brethren.	111
26. Conflict and Victory.	116
<i>Missionary Report from Portugal</i>	121

INTRODUCTION

“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel.” Genesis 3:15. This verdict was pronounced on the serpent after he deceived the first woman, who became his agent to ensnare her husband. Man yielded to the evil one, but the Lord did not leave him under the enemy’s control. The divine response to the fall made it possible for man to overcome evil, with “enmity” and conflict being part of the process. The “Seed” of the woman would take up the struggle and win the victory. He would free man from the power of the adversary and stop him from carrying on his work of destruction.

After sin’s entrance, God’s people faced not just antagonism, struggle, and suffering, but also blessing, divine intervention, progress, and victory. Abel lost his life in the conflict with sin, but he trusted God and sought communion with Him. His innocent blood pointed to that of the Redeemer. Enoch fought against evil and gained the victory; he “walked with God ... three hundred years,” and “God took him.” Genesis 5:22, 24. In the middle of almost universal sin and violence, Noah was “a preacher of righteousness” and with his family passed safely through the worldwide flood.

While enmity and struggle, pain and death have existed all through this world’s history, there have also been rich experiences of miraculous protection, progress, and deliverance—victories with God. One major example was the spiritual conflict with the Egyptian pharaoh that resulted in the exodus, a symbol of the greatest of all victories—deliverance from sin through Jesus Christ. The most severe conflicts were certainly those that Jesus passed through. He encourages everyone: “I ... overcame.” “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” Revelation 3:21; John 16:33.

“This prophecy of enmity between Satan and Christ,” wrote Sister Ellen G. White, “is far reaching. It is a delineation of an unwearied conflict between Christ and His followers, Satan and his angels, and fallen humans united in a desperate companionship to reproach, bruise, wound, and exterminate the followers of Christ to the close of time. This controversy between Satan and Christ was carried on here in this world. Satan was constantly afflicting the Son of God and creating prejudice in the minds of people. Not only were Christ’s doctrines and teachings perverted, misinterpreted, and wrested from their true meaning, but falsehoods followed Him everywhere. The misrepresentations that the chief priests, Pharisees, and Sadducees poured into the ears of the people appealed to the worst passions of adulterers, fornicators, and the dishonest, exciting a burning prejudice that made it almost impossible for Him to live upon the earth for even three and a half years after His public ministry began.” —*Christ Triumphant*, p. 29.

In the ensuing centuries, the Lord’s people faced increasing opposition, including persecution under pagan Rome. But the Roman Empire fell, and God’s work and its supporters triumphed. Then followed the long period of the Middle Ages, with a constant battle between the forces of good and evil. An estimated fifty million martyrs died at the hands of their persecutors, but the truth triumphed.

At the beginning of the last century, while World War I wreaked havoc, misery, bloodshed, and death on the world and kings and kingdoms fell, faithful believers

upheld the purity of the faith, giving testimony to what leads to eternal life. Not long after that, Communism, Nazism, and World War II arose, and more martyrs testified of the truth and hope that evil governments and wicked men cannot destroy.

Now, as prophesied, believers expect the final trials to come soon in the great conflict of faith. "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Revelation 12:17.

"In every age the true church of God has engaged in decided warfare against satanic agencies. Until the controversy is ended, the struggle will go on between wicked angels and wicked people on the one side, and holy angels and true believers on the other." —*Christ Triumphant*, p. 28.

"Now the church is militant. Now we are confronted with a world in midnight darkness, almost wholly given over to idolatry. But the day is coming in which the battle will have been fought, the victory won." —*Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White*, p. 229.

Are we prepared for the coming conflicts? What do we do now when we face tests? In view of what lies ahead, are we progressing in firmness and faithfulness? How strong is our consecration to the God we serve?

As we study these lessons showing how faithful people in Biblical times faced opposition and hostility and how He gave them victory and triumph, may every thought be a great encouragement and spiritual help to each student. The promise is, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." 1 John 5:4.

—*The brethren of the General Conference Ministerial Research Institute*

**SPECIAL SABBATH SCHOOL OFFERING FOR
THE GENERAL CONFERENCE HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

GOD BLESS YOU AND MULTIPLY YOUR GENEROUS GIFT!

1

Sabbath, January 4, 2020

Repeatedly Tested

“God has a test for us, and if we come up to the standard we shall be a peculiar people....

“We are not to follow our own will and judgment and flatter ourselves that God will come to our terms.... That which looks unimportant to you may be of the highest consequence in God’s special plans for the preservation of your life or the salvation of your soul. God tests our faith by giving us some part to act in connection with His interposition in our behalf. To those who comply with the conditions His promise will be fulfilled....” —*In Heavenly Places*, p. 150.

SUNDAY

THE MOST IMPORTANT QUALITY OF CHARACTER

- 1. What did the Lord require of His faithful servant Abraham and his son—the son of promise? What made it possible for them to reveal such great spiritual strength in this test?**

Genesis 22:1, 2, 10-12 *And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. ²And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.... ¹⁰And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. ¹²And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.*

“To Abraham no mental torture could be equal to that which he endured in obeying the command to sacrifice his son.... With a breaking heart and unnerved hand, he takes the fire, while Isaac inquires, ‘Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?’ Genesis 22:7. But oh, Abraham cannot tell him now! Father and son build the altar, and the terrible moment comes for Abraham to make known to Isaac that which has agonized his soul during all that long journey—that Isaac himself is the victim.... The son submits to the sacrifice because he believes in the integrity of his father. But when everything is ready, when the faith of the father and the submission of the son are fully tested, the angel of God stays the uplifted hand of Abraham, and tells him that it is enough. ‘Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from Me.’ Genesis 22:12.” —*That I May Know Him*, p. 20.

- 2. Although God miraculously provided Rebekah as Isaac's wife, what was a disappointment to the couple? What did God tell her after Isaac prayed for children and she became pregnant?**

Genesis 25:21, 23 *And Isaac entreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren: and the Lord was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived....²³ And the Lord said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.*

"The all-embracing terms of this covenant were familiar to Abraham's children and to his children's children." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 368.

"God knows the end from the beginning.... He answered the troubled prayer of Rebekah and informed her that she would have two children, and the elder should serve the younger. He presented the future history of her two sons before her, that they would be two nations, the one greater than the other, and the elder should serve the younger. The first-born was entitled to peculiar advantages and special privileges, which belonged to no other members of the family." —*The Story of Redemption*, p. 87.

ABUNDANT BLESSINGS AMID TRIAL

- 3. When Isaac and his family were living in Canaan, the promised land where the Lord had blessed his father, what came upon the region?**

Genesis 26:1, 6 *And there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar....⁶ And Isaac dwelt in Gerar.*

"Like the child, you shall receive day by day what is required for the day's need. Every day you are to pray, 'Give us this day our daily bread.' Be not dismayed if you have not sufficient for tomorrow. You have the assurance of His promise, 'so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.'... That God who sent the ravens to feed Elijah by the brook Cherith will not pass by one of His faithful, self-sacrificing children. Of him that walketh righteously it is written: 'Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.' 'They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.' Isaiah 33:16; Psalm 37:19.... He who had compassion on the multitude because they 'fainted, and were scattered abroad' (Matthew 9:36), still has compassion on the suffering poor. His hand is stretched out toward them in blessing; and in the very prayer which He gave His disciples, He teaches us to remember the poor." —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 111.

- 4. What happened when he sowed seed in that land? What bountiful blessings did he receive from God's hand?**

Genesis 26:12-14 *Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the Lord blessed him.¹³ And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great:¹⁴ For he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants: and the Philistines envied him.*

"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. Their efforts, rightly directed, will produce a hundredfold greater results than can be accomplished with the same means and facilities in another channel where God is not so manifestly working." —*Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White*, p. 220.

THURSDAY

5. Envious of his great prosperity, what did the Philistines do? What did their king order Isaac to do, and why? How did he respond to this?

Genesis 26:15-17 *For all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth. ¹⁶And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we. ¹⁷And Isaac departed thence, and pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there.*

"We have no home here; we are only pilgrims and strangers, passing to a better country, even a heavenly. Place your mind upon these things, and while you are doing this, Christ will be right by your side. May God help us to win the precious boon of eternal life." —*Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*, pp. 293, 294.

"We are travelers, pilgrims and strangers, on earth. Let us not spend our means in gratifying desires that God bids us repress. Let us rather set a right example before our associates. Let us fitly represent our faith by restricting our wants. Let the churches arise as one, and work earnestly as those who are walking in the full light of truth for these last days. Let your influence impress souls with the sacredness of God's requirements." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 452.

FRIDAY

CONFLICT AND SPIRITUAL PERSEVERANCE

6. Although Isaac lived peaceably with all his neighbors, what additional difficulties did the Philistines inflict on him?

Genesis 26:18-21 *And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them. ¹⁹And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water. ²⁰And the herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdmen, saying, The water is ours: and he called the name of the well Esek; because they strove with him. ²¹And they digged another well, and strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sitnah.*

"The conflict in which you have to take an active part is found in your everyday life. Will you not in times of trial lay your desires by the side of the written word, and in earnest prayer seek Jesus for counsel?" —*Messages to Young People*, p. 140.

"The last words spoken by Christ to John were: 'The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.' Revelation 22:17. When we respond to God and say, 'Lord, we come,' then with joy shall we draw water out of the wells of salvation." —*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 371.

7. What did the patriarch do again to maintain the peace? Although he lived in a land full of adversaries, who was at his side and protected him? What did he do in the new location, thus testifying of his faith?

Genesis 26:22-25 *And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now the Lord hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land. ²³And he went up from thence to Beersheba. ²⁴And the Lord appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake. ²⁵And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the Lord, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well.*

Psalms 37:3-7 *Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. ⁴Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. ⁵Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. ⁶And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday. ⁷Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.*

“‘Trust in the Lord.’ Each day has its burdens, its cares and perplexities; and when we meet, how ready we are to talk of our difficulties and trials. So many borrowed troubles intrude, so many fears are indulged, such a weight of anxiety is expressed, that one might suppose we had no pitying, loving Saviour ready to hear all our requests and to be to us a present help in every time of need....

“Do we well to be thus unbelieving? Why should we be ungrateful and distrustful? Jesus is our friend; all heaven is interested in our welfare. We should not allow the perplexities and worries of everyday life to fret the mind and cloud the brow. If we do we shall always have something to vex and annoy. We should not indulge a solicitude that only frets and wears us, but does not help us to bear trials.” —*Steps to Christ*, pp. 121, 122.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

“Isaac had been trained in the fear of God to a life of obedience. And when he was forty years old, he submitted to have his God-fearing, experienced father’s servant choose for him. He believed that God would direct in regard to his obtaining a wife....

“The course which Abraham pursued in the education of Isaac, which caused him to love a life of noble obedience, is recorded for the benefit of parents, and should lead them to command their households after them. They should instruct their children to yield to, and respect their authority.” —*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 112.

“You are not working alone. When you are tempted to become discouraged, remember this: Angels of God are right around you. They will minister to the very earth, causing it to give forth its treasures. This is the instruction I am trying to give to our people. I want them to understand what could be accomplished, if they would work the will of the Lord. It is the Lord who has given the instruction. Let us follow His directions.” —*The Upward Look*, p. 130.

* * *

A Night of Anguish

"When in his distress Jacob laid hold of the Angel, and made supplication with tears, the heavenly Messenger, in order to try his faith, also reminded him of his sin, and endeavored to escape from him.... As he reviewed his life, he was driven almost to despair; but he held fast the Angel, and with earnest, agonizing cries urged his petition until he prevailed.

"Such will be the experience of God's people in their final struggle with the powers of evil.... They will have a deep sense of their shortcomings, and as they review their lives their hopes will sink. But remembering the greatness of God's mercy, and their own sincere repentance, they will plead His promises made through Christ to helpless, repenting sinners. Their faith will not fail because their prayers are not immediately answered. They will lay hold of the strength of God, as Jacob laid hold of the Angel, and the language of their souls will be, 'I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.'" —*Conflict and Courage*, p. 68.

SUNDAY

SEEKING FORGIVENESS

1. What did Jacob do when he returned to his father's land from Mesopotamia and would soon meet his brother, whom he had greatly wronged many years before? What threatened him and his family, causing him untold distress?

Genesis 32:3-7 *And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom. ⁴And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau; Thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now: ⁵And I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and menservants, and womenservants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight. ⁶And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him. ⁷Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands.*

"It is not safe for us to close our eyes and harden our consciences, that we shall not see or realize our sins.

"The humble heart will not think confession beneath him. He will not feel it a disgrace to confess if he has in any way, even in thought, hurt his brother or hindered God's work through him.

"Sins not repented of are sins not forgiven. Those who think themselves forgiven for sins of which they have never felt the sinfulness and over which they have never felt contrition of soul, only deceive themselves.... Our strength lies in our conscious weakness.... In self-distrust we cry to God for help, and work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Casting away all confidence in the arm of flesh, we cling with firm grasp to Jesus...." —*Our High Calling*, p. 82.

2. In his anguish, how did he plead with the Lord? What gave him comfort?

Genesis 32:9-13, first part *And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: ¹⁰I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. ¹¹Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. ¹²And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude. ¹³And he lodged there that same night;...*

“The nearer we come to Jesus, and the more clearly we discern the purity of His character, the more clearly shall we see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the less shall we feel like exalting ourselves. There will be a continual reaching out of the soul after God, a continual, earnest, heartbreaking confession of sin and humbling of the heart before Him. At every advance step in our Christian experience our repentance will deepen. We shall know that our sufficiency is in Christ alone and shall make the apostle’s confession our own: ‘I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing.’ ‘God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.’ Romans 7:18; Galatians 6:14.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 561.

DOING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE THE DESIRED END

3. What did he send to his brother and with what message of humility and deference? What did he hope to accomplish by doing this?

Genesis 32:13-15, 17-20 *And he lodged there that same night; and took of that which came to his hand a present for Esau his brother; ¹⁴Two hundred she goats, and twenty he goats, two hundred ewes, and twenty rams, ¹⁵Thirty milch camels with their colts, forty kine, and ten bulls, twenty she asses, and ten foals.... ¹⁷And he commanded the foremost, saying, When Esau my brother meeteth thee, and asketh thee, saying, Whose art thou? and whither goest thou? and whose are these before thee? ¹⁸Then thou shalt say, They be thy servant Jacob’s; it is a present sent unto my lord Esau: and, behold, also he is behind us. ¹⁹And so commanded he the second, and the third, and all that followed the droves, saying, On this manner shall ye speak unto Esau, when ye find him. ²⁰And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me.*

“All heaven is interested in the interview between the one who has been injured and the one who is in error. As the erring one accepts the reproof offered in the love of Christ, and acknowledges his wrong, asking forgiveness from God and from his brother, the sunshine of heaven fills his heart. The controversy is ended; friendship and confidence are restored. The oil of love removes the soreness caused by the wrong. The Spirit of God binds heart to heart, and there is music in heaven over the union brought about.” —*Gospel Workers*, pp. 499, 500.

4. On the way, what happened as he was praying alone at night? What made it possible for him to go through this?

Genesis 32:24, 25 *And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. ²⁵And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.*

"The Lord needs men and women who carry with them into the daily life the light of a godly example, men and women whose words and actions show that Christ is abiding in the heart, teaching, leading, and guiding. He needs men and women of prayer, who, by wrestling alone with God, obtain the victory over self, and then go forth to impart to others that which they have received from the Source of power. God accepts those who crucify self, and makes them vessels unto honor. They are in His hands as clay in the hands of the potter, and He works His will through them. Such men and women receive spiritual power. Christ lives in them, and the power of His Spirit attends their efforts. They realize that they are to live in this world the life that Jesus lived—a life free from all selfishness; and He enables them to bear witness for Him that draws souls to the cross of Calvary." —*Daughters of God*, pp. 81, 82.

5. What did the Stranger with whom Jacob wrestled finally say to him? For what did the patriarch plead?

Genesis 32:26 *And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.*

"All night Jacob wrestled with the Angel. Finally the strong wrestler was weakened by a touch on his thigh. He was now disabled and suffering the keenest pain, but he would not loose his hold. All penitent and broken, he clung to the Angel,... pleading for a blessing. He must have the assurance that his sin was pardoned. His determination grew stronger, his faith more earnest and persevering, until the very last. The Angel tried to release Himself; He urged, 'Let me go, for the day breaketh,' but Jacob answered, 'I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.'" —*Christ Triumphant*, p. 89.

THE MOST IMPORTANT BLESSING

6. What did the Angel ask Jacob? What did He do, and why? Explain the significance of Jacob's two names.

Genesis 32:27, 28 *And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. ²⁸And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.*

Hosea 12:3, 4 *He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God: ⁴Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us.*

"Through humiliation, repentance, and self-surrender this sinful, erring mortal prevailed with the Majesty of heaven. He had fastened his trembling grasp on the

promises of God, and the heart of infinite love could not turn away the sinner's plea.

"As an evidence that Jacob had been forgiven, his name was changed from one that was a reminder of his sin to one that commemorated his victory. 'Thy name,' said the Angel, 'shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.'

"Shall we obtain strength from God, and win victory after victory, or shall we try in our own strength, and at last fall back defeated, worn out by vain efforts? Let us, by unreserved surrender to God, obtain the power that everyone must have who conquers in the battle against evil." —*Christ Triumphant*, p. 89.

SABBATH

7. What was Jacob given? After this experience, in what did he rejoice? What meaning does Jacob's night of prayer, wrestling, and affliction have for all of God's people both now and in the future?

Genesis 32:29, 30 *And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. ³⁰And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.*

Jeremiah 30:5-7 *For thus saith the Lord; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. ⁶Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? ⁷Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.*

"Jacob's night of anguish, when he wrestled in prayer for deliverance from the hand of Esau (Genesis 32:24-30), represents the experience of God's people in the time of trouble. Because of the deception practiced to secure his father's blessing, intended for Esau, Jacob had fled for his life, alarmed by his brother's deadly threats.... On reaching the borders of the land, he was filled with terror by the tidings of Esau's approach at the head of a band of warriors, doubtless bent upon revenge.... His only hope was in the mercy of God; his only defense must be prayer. Yet he leaves nothing undone on his own part to atone for the wrong to his brother and to avert the threatened danger. So should the followers of Christ, as they approach the time of trouble, make every exertion to place themselves in a proper light before the people, to disarm prejudice, and to avert the danger which threatens liberty of conscience." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 616.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

"Jacob's experience during that night of wrestling and anguish represents the trial through which the people of God must pass just before Christ's second coming. The prophet Jeremiah, in holy vision looking down to this time, said, 'We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace.... All faces are turned into paleness. Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.' Jeremiah 30:5-7." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 201 (1890).

"To human sight it will appear that the people of God must soon seal their testimony with their blood, as did the martyrs before them. They themselves begin to fear that the Lord has left them to fall by the hand of their enemies. It is a time of

fearful agony. Day and night they cry unto God for deliverance.... Like Jacob, all are wrestling with God. Their countenances express their internal struggle. Paleness sits upon every face. Yet they cease not their earnest intercession.

"Could men see with heavenly vision, they would behold companies of angels that excel in strength stationed about those who have kept the word of Christ's patience." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 630 (1911).

* * *

3

Sabbath, January 18, 2020

Tempted and Victorious

"Arriving in Egypt, Joseph was sold to Potiphar, captain of the king's guard, in whose service he remained for ten years. He was here exposed to temptations of no ordinary character.... Yet Joseph preserved his simplicity and his fidelity to God. The sights and sounds of vice were all about him, but he was as one who saw and heard not. His thoughts were not permitted to linger upon forbidden subjects. The desire to gain the favor of the Egyptians could not cause him to conceal his principles. Had he attempted to do this, he would have been overcome by temptation; but he was not ashamed of the religion of his fathers, and he made no effort to hide the fact that he was a worshiper of Jehovah." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 214.

"Joseph was a light bearer in Egypt. In his purity and benevolence and filial love he represented Christ in the midst of a nation of idolaters." —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 41.

SUNDAY

NOT ALONE

1. Although in a strange land among strange people, what made it possible for Joseph to bless others and to be blessed by God?

Genesis 39:1, 2 *And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither. ²And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.*

"The marked prosperity which attended everything placed under Joseph's care was not the result of a direct miracle; but his industry, care, and energy were crowned with the divine blessing. Joseph attributed his success to the favor of God, and even his idolatrous master accepted this as the secret of his unparalleled prosperity. Without steadfast, well-directed effort, however, success could never have been attained. God was glorified by the faithfulness of His servant. It was His purpose that in purity and uprightness the believer in God should appear in marked contrast to the worshipers of idols—that thus the light of heavenly grace might shine forth amid the darkness of heathenism." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 214-217.

2. Observing Joseph and his service, what did the captain of Pharaoh's guard realize? Therefore, what did he do?

Genesis 39:3-6 *And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand. ⁴And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. ⁵And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field. ⁶And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured.*

"Joseph was greatly afflicted to be separated from his father, and his bitterest sorrow was in reflecting upon his father's grief. But God did not leave Joseph to go into Egypt alone. Angels prepared the way for his reception. Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, bought him of the Ishmaelites. And the Lord was with Joseph, and he prospered him, and gave him favor with his master, so that all that he possessed he intrusted to Joseph's care. 'And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat.' It was considered an abomination for a Hebrew to prepare food for an Egyptian." —*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 143.

TESTED BY SEVERE TRIALS

3. Into what terrible situation was Joseph thrust by his master's wife? What did he say to her? How clearly was he aware of what he was going through and why?

Genesis 39:7-9 *And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me. ⁸But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; ⁹There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*

"But Joseph's faith and integrity were to be tested by fiery trials. His master's wife endeavored to entice the young man to transgress the law of God. Heretofore he had remained untainted by the corruption teeming in that heathen land; but this temptation, so sudden, so strong, so seductive—how should it be met? Joseph knew well what would be the consequence of resistance. On the one hand were concealment, favor, and rewards; on the other, disgrace, imprisonment, perhaps death. His whole future life depended upon the decision of the moment. Would principle triumph? Would Joseph still be true to God? With inexpressible anxiety, angels looked upon the scene." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 217.

4. What made the woman's attempted seduction all the more terrible? On whom did Joseph depend to save him from Satan's snare?

Genesis 39:10; 4:7 *And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her....^{4:7} If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.*

1 Corinthians 10:13 *There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*

“The lessons given Joseph in his youth by Jacob in expressing his firm trust in God and relating to him again and again the precious evidences of His loving-kindness and unceasing care were the very lessons he needed in his exile among an idolatrous people. In the testing time he put these lessons to a practical use. When under the severest trial, he looked to his heavenly Father, whom he had learned to trust. Had the precepts and example of the father of Joseph been of an opposite character, the pen of inspiration would never have traced upon the pages of sacred history the story of integrity and virtue that shines forth in the character of Joseph. The early impressions made upon his mind garrisoned his heart in the hour of fierce temptation and led him to exclaim, ‘How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?’” —*Child Guidance*, p. 197.

THURSDAY

THE SECRET OF VICTORY

5. What did Potiphar’s wife do when she could not persuade Joseph with her words? What holy principles made victory possible for him and also for all of God’s children even to this day?

Genesis 39:11, 12 *And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within.¹² And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.*

Psalms 34:17-19 *The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.¹⁸ The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.¹⁹ Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.*

2 Peter 2:9 *The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.*

“Joseph bore the test of character in adversity, and the gold was undimmed by prosperity. He showed the same sacred regard for God’s will when he stood next the throne as when in a prisoner’s cell. Joseph carried his religion everywhere, and this was the secret of his unwavering fidelity. As representative men you must have the all-pervading power of true godliness. I tell you, in the fear of God, your path is beset by dangers which you do not see and do not realize. You must hide in Jesus. You are unsafe unless you hold the hand of Christ.... No victory you can gain will be so precious as that gained over self.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 544.

“Joseph’s answer reveals the power of religious principle. He would not betray the confidence of his master on earth, and, whatever the consequences, he would

be true to his Master in heaven. Under the inspecting eye of God and holy angels many take liberties of which they would not be guilty in the presence of their fellow men, but Joseph's first thought was of God. 'How ... can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' he said." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 217.

FRIDAY

6. Unable to get what she wanted, what did the woman do? What kind of a person would seek to destroy an innocent person in this way?

Genesis 39:13-18 *And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth, ¹⁴That she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice: ¹⁵And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out. ¹⁶And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home. ¹⁷And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me: ¹⁸And it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled out.*

Jeremiah 17:9 *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*

"Joseph suffered for his integrity, for his tempter revenged herself by accusing him of a foul crime, and causing him to be thrust into prison. Had Potiphar believed his wife's charge against Joseph, the young Hebrew would have lost his life; but the modesty and uprightness that had uniformly characterized his conduct were proof of his innocence; and yet, to save the reputation of his master's house, he was abandoned to disgrace and bondage." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 218.

SABBATH

7. How did the captain react to his wife's lies about Joseph? Who comforted and blessed the young man of God in prison? What does the Lord promise those who love Him and are faithful to Him?

Genesis 39:19-23 *And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled. ²⁰And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison. ²¹But the Lord was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. ²²And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. ²³The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the Lord was with him, and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper.*

2 Timothy 3:11 *Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me.*

"At the first Joseph was treated with great severity by his jailers. The psalmist says, 'His feet they hurt with fetters; he was laid in chains of iron: until the time that his word came to pass; the word of the Lord tried him.' Psalm 105:18, 19, R.V.

But Joseph's real character shines out, even in the darkness of the dungeon. He held fast his faith and patience; his years of faithful service had been most cruelly repaid, yet this did not render him morose or distrustful. He had the peace that comes from conscious innocence, and he trusted his case with God. He did not brood upon his own wrongs, but forgot his sorrow in trying to lighten the sorrows of others. He found a work to do, even in the prison. God was preparing him in the school of affliction for greater usefulness, and he did not refuse the needful discipline. In the prison, witnessing the results of oppression and tyranny and the effects of crime, he learned lessons of justice, sympathy, and mercy, that prepared him to exercise power with wisdom and compassion." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 218.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

"God calls for complete and entire consecration, and anything short of this He will not accept. The more difficult your position the more you need Jesus. The love and fear of God kept Joseph pure and untarnished in the king's court. He was exalted to great wealth, to the high honor of being next to the king; and this elevation was as sudden as it was great. It is impossible to stand upon a lofty height without danger. The tempest leaves unharmed the modest flower of the valley, while it wrestles with the lofty tree upon the mountaintop. There are many men whom God could have used with wonderful success when pressed with poverty—He could have made them useful here, and crowned them with glory hereafter—but prosperity ruined them; they were dragged down to the pit because they forgot to be humble, forgot that God was their strength, and became independent and self-sufficient." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 544.

"Joseph's gentleness and fidelity won the heart of the chief captain, who came to regard him as a son rather than a slave. The youth was brought in contact with men of rank and learning, and he acquired a knowledge of science, of languages, and of affairs—an education needful to the future prime minister of Egypt." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 217.

* * *

4

Sabbath, January 25, 2020

Disagreement Among Leaders

"Pharaoh desired to justify his stubbornness in resisting the divine command, and hence he was seeking some pretext for disregarding the miracles that God had wrought through Moses.... Satan hoped also to shake the faith of Moses and Aaron in the divine origin of their mission, that his instruments might prevail. He was unwilling that the children of Israel should be released from bondage to serve the living God.... Moses, in breaking the yoke of bondage from off the children of Israel, prefigured Christ, who was to break the reign of sin over the human family." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 264, 265.

CALLED TO LEAD**1. What commission did Moses receive on Mount Horeb, the mountain of God?**

Exodus 3:4, 10 *And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I....¹⁰Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.*

“The time for Israel’s deliverance had come. But God’s purpose was to be accomplished in a manner to pour contempt on human pride. The deliverer was to go forth as a humble shepherd, with only a rod in his hand; but God would make that rod the symbol of His power....

“As Moses waited in reverent awe before God the words continued: ‘... Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.’” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 251, 252.

MONDAY**2. What request was he instructed to present to Egypt’s monarch? What did God tell him would happen after the request was made?**

Exodus 3:18-20 *And they shall hearken to thy voice: and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him, The Lord God of the Hebrews hath met with us: and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days’ journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God.¹⁹And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand.²⁰And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go.*

“Moses was commanded first to assemble the elders of Israel, the most noble and righteous among them, who had long grieved because of their bondage, and to declare to them a message from God, with a promise of deliverance. Then he was to go with the elders before the king, and say to him—

“‘The Lord God of the Hebrews hath met with us: and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days’ journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God.’

“Moses was forewarned that Pharaoh would resist the appeal to let Israel go. Yet the courage of God’s servant must not fail; for the Lord would make this the occasion to manifest His power before the Egyptians and before His people. ‘And I will stretch out My hand, and smite Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go.’” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 253.

TUESDAY**3. Although Moses and Aaron spoke in God’s name, what did Pharaoh reply?**

Exodus 5:1-5 *And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.²And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.³And they said, The*

God of the Hebrews hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the Lord our God; lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword. ⁴And the king of Egypt said unto them, Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their works? get you unto your burdens. ⁵And Pharaoh said, Behold, the people of the land now are many, and ye make them rest from their burdens.

"Moses had been charged also with a message for the king. The two brothers entered the palace of the Pharaohs as ambassadors from the King of kings, and they spoke in His name: 'Thus saith Jehovah, God of Israel, Let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness.'

"'Who is Jehovah, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go?' demanded the monarch; 'I know not Jehovah, neither will I let Israel go.'...

"Tidings of them and of the interest they were exciting among the people had already reached the king. His anger was kindled. 'Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let [hinder] the people from their works?' he said. 'Get you unto your burdens.' Already the kingdom had suffered loss by the interference of these strangers. At thought of this he added, 'Behold, the people of the land now are many, and ye make them rest from their burdens.'" —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 257, 258.

WEDNESDAY

HUMAN WILL RESISTS GOD

4. Unwilling to grant the petitioners' request, what had to happen to change Pharaoh's mind? Regardless of what he did and the Israelites' despair, how did the Lord encourage Moses and Aaron to persevere?

Exodus 6:1, 12, 13 *Then the Lord said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land.... ¹²And Moses spake before the Lord, saying, Behold, the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me, who am of uncircumcised lips? ¹³And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, and gave them a charge unto the children of Israel, and unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt.*

"The sufferings of the people had been much increased. All over the land a cry of despair went up from old and young, and all united in charging upon him the disastrous change in their condition. In bitterness of soul he went before God, with the cry, 'Lord, wherefore hast Thou so evil entreated this people? why is it that Thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast Thou delivered Thy people at all.'...

"The Lord directed Moses to go again to the people and repeat the promise of deliverance, with a fresh assurance of divine favor. He went as he was commanded; but they would not listen. Says the Scripture, 'They hearkened not for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.' Again the divine message came to Moses, 'Go in, speak unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land.' In discouragement he replied, 'Behold, the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me?' He was told to take Aaron with him and go before Pharaoh, and again demand 'that he send the children of Israel out of his land.'" —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 259-263.

5. Even though the monarch had more than enough evidence of the divine power to obey God's voice, what did the Lord have to do to change the king's arrogance and hardness of heart? What was Moses' decisive response to Pharaoh's final threat?

Exodus 10:28, 29 *And Pharaoh said unto him, Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die.* ²⁹*And Moses said, Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more.*

"When the demand for Israel's release had been first presented to the king of Egypt, the warning of the most terrible of the plagues had been given. Moses was directed to say to Pharaoh, 'Thus saith the Lord, Israel is My son, even My first-born: and I say unto thee, Let My son go, that he may serve Me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy first-born.' Exodus 4:22, 23. Though despised by the Egyptians, the Israelites had been honored by God, in that they were singled out to be the depositaries of His law. In the special blessings and privileges accorded them, they had pre-eminence among the nations, as the first-born son had among brothers." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 273.

6. What terrible plague did the king and the Egyptians suffer before they would obey the divine command?

Exodus 11:1; 12:29, 30 *And the Lord said unto Moses, Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence: when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether....* ^{12:29}*And it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle.* ³⁰*And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead.*

"The judgment of which Egypt had first been warned, was to be the last visited. God is long-suffering and plenteous in mercy. He has a tender care for the beings formed in His image. If the loss of their harvests and their flocks and herds had brought Egypt to repentance, the children would not have been smitten; but the nation had stubbornly resisted the divine command, and now the final blow was about to fall." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 273.

RELUCTANT ACQUIESCENCE GIVES THE VICTORY

7. Of what did Pharaoh become convinced after the death of his son and all of the firstborn in Egypt? What order did he give? What lesson do these events have for God's people at the end of time?

Exodus 12:31-33 *And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as ye have said.* ³²*Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also.* ³³*And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We be all dead men.*

Psalms 18:2, 3; 62:8 *The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. ³I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies....^{62:8} Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us.*

Isaiah 26:4 *Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.*

“The marvelous providences connected with Israel’s deliverance from Egyptian bondage and with their occupancy of the Promised Land led many of the heathen to recognize the God of Israel as the Supreme Ruler. ‘The Egyptians shall know,’ had been the promise, ‘that I am the Lord, when I stretch forth Mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them.’ Exodus 7:5. Even proud Pharaoh was constrained to acknowledge Jehovah’s power. ‘Go, serve the Lord,’ he urged Moses and Aaron, ‘and bless me also.’ Exodus 12:31, 32.” – *Prophets and Kings*, p. 369.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

“A man will gain power and efficiency as he accepts the responsibilities that God places upon him, and with his whole soul seeks to qualify himself to bear them aright. However humble his position or limited his ability, that man will attain true greatness who, trusting to divine strength, seeks to perform his work with fidelity. Had Moses relied upon his own strength and wisdom, and eagerly accepted the great charge, he would have evinced his entire unfitness for such a work. The fact that a man feels his weakness is at least some evidence that he realizes the magnitude of the work appointed him, and that he will make God his counselor and his strength.” – *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 255.

* * *

5

Sabbath, February 1, 2020

Removing Idolatry

“To Gideon came the divine call to deliver his people. He was engaged at the time in threshing wheat. A small quantity of grain had been concealed, and not daring to beat it out on the ordinary threshing floor, he had resorted to a spot near the winepress; for the season of ripe grapes being still far off, little notice was now taken of the vineyards. As Gideon labored in secrecy and silence, he sadly pondered upon the condition of Israel and considered how the oppressor’s yoke might be broken from off his people.” – *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 546.

SUNDAY

DISOBEDIENCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCE

- 1. What did the Israelites do when they departed from God and His ways? What did the Midianites and Amalekites do to them every year?**

Judges 6:1-4 *And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord: and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years. ²And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: and because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds. ³And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them; ⁴And they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass.*

“The Amalekites on the south of Canaan, as well as the Midianites on its eastern border, and in the deserts beyond, were still the unrelenting enemies of Israel. The latter nation had been nearly destroyed by the Israelites in the days of Moses, but they had since increased greatly, and had become numerous and powerful. They had thirsted for revenge; and now that the protecting hand of God was withdrawn from Israel, the opportunity had come. Not alone the tribes east of Jordan, but the whole land suffered from their ravages.... Thus the Israelites dwelling in the open country were forced to abandon their homes, and to congregate in walled towns, to seek refuge in fortresses, or even to find shelter in caves and rocky fastnesses among the mountains. For seven years this oppression continued, and then, as the people in their distress gave heed to the Lord’s reproof, and confessed their sins, God again raised up a helper for them.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 545, 546.

MONDAY

2. How did the Lord begin His plan to bring relief to the suffering people? To whom did He appear?

Judges 6:11-13 *And there came an angel of the Lord, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites. ¹²And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. ¹³And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? but now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.*

“Gideon was the son of Joash, of the tribe of Manasseh. The division to which this family belonged held no leading position, but the household of Joash was distinguished for courage and integrity. Of his brave sons it is said, ‘Each one resembled the children of a king.’ All but one had fallen in the struggles against the Midianites, and he had caused his name to be feared by the invaders.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 546.

TUESDAY

GOD’S CHOICE OF ONE TO DO HIS WILL

3. How did Gideon feel about taking on the enormous task that was presented to him? What encouragement did the Lord give him?

Judges 6:14-16 *And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee? ¹⁵And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is*

poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. ¹⁶And the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.

"Gideon deeply felt his own insufficiency for the great work before him.... The Lord does not always choose for His work men of the greatest talents, but He selects those whom He can best use. Individuals who might do good service for God, may for a time be left in obscurity, apparently unnoticed and unemployed by their Master. But if they faithfully perform the duties of their humble position, cherishing a willingness to labor and to sacrifice for Him, He will in His own time entrust them with greater responsibilities." —*Conflict and Courage*, p. 126.

WEDNESDAY

4. When Gideon realized that he was in God's presence, how did he express his faith and gratitude to Him?

Judges 6:22-24 *And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the Lord, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God! for because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face. ²³And the Lord said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die. ²⁴Then Gideon built an altar there unto the Lord, and called it Jehovahshalom: unto this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.*

"I was shown that when God sent His angels anciently to minister or communicate to individuals, and these persons learned that they had seen and talked with an angel, they were struck with awe and were afraid that they should die. They had so exalted views of the terrible majesty and power of God that they thought it would destroy them to be brought into close connection with one direct from His holy presence." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 410.

THURSDAY

DEFENDING GOD AND THE TRUTH

5. What was the first task that the Lord gave him? How quickly did he carry it out?

Judges 6:25-27 *And it came to pass the same night, that the Lord said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it: ²⁶And build an altar unto the Lord thy God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down. ²⁷Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the Lord had said unto him: and so it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do it by day, that he did it by night.*

"God then charged Moses to make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither they should go, lest they should be ensnared thereby. But they should destroy their idol altars, break their images, and cut down their groves, which were dedicated to their idols, and where the people assembled to hold their idolatrous feasts, given in honor of their idol gods. He then said to them, 'Thou shalt worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.' God claims, as His due, supreme worship.... The Lord knows that Satan is continually at work to lead His people to transgress the law of God, and He condescended to be very definite in His directions to His erring people, that they might not err, and transgress His commandments for want of knowledge." —*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 292.

- 6. How did the inhabitants of the city react when they saw what Gideon had done? Why was it necessary for him to do this, and what lesson is there in this for God's people today?**

Judges 6:28-30 *And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cast down, and the grove was cut down that was by it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar that was built. ²⁹And they said one to another, Who hath done this thing? And when they inquired and asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing. ³⁰Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die: because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that was by it.*

"The interests of the cause of God are not to be committed to men who have no connection with heaven. Those who are disloyal to God cannot be safe counselors. They have not that wisdom which comes from above. They are not to be trusted to pass judgment in matters connected with God's cause, matters upon which such great results depend. If we follow their judgment, we shall surely be brought into very difficult places, and shall retard the work of God." —*Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 300.

SABBATH

- 7. Who bravely defended what Gideon had done? With what simple logic did he answer the people? What is promised to those who faithfully and resolutely stand up for the Lord?**

Judges 6:31, 32 *And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him? he that will plead for him, let him be put to death whilst it is yet morning: if he be a god, let him plead for himself, because one hath cast down his altar. ³²Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he hath thrown down his altar.*

Psalms 34:7 *The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.*

"Those who are not connected with God are connected with the enemy of God, and while they may be honest in the advice they give, they themselves are blinded and deceived. Satan puts suggestions into the mind and words into the mouth that are entirely contrary to the mind and will of God. Thus he works through them to allure us into false paths. He will mislead, entangle, and ruin us if he can.

"Anciently it was a great sin for the people of God to give themselves away to the enemy, and open before them either their perplexity or their prosperity. Under the ancient economy it was a sin to offer sacrifice upon the wrong altar. It was a sin to offer incense kindled by the wrong fire." —*Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 300.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

"We are in danger of mingling the sacred and the common. The holy fire from God is to be used in our efforts. The true altar is Christ; the true fire is the Holy Spirit. This is our inspiration. It is only as the Holy Spirit leads and guides a man that he is a safe counselor. If we turn aside from God and from His chosen ones to inquire at strange altars we shall be answered according to our works." —*Selected Messages*, book 3, pp. 300, 301.

"They [Joseph and Daniel] were to be representatives of God in our world. They were to make no compromise with the idolatrous nations with which they were brought in contact, but were to stand loyal to their faith, bearing as a special honor the name of worshipers of the God who created the heavens and the earth." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 153.

"We are not to cringe and beg pardon of the world for telling them the truth: we should scorn concealment. Unfurl your colors to meet the cause of men and angels. Let it be understood that Seventh-day Adventists can make no compromise. In your opinions and faith there must not be the least appearance of waverings: the world has a right to know what to expect of us." —*Evangelism*, p. 179.

* * *

6

Sabbath, February 8, 2020

God Will Save by Few

"The leader whom God chose to overthrow the Midianites occupied no prominent position in Israel. He was not a ruler, a priest, or a Levite. He thought himself the least in his father's house. But God saw in him a man of courage and integrity. He was distrustful of himself and willing to follow the guidance of the Lord. God does not always choose for His work men of the greatest talents, but He selects those whom He can best use. 'Before honor is humility.' Proverbs 15:33. The Lord can work most effectually through those who are most sensible of their own insufficiency, and who will rely upon Him as their leader and source of strength. He will make them strong by uniting their weakness to His might, and wise by connecting their ignorance with His wisdom." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 553.

SUNDAY

A CALL TO UNITE AND FIGHT THE ENEMIES

1. **Having overrun Israel many times in the past, what had the attackers prepared to do? How did the Lord prepare Gideon and the people for the task He assigned to them?**

Judges 6:33-35 *Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel.*

³⁴*But the spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him. ³⁵And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh; who also was gathered after him: and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali; and they came up to meet them.*

"All thoughts of violence toward Gideon were dismissed; and when he sounded the trumpet of war, the men of Ophrah were among the first to gather to his standard. Heralds were dispatched to his own tribe of Manasseh, and also to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, and all answered to the call." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 548.

2. What did the Lord tell Gideon about the men who came in response to his call? Therefore, what did He tell him to do? How many accepted the offer?

Judges 7:1-3 *Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley. And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me. ³Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand.*

“Thus encouraged, Gideon led out his forces to give battle to the invaders. ‘All the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel.’ The entire force under Gideon’s command numbered only thirty-two thousand men; but with the vast host of the enemy spread out before him, the word of the Lord came to him: ‘The people that are with thee are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against Me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me. Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from Mount Gilead.’ Those who were unwilling to face danger and hardships, or whose worldly interests would draw their hearts from the work of God, would add no strength to the armies of Israel. Their presence would prove only a cause of weakness....

“Gideon obeyed the Lord’s direction, and with a heavy heart he saw twenty-two thousand, or more than two thirds of his entire force, depart for their homes.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 548, 549.

3. Next, what did the Lord say about the remaining ten thousand men? What order did He give? What was significant about the test, and what was the result?

Judges 7:4-6 *And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go. ⁵So he brought down the people unto the water: and the Lord said unto Gideon, Every one that lapped of the water with his tongue, as a dog lapped, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink. ⁶And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water.*

“The people were led down to the waterside, expecting to make an immediate advance upon the enemy. A few hastily took a little water in the hand and sucked it up as they went on; but nearly all bowed upon their knees, and leisurely drank from the surface of the stream. Those who took of the water in their hands were but three hundred out of ten thousand; yet these were selected; all the rest were permitted to return to their homes.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 549.

VICTORY DEPENDS ON FAITH

- 4. What did the Lord say to Gideon about his tiny army, and what plan did He give him to carry out? What was significant about the chosen men? How does God work similarly now?**

Judges 7:7-9 *And the Lord said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place. ⁸So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets: and he sent all the rest of Israel every man unto his tent, and retained those three hundred men: and the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley. ⁹And it came to pass the same night, that the Lord said unto him, Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand.*

“By the simplest means character is often tested. Those who in time of peril were intent upon supplying their own wants were not the men to be trusted in an emergency. The Lord has no place in His work for the indolent and self-indulgent. The men of His choice were the few who would not permit their own wants to delay them in the discharge of duty.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 549.

THURSDAY

- 5. How did the Scriptures describe the enemies’ army? What did the Lord use to give His servant more courage and confidence?**

Judges 7:12-14 *And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude. ¹³And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along. ¹⁴And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host.*

“Gideon trembled as he thought of the conflict of the morrow. But the Lord spoke to him in the night season and bade him, with Phurah his attendant, go down to the camp of the Midianites, intimating that he would there hear something for his encouragement. He went, and, waiting in the darkness and silence, he heard a soldier relating a dream to his companion.... Gideon recognized the voice of God speaking to him through those Midianitish strangers. Returning to the few men under his command, he said, ‘Arise; for the Lord hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.’” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 550.

FRIDAY**THE LORD USES A FAITHFUL FEW**

- 6. What did the Lord do to cause confusion and panic in the enemy camp? What caused the Midianites to flee without God’s people having to engage in violence?**

Judges 7:19-22 *So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but*

newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands. ²⁰And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon. ²¹And they stood every man in his place round about the camp: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled. ²²And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host: and the host fled to Bethshittah in Zererath, and to the border of Abelmeholah, unto Tabbath.

"By divine direction a plan of attack was suggested to him, which he immediately set out to execute. The three hundred men were divided into three companies. To every man were given a trumpet, and a torch concealed in an earthen pitcher. The men were stationed in such a manner as to approach the Midianite camp from different directions. In the dead of night, at a signal from Gideon's war horn, the three companies sounded their trumpets; then, breaking their pitchers and displaying the blazing torches, they rushed upon the enemy with the terrible war cry, 'The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon!'

"The sleeping army was suddenly aroused. Upon every side was seen the light of the flaming torches. In every direction was heard the sound of trumpets, with the cry of the assailants.

"Believing themselves at the mercy of an overwhelming force, the Midianites were panic-stricken. With wild cries of alarm they fled for life, and, mistaking their own companions for enemies, they slew one another." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 550-553.

SABBATH

7. What is possible when God's people are fully confident in His wisdom and in His guidance of their affairs?

1 Samuel 14:6 *And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the Lord will work for us: for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few.*

Zechariah 4:6 *Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.*

"The three hundred chosen men not only possessed courage and self-control, but they were men of faith. They had not defiled themselves with idolatry. God could direct them, and through them He could work deliverance for Israel. Success does not depend upon numbers. God can deliver by few as well as by many. He is honored not so much by the great numbers as by the character of those who serve Him." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 549, 550.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

"If they would cherish true humility, the Lord could do much more for His people; but there are few who can be trusted with any large measure of responsibility or success without becoming self-confident and forgetful of their dependence upon God. This is why, in choosing the instruments for His work, the Lord passes by those whom the world honors as great, talented, and brilliant. They are too often proud and self-sufficient. They feel competent to act without counsel from God.

"The simple act of blowing a blast upon the trumpet by the army of Joshua around Jericho, and by Gideon's little band about the hosts of Midian, was made effectual, through the power of God, to overthrow the might of His enemies. The

most complete system that men have ever devised, apart from the power and wisdom of God, will prove a failure, while the most unpromising methods will succeed when divinely appointed and entered upon with humility and faith. Trust in God and obedience to His will are as essential to the Christian in the spiritual warfare....” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 553, 554.

* * *

7

Sabbath, February 15, 2020

Unexpected Danger

“One great defect in the character of Saul was his love of approbation. This trait had had a controlling influence over his actions and thoughts; everything was marked by his desire for praise and self-exaltation. His standard of right and wrong was the low standard of popular applause. No man is safe who lives that he may please men, and does not seek first for the approbation of God. It was the ambition of Saul to be first in the estimation of men; and when this song of praise was sung, a settled conviction entered the mind of the king that David would obtain the hearts of the people and reign in his stead.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 650.

SUNDAY

DAVID AT THE ROYAL COURT TO HELP SAUL

1. What did King Saul decide after the Lord’s victory through David over Goliath? How did the young man perform the tasks that the king assigned to him?

1 Samuel 18:1, 2, 5 *And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. ²And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father’s house.... ⁵And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul’s servants.*

“Saul kept David with him, and would not permit him to return to his father’s house.... ‘David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war.’ David was prudent and faithful, and it was evident that the blessing of God was with him. Saul at times realized his own unfitness for the government of Israel, and he felt that the kingdom would be more secure if there could be connected with him one who received instruction from the Lord. Saul hoped also that his connection with David would be a safeguard to himself. Since David was favored and shielded by the Lord, his presence might be a protection to Saul when he went out with him to war.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 649.

2. What did the women of Israel sing in triumph? What effect did these songs have on the king? How did his attitude toward David change?

1 Samuel 18:6-9 *And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music. ⁷And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands. ⁸And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom? ⁹And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.*

“Saul, however, did not long remain friendly to David.... When Saul and David were returning from battle with the Philistines, ‘the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music.’ One company sang, ‘Saul hath slain his thousands,’ while another company took up the strain, and responded, ‘And David his ten thousands.’ The demon of jealousy entered the heart of the king. He was angry because David was exalted above himself in the song of the women of Israel. In place of subduing these envious feelings, he displayed the weakness of his character, and exclaimed, ‘They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom?’” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 650.

CONSEQUENCES OF JEALOUSY

3. What point did Saul reach in his unfounded jealousy and hatred of David? How did God thwart his murderous designs? What spirit was thus seen to control the king?

1 Samuel 18:10-13 *And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and there was a javelin in Saul’s hand. ¹¹And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. And David avoided out of his presence twice. ¹²And Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him, and was departed from Saul. ¹³Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people.*

“Saul opened his heart to the spirit of jealousy by which his soul was poisoned. Notwithstanding the lessons which he had received from the prophet Samuel, instructing him that God would accomplish whatsoever He chose, and that no one could hinder it, the king made it evident that he had no true knowledge of the plans or power of God. The monarch of Israel was opposing his will to the will of the Infinite One. Saul had not learned, while ruling the kingdom of Israel, that he should rule his own spirit.... From this frenzy he would pass into a state of despondency and self-contempt, and remorse would take possession of his soul....

“One day when the youth was ministering before him, and bringing sweet music from his instrument, accompanying his voice as he sang the praises of God, Saul suddenly threw his spear at the musician, for the purpose of putting an end to his life. David was preserved by the interposition of God, and without injury fled from the rage of the maddened king.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 650, 651.

4. What attempts on David's life did the king repeat? How did the Lord thwart the satanic attacks?

1 Samuel 19:9-12 *And the evil spirit from the Lord was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his javelin in his hand: and David played with his hand. ¹⁰And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin; but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, and he smote the javelin into the wall: and David fled, and escaped that night. ¹¹Saul also sent messengers unto David's house, to watch him, and to slay him in the morning: and Michal David's wife told him, saying, If thou save not thy life to night, to morrow thou shalt be slain. ¹²So Michal let David down through a window: and he went, and fled, and escaped. [See End Note 1, 2]*

"As Saul's hatred of David increased, he became more and more watchful to find an opportunity to take his life; but none of his plans against the anointed of the Lord were successful. Saul gave himself up to the control of the wicked spirit that ruled over him; while David trusted in Him who is mighty in counsel, and strong to deliver. 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom' (Proverbs 9:10), and David's prayer was continually directed to God, that he might walk before Him in a perfect way." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 650, 668, 651.

GOD'S PROTECTION AND SPIRIT OVER DAVID

5. How else did the Lord protect His servant?

1 Samuel 19:19-23 *And it was told Saul, saying, Behold, David is at Naioth in Ramah. ²⁰And Saul sent messengers to take David: and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as appointed over them, the spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied. ²¹And when it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they prophesied likewise. And Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they prophesied also. ²²Then went he also to Ramah, and came to a great well that is in Sechu: and he asked and said, Where are Samuel and David? And one said, Behold, they be at Naioth in Ramah. ²³And he went thither to Naioth in Ramah: and the spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on, and prophesied, until he came to Naioth in Ramah.*

"Saul then decided that he himself would go, for his fierce enmity had become uncontrollable. He was determined to wait for no further chance to kill David; as soon as he should come within reach of him, he intended with his own hand to slay him, whatever might be the consequences.

"But an angel of God met him on the way and controlled him. The Spirit of God held him in Its power, and he went forward uttering prayers to God, interspersed with predictions and sacred melodies. He prophesied of the coming Messiah as the world's Redeemer. When he came to the prophet's home in Ramah, he laid aside the outer garments that betokened his rank, and all day and all night he lay before Samuel and his pupils, under the influence of the divine Spirit. The people were drawn together to witness this strange scene, and the experience of the king was reported far and wide. Thus again, near the close of his reign, it became a proverb in Israel that Saul also was among the prophets." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 653, 654.

6. What experience did the Lord permit Saul to make to warn him of his wrong course? What incident showed David's righteous spirit? How did the Lord bless him?

1 Samuel 24:3-7 *And he came to the sheepcotes by the way, where was a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave. ⁴And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the Lord said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily. ⁵And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt. ⁶And he said unto his men, The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord. ⁷So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way.*

"David had only six hundred men in his company, while Saul advanced against him with an army of three thousand. In a secluded cave the son of Jesse and his men waited for the guidance of God as to what should be done. As Saul was pressing his way up the mountains, he turned aside, and entered, alone, the very cavern in which David and his band were hidden. When David's men saw this they urged their leader to kill Saul. The fact that the king was now in their power was interpreted by them as certain evidence that God Himself had delivered the enemy into their hand, that they might destroy him. David was tempted to take this view of the matter; but the voice of conscience spoke to him, saying, 'Touch not the anointed of the Lord.'" —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 661.

SABBATH

7. On what other occasion did Saul attempt to kill him? What did David demonstrate several times when the king was in his power?

1 Samuel 26:2, 5, 8-11 *Then Saul arose, and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph.... ⁵And David arose, and came to the place where Saul had pitched: and David beheld the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the captain of his host: and Saul lay in the trench, and the people pitched round about him.... ⁸Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time. ⁹And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless? ¹⁰David said furthermore, As the Lord liveth, the Lord shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish. ¹¹The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the Lord's anointed: but, I pray thee, take thou now the spear that is at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go.*

"David does not manifest the spirit of an unconverted man. He shows that he has had an experience in the things of God. He manifests a disposition to receive correction from God, and in confidence turns to Him as his only trust.... When Saul was repeatedly placed in his power, and his followers would have killed him, David would not permit them to do so, although he was in continual fear of his own life, and was pursued like a wild beast by Saul." —*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 4a, pp. 90, 91.

"David's experiences are recorded for the instruction of the people of God in these last days." —(Signs of the Times, November 9, 1888) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 1022.

THE RIGHTEOUS SPARED MANY AFFLICTIONS

8. What do the Scriptures say about the righteous who hope in the Lord? Even though they may suffer many afflictions, what will be their end?

Psalm 34:17-22 *The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. ¹⁸The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. ¹⁹Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all. ²⁰He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken. ²¹Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate. ²²The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.*

"In his own strength, man cannot meet the charges of the enemy. In stained garments, confessing his guilt, he stands before God. But Jesus, our Advocate, presents an effectual plea in behalf of all who by repentance and faith have committed the keeping of their souls to Him. He pleads their cause, and by the mighty arguments of Calvary, vanquishes their accuser. His perfect obedience to God's law has given Him all power in heaven and in earth, and He claims from His Father mercy and reconciliation for guilty man. To the accuser of His people He declares: 'The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan. These are the purchase of My blood, brands plucked from the burning.' And to those who rely on Him in faith, He gives the assurance, 'Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.' Zechariah 3:4." —*God's Amazing Grace*, p. 316.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

"David's conclusion that Saul would certainly accomplish his murderous purpose was formed without the counsel of God. Even while Saul was plotting and seeking to accomplish his destruction, the Lord was working to secure David the kingdom. God works out His plans, though to human eyes they are veiled in mystery. Men cannot understand the ways of God; and, looking at appearances, they interpret the trials and tests and provings that God permits to come upon them as things that are against them, and that will only work their ruin. Thus David looked on appearances, and not at the promises of God. He doubted that he would ever come to the throne. Long trials had wearied his faith and exhausted his patience." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 672.

* * *

Challenging the King

"Now as in former ages, the presentation of a truth that reproves the sins and errors of the times will excite opposition. 'Everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.' John 3:20. As men see that they cannot maintain their position by the Scriptures, many determine to maintain it at all hazards, and with a malicious spirit they assail the character and motives of those who stand in defense of unpopular truth. It is the same policy which has been pursued in all ages. Elijah was declared to be a troubler in Israel, Jeremiah a traitor, Paul a polluter of the temple. From that day to this, those who would be loyal to truth have been denounced as seditious, heretical, or schismatic. Multitudes who are too unbelieving to accept the sure word of prophecy will receive with unquestioning credulity an accusation against those who dare to reprove fashionable sins. This spirit will increase more and more." —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 458, 459.

SUNDAY

KING AHAB AND THE NATION REBUKED

1. What do the Scriptures record about the actions of King Ahab and the nation of Israel? How far did the king's spiritual blindness and apostasy go?

1 Kings 16:30-33 *And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him. ³¹And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. ³²And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. ³³And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.*

"Two years before the death of Asa, Ahab began to rule in the kingdom of Israel. From the beginning his reign was marked by a strange and terrible apostasy. His father, Omri, the founder of Samaria, had 'wrought evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all that were before him.' 1 Kings 16:25.... Not content with encouraging the forms of religious service followed at Bethel and Dan, he boldly led the people into the grossest heathenism, by setting aside the worship of Jehovah for Baal worship.

"Taking to wife Jezebel, 'the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians' and high priest of Baal, Ahab 'served Baal, and worshiped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria.' Verses 31, 32.

"... Under the leadership of Jezebel he erected heathen altars in many 'high places,' where in the shelter of surrounding groves the priests and others connected with this seductive form of idolatry exerted their baleful influence, until well-nigh all Israel were following after Baal." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 114.

2. As he went further and further from the right path, what message did the Lord send to Ahab by Elijah the prophet? How long did the Lord's chastening last?

1 Kings 17:1 *And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.*

James 5:17 *Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.*

"Among the mountains of Gilead, east of the Jordan, there dwelt in the days of Ahab a man of faith and prayer whose fearless ministry was destined to check the rapid spread of apostasy in Israel. Far removed from any city of renown, and occupying no high station in life, Elijah the Tishbite nevertheless entered upon his mission confident in God's purpose to prepare the way before him and to give him abundant success. The word of faith and power was upon his lips, and his whole life was devoted to the work of reform.... And while he came to the people as a reprover of sin, his message offered the balm of Gilead to the sin-sick souls of all who desired to be healed....

"To Elijah was entrusted the mission of delivering to Ahab Heaven's message of judgment. He did not seek to be the Lord's messenger; the word of the Lord came to him. And jealous for the honor of God's cause, he did not hesitate to obey the divine summons, though to obey seemed to invite swift destruction at the hand of the wicked king...." —*Conflict and Courage*, p. 205.

THE PROPHET CALLS FOR A MEETING

3. What message did the Lord give to Elijah after the famine had caused devastation in the land? How did Elijah carry out the Lord's command?

1 Kings 18:1, 2 *And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, show thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth. And Elijah went to shew himself unto Ahab. And there was a sore famine in Samaria.*

"Thus it had come to pass that God was now visiting His people with the severest of His judgments. The prediction of Elijah was meeting with terrible fulfillment. For three years the messenger of woe was sought for in city after city and nation after nation. At the mandate of Ahab, many rulers had given their oath of honor that the strange prophet could not be found in their dominions. Yet the search was continued, for Jezebel and the prophets of Baal hated Elijah with a deadly hatred, and they spared no effort to bring him within reach of their power. And still there was no rain." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 137.

"Through the long years of drought and famine, Elijah prayed earnestly that the hearts of Israel might be turned from idolatry to allegiance to God. Patiently the prophet waited, while the hand of the Lord rested heavily on the stricken land....

"At last, 'after many days,' the word of the Lord came to Elijah, 'Go, show thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth.'..." —*Conflict and Courage*, p. 208.

4. With what words did Ahab meet Elijah? But what was the reality of the situation? Who was responsible for Israel's suffering?

1 Kings 18:17, 18 *And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?* ¹⁸*And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim.*

"The king and the prophet stand face to face. Though Ahab is filled with passionate hatred, yet in the presence of Elijah he seems unmanned, powerless. In his first faltering words, 'Art thou he that troubleth Israel?' he unconsciously reveals the inmost feelings of his heart. Ahab knew that it was by the word of God that the heavens had become as brass, yet he sought to cast upon the prophet the blame for the heavy judgments resting on the land..." —*Conflict and Courage*, p. 208.

"Just as long as God has a church, He will have those who will cry aloud and spare not, who will be His instruments to reprove selfishness and sins, and will not shun to declare the whole counsel of God, whether men will hear or forbear." —*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2, p. 284.

THURSDAY

THE DECISION ON MOUNT CARMEL

5. What powerful message did Elijah direct to the people who gathered on Mount Carmel? What was their response to his earnest appeal?

1 Kings 18:19-21 *Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table.* ²⁰*So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel.* ²¹*And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.*

"It is as easy to make an idol of cherished ideas or objects as to fashion gods of wood or stone. Thousands have a false conception of God and His attributes. They are as verily serving a false god as were the servants of Baal. Are we worshipping the true God as He is revealed in His word, in Christ, in nature, or are we adoring some philosophical idol enshrined in His place? God is a God of truth. Justice and mercy are the attributes of His throne. He is a God of love, of pity and tender compassion. Thus He is represented in His Son, our Saviour. He is a God of patience and long-suffering. If such is the Being whom we adore and to whose character we are seeking to assimilate, we are worshipping the true God." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 173, 174.

FRIDAY

6. What miracle occurred after Elijah prayed in faith to God? What did the people openly acknowledge at this point? Is there any record that the king recognized his sins and made a similar confession?

1 Kings 18:37-39 *Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.* ³⁸*Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones,*

and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. ³⁹And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God.

“Prayer is the breath of the soul. It is the secret of spiritual power. No other means of grace can be substituted, and the health of the soul be preserved. Prayer brings the heart into immediate contact with the Wellspring of life, and strengthens the sinew and muscle of the religious experience. Neglect the exercise of prayer, or engage in prayer spasmodically, now and then, as seems convenient, and you lose your hold on God. The spiritual faculties lose their vitality, the religious experience lacks health and vigor.

“It is only at the altar of God that we can kindle our tapers with divine fire. It is only the divine light that will reveal the littleness, the incompetence, of human ability, and give clear views of the perfection and purity of Christ. It is only as we behold Jesus that we desire to be like Him, only as we view His righteousness that we hunger and thirst to possess it; and it is only as we ask in earnest prayer, that God will grant us our heart’s desire.” —*Gospel Workers*, pp. 254, 255.

SABBATH

7. After the fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice and everything around it, what did the Lord give to the people and the king? How did He empower Elijah to minister to the king?

James 5:18 *And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.*

1 Kings 18:44-46 *And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man’s hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not. ⁴⁵And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel. ⁴⁶And the hand of the Lord was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.*

“Important lessons are presented to us in the experience of Elijah. When upon Mt. Carmel he offered the prayer for rain, his faith was tested, but he persevered in making known his request unto God. Six times he prayed earnestly, and yet there was no sign that his petition was granted, but with a strong faith he urged his plea to the throne of grace. Had he given up in discouragement at the sixth time, his prayer would not have been answered.... We have a God whose ear is not closed to our petitions; and if we prove His word, He will honor our faith. He wants us to have all our interests interwoven with His interests, and then He can safely bless us; for we shall not then take glory to self when the blessing is ours, but shall render all the praise to God. God does not always answer our prayers the first time we call upon Him; for should He do this, we might take it for granted that we had a right to all the blessings and favors He bestowed upon us.” —*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 206.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

“However courageous and successful a man may be in the performance of a special work, unless he looks constantly to God when circumstances arise to test

his faith he will lose his courage. Even after God has given him marked tokens of His power, after he has been strengthened to do God's work, he will fail unless he trusts implicitly in Omnipotence." —*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 206.

"I asked the angel why there was no more faith and power in Israel. He said, 'Ye let go of the arm of the Lord too soon. Press your petitions to the throne, and hold on by strong faith. The promises are sure. Believe ye receive the things ye ask for, and ye shall have them.' I was then pointed to Elijah. He was subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly. His faith endured the trial. Seven times he prayed before the Lord, and at last the cloud was seen. I saw that we had doubted the sure promises, and wounded the Saviour by our lack of faith. Said the angel, 'Gird the armor about thee, and above all take the shield of faith; for that will guard the heart, the very life, from the fiery darts of the wicked.' If the enemy can lead the desponding to take their eyes off from Jesus, and look to themselves, and dwell upon their own unworthiness, instead of dwelling upon the worthiness of Jesus, His love, His merits, and His great mercy, he will get away their shield of faith and gain his object; they will be exposed to his fiery temptations. The weak should therefore look to Jesus, and believe in Him; they then exercise faith." —*Early Writings*, p. 73.

* * *

Please read the Missionary Report from URUGUAY on page 47.

9

Sabbath, February 29, 2020

A Despised Prophet

"The unfaltering servants of God have usually suffered the bitterest persecution from false teachers of religion. But the true prophets will ever prefer reproach, and even death, rather than unfaithfulness to God. The Infinite Eye is upon the instruments of divine reproof, and they bear a heavy responsibility. But God regards the injury done to them through misrepresentation, falsehood, or abuse as though it were done unto Himself, and will punish accordingly." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 167.

SUNDAY

A SEEMINGLY BENEFICIAL ALLIANCE

1. What did Ahab, the king of Israel, propose to the king of Judah? What did Jehoshaphat reply?

1 Kings 22:1-4 And they continued three years without war between Syria and Israel. ²And it came to pass in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel. ³And the king of Israel said unto his servants, Know ye that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, and we be still, and take it not out of the hand of the king of Syria? ⁴And he said unto Jehoshaphat, Wilt thou go with me to battle to Ramothgilead? And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses.

"On one occasion Jehoshaphat visited the king of Israel at Samaria. Special honor was shown the royal guest from Jerusalem, and before the close of his visit he was persuaded to unite with the king of Israel in war against the Syrians. Ahab hoped that by joining his forces with those of Judah he might regain Ramoth, one of the old cities of refuge, which, he contended, rightfully belonged to the Israelites." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 195.

MONDAY

2. However, what did Jehoshaphat then ask Ahab to do before going ahead with this idea? What was the answer of the false prophets?

1 Kings 22:5, 6 *And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Inquire, I pray thee, at the word of the Lord to day. ⁶Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall I go against Ramothgilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king.*

"Although Jehoshaphat in a moment of weakness had rashly promised to join the king of Israel in his war against the Syrians, yet his better judgment led him to seek to learn the will of God concerning the undertaking. 'Inquire, I pray thee, at the word of the Lord today,' he suggested to Ahab. In response, Ahab called together four hundred of the false prophets of Samaria, and asked of them, 'Shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear?' And they answered, 'Go up; for God will deliver it into the king's hand.' Verses 4, 5." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 195.

TUESDAY

TRUE VS. FALSE PROPHETS

3. How satisfied was the faithful Jehoshaphat with the outcome of the meeting with the prophets that Ahab summoned? What was Ahab's opinion of the Lord's true prophet? Why did he and others in the Scriptures hold such an opinion of a prophet?

1 Kings 22:7, 8 *And Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might inquire of him? ⁸And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so.*

"Unsatisfied, Jehoshaphat sought to learn for a certainty the will of God. 'Is there not here a prophet of the Lord,' he asked, 'that we might inquire of him?' Verse 6. 'There is yet one man, Micaiah to son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the Lord,' Ahab answered; 'but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.' 1 Kings 22:8." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 195.

"Every one whom the Lord calls should be distrustful of self, and have full trust in God. Moses went forth in the name of 'I AM THAT I AM,' without outward display of grandeur; yet the rod in his hand was a symbol of the divine power of Jehovah, and Moses was the instrumentality through whom God would deliver Israel from the bondage of tyranny." —*Review and Herald*, April 2, 1895.

WEDNESDAY

4. What did the false prophet Zedekiah prophesy after making some iron horns? What did the other false prophets say? When one wants to follow his own ideas, what evidence for them will he seek and find?

1 Kings 22:10-12 *And the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah sat each on his throne, having put on their robes, in a void place in the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them. ¹¹And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made him horns of iron: and he said, Thus saith the Lord, With these shalt thou push the Syrians, until thou have consumed them. ¹²And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramothgilead, and prosper: for the Lord shall deliver it into the king's hand.*

“Those who pursue a course of rebellion against the Lord can always find false prophets who will justify them in their acts, and flatter them to their destruction. Lying words often make many friends, as is illustrated in the case of these false teachers among the Israelites. These so-called prophets, in their pretended zeal for God, found many more believers and followers than the true prophet who delivered the simple message of the Lord.” —(*Review and Herald*, March 14, 1907) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1158.

“God has blessed His commandment-keeping people, and all the opposition and falsehoods that may be brought against them will only strengthen those who stand firm in defense of the faith once delivered to the saints. But if those who profess to be the depositaries of God's law become transgressors of that law, His protecting care will be withdrawn.... Then we shall indeed be unable to stand before our enemies. But if His people remain separate and distinct from the world, as a nation that do righteousness, God will be their defense, and no weapons formed against them shall prosper.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 601.

THURSDAY

5. What did the messenger who was sent to summon the true prophet tell him to do? Why? What did the prophet's reply show?

1 Kings 22:9, 13, 14 *Then the king of Israel called an officer, and said, Hasten hither Micaiah the son of Imlah.... ¹³And the messenger that was gone to call Micaiah spake unto him, saying, Behold now, the words of the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth: let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good. ¹⁴And Micaiah said, As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak.*

“Read the cautions so abundantly given in the word of God in regard to false prophets that will come in with their heresies, and if possible will deceive the very elect. With these warnings, why is it that the church does not distinguish the false from the genuine? Those who have in any way been thus misled need to humble themselves before God, and sincerely repent, because they have so easily been led astray. They have not distinguished the voice of the True Shepherd from that of a stranger. Let all such review this chapter of their experience.” —*Selected Messages*, book 2, pp. 393, 394.

“We have before us a warfare—a lifelong conflict with Satan and his seductive temptations. The enemy will use every argument, every deception, to entangle the soul; and in order to win the crown of life, we must put forth earnest, persevering effort. We must not lay off the armor or leave the battlefield until we have gained the victory, and can triumph in our Redeemer.” —*My Life Today*, p. 105.

REFUSAL TO CHERISH THE LORD'S COUNSEL

6. What did the prophet say would be the result of the two kings' going to war together? How pleased was Ahab with the prophet's words? What was shown by his answer?

1 Kings 22:17, 18 *And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the Lord said, These have no master: let them return every man to his house in peace. ¹⁸And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?*

"The words of the prophet should have been enough to show the kings that their project was not favored by Heaven, but neither ruler felt inclined to heed the warning. Ahab had marked out his course, and he was determined to follow it. Jehoshaphat had given his word of honor, 'We will be with thee in the war;' and after making such a promise, he was reluctant to withdraw his forces. 2 Chronicles 18:3. 'So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth-gilead.' 1 Kings 22:29." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 196.

"The more closely the Scriptures are studied, the more clearly shall we understand the true character of our thoughts and actions. But thousands put the Bible on one side for the same reason that Ahab hated Micaiah. Because it prophesies evil against the sinner, they claim that they find objections and contradictions in God's word. While professing to be open to conviction, they allow prejudice to hold sway, and refuse to see the truth which that word reveals." —(The Youth's Instructor, June 10, 1897) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 1036.

SABBATH

7. What did Jesus say about those who reject the counsel of the Lord's prophets? Who was speaking to Ahab through the prophet Micaiah?

Matthew 13:57 *And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.*

2 Peter 1:20, 21 *Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. ²¹For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

"God committed the preparation of His divinely inspired word to finite man. This word, arranged into books, the Old and New Testaments, is the guidebook to the inhabitants of a fallen world, bequeathed to them that, by studying and obeying the directions, not one soul would lose its way to heaven....

"God designed the Bible to be a lesson book to all mankind, in childhood, youth, and manhood, and to be studied through all time. He gave His word to men as a revelation of Himself.... It is the medium of communication between God and man." —*The Faith I Live By*, p. 10.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

"I have been shown that the false shepherds were drunk, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink. The truth of God is sealed up to them; they cannot read it.... I saw that these prophets were like the foxes of the desert. They have not gone up into the gaps, they have not made up the hedge that the people of God may stand in the battle in the day of the Lord. When the minds of any get

stirred up, and they begin to inquire of these false shepherds about the truth, they take the easiest and best manner to effect their object and quiet the minds of the inquiring ones, even changing their own position to do it. Light has shone on many of these shepherds, but they would not acknowledge it and have changed their position a number of times to evade the truth and get away from the conclusions that they must come to if they continued in their former position. The power of truth tore up their foundation, but instead of yielding to it they would get up another platform that they were not satisfied with themselves.” —*Early Writings*, p. 123.

* * *

MISSIONARY REPORT

from Uruguay

To be read on Sabbath, February 29, 2020

The Special Sabbath School Offering

will be gathered on Sabbath, March 7, 2020

“Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Luke 12:33, 34.

Greetings to all the brethren with the blessed peace of the Lord Jesus Christ and with the great desire that all the promises of His precious word will be fulfilled to you.

Uruguay, officially the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, is a South American country located in the eastern part of the American Southern Cone. It borders Brazil on the northeast and Argentina on the west and southwest, while the Atlantic Ocean is on the south and east. The country covers 176,215 square kilometers (68,037 square miles), making it the second smallest in South America, after Suriname. According to the data of the last census (2011), the population of Uruguay is of 3,444,006 inhabitants. The language spoken is Spanish, while Portuguese is also spoken in some border regions, along with *Portuñol Riverense*, a Portuguese dialect.

A study conducted in 2014 by the *Latinobarómetro* Corporation highlights Uruguay as the most secular country in Latin America, with 38% atheists or agnostics compared to 41% Catholics, 8% Protestants, and 13% African metaphysical religions (Macumberos, Umbandas, Kimbandas, and others).

The International Missionary Society, Seventh-day Adventist Church, Reform Movement, began its mission in Uruguay in 1940 through the work of Brother Carlos Kozel, who helped to establish the Field on November 12, 1943, in the city of Rosario, Colonia, 130 kilometers (81 miles) from the capital. On May 3, 1989, the above headquarters was sold and property was purchased in the capital, Montevideo. The property is approximately 500 square meters in size and is accessible by

two streets; the mission house faces Calle Comercio and houses the headquarters of the Uruguayan Field. A small room serves as a chapel for thirty people. We are thankful to God that this has now become too small due to an increase in the number of believers attending the meetings.

The work in Uruguay is expanding, in spite of much suffering. There are souls who need to hear the word of God and to know about the true God. We have many projects for advancing His work, for this is our greatest need, as the inspired writing says: "The establishment of churches ... is only a further manifestation of the love of God, and in this work all God's people should have a part. Christ formed His church here below for the express purpose of showing forth through the members the grace of God. Throughout the world His people are to raise memorials of His Sabbath—the sign between Him and them that He is the One who sanctifies them. Thus they are to show that they have returned to their loyalty and stand firmly for the principles of His law." —*Counsels on Health*, p. 223.

In 1993, a project was begun to build a church for 150 people facing Governor Viana Street. Unfortunately we have not been able to finish this building because of scarce financial resources and few members (53), for construction costs are very high in this country. The foundation is complete, and the walls have been erected to the height of three meters. Unfortunately, since the building could not be roofed, it has been open for many years and has deteriorated a lot. Our great desire is to be able to see a completed church dedicated to the worship of our good God; it makes us very sad that, in spite of 26 years of construction, it is not yet finished. It is said of us as written in Luke 14:30: "This ... began to build, and was not able to finish."

The building's foundation is strong and can support a second floor, which is planned to be a minister's living quarters as well as the Field headquarters, since there is no place available to carry out the administrative work.

We invite the people of God to contribute generously to complete this project for God's honor and glory and the advancement of His cause in Uruguay. May He reward you a hundred times over! We thank you with all our hearts.

—Pablo Ruiz

Uruguayan Field President

**SPECIAL SABBATH SCHOOL OFFERING FOR
URUGUAY**

Give according to what you have received from God's hand!

10

Sabbath, March 7, 2020

The Consequence of Disobedience

"The message given man to proclaim in these last days is not to be amalgamated with worldly opinions. In these days of peril, nothing but obedience will keep man from apostasy. God has bestowed on man great light and many blessings. But unless this light and these blessings are received, they are no security against apostasy and disobedience. When those whom God has exalted to positions of high trust turn from Him to human wisdom, their light becomes darkness, and how great is that darkness! Their entrusted capabilities are a snare to them....

"There always has been, and till the conflict is ended, there always will be a departing from God. Sins have a close connection. One act of disobedience, unless repented of, leads to another. He who justifies himself in sin is led on step by step in deception, till at length he sins with impunity." —*The Upward Look*, p. 318.

SUNDAY

CHALLENGES TO GOD'S SERVANT

1. How did the Zedekiah, the self-proclaimed prophet, challenge the prophet Micaiah? What did the Lord's servant reply?

1 Kings 22:24, 25 *But Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near, and smote Micaiah on the cheek, and said, Which way went the spirit of the Lord from me to speak unto thee? ²⁵And Micaiah said, Behold, thou shalt see in that day, when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself.*

"Many will stand in our pulpits with the torch of false prophecy in their hands, kindled from the hellish torch of Satan. If doubts and unbelief are cherished, the faithful ministers will be removed from the people who think they know so much. 'If thou hadst known,' said Christ, 'even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.'" —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 409, 410.

"These false prophets will have to be met. They will make an effort to deceive many, by leading them to accept false theories. Many scriptures will be misapplied in such a way that deceptive theories will apparently be based upon the words that God has spoken. Precious truth will be appropriated to substantiate and establish error. These false prophets, who claim to be taught of God, will take beautiful scriptures that have been given to adorn the truth, and will use them as a robe of righteousness to cover false and dangerous theories. And even some of

those who, in times past, the Lord has honored, will depart so far from the truth as to advocate misleading theories regarding many phases of truth, including the sanctuary question." —*Evangelism*, p. 360.

MONDAY

2. What was King Ahab's opinion of what Micaiah prophesied? What wicked command did he give?

1 Kings 22:26, 27 *And the king of Israel said, Take Micaiah, and carry him back unto Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son; ²⁷And say, Thus saith the king, Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I come in peace.*

"Those who are loyal to God's law will not always find the way smooth. God has not promised His people exemption from trials, but He has promised that which is far better. He has said: 'As thy days, so shall thy strength be.' 'My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' 'The God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation.'" —*Signs of the Times*, March 3, 1890.

"In all ages Satan has persecuted the people of God. He has tortured them and put them to death, but in dying they became conquerors. They revealed in their steadfast faith a mightier One than Satan. Satan could torture and kill the body, but he could not touch the life that was hid with Christ in God. He could incarcerate in prison walls, but he could not bind the spirit. They could look beyond the gloom to the glory, saying, 'I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.' 'Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:17." —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 30.

TUESDAY

THE TRUE PROPHECY DESPISED

3. Certain of the prophecy that he had given to the king from the Lord, what did Micaiah say? What did his answer show?

1 Kings 22:28, first part *And Micaiah said, If thou return at all in peace, the Lord hath not spoken by me.*

"All that God has in prophetic history specified to be fulfilled in the past has been, and all that is yet to come in its order will be. Daniel, God's prophet, stands in his place. John stands in his place. In the Revelation the Lion of the tribe of Judah has opened to the students of prophecy the book of Daniel, and thus is Daniel standing in his place. He bears his testimony, that which the Lord revealed to him in vision of the great and solemn events which we must know as we stand on the very threshold of their fulfillment." —*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 109.

WEDNESDAY

4. What was revealed by the fact that Ahab proceeded with his plan, disguised himself, and went on the battlefield?

1 Kings 22:29, 30 *So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramothgilead. ³⁰And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise*

myself, and enter into the battle; but put thou on thy robes. And the king of Israel disguised himself, and went into the battle.

"The words of the prophet should have been enough to show the kings that their project was not favored by Heaven, but neither ruler felt inclined to heed the warning. Ahab had marked out his course, and he was determined to follow it. Jehoshaphat had given his word of honor, 'We will be with thee in the war;' and after making such a promise, he was reluctant to withdraw his forces. 2 Chronicles 18:3. 'So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth-gilead.' 1 Kings 22:29." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 196.

THURSDAY

THE CONSEQUENCES OF REBELLION

- 5. What enormous risk did Jehoshaphat take when he entered the battlefield against Syria? What promise did this faithful king of Judah see come to pass?**

1 Kings 22:31-33 *But the king of Syria commanded his thirty and two captains that had rule over his chariots, saying, Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel. ³²And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, Surely it is the king of Israel. And they turned aside to fight against him: and Jehoshaphat cried out. ³³And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots perceived that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him.*

Psalms 34:19, 20 *Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all. ²⁰He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.*

"We should keep our minds upon the love, the mercy, and the graciousness of our God.... It is no sign that Jesus has ceased to love us because we experience doubts and discouragements. Affliction comes to us in the providence of God in order that we may see that Christ is our Helper, that in Him is love and consolation. We may receive grace whereby we may be overcomers and inherit the life that measures with the life of God. We must have such an experience that when affliction comes upon us we shall not depart from the faith...." —*That I May Know Him*, p. 278.

FRIDAY

- 6. What occurred during the battle? What happened to Ahab that confirmed the prophecy that he had been given shortly before? What is inevitable when one deliberately goes against God's omniscient will?**

1 Kings 22:31, 34 *But the king of Syria commanded his thirty and two captains that had rule over his chariots, saying, Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel.... ³⁴And a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host; for I am wounded.*

Proverbs 6:27, 28 *Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? ²⁸Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?*

Galatians 6:7 *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*

"It is too late in the day for a superficial work. It is time to arise and shine, for the glory of God has risen upon you. It is too late to play into the hands of the enemy. The plowshare must go deep; the fallow ground must be broken up. We need to have our hearts broken. We need to feel how offensive is sin before God. We are to keep the heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." —*Review and Herald*, March 12, 1889.

SABBATH

- 7. What happened in this battle, thus ending Ahab's practice of ignoring God's prophets and trusting false prophets? What will happen to anyone who believes falsehood?**

1 Kings 22:35-38 *And the battle increased that day: and the king was stayed up in his chariot against the Syrians, and died at even: and the blood ran out of the wound into the midst of the chariot. ³⁶And there went a proclamation throughout the host about the going down of the sun, saying, Every man to his city, and every man to his own country. ³⁷So the king died, and was brought to Samaria; and they buried the king in Samaria. ³⁸And one washed the chariot in the pool of Samaria; and the dogs licked up his blood; and they washed his armour; according unto the word of the Lord which he spake.*

"Ben-hadad, king of Syria, had defeated the armies of Israel in the battle which resulted in the death of Ahab." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 244.

"During the battle that followed, Ahab was shot by an arrow, and at eventide he died. 'About the going down of the sun,' 'there went a proclamation throughout the host,' 'Every man to his city, and every man to his own country.' Verse 36. Thus was fulfilled the word of the prophet." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 196.

SABBATH

JESUS' EXAMPLE

- 8. Exactly the opposite of the rebellious, self-centered Ahab's actions, what did Jesus, God's Son, do? Following His example, what will be the desire and prayer of God's faithful followers?**

Psalms 40:8 *I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.*

Matthew 26:42 *He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.*

Philippians 2:8 *And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

Psalms 143:10 *Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.*

"He stepped down from His throne, He left His crown and royal scepter, and clothed His divinity with humanity. He humbled Himself even to the death of the cross, that man might be exalted to a seat with Him upon His throne. In Him we have a complete offering, an infinite sacrifice, a mighty Saviour, who is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. In love He comes to reveal the Father, to reconcile man to God, to make him a new creature renewed after the image of Him who created him." —*God's Amazing Grace*, p. 160.

“Willingly and cheerfully Christ gave Himself to the carrying out of the will of God. He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Shall we feel it a hardship to deny ourselves? Shall we draw back from being partakers of His sufferings?... As we think of what He has done for us, our hearts should be filled with love.” —*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 302.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

“From this disastrous battle Jehoshaphat returned to Jerusalem. As he approached the city, the prophet Jehu met him with the reproof: ‘shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord. Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God.’ 2 Chronicles 19:2, 3.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 196.

“The Lord knows all about His faithful servants who for His sake are lying in prison or who are banished to lonely islands. He comforts them with His own presence. When for the truth’s sake the believer stands at the bar of unrighteous tribunals, Christ stands by his side. All the reproaches that fall upon him, fall upon Christ. Christ is condemned over again in the person of His disciple. When one is incarcerated in prison walls, Christ ravishes the heart with His love. When one suffers death for His sake, Christ says, ‘I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore,... and have the keys of hell and of death.’ Revelation 1:18. The life that is sacrificed for Me is preserved unto eternal glory.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 669.

* * *

11

Sabbath, March 14, 2020

Impossible Circumstances

“God calls upon His faithful ones, who believe in Him, to talk courage to those who are unbelieving and hopeless. Turn to the Lord, ye prisoners of hope. Seek strength from God, the living God. Show an unwavering, humble faith in His power and His willingness to save. When in faith we take hold of His strength, He will change, wonderfully change, the most hopeless, discouraging outlook. He will do this for the glory of His name.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 260.

SUNDAY

A SEEMINGLY UNBELIEVABLE PROPHECY

- 1. What serious trouble threatened the inhabitants of Samaria when (around B.C. 844) the Syrians besieged the city? What did Elisha prophesy when the famine was affecting everyone and the small amount of food that was left was selling for exorbitant prices?**

2 Kings 6:24, 25; 7:1, 2 *And it came to pass after this, that Benhadad king of Syria gathered all his host, and went up, and besieged Samaria. ²⁵And there was a great famine in Samaria: and, behold, they besieged it, until an ass’s head was sold for*

fourscore pieces of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five pieces of silver....^{7:1} Then Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the Lord; Thus saith the Lord, To morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.² Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.

"For a time after this [after the Syrians sent to capture Elisha were struck with blindness], Israel was free from the attacks of the Syrians. But later, under the energetic direction of a determined king, Hazael, the Syrian hosts surrounded Samaria and besieged it. Never had Israel been brought into so great a strait as during this siege. The sins of the fathers were indeed being visited upon the children and the children's children. The horrors of prolonged famine were driving the king of Israel to desperate measures, when Elisha predicted deliverance the following day." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 258.

MONDAY

2. What did four starving lepers decide to do? What surprise met them in the Syrian camp?

2 Kings 7:3-7 *And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate: and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die? ⁴If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die. ⁵And they rose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Syrians: and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, there was no man there. ⁶For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us. ⁷Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life.*

"As the next morning was about to dawn, the Lord 'made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host;' and they, seized with fear, 'arose and fled in the twilight,' leaving 'their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was,' with rich stores of food. They 'fled for their life,' not tarrying until after the Jordan had been crossed.

"During the night of the flight, four leprous men at the gate of the city, made desperate by hunger, had proposed to visit the Syrian camp and throw themselves upon the mercy of the besiegers, hoping thereby to arouse sympathy and obtain food. What was their astonishment when, entering the camp, they found 'no man there.'" —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 258.

TUESDAY

GOOD NEWS—THE PROPHECY FULFILLED

3. What did they find? What did they know they had to do with the wonderful news?

2 Kings 7:8-10 *And when these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver, and gold, and*

raiment, and went and hid it; and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence also, and went and hid it. ⁹Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household. ¹⁰So they came and called unto the porter of the city: and they told them, saying, We came to the camp of the Syrians, and, behold, there was no man there, neither voice of man, but horses tied, and asses tied, and the tents as they were.

"With none to molest or forbid, 'they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it; and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence also, and went and hid it. Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace.' Quickly they returned to the city with the glad news." —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 258, 259.

"The dealings of God with His people often appear mysterious. His ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts. Many times His way of dealing is so contrary to our plans and expectations that we are amazed and confounded. We do not understand our perverse natures; and often when we are gratifying self, following our own inclinations, we flatter ourselves that we are carrying out the mind of God. And so we need to search the Scriptures, and be much in prayer, that, according to His promise, the Lord may give us wisdom." —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 503.

WEDNESDAY

4. **To whom was the news of the Syrians' departure delivered? Was he completely convinced that the Syrians had abandoned the camp?**

2 Kings 7:11-13 *And he called the porters; and they told it to the king's house within. ¹²And the king arose in the night, and said unto his servants, I will now show you what the Syrians have done to us. They know that we be hungry; therefore are they gone out of the camp to hide themselves in the field, saying, When they come out of the city, we shall catch them alive, and get into the city. ¹³And one of his servants answered and said, Let some take, I pray thee, five of the horses that remain, which are left in the city, (behold, they are as all the multitude of Israel that are left in it: behold, I say, they are even as all the multitude of the Israelites that are consumed:) and let us send and see.*

"The continual worry is wearing out the life forces. Our Lord desires them to lay aside this yoke of bondage. He invites them to accept His yoke; He says, 'My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.' He bids them seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and His promise is that all things needful to them for this life shall be added. Worry is blind, and cannot discern the future; but Jesus sees the end from the beginning. In every difficulty He has His way prepared to bring relief. Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us, of which we know nothing. Those who accept the one principle of making the service and honor of God supreme will find perplexities vanish, and a plain path before their feet." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 330.

THURSDAY

5. **What did he command to be done to be sure that the empty camp was not a trap? With what amazing confirmation did the investigators return?**

2 Kings 7:14, 15 *They took therefore two chariot horses; and the king sent after the host of the Syrians, saying, Go and see. ¹⁵And they went after them unto Jordan: and, lo, all the way was full of garments and vessels, which the Syrians had cast away in their haste. And the messengers returned, and told the king.*

“God had placed His people in Canaan as a mighty breastwork to stay the tide of moral evil, that it might not flood the world. If faithful to Him, God intended that Israel should go on conquering and to conquer. He would give into their hands nations greater and more powerful than the Canaanites. The promise was: ‘If ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you,... then will the Lord drive out all these nations from before you, and ye shall possess greater nations and mightier than yourselves. Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea shall your coast be. There shall no man be able to stand before you: for the Lord your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that ye shall tread upon, as He hath said unto you.’ Deuteronomy 11:22-25.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 544.

FRIDAY

6. What did the people thus receive in abundance? What message of Elisha came to pass exactly?

2 Kings 7:16 *And the people went out, and spoiled the tents of the Syrians. So a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the Lord.*

“Great was the spoil; so abundant were the supplies that on that day ‘a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel,’ as had been foretold by Elisha the day before. Once more the name of God was exalted before the heathen ‘according to the word of the Lord’ through His prophet in Israel. See 2 Kings 7:5-16.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 259.

SABBATH

THE RESULTS OF UNBELIEF

7. What happened to the lord who doubted and mocked Elisha’s prophecy? How did Jesus warn against doubting and finding fault with the Lord’s promises?

2 Kings 7:18-20 *And it came to pass as the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, Two measures of barley for a shekel, and a measure of fine flour for a shekel, shall be to morrow about this time in the gate of Samaria: ¹⁹And that lord answered the man of God, and said, Now, behold, if the Lord should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof. ²⁰And so it fell out unto him: for the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died.*

John 20:29 *Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

“Thus the man of God [Elisha] continued to labor from year to year, drawing close to the people in faithful ministry, and in times of crisis standing by the side of kings as a wise counselor. The long years of idolatrous backsliding on the part of rulers and people had wrought their baleful work; the dark shadow of apostasy was still everywhere apparent, yet here and there were those who had steadfastly

refused to bow the knee to Baal. As Elisha continued his work of reform, many were reclaimed from heathenism, and these learned to rejoice in the service of the true God. The prophet was cheered by these miracles of divine grace, and he was inspired with a great longing to reach all who were honest in heart. Wherever he was he endeavored to be a teacher of righteousness.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 259.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

“From a human point of view the outlook for the spiritual regeneration of the nation was as hopeless as is the outlook today before God’s servants who are laboring in the dark places of the earth. But the church of Christ is God’s agency for the proclamation of truth; she is empowered by Him to do a special work; and if she is loyal to God, obedient to His commandments, there will dwell within her the excellency of divine power. If she will be true to her allegiance, there is no power that can stand against her. The forces of the enemy will be no more able to overwhelm her than is the chaff to resist the whirlwind.

“There is before the church the dawn of a bright, glorious day, if she will put on the robe of Christ’s righteousness, withdrawing from all allegiance to the world.” —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 259, 260.

* * *

12

Sabbath, March 21, 2020

Jerusalem’s Deliverance from Siege

“Nothing more quickly inspires faith than the exercise of faith. The king of Judah had prepared for the coming storm; and now, confident that the prophecy against the Assyrians would be fulfilled, he stayed his soul upon God. ‘And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah.’ 2 Chronicles 32:8. What though the armies of Assyria, fresh from the conquest of the greatest nations of earth, and triumphant over Samaria in Israel, should now turn their forces against Judah? What though they should boast, ‘As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, and whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria; shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols?’ Isaiah 10:10, 11. Judah had nothing to fear; for their trust was in Jehovah.” —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 351, 352.

SUNDAY

THE ASSYRIAN CHALLENGE

- 1. What intimidating message did the Assyrian army captain shout out near Jerusalem? Besides King Hezekiah, against whom were these arrogant, contemptuous words directed?**

2 Kings 18:28-31 *Then Rabshakeh stood and cried with a loud voice in the Jews’ language, and spake, saying, Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria: ²⁹Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you out of his hand: ³⁰Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord, saying,*

The Lord will surely deliver us, and this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria. ³¹*Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me, and then eat ye every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his cistern.*

“Emboldened by their successes, the Ninevites had long since set aside the message of Jonah and had become defiant in their opposition to the purposes of Heaven. A few years after the fall of Samaria the victorious armies reappeared in Palestine, this time directing their forces against the fenced cities of Judah, with some measure of success; but they withdrew for a season because of difficulties arising in other portions of their realm. Not until some years later, toward the close of Hezekiah’s reign, was it to be demonstrated before the nations of the world whether the gods of the heathen were finally to prevail....

“Confident of victory, the leaders divided their forces into two armies, one of which was to meet the Egyptian army to the southward, while the other was to besiege Jerusalem.” —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 339, 352.

MONDAY

2. What did he claim would be of benefit to the people of Judah, even as he tried to bully them into accepting Assyrian power as superior to that of God?

2 Kings 18:32-35 *Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of oil olive and of honey, that ye may live, and not die: and hearken not unto Hezekiah, when he persuadeth you, saying, The Lord will deliver us.* ³³*Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?* ³⁴*Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand?* ³⁵*Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?*

“The boastful threat was accompanied by the message: ‘Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria. Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly: and shalt thou be delivered? Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed; as Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden which were in Thelasar? Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, of Hena, and Ivah?’ 2 Kings 19:10-13.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 355.

TUESDAY

COUNSEL AND HELP SOUGHT FROM GOD

3. Instead of reacting in the same spirit as the crass Assyrian, to whom did King Hezekiah, who had carried out many reforms in God’s name, appeal with all his heart?

2 Kings 19:1-4 *And it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the Lord.* ²*And he sent Eliakim, which was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet the son of*

Amos. ³And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth. ⁴It may be the Lord thy God will hear all the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God; and will reprove the words which the Lord thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that are left.

2 Chronicles 32:20 *And for this cause Hezekiah the king, and the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz, prayed and cried to Heaven.*

"A messenger was dispatched to Isaiah to inform him of the outcome of the conference. 'This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and blasphemy,' was the word the king sent. 'It may be the Lord thy God will hear all the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God; and will reprove the words which the Lord thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that are left.' Verses 3, 4....

"Judah's only hope was now in God. All possible help from Egypt had been cut off, and no other nations were near to lend a friendly hand." —Prophets and Kings, pp. 354, 352.

WEDNESDAY

- 4. Under circumstances that would make even the strongest leader despair, what did the Lord tell Isaiah to promise His distressed people?**

2 Kings 19:5-7 *So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah. ⁶And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say to your master, Thus saith the Lord, Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. ⁷Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and shall return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.*

Jeremiah 33:3 *Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.*

"God answered the prayers of His servants. To Isaiah was given the message for Hezekiah...." —Prophets and Kings, p. 354.

"We may be tested and proved, for God sees it best to put us under a course of discipline which is essential for us before we are fit subjects for the blessing we crave. We should not become discouraged and give way to doubt, and think that our prayers are not noticed. We should rely more securely upon Christ and leave our case with God to answer our prayers in His own way. God has not promised to bestow His blessings through the channels we have marked out. God is too wise to err and too regardful of our good to allow us to choose for ourselves." —The Upward Look, p. 109.

THURSDAY

- 5. What final attempt did the Assyrians make to try to weaken the courage of Hezekiah and his counselors?**

2 Kings 19:10-13 *Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria. ¹¹Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly: and shalt thou be delivered? ¹²Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed; as Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden which were*

in Thelasar? ¹³Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, of Hena, and Ivah?

"The Assyrian representatives, after taking leave of the chief men of Judah, communicated direct with their king, who was with the division of his army guarding the approach from Egypt. Upon hearing the report, Sennacherib wrote 'letters to rail on the Lord God of Israel, and to speak against Him, saying, As the gods of the nations of other lands have not delivered their people out of mine hand, so shall not the God of Hezekiah deliver His people out of mine hand.' 2 Chronicles 32:17." —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 354, 355.

FRIDAY

6. To whom did Hezekiah again turn with earnestness and complete trust? What may God's people today learn from this experience?

2 Kings 19:14-17, 19 *And Hezekiah received the letter of the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up into the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord. ¹⁵And Hezekiah prayed before the Lord, and said, O Lord God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth. ¹⁶Lord, bow down thine ear, and hear: open, Lord, thine eyes, and see: and hear the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent him to reproach the living God. ¹⁷Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands.... ¹⁹Now therefore, O Lord our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord God, even thou only.*

"When the king of Judah received the taunting letter, he took it into the temple and 'spread it before the Lord' and prayed with strong faith for help from heaven, that the nations of earth might know that the God of the Hebrews still lived and reigned. Verse 14. The honor of Jehovah was at stake; He alone could bring deliverance." —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 355, 356.

SABBATH

GOD'S PROMISE AND THE ASSYRIAN DEFEAT

7. What further reassurance did the Lord give His distressed people through the prophet Isaiah?

2 Kings 19:31-34 *For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this. ³²Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it. ³³By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord. ³⁴For I will defend this city, to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.*

"Hezekiah's pleadings in behalf of Judah and of the honor of their Supreme Ruler were in harmony with the mind of God.... Especially was the Lord to show favor when, in times of war or of oppression by an army, the chief men of Israel should enter the house of prayer and plead for deliverance. 1 Kings 8:33, 34.

"Hezekiah was not left without hope. Isaiah sent to him, saying, 'Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, That which thou hast prayed to Me against Sennacherib king of Assyria I have heard. This is the word that the Lord hath spoken concerning him:

“The virgin the daughter of Zion hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 359.

8. What was the outcome of this extreme test? Sooner or later, what will be the end of all who threaten God and His people? What lesson is there in this experience for God’s faithful followers?

2 Kings 19:35-37 *And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses. ³⁶So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh. ³⁷And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword: and they escaped into the land of Armenia. And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.*

“That very night deliverance came.... ‘All the mighty men of valor, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria,’ were slain. 2 Chronicles 32:21.

“Tidings of this terrible judgment upon the army that had been sent to take Jerusalem, soon reached Sennacherib, who was still guarding the approach to Judea from Egypt. Stricken with fear, the Assyrian king hastened to depart and ‘returned with shame of face to his own land.’ Verse 21. But he had not long to reign. In harmony with the prophecy that had been uttered concerning his sudden end, he was assassinated by those of his own home, ‘and Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.’ Isaiah 37:38.

“The God of the Hebrews had prevailed over the proud Assyrian. The honor of Jehovah was vindicated in the eyes of the surrounding nations. In Jerusalem the hearts of the people were filled with holy joy. Their earnest entreaties for deliverance had been mingled with confession of sin and with many tears. In their great need they had trusted wholly in the power of God to save, and He had not failed them. Now the temple courts resounded with songs of solemn praise.” —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 361, 362.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

“Judah was again and again to be invaded by the Assyrian armies, and Jerusalem was to suffer a siege that would have resulted in her downfall had not God miraculously interposed. Already grave perils were threatening the peace of the southern kingdom. The divine protection was being removed, and the Assyrian forces were about to overspread the land of Judah.

“But the dangers from without, overwhelming though they seemed, were not so serious as the dangers from within. It was the perversity of his people that brought to the Lord’s servant the greatest perplexity and the deepest depression. By their apostasy and rebellion those who should have been standing as light bearers among the nations were inviting the judgments of God. Many of the evils which were hastening the swift destruction of the northern kingdom, and which had recently been denounced in unmistakable terms by Hosea and Amos, were fast corrupting the kingdom of Judah.” —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 305, 306.

* * *

Warning to Hezekiah from Isaiah

“Those with whom we associate day by day need our help, our guidance. They may be in such a condition of mind that a word spoken in season will be as a nail in a sure place. Tomorrow some of these souls may be where we can never reach them again. What is our influence over these fellow travelers?”

“Every day of life is freighted with responsibilities which we must bear. Every day, our words and acts are making impressions upon those with whom we associate. How great the need that we set a watch upon our lips and guard carefully our steps! One reckless movement, one imprudent step, and the surging waves of some strong temptation may sweep a soul into the downward path. We cannot gather up the thoughts we have planted in human minds. If they have been evil, we may have set in motion a train of circumstances, a tide of evil, which we are powerless to stay.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 348.

SUNDAY

1. In about B.C. 721, who became the ruler in Judah? What do the Holy Scriptures report about his reign?

2 Kings 18:1, 3-5, 7 *Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign....³ And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father did.⁴ He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan.⁵ He trusted in the Lord God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him....⁷ And the Lord was with him; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth: and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not.*

“Hezekiah came to the throne determined to do all in his power to save Judah from the fate that was overtaking the northern kingdom. The messages of the prophets offered no encouragement to halfway measures. Only by most decided reformation could the threatened judgments be averted.

“In the crisis, Hezekiah proved to be a man of opportunity. No sooner had he ascended the throne than he began to plan and to execute. He first turned his attention to the restoration of the temple services, so long neglected; and in this work he earnestly solicited the cooperation of a band of priests and Levites who had remained true to their sacred calling. Confident of their loyal support, he spoke with them freely concerning his desire to institute immediate and far-reaching reforms. ‘Our fathers have trespassed,’ he confessed, ‘and done that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord our God, and have forsaken Him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the Lord.’ ‘Now it is in mine heart to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel, that His fierce wrath may turn away from us.’ 2 Chronicles 29:6, 10.” —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 331, 332.

THE KING'S ILLNESS AND FERVENT PRAYER**2. At the height of his activity for the benefit of Judah, what happened to Hezekiah? With what fervent prayer did he plead with the Lord?**

Isaiah 38:1-3 *In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live. ²Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the Lord, ³And said, Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.*

"In the midst of his prosperous reign King Hezekiah was suddenly stricken with a fatal malady. 'Sick unto death,' his case was beyond the power of man to help. And the last vestige of hope seemed removed when the prophet Isaiah appeared before him with the message, 'Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live.' Isaiah 38:1.

"The outlook seemed utterly dark; yet the king could still pray to the One who had hitherto been his 'refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.' Psalm 46:1." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 340.

TUESDAY**3. How did the Lord answer his plea through the prophet Isaiah?**

Isaiah 38:4, 5 *Then came the word of the Lord to Isaiah, saying, ⁵Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years.*

"He whose 'compassions fail not,' heard the prayer of His servant. Lamentations 3:22. 'It came to pass, afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the Lord came to him, saying, Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of My people, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the Lord. And I will add unto thy days fifteen years; and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for Mine own sake, and for My servant David's sake.' 2 Kings 20:4-6.

"Gladly the prophet returned with the words of assurance and hope. Directing that a lump of figs be laid upon the diseased part, Isaiah delivered to the king the message of God's mercy and protecting care." —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 341, 342.

WEDNESDAY**HUMAN PRIDE****4. As a result of the king's miraculous healing and the sign given to him by the Lord, who paid Hezekiah a visit? What did he show these foreign visitors?**

Isaiah 39:1, 2 *At that time Merodachbaladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah: for he had heard that he had been sick, and was recovered. ²And Hezekiah was glad of them, and showed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment,*

and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah showed them not.

"Their [the Babylonians'] king, Merodachbaladan,... sent ambassadors to Hezekiah to congratulate him on his recovery and to learn, if possible, more of the God who was able to perform so great a wonder.

"The visit of these messengers from the ruler of a far-away land gave Hezekiah an opportunity to extol the living God. How easy it would have been for him to tell them of God, the upholder of all created things, through whose favor his own life had been spared when all other hope had fled! What momentous transformations might have taken place had these seekers after truth from the plains of Chaldea been led to acknowledge the supreme sovereignty of the living God!

"But pride and vanity took possession of Hezekiah's heart, and in self-exaltation he laid open to covetous eyes the treasures with which God had enriched His people." —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 344, 345.

THURSDAY

5. After the foreigners left, what did the prophet Isaiah come and ask the king? What do the Scriptures say about the reason for and the results of this experience?

Isaiah 39:3, 4 *Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country unto me, even from Babylon. ⁴Then said he, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All that is in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not showed them.*

2 Chronicles 32:31, 25 *Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.... ²⁵But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem.*

"The visit of the ambassadors to Hezekiah was a test of his gratitude and devotion.... Had Hezekiah improved the opportunity given him to bear witness to the power, the goodness, the compassion, of the God of Israel, the report of the ambassadors would have been as light piercing darkness. But he magnified himself above the Lord of hosts. He 'rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up.' Verse 25." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 346.

FRIDAY

SEEDS OF DISASTER FOR THE FUTURE

6. What was prophesied would happen as a result of the avarice aroused in the hearts and minds of the pagan visitors because of Hezekiah's failure to glorify God?

Isaiah 39:5-7 *Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the Lord of hosts: ⁶Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the Lord. ⁷And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.*

“How disastrous the results which were to follow! To Isaiah it was revealed that the returning ambassadors were carrying with them a report of the riches they had seen, and that the king of Babylon and his counselors would plan to enrich their own country with the treasures of Jerusalem. Hezekiah had grievously sinned; ‘therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem.’ Verse 25.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 346.

SABBATH

- 7. How did Hezekiah receive this message? Even though God delayed the fulfillment of the prophecy, what happened to Judah? What did the people have to learn through severe trial, and how does this experience apply to God’s church now?**

Isaiah 39:8 *Then said Hezekiah to Isaiah, Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken. He said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days.*

2 Chronicles 32:26 *Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the Lord came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah.*

2 Kings 24:11, 13; 25:13-15 *And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, and his servants did besiege it.... ¹³And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king’s house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the Lord, as the Lord had said.... ^{25:13}And the pillars of brass that were in the house of the Lord, and the bases, and the brazen sea that was in the house of the Lord, did the Chaldees break in pieces, and carried the brass of them to Babylon. ¹⁴And the pots, and the shovels, and the snuffers, and the spoons, and all the vessels of brass wherewith they ministered, took they away. ¹⁵And the firepans, and the bowls, and such things as were of gold, in gold, and of silver, in silver, the captain of the guard took away.*

“Filled with remorse, ‘Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the Lord came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah.’ 2 Chronicles 32:26. But the evil seed had been sown and in time was to spring up and yield a harvest of desolation and woe. During his remaining years the king of Judah was to have much prosperity because of his steadfast purpose to redeem the past and to bring honor to the name of the God whom he served; yet his faith was to be severely tried, and he was to learn that only by putting his trust fully in Jehovah could he hope to triumph over the powers of darkness that were plotting his ruin and the utter destruction of his people.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 347.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

“The story of Hezekiah’s failure to prove true to his trust at the time of the visit of the ambassadors is fraught with an important lesson for all. Far more than we do, we need to speak of the precious chapters in our experience, of the mercy and loving-kindness of God, of the matchless depths of the Saviour’s love. When mind and heart are filled with the love of God, it will not be difficult to impart that which enters into the spiritual life. Great thoughts, noble aspirations, clear perceptions of truth, unselfish purposes, yearnings for piety and holiness, will find expression in words that reveal the character of the heart treasure....

"On the other hand, if by our example we aid others in the development of good principles, we give them power to do good. In their turn they exert the same beneficial influence over others. Thus hundreds and thousands are helped by our unconscious influence. The true follower of Christ strengthens the good purposes of all with whom he comes in contact. Before an unbelieving, sin-loving world he reveals the power of God's grace and the perfection of His character." —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 347, 348.

* * *

14

Sabbath, April 4, 2020

Opposition from One's Own Countrymen

"For forty years Jeremiah was to stand before the nation as a witness for truth and righteousness. In a time of unparalleled apostasy he was to exemplify in life and character the worship of the only true God. During the terrible sieges of Jerusalem he was to be the mouthpiece of Jehovah. He was to predict the downfall of the house of David and the destruction of the beautiful temple built by Solomon. And when imprisoned because of his fearless utterances, he was still to speak plainly against sin in high places. Despised, hated, rejected of men, he was finally to witness the literal fulfillment of his own prophecies of impending doom, and share in the sorrow and woe that should follow the destruction of the fated city." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 408.

SUNDAY

RESISTANCE AGAINST THE LORD'S PROPHET AND MESSAGES

1. Where did Jeremiah the prophet come from? Into what special group of people was he born?

Jeremiah 1:1, 2 *The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin: ²To whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign.*

"Among those who had hoped for a permanent spiritual revival as the result of the reformation under Josiah was Jeremiah, called of God to the prophetic office while still a youth, in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign. A member of the Levitical priesthood, Jeremiah had been trained from childhood for holy service. In those happy years of preparation he little realized that he had been ordained from birth to be 'a prophet unto the nations;' and when the divine call came, he was overwhelmed with a sense of his unworthiness. 'Ah, Lord God!' he exclaimed, 'behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.' Jeremiah 1:5, 6." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 407.

MONDAY

2. What did the Lord reveal to him? How deep were the plots of both influential and common people against him? How do God's faithful servants respond to such evils?

Jeremiah 11:18, 19 *And the Lord hath given me knowledge of it, and I know it: then thou showedst me their doings. ¹⁹But I was like a lamb or an ox that is brought to the slaughter; and I knew not that they had devised devices against me, saying, Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered.*

“The spirit of opposition to reproof, that led to the persecution and imprisonment of Jeremiah, exists today. Many refuse to heed repeated warnings, preferring rather to listen to false teachers who flatter their vanity and overlook their evil-doing. In the day of trouble such will have no sure refuge, no help from heaven. God’s chosen servants should meet with courage and patience the trials and sufferings that befall them through reproach, neglect, and misrepresentation. They should continue to discharge faithfully the work God has given them to do, ever remembering that the prophets of old and the Saviour of mankind and His apostles also endured abuse and persecution for the word’s sake.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 437.

TUESDAY

3. How intensely did Jeremiah’s fellow citizens despise him and his mission? What did they command him not to do, under threat of death?

Jeremiah 11:21 *Therefore thus saith the Lord of the men of Anathoth, that seek thy life, saying, Prophesy not in the name of the Lord, that thou die not by our hand.*

“The cities and villages constitute a part of that vineyard. These must be worked. Satan will try to interpose himself and discourage the workers, so as to prevent them from giving the message of light and warning in the more prominent as well as in the more secluded places....

“God designs that His precious word, with its messages of warning and encouragement, shall come to those who are in darkness and are ignorant of our faith. It is to be given to all, and will be to them a witness, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. Do not feel that the responsibility rests upon you to convict and convert the hearers. The power of God alone can soften the hearts of the people. You are to hold forth the word of life, that all may have an opportunity of receiving the truth if they will. If they turn from the truth of heavenly origin, it will be their condemnation.

“We must not hide the truth in the corners of the earth. It must be made known; it must shine in our large cities.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, pp. 34, 35.

WEDNESDAY

INVETERATE REBELLION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

4. What was going to happen to men because of their gross evil and failure to repent and seek God’s righteousness? How widespread is such evil, even among God’s people?

Jeremiah 11:22, 23 *Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, I will punish them: the young men shall die by the sword; their sons and their daughters shall die by famine: ²³And there shall be no remnant of them: for I will bring evil upon the men of Anathoth, even the year of their visitation.*

“Some have so long sacrificed principle that they cannot see the difference between the sacred and the common. Those who refuse to give heed to the Lord’s

instruction will go steadily downward in the path of ruin. The day of test and trial is just before us. Let every man put on his true colors. Do you choose loyalty or rebellion? Show your colors to men and angels. We are safe only when we are committed to the right. Then the world knows where we shall be found in the day of trial and trouble.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 96.

“As I saw the dreadful fact that God’s people were conformed to the world, with no distinction, except in name, between many of the professed disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus and unbelievers, my soul felt deep anguish. I saw that Jesus was wounded and put to an open shame. Said the angel, as with sorrow he saw the professed people of God loving the world, partaking of its spirit, and following its fashions: ‘Cut loose! Cut loose! lest He appoint you your portion with hypocrites and unbelievers outside the city. Your profession will only cause you greater anguish, and your punishment will be greater because ye knew His will, but did it not.’” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 133.

THURSDAY

- 5. Because of such evil thinking, what questions did the prophet ask God? What did the psalmist advise the righteous concerning such things, and why?**

Jeremiah 12:1, 2 *Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously? ²Thou hast planted them, yea, they have taken root: they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit: thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins.*

Psalms 37:7-11 *Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. ⁸Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. ⁹For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. ¹⁰For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. ¹¹But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.*

“‘The Lord is not slack concerning His promise.’ 2 Peter 3:9. He does not forget or neglect His children; but He permits the wicked to reveal their true character, that none who desire to do His will may be deceived concerning them. Again, the righteous are placed in the furnace of affliction, that they themselves may be purified; that their example may convince others of the reality of faith and godliness; and also that their consistent course may condemn the ungodly and unbelieving.

“God permits the wicked to prosper and to reveal their enmity against Him, that when they shall have filled up the measure of their iniquity all may see His justice and mercy in their utter destruction. The day of His vengeance hastens, when all who have transgressed His law and oppressed His people will meet the just recompense of their deeds; when every act of cruelty or injustice toward God’s faithful ones will be punished as though done to Christ Himself.” –*The Great Controversy*, p. 48.

FRIDAY

WORSE PERSECUTION AND NO SUPPORT FROM HIS BRETHREN

- 6. When one comes to the point of thinking that gross evil cannot possibly get worse, what do the words of Jeremiah and the apostle Paul show him? What will those who are righteous experience in the end?**

Jeremiah 12:5 *If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?*

Hebrews 12:3, 4 *For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. ⁴Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.*

“The Lord disciplines His workers, that they may be prepared to fill the places appointed them. He desires to fit them to do more acceptable service. There are those who wish to be a ruling power, and who need the sanctification of submission. God brings about a change in their lives. Perhaps He places before them duties that they would not choose. If they are willing to be guided by Him, He will give them grace and strength to perform these duties in a spirit of submission and helpfulness. Thus they are being qualified to fill places where their disciplined abilities will make them of great service.

“Some God trains by bringing to them disappointment and apparent failure.... Often men pray and weep because of the perplexities and obstacles that confront them. But if they will hold the beginning of their confidence steadfast unto the end, God will make their way clear. Success will come as they struggle against apparently insurmountable difficulties and with success will come the greatest joy.”
—*Gospel Workers*, p. 269.

SABBATH

7. How severe was the persecution against the prophet? Who made the same bitter experience at the hands of His family members and countrymen? What does everyone have to learn?

Jeremiah 12:6 *For even thy brethren, and the house of thy father, even they have dealt treacherously with thee; yea, they have called a multitude after thee: believe them not, though they speak fair words unto thee.*

Luke 4:24 *And he said, Verily, I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country.*

Mark 6:4 *But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.*

John 7:4, 5 *For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. ⁵If thou do these things, show thyself to the world. For neither did his brethren believe in him.*

“Even the common people, who were astonished at His miracles and charmed with His words of wisdom, pointed sneeringly at His origin. His own neighbors in His native town refused to accept Him as the Messiah, and refused to hear Him as a prophet of God. His own brothers did not believe in His being the Son of God. They became impatient that His life was without display and worldly honor. Even His own chosen disciples, notwithstanding their great respect for Him, their faith in His divinity, and [their belief] that He was the long-expected Messiah, reproved Him because He did not fulfill their expectations, and establish a temporal kingdom and exalt them to positions of honor.” —*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 8, p. 242.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

"Some can reach the highest standard of spirituality only through a change in the regular order of things. When in His providence God sees that changes are essential for the success of the character-building, He disturbs the smooth current of the life. He sees that a worker needs to be more closely associated with Him; and to bring this about, He separates him from friends and acquaintances." —*Gospel Workers*, pp. 269, 270.

"As Joseph was sold to the heathen by his own brothers, so Christ was sold to His bitterest enemies by one of His disciples. Joseph was falsely accused and thrust into prison because of his virtue: so Christ was despised and rejected because His righteous, self-denying life was a rebuke to sin; and though guilty of no wrong, He was condemned upon the testimony of false witnesses. And Joseph's patience and meekness under injustice and oppression, his ready forgiveness and noble benevolence toward his unnatural brothers, represent the Saviour's uncomplaining endurance of the malice and abuse of wicked men, and His forgiveness, not only of His murderers, but of all who have come to Him confessing their sins and seeking a pardon." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 239.

* * *

15

Sabbath, April 11, 2020

Jeremiah Faces Hananiah

"In view of the work of these false prophets, Jeremiah was directed by the Lord to write letters to the captains, elders, priests, prophets, and all the people who had been taken captive to Babylon, bidding them not to be deluded into believing their deliverance nigh, but to submit quietly, pursue their vocations, and make for themselves peaceful homes among their conquerors. The Lord bade them not to allow so-called prophets or diviners to deceive them with false expectations. Through His servant Jeremiah He assured them that after seventy years' bondage they should be delivered, and should return to Jerusalem. God would listen to their prayers and show them His favor, when they would turn to Him with all their hearts [Jeremiah 29:14 quoted]." —(*Review and Herald*, March 14, 1907) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1158.

SUNDAY

A FALSE PROPHET AND A FALSE MESSAGE

- 1. Around B.C. 594, who addressed the prophet Jeremiah in front of the priests and people?**

Jeremiah 28:1 *And it came to pass the same year, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year, and in the fifth month, that Hananiah the son of Azur the prophet, which was of Gibeon, spake unto me in the house of the Lord, in the presence of the priests and of all the people.*

"Prominent among those who presumed to gainsay the counsel of the Lord was Hananiah, one of the false prophets against whom the people had been

warned. Thinking to gain the favor of the king and of the royal court, he lifted his voice in protest, declaring that God had given him words of encouragement for the Jews." —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 444, 445.

MONDAY

2. What did he declare in the Lord's name? How forceful was he in claiming that his prophecies were from God? What motivated him?

Jeremiah 28:2-4 *Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. ³Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of the Lord's house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried them to Babylon: ⁴And I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah, that went into Babylon, saith the Lord: for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.*

"The amazement of the assembled council of nations knew no bounds when Jeremiah, carrying the yoke of subjection about his neck, made known to them the will of God. But Hananiah, one of the false prophets against whom God had warned His people through Jeremiah, lifted up his voice in opposition to the prophecy declared. Wishing to gain the favor of the king and his court, he affirmed that God had given him words of encouragement for the Jews. Said he: 'Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of the Lord's house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried them to Babylon: and I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah, that went into Babylon, saith the Lord: for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.'" —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 170.

TUESDAY

JEREMIAH COURAGEOUSLY RESISTS THE FALSE PROPHET

3. The prophet Jeremiah would have been pleased if the false prophet's messages were true, but what actions of the people made this impossible?

Jeremiah 28:5, 6 *Then the prophet Jeremiah said unto the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests, and in the presence of all the people that stood in the house of the Lord, ⁶Even the prophet Jeremiah said, Amen: the Lord do so: the Lord perform thy words which thou hast prophesied, to bring again the vessels of the Lord's house, and all that is carried away captive, from Babylon into this place.*

"Jeremiah, in the presence of all the priests and the people, said that it was the earnest wish of his heart that God would so favor His people that the vessels of the Lord's house might be returned and the captives brought back from Babylon; but this could only be done on condition that the people repented and turned from their evil way to the obedience of God's law. Jeremiah loved his country and ardently wished that the desolation predicted might be averted by the humiliation of the people, but he knew the wish was vain. He hoped the punishment of Israel would be as light as possible, therefore he earnestly entreated them to submit to the king of Babylon for the time that the Lord specified." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 170.

4. Therefore, what did he state clearly? What always determines whether or not a prophecy is true?

Jeremiah 28:7-9 *Nevertheless hear thou now this word that I speak in thine ears, and in the ears of all the people; ⁸The prophets that have been before me and before thee of old prophesied both against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pestilence. ⁹The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly sent him.*

Deuteronomy 18:22 *When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.*

“He entreated them to hear the words that he spoke. He cited them to the prophecies of Hosea, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and others whose messages of reproof and warning had been similar to his own. He referred them to events which had transpired in their history in fulfillment of the prophecies of retribution for unrepented sins. Sometimes, as in this case, men had arisen in opposition to the message of God and had predicted peace and prosperity to quiet the fears of the people and gain the favor of those in high places. But in every past instance the judgment of God had been visited upon Israel as the true prophets had indicated. Said he: ‘The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly sent him.’ If Israel chose to run the risk, future developments would effectually decide which was the false prophet.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 170, 171.

THURSDAY

5. Disregarding Jeremiah’s clear, principle-based answer, what did Hananiah do?

Jeremiah 28:10, 11 *Then Hananiah the prophet took the yoke from off the prophet Jeremiah’s neck, and brake it. ¹¹And Hananiah spake in the presence of all the people, saying, Thus saith the Lord; Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all nations within the space of two full years. And the prophet Jeremiah went his way.*

“But Hananiah, incensed at this, took the yoke from Jeremiah’s neck and broke it. ‘And Hananiah spake in the presence of all the people, saying, Thus saith the Lord; Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all nations within the space of two full years. And the prophet Jeremiah went his way.’ He had done his work; he had warned the people of their danger; he had pointed out the only course by which they could regain the favor of God. But though his only crime was that he had faithfully delivered the message of God to an unbelieving people, they had mocked his words, and men in responsible positions had denounced him and tried to arouse the people to put him to death.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 171.

FRIDAY

JEREMIAH PERSEVERES IN GIVING GOD’S MESSAGE

6. How did Jeremiah counteract the false prophet’s words and actions? What alone would keep the people from coming under the yoke of the Babylonians?

Jeremiah 28:12-14 *Then the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah the prophet, after that Hananiah the prophet had broken the yoke from off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, saying, ¹³Go and tell Hananiah, saying, Thus saith the Lord; Thou hast broken the yokes of wood; but thou shalt make for them yokes of iron. ¹⁴For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall serve him: and I have given him the beasts of the field also.*

Isaiah 55:6, 7 *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: ⁷Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

“God had said that His people should be saved, that the yoke He would lay upon them should be light, if they submitted uncomplainingly to His plan. Their servitude was represented by a yoke of wood, which was easily borne; but resistance would be met with corresponding severity, represented by the yoke of iron. God designed to hold the king of Babylon in check, that there should be no loss of life nor galling oppression; but by scorning His warning and commands they brought upon themselves the full rigor of bondage.... Had they had a proper sense of their disobedience they would have acknowledged the justice of the Lord’s course and recognized the authority of His prophet. God entreated them to repent, that He might spare them humiliation and that a people called by His name should not become tributary to a heathen nation; but they scoffed at His counsel and went after false prophets.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 172.

SABBATH

- 7. Since Hananiah insisted on confusing the people with lies, what did Jeremiah prophesy would happen to him? How soon did this come to pass? What essential lesson must God’s people learn today?**

Jeremiah 28:15-17 *Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah; The Lord hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. ¹⁶Therefore thus saith the Lord; Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the Lord. ¹⁷So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month.*

2 Chronicles 20:20, last part ... *Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.*

“This false prophet had strengthened the unbelief of the people in Jeremiah and his message. He had wickedly declared himself to be the Lord’s messenger, and he suffered death in consequence of his fearful crime. In the fifth month Jeremiah prophesied the death of Hananiah, and in the seventh month his death proved the words of the prophet true.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 171, 172.

“To the end of time, men will arise to create confusion and rebellion among the people who profess to obey the law of God. But as surely as divine judgment was visited upon the false prophets in Jeremiah’s day, so surely will the evil workers of today receive their full measure of retribution, for the Lord has not changed. Those who prophesy lies, encourage men to look upon sin as a light thing. When

the terrible results of their evil deeds are made manifest, they seek, if possible, to make the one who has faithfully warned them responsible for their difficulties, even as the Jews charged Jeremiah with their evil fortunes.” —(*Review and Herald*, March 14, 1907) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1158.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

“Those who pursue a course of rebellion against the Lord can always find false prophets who will justify them in their acts, and flatter them to their destruction. Lying words often make many friends, as is illustrated in the case of these false teachers among the Israelites. These so-called prophets, in their pretended zeal for God, found many more believers and followers than the true prophet who delivered the simple message of the Lord.” —(*Review and Herald*, March 14, 1907) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1158.

* * *

16

Sabbath, April 18, 2020

False Claims and Tests of the Prophets

“In these days of peril we are not to accept everything that men bring to us as truth. As professed teachers from God come to us declaring that they have a message from God, it is proper to inquire carefully, How do we know that this is truth? Jesus has told us that ‘false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.’ Matthew 24:11. But we need not be deceived; for the word of God gives us a test whereby we may know what is truth. The prophet says, ‘To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.’ Isaiah 8:20.” —*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 99.

SUNDAY

THE LORD SEES AND WARNS ABOUT FALSE PROPHETS

- 1. What do the Scriptures tell about the false prophets of Jeremiah’s day? What did the Lord say would be the consequence of their great wickedness?**

Jeremiah 23:9, first part, 11, 12 *Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets;... ¹¹For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the Lord. ¹²Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness: they shall be driven on, and fall therein: for I will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation, saith the Lord.*

“Through Jeremiah the Lord had declared of the wicked men who presumptuously dared to stand before the people in His name: ‘Both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in My house have I found their wickedness.’ Jeremiah 23:11. In the terrible arraignment of Judah as recorded in the closing narrative of the chronicler of Zedekiah’s reign, this charge of violating the sanctity of the temple was repeat-

ed. 'Moreover,' the sacred writer declared, 'all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the Lord which He had hallowed in Jerusalem.' 2 Chronicles 36:14." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 449.

MONDAY

- 2. What else do the Scriptures say about false prophets in Samaria and Jerusalem? What clear instruction did the Lord give to the people even if so-called prophets claimed that they were His spokespersons?**

Jeremiah 23:13-16 *And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied in Baal, and caused my people Israel to err. ¹⁴I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah. ¹⁵Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts concerning the prophets; Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land. ¹⁶Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord.*

"Jesus has raised His voice in warning: 'Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits.' Matthew 7:15, 16. 'Thus saith the Lord of hosts, hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord.' Jeremiah 23:16. 'If any man shall say to you, Lo here is Christ, or lo, he is there, believe him not; for false Christs and false prophets shall arise, and shall shew signs and wonders to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. But take ye heed; behold, I have foretold you all things.' Mark 13:21-23." —*Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 341.

"Those who hold the truth in righteousness will arouse, and put on the gospel shoes. Their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, they will make no false paths in which the lame would be turned out of the way." —*This Day with God*, p. 311.

TUESDAY

- 3. What did the imposters prophesy to gain the people's favor? How can one distinguish between what is true and what is false?**

Jeremiah 23:17, 18, 21, 22 *They say still unto them that despise me, The Lord hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you. ¹⁸For who hath stood in the counsel of the Lord, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word, and heard it?... ²¹I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. ²²But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings.*

"The leadings of the Lord were marked, and most wonderful were His revelations of what is truth. Point after point was established by the Lord God of heaven. That which was truth then, is truth today. But the voices do not cease to be heard—'This is truth. I have new light.' But these new lights in prophetic lines are manifest

in misapplying the word and setting the people of God adrift without an anchor to hold them. If the student of the word would take the truths which God has revealed in the leadings of His people, and appropriate these truths, digest them, and bring them into their practical life, they would then be living channels of light. But those who have set themselves to study out new theories, have a mixture of truth and error combined, and after trying to make these things prominent, have demonstrated that they have not kindled their taper from the divine altar, and it has gone out in darkness.” —*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 104.

WEDNESDAY

TESTS TO BE APPLIED TO PROPHETS

4. Even if a person claims to have received a message in a dream, what principle should one apply to test the claim? How does this apply not just to dreams but also to messages?

Jeremiah 23:25-27 *I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. ²⁶How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart; ²⁷Which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal.*

“Literary societies are almost universally exerting an influence contrary to that which the name indicates. As generally conducted they are an injury to the youth, for Satan comes in to put his stamp upon the exercises. All that makes men manly or women womanly is reflected from the character of Christ. The less we have of Christ in such societies, the less we have of the elevating, refining, ennobling element which should prevail. When worldlings conduct these meetings to meet their wishes, the spirit of Christ is excluded. The mind is drawn away from serious reflection, away from God, away from the real and substantial, to the imaginary and the superficial. Literary societies—would that the name expressed their true character! What is the chaff to the wheat?” —*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 541.

THURSDAY

5. What is another test that one can apply to an assumed prophet and his message? What should be one’s attitude toward a person whose prophecy is not fulfilled?

Jeremiah 23:28, 29; 28:9 *The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. ²⁹Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?... ^{28:9}The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly sent him.*

Deuteronomy 18:22 *When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.*

“The judgments of God are soon to be poured out upon the earth. ‘Escape for thy life’ is the warning from the angels of God. Other voices are heard saying: ‘Do not become excited; there is no cause for special alarm.’ Those who are at ease in

Zion cry, 'Peace and safety,' while heaven declares that swift destruction is about to come upon the transgressor. The young, the frivolous, the pleasure loving, consider these warnings as idle tales and turn from them with a jest." —*Conflict and Courage*, p. 53.

"Those who prophesy lies will encourage men to look upon sin as a light thing. When the terrible results of their evil deeds are made manifest, they will seek, if possible, to make the one who has faithfully warned them, responsible for their difficulties, even as the Jews charged Jeremiah with their evil fortunes. But as surely as the words of Jehovah through His prophet were vindicated anciently, so surely will the certainty of His messages be established today." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 442.

FRIDAY

6. Over and above the fulfillment of a prophecy, what is an even greater test to apply to a prophet and his message? If his messages and life do not agree with God's law, what can be known about that so-called prophet?

Deuteronomy 13:1-4 *If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, ²And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; ³Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. ⁴Ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.*

Matthew 7:16-20 *Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? ¹⁷Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. ¹⁸A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. ²⁰Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.*

"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isaiah 8:20. The people of God are directed to the Scriptures as their safeguard against the influence of false teachers and the delusive power of spirits of darkness. Satan employs every possible device to prevent men from obtaining a knowledge of the Bible; for its plain utterances reveal his deceptions." —*Darkness Before Dawn*, p. 36.

"From this statement it is evident that it becomes us to be diligent Bible students, that we may know what is according to the law and the testimony. We are safe in no other course of action. Jesus says, 'Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.' Matthew 7:15-19." —*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 99.

SABBATH

KNOW AND FOLLOW THE SCRIPTURES

7. What will be the end of all who preach human messages and claim that they come from God? To what must every Christian adhere strictly in his preaching and teaching?

Jeremiah 23:30-33 *Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that steal my words every one from his neighbour. ³¹Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their tongues, and say, He saith. ³²Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord. ³³And when this people, or the prophet, or a priest, shall ask thee, saying, What is the burden of the Lord? thou shalt then say unto them, What burden? I will even forsake you, saith the Lord.*

Isaiah 8:20 *To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.*

John 5:39 *Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.*

“There are persons who believe that they are right, when they are wrong. While claiming Christ as their Lord, and professedly doing great works in His name, they are workers of iniquity. ‘With their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.’ He who declares God’s word is to them ‘as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear Thy words, but they do them not.’ Ezekiel 33:31, 32....

“Obedience is the test of discipleship. It is the keeping of the commandments that proves the sincerity of our professions of love. When the doctrine we accept kills sin in the heart, purifies the soul from defilement, bears fruit unto holiness, we may know that it is the truth of God. When benevolence, kindness, tender-heartedness, sympathy, are manifest in our lives; when the joy of right doing is in our hearts; when we exalt Christ, and not self, we may know that our faith is of the right order. ‘Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.’ 1 John 2:3.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 146, 147.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

“The truths that have been unfolding in their order, as we have advanced along the line of prophecy revealed in the Word of God, are truth, sacred, eternal truth today. Those who passed over the ground step by step in the past history of our experience, seeing the chain of truth in the prophecies, were prepared to accept and obey every ray of light. They were praying, fasting, searching, digging for the truth as for hidden treasures, and the Holy Spirit, we know, was teaching and guiding us. Many theories were advanced, bearing a semblance of truth, but so mingled with misinterpreted and misapplied scriptures, that they led to dangerous errors. Very well do we know how every point of truth was established, and the seal set upon it by the Holy Spirit of God. And all the time voices were heard, ‘Here is the truth,’ ‘I have the truth; follow me.’ But the warnings came, ‘Go not ye after them. I have not sent them, but they ran.’ (See Jeremiah 23:21.)” —*Selected Messages*, book 2, pp. 103, 104.

* * *

Please read the Missionary Report from Ecuador on page 84.

Conspiracy and the Temple Foundation

“Throughout the history of God’s people great mountains of difficulty, apparently insurmountable, have loomed up before those who were trying to carry out the purposes of Heaven. Such obstacles are permitted by the Lord as a test of faith. When we are hedged about on every side, this is the time above all others to trust in God and in the power of His Spirit. The exercise of a living faith means an increase of spiritual strength and the development of an unfaltering trust. It is thus that the soul becomes a conquering power. Before the demand of faith, the obstacles placed by Satan across the pathway of the Christian will disappear; for the powers of heaven will come to his aid. ‘Nothing shall be impossible unto you.’ Matthew 17:20.” —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 594, 595.

SUNDAY

THE DECREE TO GO BACK TO JERUSALEM AND REBUILD THE TEMPLE

1. **By divine providence and in fulfillment of prophecy, what decree did Cyrus the Great make in the first year of his reign (B.C. 538/537)?**

Ezra 1:1-4 *Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, ²Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. ³Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. ⁴And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.*

“Conditions were now changed. In tender mercy the Lord had again visited His people and allowed them to return to their own land. Sadness because of the mistakes of the past should have given way to feelings of great joy. God had moved upon the heart of Cyrus to aid them in rebuilding the temple, and this should have called forth expressions of profound gratitude. But some failed of discerning God’s opening providences. Instead of rejoicing, they cherished thoughts of discontent and discouragement. They had seen the glory of Solomon’s temple, and they lamented because of the inferiority of the building now to be erected.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 564.

MONDAY

2. **Who joined together to return to Jerusalem and build the Lord’s house? In response to the king’s decree, what did their neighbors give them?**

Ezra 1:5-7 *Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build*

the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem. ⁶And all they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was willingly offered. ⁷Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods.

“The chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised—these were the goodly remnant, about fifty thousand strong, from among the Jews in the lands of exile, who determined to take advantage of the wonderful opportunity offered them ‘to go up to build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem.’ Their friends did not permit them to go empty-handed. ‘All they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things.’ And to these and many other voluntary offerings were added ‘the vessels of the house of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem;... even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer,... five thousand and four hundred’ in number, for use in the temple that was to be rebuilt. Ezra 1:5-11.” —Prophets and Kings, p. 559.

TUESDAY

THOROUGH PLANNING DESPITE OPPOSITION

3. What was necessary before the work could proceed? In what year did the construction of the Lord’s house begin? Who were present when the foundation was laid?

Ezra 3:6, last part, - 10 ... *But the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid. ⁷They gave money also unto the masons, and to the carpenters; and meat, and drink, and oil, unto them of Zidon, and to them of Tyre, to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea of Joppa, according to the grant that they had of Cyrus king of Persia. ⁸Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, began Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the remnant of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all they that were come out of the captivity unto Jerusalem; and appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to set forward the work of the house of the Lord. ⁹Then stood Jeshua with his sons and his brethren, Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, together, to set forward the workmen in the house of God: the sons of Henadad, with their sons and their brethren the Levites. ¹⁰And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the Lord, after the ordinance of David king of Israel.*

“The workmen engaged in the preparation of the building material, found among the ruins some of the immense stones brought to the temple site in the days of Solomon. These were made ready for use, and much new material was provided; and soon the work was advanced to the point where the foundation stone must be laid. This was done in the presence of many thousands who had assembled to witness the progress of the work and to give expression to their joy in having a part in it. While the cornerstone was being set in position, the people, accompanied by the trumpets of the priests and the cymbals of the sons of Asaph, ‘sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because He is good, for His mercy endureth forever toward Israel.’ Verse 11.” —Prophets and Kings, p. 563.

4. What did the representatives of the local population, whom the Assyrians had relocated to this territory decades before, ask for?

Ezra 4:1, 2 *Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the Lord God of Israel; ²Then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither.*

"When the temple at Jerusalem was rebuilt in the days of Ezra, the Samaritans wished to join the Jews in its erection. This privilege was refused them, and a bitter animosity sprang up between the two peoples. The Samaritans built a rival temple on Mount Gerizim. Here they worshiped in accordance with the Mosaic ritual, though they did not wholly renounce idolatry. But disasters attended them, their temple was destroyed by their enemies, and they seemed to be under a curse; yet they still clung to their traditions and their forms of worship. They would not acknowledge the temple at Jerusalem as the house of God, nor admit that the religion of the Jews was superior to their own." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 188.

THURSDAY

5. What answer did Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the other leaders of the people give to this request? Why?

Ezra 4:3 *But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us.*

"Zerubbabel and his associates were familiar with these and many like scriptures; and in the recent captivity they had evidence after evidence of their fulfillment. And now, having repented of the evils that had brought upon them and their fathers the judgments foretold so plainly through Moses; having turned with all the heart to God, and renewed their covenant relationship with Him, they had been permitted to return to Judea, that they might restore that which had been destroyed. Should they, at the very beginning of their undertaking, enter into a covenant with idolaters?

"'Thou shalt make no covenant with them,' God had said; and those who had recently rededicated themselves to the Lord at the altar set up before the ruins of His temple, realized that the line of demarcation between His people and the world is ever to be kept unmistakably distinct. They refused to enter into alliance with those who, though familiar with the requirements of God's law, would not yield to its claims." —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 569, 570.

FRIDAY

UNRELENTING ATTACKS AND THEIR EFFECTS

6. How did the people of the country react? How far did they go in their resistance to God's purposes?

Ezra 4:4-7 *Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, ⁵And hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia. ⁶And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote*

they unto him an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.⁷ And in the days of Artaxerxes wrote Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of their companions, unto Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the writing of the letter was written in the Syrian tongue, and interpreted in the Syrian tongue.

"In rebuilding the house of the Lord, Zerubbabel had labored in the face of manifold difficulties. From the beginning, adversaries had 'weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building,' 'and made them to cease by force and power.' Ezra 4:4, 23. But the Lord had interposed in behalf of the builders, and now He spoke through His prophet to Zerubbabel, saying, 'Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it.' Zechariah 4:7." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 594.

SABBATH

7. Because of their evil insinuations and influence on King Artaxerxes, what did he order? Contrary to the will and decree of Cyrus, what was stopped in Jerusalem and remained suspended for years?

Ezra 4:8, 21-24 *Rehum the chancellor and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king:...*²¹*Give ye now commandment to cause these men to cease, and that this city be not builded, until another commandment shall be given from me.*²²*Take heed now that ye fail not to do this: why should damage grow to the hurt of the kings?*²³*Now when the copy of king Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum, and Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem unto the Jews, and made them to cease by force and power.*²⁴*Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.*

"The opposition of their enemies was strong and determined, and gradually the builders lost heart. Some could not forget the scene at the laying of the cornerstone, when many had given expression to their lack of confidence in the enterprise. And as the Samaritans grew more bold, many of the Jews questioned whether, after all, the time had come to rebuild. The feeling soon became widespread. Many of the workmen, discouraged and disheartened, returned to their homes to take up the ordinary pursuits of life.

"During the reign of Cambyses the work on the temple progressed slowly. And during the reign of the false Smerdis (called Artaxerxes in Ezra 4:7) the Samaritans induced the unscrupulous impostor to issue a decree forbidding the Jews to rebuild their temple and city." —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 572, 573.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

"Such were the conditions existing during the early part of the reign of Darius Hystaspes. Spiritually as well as temporally, the Israelites were in a pitiable state. So long had they murmured and doubted; so long had they chosen to make personal interests first, while viewing with apathy the Lord's temple in ruins, that many had lost sight of God's purpose in restoring them to Judea; and these were saying, 'The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built.' Hag-gai 1:2." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 573.

"Just as long as we are in this world, and the Spirit of God is striving with the world, we are to receive as well as to impart favors. We are to give to the world the light of truth as presented in the Sacred Scriptures, and we are to receive from the

world that which God moves upon them to do in behalf of His cause. The Lord still moves upon the hearts of kings and rulers in behalf of His people, and it becomes those who are so deeply interested in the religious liberty question not to cut off any favors, or withdraw themselves from the help that God has moved men to give, for the advancement of His cause.

“We find examples in the word of God concerning this very matter. Cyrus, king of Persia, made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it into writing. A second commandment was issued by Darius for the building of the house of the Lord, and is recorded in the sixth chapter of Ezra.” —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 202, 203.

* * *

MISSIONARY REPORT

from Ecuador

To be read on Sabbath, April 25, 2020

***The Special Sabbath School Offering
will be gathered on Sabbath, May 2, 2020***

Greetings from Ecuador with Jeremiah 17:7, 8: *“Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.”*

On this occasion we want to share with you the work being done at the ELIM School, located in the city of Guayaquil, which opened in April 2005 to provide basic education integrating faith and hope for children and their families. This work began by faith and with the support of several local families that dared to dream of expanding God’s work through the education of children.

In 2007, the school was accredited and secured all operating permits; it is in compliance with all legal requirements. At the beginning of the 2005-2006 school year, a total of 37 boys and girls were enrolled, and that number grew to 57 by the end of the year. The following school year, 90 students enrolled, and the number has continued to grow every year. Our best advertising has been the testimonies of the children and families who leave the school with great longing. We currently have 185 students.

However, our dreams continue, for several times we have had to turn students away because of lack of capacity. This has mainly affected those who are just beginning and preparing for further study, and these are the classes requested most often. We are sure this demand will continue in the coming years and the students’ hearts will be touched as they learn to know God and His great love and are blessed with the knowledge of the wonderful plan of salvation.

The Spirit of prophecy writes: “While we should put forth earnest efforts for the masses of the people around us, and push the work into foreign fields, no amount of labor in this line can excuse us for neglecting the education of our chil-

dren and youth.... Both parents and teachers, by precept and example, are so to instill the principles of truth and honesty into the minds and hearts of the young that they will become men and women who are true as steel to God and His cause.” —*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 165.

Each day at the school begins with morning worship. Christian education is not only a subject but is the common thread woven into each class. Every Thursday, we hold a children’s worship service in the church, where the children praise God in different ways and the older ones give short presentations from the Bible. These events are attended by the students’ parents, so we take advantage of the opportunity to share topics about the family with them, as presented by ministers. In addition, professional psychologists give family and spiritual counseling. To expand our activities, children’s evangelistic series are conducted, and open houses are held, at which the students’ work is presented, along with health reform topics on food and natural remedies.

The name “ELIM” is of great significance in the Bible, for that was where God’s people found refreshment, water, and seventy palm trees. Today, this “ELIM” is a refreshment for students in our country. The school has a number of needs, and the enemy of all goodness has tried several times to hinder its progress to the point of thinking that the school would have to be closed. But with God’s blessings we have been able to overcome the obstacles and move forward, claiming the Lord’s promise in 2 Corinthians 12:9: “My grace is sufficient for thee.”

We invite you to participate in this “ELIM” school project so that we can continue to provide this service and at the same time to take advantage of the opportunity to evangelize children and their families on a broad scale. Your financial contribution will help us to improve the classrooms, construct additional facilities to continue this educational work, and to update the furniture and equipment, such as desks, chalkboards, etc.

“In the closing scenes of this earth’s history many of these children and youth will astonish people by their witness to the truth, which will be borne in simplicity, yet with spirit and power. They have been taught the fear of the Lord, and their hearts have been softened by a careful and prayerful study of the Bible. In the near future many children will be endued with the Spirit of God, and will do a work in proclaiming the truth to the world, that at that time cannot well be done by the older members of the church.” —*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, pp. 166, 167.

“The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.” Proverbs 11:25. Thank you for your generous donations. We pray that God will prosper them all and make them as a mighty river that flows out in blessings to many children and families.

We pray that you will receive our great love.

—The brothers and sisters of the Ecuadorian Field

**SPECIAL SABBATH SCHOOL OFFERING FOR
ECUADOR**

God bless your devoted service and generosity!

18

Sabbath, May 2, 2020

The Temple Completed Despite Enemy Opposition

“Human power and human might did not establish the church of God, and neither can they destroy it. Not on the rock of human strength, but on Christ Jesus, the Rock of Ages, was the church founded, ‘and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.’ Matthew 16:18. The presence of God gives stability to His cause. ‘Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man,’ is the word that comes to us. Psalm 146:3. ‘In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.’ Isaiah 30:15. God’s glorious work, founded on the eternal principles of right, will never come to nought. It will go on from strength to strength, ‘not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.’ Zechariah 4:6.” —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 595, 596.

SUNDAY

THE BUILDING RESUMED AND THREATENED

- 1. Around B.C. 520, how did the Lord encourage His people through His prophets?**

Ezra 5:1, 2 *Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them. ²Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem: and with them were the prophets of God helping them.*

“But even this dark hour was not without hope for those whose trust was in God. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah were raised up to meet the crisis. In stirring testimonies these appointed messengers revealed to the people the cause of their troubles. The lack of temporal prosperity was the result of a neglect to put God’s interests first, the prophets declared. Had the Israelites honored God, had they shown Him due respect and courtesy, by making the building of His house their first work, they would have invited His presence and blessing.” —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 573, 574.

2. What did the adversaries do to try to stop the work again? According to the Spirit of prophecy, how should opponents of the Lord's work be dealt with?

Ezra 5:3-5 *At the same time came to them Tatnai, governor on this side the river, and Shetharboznai, and their companions, and said thus unto them, Who hath commanded you to build this house, and to make up this wall?⁴ Then said we unto them after this manner, What are the names of the men that make this building?⁵ But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they could not cause them to cease, till the matter came to Darius: and then they returned answer by letter concerning this matter.*

"The course of Christ in dealing even with the adversary of souls should be an example to us in all our intercourse with others never to bring a railing accusation against any; much less should we employ harshness or severity toward those who may be as anxious to know the right way as we are ourselves." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 240.

"Take heed,' first to yourself, and then to the doctrine. Do not let your heart become hardened by sin. Closely examine your manners and habits. Compare them with the word of God, and then cut away from the life every wrong habit and indulgence. Kneel before God, and plead with Him for an understanding of His word. Be sure that you know the real principles of the truth; and then when you meet opponents, it will not be in your own strength; an angel of God will stand by your side, to help in answering every question that may be asked. Day by day you are to be shut in, as it were, with Jesus; and then your words and example will have a strong influence for good." —*Gospel Workers*, p. 105.

3. Who wrote a letter to the king concerning this, and what logical, balanced points did the message contain?

Ezra 5:17 *Now therefore, if it seem good to the king, let there be search made in the king's treasure house, which is there at Babylon, whether it be so, that a decree was made of Cyrus the king to build this house of God at Jerusalem, and let the king send his pleasure to us concerning this matter.*

"The messages delivered by Haggai and Zechariah roused the people to put forth every possible effort for the rebuilding of the temple; but, as they worked, they were sadly harassed by the Samaritans and others who devised many hindrances. On one occasion the provincial officers of the Medo-Persian realm visited Jerusalem and requested the name of the one who had authorized the restoration of the building. If at that time the Jews had not been trusting in the Lord for guidance, this inquiry might have resulted disastrously to them. 'But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they could not cause them to cease, till the matter came to Darius.' Ezra 5:5. The officers were answered so wisely that they decided to write a letter to Darius Hystaspes, then the ruler of Medo-Persia, directing his attention to the original decree made by Cyrus, which commanded that the house of God at Jerusalem be rebuilt, and that the expenses for the same be paid from the king's treasury." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 578.

4. What was the result of this letter? What may be learned from this incident and be applied whenever obstacles or difficulties arise in God's cause?

Ezra 6:1-4 *Then Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in the house of the rolls, where the treasures were laid up in Babylon. ²And there was found at Achmetha, in the palace that is in the province of the Medes, a roll, and therein was a record thus written: In the first year of Cyrus the king the same Cyrus the king made a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, ³Let the house be builded, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid; the height thereof threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof threescore cubits; ⁴With three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber: and let the expenses be given out of the king's house.*

DARIUS' DECREE TO CONTINUE BUILDING

5. What wonderful change took place because of King Darius' carefulness and support? What was particularly remarkable about the king's command regarding the opponents of the temple construction and of God's people?

Ezra 6:6-9, 11, 12 *Now therefore, Tatnai, governor beyond the river, Shetharboznai, and your companions the Apharsachites, which are beyond the river, be ye far from thence: ⁷Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in his place. ⁸Moreover I make a decree what ye shall do to the elders of these Jews for the building of this house of God: that of the king's goods, even of the tribute beyond the river, forthwith expenses be given unto these men, that they be not hindered. ⁹And that which they have need of, both young bullocks, and rams, and lambs, for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the appointment of the priests which are at Jerusalem, let it be given them day by day without fail:... ¹¹Also I have made a decree, that whosoever shall alter this word, let timber be pulled down from his house, and being set up, let him be hanged thereon; and let his house be made a dunghill for this. ¹²And the God that hath caused his name to dwell there destroy all kings and people, that shall put to their hand to alter and to destroy this house of God which is at Jerusalem. I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with speed.*

"Darius searched for this decree, and found it; whereupon he directed those who had made the inquiry to allow the rebuilding of the temple to proceed. 'Let the work of this house of God alone,' he commanded; 'let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in his place.'" —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 579.

6. What impetus did this give to the work of construction? What did the authorities do immediately?

Ezra 6:13 *Then Tatnai, governor on this side the river, Shetharboznai, and their companions, according to that which Darius the king had sent, so they did speedily.*

"The king further decreed that severe penalties be meted out to those who should in any wise alter the decree; and he closed with the remarkable statement: 'The God that hath caused His name to dwell there destroy all kings and people, that shall put to their hand to alter and to destroy this house of God which is at Jerusalem. I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with the speed.' Verse 12. Thus the Lord prepared the way for the completion of the temple." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 579.

SABBATH

7. Because of the Lord's great help and power, what occurred in B.C. 515? Explain what God's people today especially need to learn from this experience.

Ezra 6:15, 16 *And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king. ¹⁶And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy.*

"The promise, 'The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it,' was literally fulfilled. Verse 9. 'The elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia. And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar [the twelfth month], which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.' Ezra 6:14, 15.

"Shortly afterward the restored temple was dedicated. 'The children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy;' and 'upon the fourteenth day of the first month' they 'kept the Passover.' Verses 16, 17, 19." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 596.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

"It is not the open and avowed enemies of the cause of God that are most to be feared. Those who, like the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin, come with smooth words and fair speeches, apparently seeking for friendly alliance with God's children, have greater power to deceive. Against such every soul should be on the alert, lest some carefully concealed and masterly snare take him unaware. And especially today, while earth's history is closing, the Lord requires of His children a vigilance that knows no relaxation. But though the conflict is a ceaseless one, none are left to struggle alone. Angels help and protect those who walk humbly before God. Never will our Lord betray one who trusts in Him. As His children draw near to Him for protection from evil, in pity and love He lifts up for them a standard against the enemy. Touch them not, He says; for they are Mine. I have graven them upon the palms of My hands." —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 570, 571.

* * *

Reconstruction, Vigilance, and Defense

“The people in general were animated with one heart and one soul of patriotism and cheerful activity. Men of ability and influence organized the various classes of citizens into companies, each leader making himself responsible for the erection of a certain portion of the wall. It was a sight well pleasing to God and angels to see the busy companies working harmoniously upon the broken-down walls of Jerusalem, and it was a joyous sound to hear the noise of instruments of labor from the earliest dawn ‘till the stars appeared.’” —(*Southern Watchman*, April 5, 1904) *Christian Service*, p. 175.

SUNDAY

MORE ENEMY ATTACKS AND RELIANCE ON GOD

- 1. Who was furious when the reconstruction of the city walls began to advance under Nehemiah’s leadership? What can be seen in the enemies’ verbal attacks?**

Nehemiah 4:1-3 *But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. ²And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned? ³Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.*

“In his many activities Nehemiah did not forget the source of his strength. His heart was constantly uplifted to God, the great Overseer of all. ‘The God of heaven,’ he exclaimed, ‘He will prosper us;’ and the words, echoed and re-echoed, thrilled the hearts of all the workers on the wall.

“But the restoration of the defenses of Jerusalem did not go forward unhindered. Satan was working to stir up opposition and bring discouragement. Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem, his principal agents in this movement, now set themselves to hinder the work of rebuilding. They endeavored to cause division among the workmen. They ridiculed the efforts of the builders, declaring the enterprise an impossibility and predicting failure.” —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 640, 641.

MONDAY

- 2. How did Nehemiah respond to the opponents’ ridicule?**

Nehemiah 4:4-6 *Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity: ⁵And cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have provoked thee to anger before the builders. ⁶So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.*

"But the people were commanded not to engage in controversy with their enemies and to answer them not a word, that no advantage of words might be given them. Threatenings and ridicule were resorted to. They said: 'Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.' Sanballat 'was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews.' Nehemiah prayed: 'Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head.'" —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 573, 574.

TUESDAY

3. In addition to negative comments, how else did the enemies of God's people try to stop the work from being carried out?

Nehemiah 4:7, 8 *But it came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth, ⁸And conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it.*

"The case of Nehemiah was presented before me. He was engaged in building the walls of Jerusalem, and the enemies of God were determined that the walls should not be built....

"In this case a spirit of hatred and opposition to the Hebrews formed the bond of union and created a mutual sympathy among different bodies of men who might otherwise have warred with one another. This well illustrates what we frequently witness in our day in the existing union of men of different denominations to oppose present truth, men whose only bond seems to be that which is dragonic in its nature, manifesting bitterness and hatred against the remnant who keep the commandments of God. This is especially seen in the first-day, no-day, and all-days-alike Adventists, who seem to be famous for hating and slandering one another, when they can spare time from their efforts to misrepresent, slander, and in every way abuse Seventh-day Adventists." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 571, 572.

WEDNESDAY

DAY AND NIGHT WORK, VIGILANCE, AND DEFENSE

4. What other resistance and attacks did the courageous builders meet? In addition to the defensive measures put in place, whom did Nehemiah trust?

Nehemiah 4:9-14 *Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them. ¹⁰And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall. ¹¹And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease. ¹²And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us they will be upon you. ¹³Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows. ¹⁴And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.*

"At the same time that the Samaritans were plotting against Nehemiah and his work, some of the leading men among the Jews, becoming disaffected, sought to discourage him by exaggerating the difficulties attending the enterprise....

"Discouragement came from still another source. 'The Jews which dwelt by,' those who were taking no part in the work, gathered up the statements and reports of their enemies and used these to weaken courage and create disaffection.

"But taunts and ridicule, opposition and threats, seemed only to inspire Nehemiah with firmer determination and to arouse him to greater watchfulness. He recognized the dangers that must be met in this warfare with their enemies, but his courage was undaunted. 'We made our prayer unto our God,' he declares, 'and set a watch against them day and night.'" —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 642, 643.

THURSDAY

5. **What measures did the people have to take to keep the construction going? Explain how the wise means of defense that they used apply today to God's church as it presses forward against the powers of darkness.**

Nehemiah 4:15-17 *And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work. ¹⁶And it came to pass from that time forth, that the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah. ¹⁷They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon.*

Isaiah 8:10 *Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us.*

Job 5:12 *He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise.*

"Beside Nehemiah stood a trumpeter, and on different parts of the wall were stationed priests bearing the sacred trumpets. The people were scattered in their labors, but on the approach of danger at any point a signal was given for them to repair thither without delay. 'So we labored in the work,' Nehemiah says, 'and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared.'

"Those who had been living in towns and villages outside Jerusalem were now required to lodge within the walls, both to guard the work and to be ready for duty in the morning. This would prevent unnecessary delay, and would cut off the opportunity which the enemy would otherwise improve, of attacking the workmen as they went to and from their homes. Nehemiah and his companions did not shrink from hardship or trying service. Neither by day nor night, not even during the short time given to sleep, did they put off their clothing or lay aside their armor." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 644.

FRIDAY

6. **How did Nehemiah and the people defend each other against attack, especially in isolated places? As they were united and committed, who fought for them? Who will be with the people even in isolated places in our day as they also work unitedly and tirelessly to build and strengthen God's spiritual kingdom?**

Nehemiah 4:18-20 *For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me. ¹⁹And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another. ²⁰In what place therefore ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us.*

“Satan takes advantage of every unconsecrated element for the accomplishment of his purposes. Among those who profess to be the supporters of God’s cause there are those who unite with His enemies and thus lay His cause open to the attacks of His bitterest foes. Even some who desire the work of God to prosper will yet weaken the hands of His servants by hearing, reporting, and half believing the slanders, boasts, and menaces of His adversaries. Satan works with marvelous success through his agents, and all who yield to their influence are subject to a bewitching power that destroys the wisdom of the wise and the understanding of the prudent. But, like Nehemiah, God’s people are neither to fear nor to despise their enemies. Putting their trust in God, they are to go steadily forward, doing His work with unselfishness, and committing to His providence the cause for which they stand.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 645.

SABBATH

THE GREATEST POSSIBLE COMMITMENT AND EFFORT

7. What extreme defensive measures were necessary to advance the Lord’s work in Nehemiah’s day? What happens when God’s people deal with similar situations and face similar obstacles now?

Nehemiah 4:21-23 *So we laboured in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared. ²²Likewise at the same time said I unto the people, Let every one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and labour on the day. ²³So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, saving that every one put them off for washing.*

“Amidst great discouragement, Nehemiah made God his trust, his sure defense. And He who was the support of His servant then has been the dependence of His people in every age. In every crisis His people may confidently declare, ‘If God be for us, who can be against us?’ Romans 8:31. However craftily the plots of Satan and his agents may be laid, God can detect them, and bring to nought all their counsels. The response of faith today will be the response made by Nehemiah, ‘Our God shall fight for us,’ for God is in the work, and no man can prevent its ultimate success.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 645.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

“In my recent view I saw that it will not increase our influence, or bring us into favor with God, to retaliate or come down from our great work to their level in meeting their slanders. There are those who will resort to any species of deception and gross falsehood to gain their object and deceive souls, and to cast stigma upon the law of God and those who love to obey it. They will repeat the most inconsistent and vile falsehoods, over and over, until they make themselves believe that they are truth. These are the strongest arguments they have to use against the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. We should not allow our feelings to control us and divert us from the work of warning the world.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 571.

* * *

Success in Spite of Every Threat

“Every device that the prince of darkness can suggest will be employed to induce God’s servants to form a confederacy with the agents of Satan. Repeated solicitations will come to call them from duty; but, like Nehemiah, they should steadfastly reply, ‘I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down.’ God’s workers may safely keep on with their work, letting their efforts refute the falsehoods that malice may coin for their injury. Like the builders on the walls of Jerusalem they must refuse to be diverted from their work by threats or mockery or falsehood. Not for one moment are they to relax their watchfulness or vigilance, for enemies are continually on their track. Ever they must make their prayer to God ‘and set a watch against them day and night.’ Nehemiah 4:9.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 659.

SUNDAY

IMPLIED BENEFITS OF COMPROMISE EQUAL DANGER

- 1. When the walls were completely finished, what did Nehemiah’s enemies invite him to do? Having been unable to stop the work so far, what did they plan to accomplish with a different strategy?**

Nehemiah 6:1, 2 *Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;) ²That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief.*

“Sanballat and his confederates dared not make open war upon the Jews; but with increasing malice they continued their secret efforts to discourage, perplex, and injure them. The wall about Jerusalem was rapidly approaching completion. When it should be finished and its gates set up, these enemies of Israel could not hope to force an entrance into the city. They were the more eager, therefore, to stop the work without further delay. At last they devised a plan by which they hoped to draw Nehemiah from his station, and while they had him in their power, to kill or imprison him.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 653.

MONDAY

- 2. What did Nehemiah reply regarding this trap? What did the enemies’ persistent meddling show?**

Nehemiah 6:3, 4 *And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you? ⁴Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner.*

“Pretending to desire a compromise of the opposing parties, they sought a conference with Nehemiah, and invited him to meet them in a village on the plain

of Ono. But enlightened by the Holy Spirit as to their real purpose, he refused. 'I sent messengers unto them,' he writes, 'saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?' But the tempters were persistent. Four times they sent a message of similar import, and each time they received the same answer." —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 653, 654.

TUESDAY

INCREASING MALICE REQUIRES DIVINE WISDOM AND STRENGTH

3. What intimidating insinuations in an open letter to Nehemiah did the enemy try to use to cause difficulties? How did Nehemiah refute the lies?

Nehemiah 6:5-8 *Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand; ⁶Wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words. ⁷And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together. ⁸Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart.*

"Finding this scheme unsuccessful, they resorted to a more daring stratagem. Sanballat sent Nehemiah a messenger bearing an open letter....

"Had the reports mentioned been actually circulated, there would have been cause for apprehension; for they would soon have been carried to the king, whom a slight suspicion might provoke to the severest measures. But Nehemiah was convinced that the letter was wholly false, written to arouse his fears and draw him into a snare. This conclusion was strengthened by the fact that the letter was sent open, evidently that the people might read the contents, and become alarmed and intimidated.

"He promptly returned the answer. 'There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart.' Nehemiah was not ignorant of Satan's devices. He knew that these attempts were made in order to weaken the hands of the builders and thus frustrate their efforts." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 654.

WEDNESDAY

4. While his enemies were trying in every way to discourage and terrify Nehemiah, from whom did he receive wisdom and support? What suggestion did Shemaiah make, supposedly for the purpose of saving Nehemiah's life?

Nehemiah 6:9, 10 *For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands. ¹⁰Afterward I came unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee.*

"Sanballat and his companions hired men who professed to be the friends of Nehemiah, to give him evil counsel as the word of the Lord. The chief one engaged

in this iniquitous work was Shemaiah, a man previously held in good repute by Nehemiah. This man shut himself up in a chamber near the sanctuary as if fearing that his life was in danger. The temple was at this time protected by walls and gates, but the gates of the city were not yet set up. Professing great concern for Nehemiah's safety, Shemaiah advised him to seek shelter in the temple....

"Had Nehemiah followed this treacherous counsel, he would have sacrificed his faith in God, and in the eyes of the people he would have appeared cowardly and contemptible.... That one unwise move on the part of Nehemiah would have been a virtual surrender of all that had been gained." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 655.

THURSDAY

5. **Through divine providence, what did Nehemiah discover about the intentions of the man who advised him to flee and hide? Who tried to frighten this brave servant of the Lord, who was firmly determined to complete Heaven's work?**

Nehemiah 6:11-14 *And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in. ¹²And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. ¹³Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me. ¹⁴My God, think thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear.*

"The infamous counsel given by Shemaiah was seconded by more than one man of high reputation, who, while professing to be Nehemiah's friends, were secretly in league with his enemies. But it was to no avail that they laid their snare. Nehemiah's fearless answer was: 'Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in.'" — *Prophets and Kings*, p. 656.

FRIDAY

VICTORY—THE WORK COMPLETED

6. **Meanwhile, what did the builders accomplish in record time? Whose wonderful hand guided and strengthened them in completing the work?**

Nehemiah 6:15, 16 *So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days. ¹⁶And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God.*

"Notwithstanding the plots of enemies, open and secret, the work of building went steadily forward, and in less than two months from the time of Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem the city was girded with its defenses and the builders could walk upon the walls and look down upon their defeated and astonished foes. 'When all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things,' Nehemiah writes, 'they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God.'" —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 657.

7. Even among whom were there people who sided with the enemy? In such a complicated situation of intrigue, to whom did Nehemiah and the builders look for hope, courage, wisdom, and strength to continue to the end?

Nehemiah 6:17-19 *Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters unto Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came unto them. ¹⁸For there were many in Judah sworn unto him, because he was the son in law of Shechaniah the son of Arah; and his son Johanan had taken the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah. ¹⁹Also they reported his good deeds before me, and uttered my words to him. And Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear.*

Psalms 37:39, 40 *But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord: he is their strength in the time of trouble. ⁴⁰And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him.*

“Yet even this evidence of the Lord’s controlling hand was not sufficient to restrain discontent, rebellion, and treachery among the Israelites.... Here are seen the evil results of intermarriage with idolaters. A family of Judah had become connected with the enemies of God, and the relation had proved a snare. Many others had done the same. These, like the mixed multitude that came up with Israel from Egypt, were a source of constant trouble. They were not wholehearted in His service; and when God’s work demanded a sacrifice, they were ready to violate their solemn oath of cooperation and support....

“The nobles of Judah who had become entangled in idolatrous marriages, and who had held traitorous correspondence with Tobiah and taken oath to serve him, now represented him as a man of ability and foresight, an alliance with whom would be greatly to the advantage of the Jews. At the same time they betrayed to him Nehemiah’s plans and movements. Thus the work of God’s people was laid open to the attacks of their enemies, and opportunity was given to misconstrue Nehemiah’s words and acts, and to hinder his work.” —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 657, 658.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

“When the poor and oppressed had appealed to Nehemiah for redress of their wrongs, he had stood boldly in their defense and had caused the wrongdoers to remove the reproach that rested on them. But the authority that he had exercised in behalf of his downtrodden countrymen he did not now exercise in his own behalf. His efforts had been met by some with ingratitude and treachery....

“Satan’s assaults have ever been directed against those who have sought to advance the work and cause of God. Though often baffled, he as often renews his attacks with fresh vigor, using means hitherto untried. But it is his secret working through those who avow themselves the friends of God’s work, that is most to be feared. Open opposition may be fierce and cruel, but it is fraught with far less peril to God’s cause than is the secret enmity of those who, while professing to serve God, are at heart the servants of Satan.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 658.

* * *

Defended and Cleansed

“Satan seeks to bring us into temptation, that the evil of our characters may be revealed before men and angels, that he may claim us as his own. In the symbolic prophecy of Zechariah, Satan is seen standing at the right hand of the Angel of the Lord, accusing Joshua, the high priest, who is clothed in filthy garments, and resisting the work that the Angel desires to do for him. This represents the attitude of Satan toward every soul whom Christ is seeking to draw unto Himself. The enemy leads us into sin, and then he accuses us before the heavenly universe as unworthy of the love of God.... And unto Joshua He said, ‘Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.’ Zechariah 3:1-4.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 116, 117.

SUNDAY

A VISION OF THE HIGH PRIEST UNDER ACCUSATION

1. What vision did the Lord give to the prophet Zechariah? What was Satan doing at the right hand of the Angel of the Lord?

Zechariah 3:1 *And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.*

“The scene of Satan’s accusation was presented before the prophet. He says, ‘He showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.’ Jesus is our great High Priest in heaven. And what is He doing? He is making intercession and atonement for His people who believe in Him. Through His imputed righteousness, they are accepted of God as those who are manifesting to the world that they acknowledge allegiance to God, keeping all His commandments. Satan is full of malignant hatred against them, and manifests to them the same spirit that he manifested to Jesus Christ when He was upon earth.” —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 37.

MONDAY

2. In what condition was the clothing that Joshua the high priest wore? Who defended him against the adversary’s accusations? Who else has a Defender at the Father’s throne?

Zechariah 3:2, 3 *And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? ³Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel.*

1 John 2:1 *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:*

“‘In a vision in 1880 I asked, ‘Where is the security for the people of God in these days of peril?’ The answer was, ‘Jesus maketh intercession for His people,

though Satan standeth at His right hand to resist Him.... As man's Intercessor and Advocate, Jesus will lead all who are willing to be led, saying, 'Follow Me upward, step by step, where the clear light of the Sun of Righteousness shines.'" —*Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*, p. 324.

"We read in the prophecy of Zechariah that Satan with all his synagogue stood up to resist the prayers of Joshua the high priest, and to resist Christ, who was about to show decided favor to Joshua....

"The course of Christ in dealing even with the adversary of souls should be an example to us in all our intercourse with others never to bring a railing accusation against any; much less should we employ harshness or severity toward those who may be as anxious to know the right way as we are ourselves." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 240.

TUESDAY

HIS CLOTHING COMPLETELY CHANGED

- 3. What command did the Defender give to "those that stood before Him" regarding the high priest's stained clothing? What is represented by taking "away the filthy garments from him"?**

Zechariah 3:4 *And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, 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.*

"Standing before the broken law of God, the sinner cannot cleanse himself; but, believing in Christ, he is the object of His infinite love and clothed in His spotless righteousness. For those who believe in Christ, Jesus prayed: 'Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth:... that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me. And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one.' John 17:17-22." —*Faith and Works*, p. 108.

WEDNESDAY

- 4. Once the dirty clothing was gone, with what garments was Joshua clothed? What do the change of garments and the fair mitre represent spiritually?**

Zechariah 3:5 *And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord stood by.*

"Your heavenly Father will take from you the garments defiled by sin. 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. 'Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.' Psalm 68:13." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 206.

5. What conditional promises did the Angel of the Lord make to the minister of intercession? What do the Lord's promises mean to God's people?

Zechariah 3:6, 7 *And the angel of the Lord protested unto Joshua, saying, 'Thus saith the Lord of hosts; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by.'*

"We need divine help if we would keep our lights burning. But Jesus died to provide that aid. He extends the invitation: 'Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me.' Cling to the arm of Infinite Power; then you will find Him precious to your soul, and all heaven will be at your command. 'If we walk in the light, as He is in the light,' we shall have the companionship of holy angels. To 'Joshua' it was said, 'Thus saith the Lord of hosts: If thou wilt walk in My ways, and if thou wilt keep My charge,... I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by.' And who are 'these that stand by'? They are the angels of God. Joshua must have a living, confiding trust in God every day; and then angels would walk with him, and the power of God would rest upon him in all his labors." —*Reflecting Christ*, p. 168.

"The change is given on condition, 'Thus saith the Lord of hosts; If thou wilt walk in My ways, and if thou wilt keep My charge, then thou shalt also judge My house, and shalt also keep My courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by.' Zechariah 3:7." —*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 20, pp. 190, 191.

THE BRANCH ACCOMPLISHES THE MIRACLE

6. How was the ministry of Joshua and his co-workers considered? Whom would the Lord send to make the priestly work glorious?

Zechariah 3:8 *Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH.*

"Now is reached the complete fulfillment of those words of the Angel: 'Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the Branch.' Zechariah 3:8. Christ is revealed as the Redeemer and Deliverer of His people. Now indeed are the remnant 'men wondered at,' as the tears and humiliation of their pilgrimage give place to joy and honor in the presence of God and the Lamb. 'In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely.... And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy.' Isaiah 4:2, 3." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 475, 476; *Lift Him Up*, p. 377.

7. What special stone did the Lord place before the high priest? How long does it take to completely remove iniquity from one who builds upon the living "stone"?

Zechariah 3:9, 10 *For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord*

of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. ¹⁰In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree. [See End Note 3]

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

“Your mind was given that you might understand how to work. Your eyes were given that you might be keen to discern your God-given opportunities. Your ears are to listen for the commands of God. Your knees are to bow three times a day in heartfelt prayer. Your feet are to run in the way of God’s commandments. Thought, effort, talent, should be put into exercise, that you may be prepared to graduate into the school above and hear from the lips of One who has overcome all temptations in our behalf the words: ‘To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne.’ ‘Thus saith the Lord of hosts, If thou wilt walk in My ways, and if thou wilt keep My charge, then thou shalt also judge My house, and shalt also keep My courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by.’ Revelation 3:21; Zechariah 3:7.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 298.

* * *

22

Sabbath, May 30, 2020

Victory over Temptation

“After the baptism of Jesus in Jordan, He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil. The Holy Spirit had prepared Him for that special scene of fierce temptations. Forty days He was tempted of Satan, and in those days He ate nothing. Everything around Him was unpleasant, from which human nature would be led to shrink. He was with the wild beasts and the devil, in a desolate, lonely place. The Son of God was pale and emaciated, through fasting and suffering. But His course was marked out, and He must fulfill the work which He came to do.” —*Early Writings*, p. 155.

SUNDAY

TEMPTATION AT THE MOST BASIC LEVELS

- 1. How many days did Jesus spend fasting in the desert? For what purpose did He go there?**

Luke 4:1, 2 And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, ²Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.

Mark 1:12, 13 And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. ¹³And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.

"When Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted, He was led by the Spirit of God. He did not invite temptation. He went to the wilderness to be alone, to contemplate His mission and work. By fasting and prayer He was to brace Himself for the bloodstained path He must travel. But Satan knew that the Saviour had gone into the wilderness, and he thought this the best time to approach Him." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 114.

MONDAY

APPETITE

- 2. What doubt did the devil try to plant in Jesus' mind? What did he hope to accomplish while Jesus was hungry and very weak after the long fast that He passed through to prepare for His mission to save mankind?**

Matthew 4:3 *And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.*

"Satan took advantage of the sufferings of the Son of God and prepared to beset Him with manifold temptations, hoping to obtain the victory over Him, because He had humbled Himself as a man. Satan came with this temptation: 'If Thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.' He tempted Jesus to condescend to give him proof of His being the Messiah, by exercising His divine power....

"Satan was seeking a dispute with Jesus concerning His being the Son of God. He referred to His weak, suffering condition and boastfully affirmed that he was stronger than Jesus. But the word spoken from heaven, 'Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased,' was sufficient to sustain Jesus through all His sufferings. I saw that Christ had nothing to do in convincing Satan of His power or of His being the Saviour of the world. Satan had sufficient evidence of the exalted station and authority of the Son of God. His unwillingness to yield to Christ's authority had shut him out of heaven." —*Early Writings*, pp. 155, 156.

TUESDAY

- 3. How did Jesus' reply show that life requires no one to do what the tempter demands? What food is necessary for spiritual, eternal life?**

Matthew 4:4 *But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*

Deuteronomy 8:3 *And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.*

John 4:34; 6:51 *Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work....^{6:51} I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.*

"He told Satan that in order to prolong life, obedience to God's requirements was more essential than temporal food. To pursue a course of deviation from the purposes of God, in the smallest degree, would be more grievous than hunger or death." —(Redemption: or The First Advent of Christ, p. 48) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1083.

"When Christ bore the test of temptation upon the point of appetite, He did not stand in beautiful Eden, as did Adam, with the light and love of God seen in everything His eye rested upon. But He was in a barren, desolate wilderness, surrounded with wild beasts. Everything around Him was repulsive, and [that] from which human nature would be inclined to shrink. With these surroundings He fasted forty days and forty nights, 'and in those days He did eat nothing.' Luke 4:2. He was emaciated through long fasting, and felt the keenest sense of hunger. His visage was indeed marred more than the sons of men.

"Christ thus entered upon His life of conflict to overcome the mighty foe, in bearing the very test Adam failed to endure, that, through successful conflict, He might break the power of Satan, and redeem the race from the disgrace of the Fall." —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 272.

WEDNESDAY

PRESUMPTION

- 4. To what risk was Jesus exposed in the second temptation? Bread might be necessary for physical life, but what would be the value of jumping off the pinnacle of the temple?**

Matthew 4:5, 6 *Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, ⁶And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.*

"Satan, to manifest his power, carried Jesus to Jerusalem, and set Him upon a pinnacle of the temple, and there tempted Him to give evidence that He was the Son of God, by casting Himself down from that dizzy height.... Satan wished to cause Jesus to presume upon the mercy of His Father and risk His life before the fulfillment of His mission. He had hoped that the plan of salvation would fail; but the plan was laid too deep to be overthrown or marred by Satan.

"... Christians ... should not feel that they have a right to call upon the Lord to display His power that they may obtain a victory over their enemies, unless God can be directly honored and glorified thereby. If Jesus had cast Himself from the pinnacle of the temple, it would not have glorified His Father; for none would have witnessed the act but Satan and the angels of God. And it would have been tempting the Lord to display His power to His bitterest foe. It would have been condescending to the one whom Jesus came to conquer." —*Early Writings*, pp. 156, 157.

THURSDAY

- 5. What did Jesus' answer show that such an action would really be? What can one expect if he deliberately does something that is foolish or dangerous?**

Matthew 4:7 *Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*

Psalms 91:10-12 *There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. ¹¹For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. ¹²They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.*

“Jesus would not place Himself in peril to please the devil. But how many to-day can stand a dare?” —(*Manuscript 17, 1893*) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1083.

“Often when Satan has failed of exciting distrust, he succeeds in leading us to presumption. If he can cause us to place ourselves unnecessarily in the way of temptation, he knows that the victory is his. God will preserve all who walk in the path of obedience; but to depart from it is to venture on Satan’s ground. There we are sure to fall. The Saviour has bidden us, ‘Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.’ Mark 14:38.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 126.

“Christ was firm. Oh! where would now be the salvation of the race if Christ had been as weak in moral power as man? No wonder that joy filled heaven as the fallen chief left the wilderness of temptation, a conquered foe. Christ has power from His Father to give His divine grace and strength to man—making it possible for us through His name to overcome. There are but few professed followers of Christ who choose to engage with Him in the work of resisting Satan’s temptation as He resisted and overcame.” —*Confrontation*, p. 63.

FRIDAY

WEALTH, GLORY, POWER, AND FALSE WORSHIP

6. What human weak point did the tempter use to try to make the Son of God worship him and thus become one of his subjects?

Matthew 4:8, 9 *Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.*

“This last temptation was the most alluring of the three. Satan knew that Christ’s life must be one of sorrow, hardship, and conflict. And he thought he could take advantage of this fact to bribe Christ to yield His integrity. Satan brought all his strength to bear upon this last temptation, for this last effort was to decide his destiny as to who should be victor. He claimed the world as his dominion, and he was the prince of the power of the air.... He told Christ He could come into possession of the kingdoms of the world without suffering or peril on His part. Satan promises to yield his scepter and dominion, and Christ shall be rightful ruler for one favor from Him. All he requires in return for making over to Him the kingdoms of the world that day presented before Him, is, that Christ shall do him homage as to a superior.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 286.

SABBATH

7. To Jesus, were the kingdoms of the world or the kingdom of God more important? If man allows the desire for the world’s wealth and glory to flash into his mind, to whom does he make himself a servant?

Matthew 4:10, 11; 6:33 *Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. ¹¹Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.... ^{6:33}But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

Romans 6:16 *Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?*

"This presumptuous blasphemy, and insult to Jehovah, excited the indignation of Christ, and led Him to exercise His divine authority, and command Satan in an authoritative, dignified manner to desist. Here Satan, in his pride and arrogance, declared himself to be the rightful and permanent ruler of the world, the possessor of all its glory, as though he had created the world and all the riches and glory contained in it....

"He told Jesus that he would relinquish his claims of the possessions of earth. Satan knew that his power must be limited, and finally taken away, if the plan of salvation should be carried out. He knew that if Jesus should die to redeem man, his power would end after a season, and he would be destroyed. Therefore it was his studied plan to prevent, if possible, the completion of the great work which had been commenced by the Son of God. If the plan of man's redemption should fail, he would retain the kingdom which he then claimed."—(*Redemption: or The First Advent of Christ*, pp. 50, 51) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1119.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

"Christ's victory was as complete as had been the failure of Adam.

"So we may resist temptation, and force Satan to depart from us. Jesus gained the victory through submission and faith in God, and by the apostle He says to us, 'Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you.' James 4:7, 8. We cannot save ourselves from the tempter's power; he has conquered humanity, and when we try to stand in our own strength, we shall become a prey to his devices; but 'the name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.' Proverbs 18:10. Satan trembles and flees before the weakest soul who finds refuge in that mighty name."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 130, 131.

* * *

23

Sabbath, June 6, 2020

Drinking the Bitter Cup

"The awful moment had come—that moment which was to decide the destiny of the world. The fate of humanity trembled in the balance. Christ might even now refuse to drink the cup apportioned to guilty man. It was not yet too late. He might wipe the bloody sweat from His brow, and leave man to perish in his iniquity. He might say, Let the transgressor receive the penalty of his sin, and I will go back to My Father. Will the Son of God drink the bitter cup of humiliation and agony? Will the innocent suffer the consequences of the curse of sin, to save the guilty? The words fall tremblingly from the pale lips of Jesus, 'O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done.'"—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 690.

CARRYING THE SIN OF THE WORLD

1. **Where did Jesus go with His disciples as the hour of His greatest suffering approached?**

Matthew 26:36, 37 *Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.³⁷ And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.*

“... As He neared Gethsemane, He became strangely silent. He had often visited this spot for meditation and prayer; but never with a heart so full of sorrow as upon this night of His last agony.... Now He seemed to be shut out from the light of God’s sustaining presence. Now He was numbered with the transgressors. The guilt of fallen humanity He must bear.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 685.

MONDAY

2. **What did the Redeemer ask His disciples to do as He felt the burden of the sin of fallen humanity weighing down on Him? What was the meaning of His request for them to watch with Him?**

Matthew 26:38 *Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.*

2 Corinthians 5:21 *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

“Upon Him who knew no sin must be laid the iniquity of us all. So dreadful does sin appear to Him, so great is the weight of guilt which He must bear, that He is tempted to fear it will shut Him out forever from His Father’s love. Feeling how terrible is the wrath of God against transgression, He exclaims, ‘My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.’...”

“Often they had passed the night with Him in this retreat. On these occasions, after a season of watching and prayer, they would sleep undisturbed at a little distance from their Master, until He awoke them in the morning to go forth anew to labor. But now He desired them to spend the night with Him in prayer. Yet He could not bear that even they should witness the agony He was to endure. ‘Tarry ye here,’ He said, ‘and watch with Me.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 685, 686.

“Christ was now standing in a different attitude than He had ever done before. Hitherto He had stood as an intercessor for others; now He longs for an intercessor for Himself. Could His human nature bear the strain?” —*Christ Triumphant*, p. 267.

TUESDAY

3. **With the weight of sin upon Him and the sufferings of the cross before Him, what did Jesus ask of His Father? What would the consequences have been for humanity if Jesus had not drunk the cup of pain and suffering?**

Matthew 26:39 *And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

Mark 14:35, 36 *And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. ³⁶And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.*

John 6:38 *For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.*

"As Christ felt His unity with the Father broken up, He feared that in His human nature He would be unable to endure the coming conflict with the powers of darkness.... Now the tempter had come for the last fearful struggle. For this he had been preparing during the three years of Christ's ministry. Everything was at stake with him....

"That those whom He had undertaken to save, those whom He loved so much, should unite in the plots of Satan, this pierced His soul. The conflict was terrible. Its measure was the guilt of His nation, of His accusers and betrayer, the guilt of a world lying in wickedness. The sins of men weighed heavily upon Christ, and the sense of God's wrath against sin was crushing out His life.

"Behold Him contemplating the price to be paid for the human soul. In His agony He clings to the cold ground, as if to prevent Himself from being drawn farther from God.... From His pale lips comes the bitter cry, 'O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me.' Yet even now He adds, 'Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt.'" —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 686, 687.

WEDNESDAY

WATCH AND PRAY

- 4. What did Jesus repeat to Peter when he and the other disciples were overwhelmed by weariness and sleep? Because of the weakness of the flesh, what happens to everyone who does not fight for Christ to be at the center of his life?**

Matthew 26:40, 41 *And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? ⁴¹Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*

Romans 7:23 *But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.*

"The human heart longs for sympathy in suffering. This longing Christ felt to the very depths of His being. In the supreme agony of His soul He came to His disciples with a yearning desire to hear some words of comfort from those whom He had so often blessed and comforted, and shielded in sorrow and distress. The One who had always had words of sympathy for them was now suffering superhuman agony, and He longed to know that they were praying for Him and for themselves.... If He could only know that His disciples understood and appreciated this, He would be strengthened.

"Rising with painful effort, He staggered to the place where He had left His companions. But He 'findeth them asleep.' Had He found them praying, He would have been relieved. Had they been seeking refuge in God, that satanic agencies might not prevail over them, He would have been comforted by their steadfast faith." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 687, 688.

- 5. Why were the disciples unable to stay awake and pray for the Father to give Jesus the strength He needed to endure the coming test? How severe was the agony of God's Son?**

Matthew 26:42, 43 *He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. ⁴³And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy.*

Mark 14:40 *And when he returned, he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer him.*

"They did not intend to forsake their Lord, but they seemed paralyzed by a stupor which they might have shaken off if they had continued pleading with God. They did not realize the necessity of watchfulness and earnest prayer in order to withstand temptation....

"Again the Son of God was seized with superhuman agony, and fainting and exhausted, He staggered back to the place of His former struggle. His suffering was even greater than before. As the agony of soul came upon Him, 'His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.' Now He was like a reed beaten and bent by the angry storm." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 688, 689.

ACCEPTING THE FATHER'S WILL

- 6. While the disciples were completely oblivious to His unbelievable agony in carrying the sins of mankind, how many times did Jesus pray the prayer of submission to His Father?**

Matthew 26:44 *And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.*

"Three times has He uttered that prayer. Three times has humanity shrunk from the last, crowning sacrifice. But now the history of the human race comes up before the world's Redeemer. He sees that the transgressors of the law, if left to themselves, must perish. He sees the helplessness of man. He sees the power of sin.... He has left the courts of heaven, where all is purity, happiness, and glory, to save the one lost sheep, the one world that has fallen by transgression. And He will not turn from His mission. He will become the propitiation of a race that has willed to sin. His prayer now breathes only submission: 'If this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done.'" —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 690-693.

- 7. How far did Jesus go in demonstrating His willingness to carry out His Father's will? What great lesson may everyone learn from His agonizing experience in Gethsemane?**

Luke 22:43, 44 *And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. ⁴⁴And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*

Matthew 26:45, 46 *Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is be-*

trayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.

Philippians 2:8 *And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

Hebrews 5:7 *Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared.*

“‘And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.’ ‘And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him.’ The conflict is ended; Jesus consents to honor His Father by doing His will and bearing His curse, the consequence of humanity’s transgression. He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Here was what was involved in Adam’s disobedience and what the obedience of the Son of God means to us....” —*Christ Triumphant*, p. 24.

“Willingly and cheerfully Christ gave Himself to the carrying out of the will of God. He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Shall we feel it a hardship to deny ourselves? Shall we draw back from being partakers of His sufferings? His death ought to stir every fiber of the being, making us willing to consecrate to His work all that we have and are. As we think of what He has done for us, our hearts should be filled with love.” —*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 302.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

“Think of what Christ accomplished during His earthly ministry. How earnest, how untiring, were His efforts! He allowed nothing to turn Him aside from the work given Him. Are we following in His footsteps? He gave up all to carry out God’s plan of mercy for the fallen race. In the fulfillment of the purpose of heaven, He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.... He grappled with temptation, overcoming in our behalf. The Son of God, pure and unsullied, bore the penalty of transgression, and received the stroke of death that brought deliverance to the race.” —*The Colporteur Evangelist*, p. 38.

* * *

Fighting for the Faith

“For over three years Ephesus was the center of Paul’s work. A flourishing church was raised up here, and from this city the gospel spread throughout the province of Asia, among both Jews and Gentiles....

“In his speech Demetrius had said, ‘This our craft is in danger.’ These words reveal the real cause of the tumult at Ephesus, and also the cause of much of the persecution which followed the apostles in their work. Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen saw that by the teaching and spread of the gospel the business of image making was endangered. The income of pagan priests and artisans was at stake, and for this reason they aroused against Paul the most bitter opposition.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 291, 295.

SUNDAY

THE MOST POWERFUL, LIFE-CHANGING MESSAGE

- 1. What do the Scriptures relate about the progress of the gospel in the famous city of Ephesus, in Asia Minor?**

Acts 19:17-20 *And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. ¹⁸And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds. ¹⁹Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. ²⁰So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.*

“When the Ephesians were converted, they changed their habits and practices. Under the conviction of the Spirit of God, they acted with promptness, and laid bare all the mysteries of their witchcraft. They came and confessed, and showed their deeds, and their souls were filled with holy indignation because they had given such devotion to magic, and had so highly prized the books in which the rules of Satan’s devising had laid down the methods whereby they might practice witchcraft. They were determined to turn from the service of the evil one, and they brought their costly volumes and publicly burned them. Thus they made manifest their sincerity in turning to God....” —*Messages to Young People*, p. 275.

MONDAY

- 2. For fear of losing their means of livelihood, what speech did Demetrius make to his fellow manufacturers of statuettes of Diana? What other argument in favor of Diana did he present to arouse the people’s hatred against Paul and the message that he preached?**

Acts 19:24-27 *For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen; ²⁵Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. ²⁶Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much*

people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands: ²⁷So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.

“There existed also another cause of dissatisfaction. An extensive and profitable business had grown up at Ephesus from the manufacture and sale of small shrines and images, modeled after the temple and the image of Diana. Those interested in this industry found their gains diminishing, and all united in attributing the unwelcome change to Paul’s labors.” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 292.

TUESDAY

3. What terrible effect did this highly accusatory speech have on the hearers and the whole city?

Acts 19:28, 29 *And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians. ²⁹And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul’s companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre.*

“A report of this speech was rapidly circulated. ‘The whole city was filled with confusion.’ Search was made for Paul, but the apostle was not to be found. His brethren, receiving an intimation of the danger, had hurried him from the place. Angels of God had been sent to guard the apostle; his time to die a martyr’s death had not yet come.

“Failing to find the object of their wrath, the mob seized ‘Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul’s companions in travel,’ and with these ‘they rushed with one accord into the theater.’” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 293.

WEDNESDAY

PROTECTION FOR GOD’S SERVANT

4. What was Paul’s desire when the people poured into the theater? However, what did his friends advise so that his life would not be placed in peril?

Acts 19:30, 31 *And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not. ³¹And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring him that he would not adventure himself into the theatre.*

“Paul’s place of concealment was not far distant, and he soon learned of the peril of his beloved brethren. Forgetful of his own safety, he desired to go at once to the theater to address the rioters. But ‘the disciples suffered him not.’ Gaius and Aristarchus were not the prey the people sought; no serious harm to them was apprehended. But should the apostle’s pale, care-worn face be seen, it would arouse at once the worst passions of the mob and there would not be the least human possibility of saving his life.

“Paul was still eager to defend the truth before the multitude, but he was at last deterred by a message of warning from the theater. ‘Certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring him that he would not adventure himself into the theater.’ Acts 19:31.” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 293.

5. What can be expected when a mass of people all start shouting different things? Regardless, in this case, what did they end up extolling?

Acts 19:32-34 *Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together. ³³And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defence unto the people. ³⁴But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.*

“The tumult in the theater was continually increasing. ‘Some ... cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.’ Acts 19:32. The fact that Paul and some of his companions were of Hebrew extraction made the Jews anxious to show plainly that they were not sympathizers with him and his work. They therefore brought forward one of their own number to set the matter before the people. The speaker chosen was Alexander, one of the craftsmen, a coppersmith, to whom Paul afterward referred as having done him much evil. 2 Timothy 4:14. Alexander was a man of considerable ability, and he bent all his energies to direct the wrath of the people exclusively against Paul and his companions. But the crowd, seeing that Alexander was a Jew, thrust him aside, and ‘all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.’” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 294.

FRIDAY

6. Who had to address the people to calm them down and make them think more rationally? What common-sense reasoning quieted the crowd?

Acts 19:35-41 *And when the townclerk had appeased the people, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter? ³⁶Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly. ³⁷For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess. ³⁸Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another. ³⁹But if ye inquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly. ⁴⁰For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse. ⁴¹And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.*

“At last, from sheer exhaustion, they ceased, and there was a momentary silence. Then the recorder of the city arrested the attention of the crowd, and by virtue of his office obtained a hearing. He met the people on their own ground and showed that there was no cause for the present tumult. He appealed to their reason.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 294.

SABBATH

HUGE TUMULT FOLLOWED BY VICTORY

7. What did the apostle Paul write later about what happened in Ephesus? In spite of the great tumult raised against him, how did the Lord bless him?

1 Corinthians 15:32, 57, 58 *If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die....⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

"The decision of the recorder and of others holding honorable offices in the city had set Paul before the people as one innocent of any unlawful act. This was another triumph of Christianity over error and superstition. God had raised up a great magistrate to vindicate His apostle and hold the tumultuous mob in check. Paul's heart was filled with gratitude to God that his life had been preserved and that Christianity had not been brought into disrepute by the tumult at Ephesus." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 295.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

"After the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia.' On this journey he was accompanied by two faithful Ephesian brethren, Tychicus and Trophimus.

"Paul's labors in Ephesus were concluded. His ministry there had been a season of incessant labor, of many trials, and of deep anguish. He had taught the people in public and from house to house, with many tears instructing and warning them. Continually he had been opposed by the Jews, who lost no opportunity to stir up the popular feeling against him.

"And while thus battling against opposition, pushing forward with untiring zeal the gospel work, and guarding the interests of a church yet young in the faith, Paul was bearing upon his soul a heavy burden for all the churches." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 295, 296.

* * *

25

Sabbath, June 20, 2020

In Danger Among Brethren

"Satan is constantly working through his agents to dishearten and destroy those whom God has chosen to accomplish a great and good work. They may be ready to sacrifice even life itself for the advancement of the cause of Christ, yet the great deceiver will suggest to their brethren doubts concerning them which, if entertained, would undermine confidence in their integrity of character, and thus cripple their usefulness. Too often he succeeds in bringing upon them, through their own brethren, such sorrow of heart that God graciously interposes to give His persecuted servants rest. After the hands are folded upon the pulseless breast, when the voice of warning and encouragement is silent, then the obdurate may be aroused to see and prize the blessings they have cast from them." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 418.

AGITATION AGAINST PAUL IN THE TEMPLE**1. When he was in Jerusalem, where did the apostle Paul go on the advice of some brethren?**

Acts 21:23-26 *Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them; ²⁴Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law. ²⁵As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication. ²⁶Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.*

“This was the golden opportunity for all the leading brethren to confess frankly that God had wrought through Paul, and that at times they had erred in permitting the reports of his enemies to arouse their jealousy and prejudice. But instead of uniting in an effort to do justice to the one who had been injured, they gave him counsel which showed that they still cherished a feeling that Paul should be held largely responsible for the existing prejudice....

“When we think of Paul’s great desire to be in harmony with his brethren, his tenderness toward the weak in the faith, his reverence for the apostles who had been with Christ, and for James, the brother of the Lord, and his purpose to become all things to all men so far as he could without sacrificing principle—when we think of all this, it is less surprising that he was constrained to deviate from the firm, decided course that he had hitherto followed.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 403, 405.

MONDAY**2. What happened suddenly while he was there and bothering no one? When some Jews from Asia saw him there, believing that he had polluted the temple, what scene ensued?**

Acts 21:27-30 *And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, ²⁸Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place. ²⁹(For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.) ³⁰And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut.*

“But instead of accomplishing the desired object, his efforts for conciliation only precipitated the crisis, hastened his predicted sufferings, and resulted in separating him from his brethren, depriving the church of one of its strongest pillars, and bringing sorrow to Christian hearts in every land....

“Those who advised Paul to take this step had not fully considered the great peril to which he would thus be exposed. At this season, Jerusalem was filled with

worshippers from many lands. As, in fulfillment of the commission given him by God, Paul had borne the gospel to the Gentiles, he had visited many of the world's largest cities, and he was well known to thousands who from foreign parts had come to Jerusalem to attend the feast. Among these were men whose hearts were filled with bitter hatred for Paul, and for him to enter the temple on a public occasion was to risk his life....

"That an apostate from Israel should presume to profane the temple at the very time when thousands had come there from all parts of the world to worship, excited the fiercest passions of the mob." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 405-407.

TUESDAY

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE OPPORTUNITY

3. Who became aware that a riot had erupted in the city? What precautionary measures did he take?

Acts 21:31, 32 *And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. ³²Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul.*

"As they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.' Claudius Lysias well knew the turbulent elements with which he had to deal, and he 'immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul.'" —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 407.

WEDNESDAY

4. What orders were immediately carried out, making the apostle a prisoner? Meanwhile, what were the people demanding?

Acts 21:33-36 *Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done. ³⁴And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle. ³⁵And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne off the soldiers for the violence of the people. ³⁶For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him.*

"By the Jewish law it was a crime punishable with death for an uncircumcised person to enter the inner courts of the sacred edifice. Paul had been seen in the city in company with Trophimus, an Ephesian, and it was conjectured that he had brought him into the temple. This he had not done; and being himself a Jew, his act in entering the temple was no violation of the law. But though the charge was wholly false, it served to arouse the popular prejudice. As the cry was taken up and borne through the temple courts, the throngs gathered there were thrown into wild excitement....

"Ignorant of the cause of the tumult, but seeing that the rage of the multitude was directed against Paul, the Roman captain concluded that he must be a certain Egyptian rebel of whom he had heard, who had thus far escaped capture.... At once many voices were raised in loud and angry accusation...." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 407, 408.

- 5. What did Paul want the captain to realize? What did the officer give the apostle permission to do, realizing that he was not the revolutionary that he imagined?**

Acts 21:37-40 *And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek? ³⁸Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers? ³⁹But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people. ⁴⁰And when he had given him licence, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue....*

"In the midst of the tumult the apostle was calm and self-possessed. His mind was stayed upon God, and he knew that angels of heaven were about him. He felt unwilling to leave the temple without making an effort to set the truth before his countrymen. As he was about to be led into the castle he said to the chief captain, 'May I speak unto thee?' ... 'I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people.'

"The request was granted, and 'Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people.' The gesture attracted their attention, while his bearing commanded respect." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 408.

- 6. With what words of affection did Paul address his fellow Jews? Among other things, what experience did he tell them about?**

Acts 22:1, 6-8 *Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence which I make now unto you.... ⁶And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. ⁷And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? ⁸And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.*

"None could deny the apostle's statements, as the facts that he referred to were well known to many who were still living in Jerusalem. He then spoke of his former zeal in persecuting the disciples of Christ, even unto death; and he narrated the circumstances of his conversion, telling his hearers how his own proud heart had been led to bow to the crucified Nazarene. Had he attempted to enter into argument with his opponents, they would have stubbornly refused to listen to his words; but the relation of his experience was attended with a convincing power that for the time seemed to soften and subdue their hearts." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 409.

A WONDERFUL TESTIMONY

- 7. What did he relate to them about his divine call to the apostleship? What can be seen in this about his ability to take advantage of every opportunity to present the gospel? How can one learn to do this in our day?**

Acts 22:10, 12-14 *And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which*

are appointed for thee to do.... ¹²And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, ¹³Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. ¹⁴And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.

"He then endeavored to show that his work among the Gentiles had not been entered upon from choice. He had desired to labor for his own nation; but in that very temple the voice of God had spoken to him in holy vision, directing his course 'far hence unto the Gentiles.'...

"Accustomed to look upon themselves as the only people favored by God, they were unwilling to permit the despised Gentiles to share the privileges which had hitherto been regarded as exclusively their own. Lifting their voices above the voice of the speaker, they cried, 'Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.'...

"In this dark hour the Lord was not unmindful of His servant. He had guarded him from the murderous throng in the temple courts;... He was with him in the fortress; and He revealed Himself to His faithful witness in response to the earnest prayers of the apostle for guidance." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 409, 410, 413.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

"Paul's heart was filled with a deep, abiding sense of his responsibility; and he labored in close communion with Him who is the fountain of justice, mercy, and truth. He clung to the cross of Christ as his only guaranty of success. The love of the Saviour was the undying motive that upheld him in his conflicts with self and in his struggle against evil, as in the service of Christ he pressed forward against the unfriendliness of the world and the opposition of his enemies.

"What the church needs in these days of peril, is an army of workers who, like Paul, have educated themselves for usefulness, who have a deep experience in the things of God, and who are filled with earnestness and zeal. Sanctified, self-sacrificing men are needed; men who are brave and true; men in whose hearts Christ is formed, 'the hope of glory' (Colossians 1:27), and who with lips touched with holy fire will 'preach the word.' 2 Timothy 4:2." —*Gospel Workers*, p. 61.

* * *

Please read the Missionary Report from Portugal on page 121.

Conflict and Victory

“There is a strife between the forces of good and evil, between the loyal and the disloyal angels. Christ and Satan are not at an agreement, and they never will be. In every age the true church of God has engaged in decided warfare against satanic agencies. Until the controversy is ended, the struggle will go on between wicked angels and wicked people on the one side, and holy angels and true believers on the other.” —*Christ Triumphant*, p. 28.

SUNDAY

ENMITY AND CONFLICT FROM THE BEGINNING TO THE END

1. According to the divine verdict, what would exist throughout the centuries between the serpent and the woman and between the serpent's seed and that of the woman? What does the history of this world show?

Genesis 3:15 *And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

Daniel 11:33 *And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days.*

John 16:2, last part ... *The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.*

“When Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden of Eden, they were innocent and sinless, in perfect harmony with God. Enmity had no natural existence in their hearts. But when they transgressed, their nature was no longer sinless. They became evil, for they had placed themselves on the side of the fallen foe, doing the very things that God specified they should not do. Had there been no interference on the part of God, fallen humans would have formed a firm alliance with Satan against heaven. But when the words were spoken, ‘I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel,’ Satan knew that although he had succeeded in making human beings sin,... some arrangement had been made whereby the beings who had fallen would be placed on vantage ground, their nature renewed in godliness. He saw that his actions in tempting them would react upon himself, and that he would be placed where he could not become conqueror....” —*Christ Triumphant*, p. 28.

MONDAY

2. According to Bible prophecy, what escalation of the conflict between the forces of good and evil is expected in the near future? What will bring this about?

Revelation 12:17; 13:7 *And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ....^{13:7} And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.*

Mark 13:13 *And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.*

"The remnant church will then be brought into great trial and distress. Those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus will feel the ire of the dragon and his hosts. Satan numbers the world as his subjects; he has gained control even of many professing Christians. But here is a little company who are resisting his supremacy." —*Prophecy and Kings*, p. 587.

"In the near future we shall see these words (Revelation 12:17) fulfilled as the Protestant churches unite with the world and with the papal power against commandment keepers....

"Church and state are now making preparations for the future conflict.... Throughout the land the papacy is piling up her lofty and massive structures, in the secret recesses of which her former persecutions are to be repeated. And the way is preparing for the manifestation, on a grand scale, of those lying wonders by which, if it were possible, Satan would deceive even the elect." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 449, 450.

TUESDAY

SPIRITUAL NATURE OF THE CONFLICT

3. Who is the Christian's foe? How did the apostle Paul define the conflict in every age?

Ephesians 6:12 *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*

1 Timothy 6:12 *Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.*

2 Timothy 4:7, 8 *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: ⁸Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

"Terrible is the struggle that takes place between the forces of good and of evil in important centers where the messengers of truth are called upon to labor. 'We wrestle not against flesh and blood,' declares Paul, 'but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world.' Ephesians 6:12. Till the close of time there will be a conflict between the church of God and those who are under the control of evil angels....

"The principalities and powers of heaven are watching the warfare which, under apparently discouraging circumstances, God's servants are carrying on. New conquests are being achieved, new honors won, as the Christians, rallying round the banner of their Redeemer, go forth to fight the good fight of faith. All the heavenly angels are at the service of the humble, believing people of God; and as the

Lord's army of workers here below sing their songs of praise, the choir above join with them in ascribing praise to God and to His Son." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 219, 154.

WEDNESDAY

4. Of what are the spiritual soldiers in the Lord's army assured? In whose name will the battle be fought and won?

Romans 16:20 *And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.*

Revelation 12:10, last part, 11 ... *For the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. ¹¹And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.*

"God is the strength of His people today. We are not to trust in princes, or to set men in the place of God. We are to remember that human beings are fallible and erring, and that He who has all power is our strong tower of defense. In every emergency we are to feel that the battle is His. His resources are limitless, and apparent impossibilities will make the victory all the greater." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 202.

"This is not the case in the Christian warfare. All may run this race, and may be sure of victory and immortal honor if they submit to the conditions. Says Paul: 'So run, that ye may obtain.' He then explains the conditions which are necessary for them to observe in order to be successful: 'And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things.'" —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 34.

"Christ has made it possible for every member of the human family to resist temptation. All who would live godly lives may overcome as Christ overcame, by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony." —*Medical Ministry*, p. 264.

THURSDAY

DIVINE POWER FOR THE FINAL INVITATION TO GLORY

5. What will the Lord's servants—those who have loved and followed Him and have given His message with power—soon receive?

Joel 2:28, 29 *And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: ²⁹And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.*

Acts 1:8; 2:38, last part, 39 *But 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 Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.... ^{2:38}And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. ³⁹For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.*

"If this prophecy of Joel met a partial fulfillment in the days of the apostles, we are living in a time when it is to be even more evidently manifest to the people of God. He will so bestow His Spirit upon His people that they will become a light amid the moral darkness; and great light will be reflected in all parts of the world. O that our faith might be increased, that the Lord might work mightily with His people." —(*Manuscript 49*, 1908) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1175.

"The time has come when we must expect the Lord to do great things for us. Our efforts must not flag or weaken. We are to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord. Before the work is closed up and the sealing of God's people is finished, we shall receive the outpouring of the Spirit of God. Angels from heaven will be in our midst. The present is a fitting-up time for heaven when we must walk in full obedience to all the commands of God." —(Letter 30, 1907) *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 111.

FRIDAY

6. What has always been Jesus' desire and earnest prayer for His followers? What is He preparing for those who love Him and follow Him in the severe conflict with evil powers?

John 17:24; 14:2, 3 *Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world....^{14:2}In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

"From garrets, from hovels, from dungeons, from scaffolds, from mountains and deserts, from the caves of the earth and the caverns of the sea, Christ will gather His children to Himself. On earth they have been destitute, afflicted, and tormented. Millions have gone down to the grave loaded with infamy because they refused to yield to the deceptive claims of Satan. By human tribunals the children of God have been adjudged the vilest criminals. But the day is near when 'God is judge Himself.' Psalm 50:6. Then the decisions of earth shall be reversed. 'The rebuke of His people shall He take away.' Isaiah 25:8. White robes will be given to every one of them. Revelation 6:11. And 'they shall call them the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord.' Isaiah 62:12." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 179, 180.

SABBATH

VICTORY—ENTRANCE INTO THE KINGDOM OF GLORY

7. What final words will soon be spoken from the temple in heaven? What wonderful promises will the Lord fulfill to those who overcome the evil one through His divine power?

Revelation 16:17; 2:26; 3:21 *And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done....^{2:26}And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:....^{3:21}To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.*

"The time is coming when it will be too late to seek God, and I have been thinking how we shall feel when probation is closed, and all our life-work ended.... Shall we then be accounted as faithful servants? What if at this moment we should hear the voice of Christ saying, 'It is done'?..." —*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 343.

"Those who would overcome must put to the tax every power of their being. They must agonize on their knees before God for divine power. Christ came to be

our example, and to make known to us that we may be partakers of the divine nature. How? By having escaped the corruptions that are in the world through lust. Satan did not gain the victory over Christ. He did not put his foot upon the soul of the Redeemer. He did not touch the head though he bruised the heel. Christ, by His own example, made it evident that man may stand in integrity. Men may have a power to resist evil—a power that neither earth, nor death, nor hell can master; a power that will place them where they may overcome as Christ overcame. Divinity and humanity may be combined in them.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 409.

SABBATH

8. Where will the victorious saints spend eternity, free from all conflict?

Revelation 21:4, 5 *And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. ⁵And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.*

Daniel 7:27 *And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.*

“Through trials and persecution, the glory—character—of God is revealed in His chosen ones. The church of God, hated and persecuted by the world, are educated and disciplined in the school of Christ. They walk in narrow paths on earth; they are purified in the furnace of affliction. They follow Christ through sore conflicts; they endure self-denial and experience bitter disappointments; but their painful experience teaches them the guilt and woe of sin, and they look upon it with abhorrence. Being partakers of Christ’s sufferings, they are destined to be partakers of His glory. In holy vision the prophet saw the triumph of the people of God. He says, ‘I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory ... stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints.’ Revelation 15:2, 3.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 31.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

“The crown and the throne are the tokens of a condition attained; they are the tokens of self-conquest through our Lord Jesus Christ.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 549.

“Through trial and persecution the glory—the character—of God is revealed in His chosen ones. The believers in Christ, hated and persecuted by the world, are educated and disciplined in the school of Christ. On earth they walk in narrow paths; they are purified in the furnace of affliction. They follow Christ through sore conflicts; they endure self-denial, and experience bitter disappointments; but thus they learn the guilt and woe of sin, and they look upon it with abhorrence. Being partakers of Christ’s sufferings, they can look beyond the gloom to the glory, saying, ‘I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.’ Romans 8:18.” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 280.

* * *

MISSIONARY REPORT

from Portugal

To be read on Sabbath, June 27, 2020

***The Special Sabbath School Offering
will be gathered on Sabbath, July 4, 2020***

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” James 1:27.

Portugal is located in southwestern of Europe, in the western part of the Iberian Peninsula and near the islands of the North Atlantic. The country has a land area of 92,212 square kilometers (35,603 square miles) and shares a border with Spain on the north and east; the Atlantic Ocean is on the south and west, near the Azores and Madeira. The westernmost country of the European continent, Portugal's official language is Portuguese, and it has a population of 10,374,822.

The territory that is now occupied by Portugal belonged to the Roman Empire for a very long time, and barbarian tribes began to invade and conquer the northern part of the country in A.D. 409. The Swabians and Alans settled in the south. In A.D. 415, the Visigoths overran the Peninsula at the request of the Romans to expel the invaders, resulting in the Vandals and Alans being driven toward North Africa. The Swabians and Visigoths founded the first Christian kingdom.

In A.D. 711, the country was conquered by the Muslims, who established the Al-Andalus. The Christians gathered in the north, establishing the Kingdom of Asturias. Since the Swabians who were in the country when Portugal was established were Christians, the country has a Christian majority.

Currently the Portuguese Constitution guarantees religious freedom and equality to all religions, although the Catholic Church is especially privileged in various areas of society.

According to the 2011 census, 81% of the Portuguese population is Catholic, 8.3% is undeclared, 6.8% has no religion, 3.3% is Protestant, and 0.6% belong to other religions.

The message of the Reform Movement was brought to Portugal in 1933 by Brothers Antonio of Spain and Eggarter of Germany. They started talking about the message of Reformation to brothers of the Adventist Church in Lisbon, and eight of them accepted the message. Brothers Antonio and Eggarter were eventually deported from Portugal, because the Adventist pastor of the complained to the authorities that these brethren were teaching against military service.

Brother Rieck was then sent to Portugal by the General Conference, and after some time the first souls were baptized by the former General Conference President, Wilhelm Maas, sometime in 1936-1938. In the following years, two churches

were established and smaller groups were formed. Every year new souls accepted the message of Reform.

In 1976, Elder Raul Escobar, Elder Henry Andrade, and Brother Wilhelm Egert-er worked together to secure the first official registration of the church in Portugal. Now the Portuguese Field has two churches and 28 members, more than 60% of them being over 65 years of age.

The latter fact is the reason for this request for assistance. Many of these brethren are in need of care. Some of them live alone, and their families are unable to care for them, so the spiritual family needs to take up the responsibility to help these brethren, who gave so much for God's cause. The Lord says in His word: "And even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." Isaiah 46:4.

When I became president of the Portuguese Field in 2016, I saw the need to initiate a project to meet the urgent needs of these older brethren. Our plan is to buy a piece of property with or without a house in a country setting in nature and remodel the building to comply with the country's laws and to meet the needs of our elderly brethren. We already have professionals who can care for these believers and can give them the attention that they deserve. By the grace of God, this plan already has the support of the European Division and the believers in Portugal; but we also desire the assistance of those around the world who are able to pray for and support this project with their means.

"The light that the Lord has given me was repeated: Let every family take care of its own relatives, making suitable provision for them. If this is not possible, then the church should bear the burden. The Lord will bless His church in exercising benevolence. They are God's poor, and are not to be left unhappy and destitute.

"If the church cannot do this, then the conference must take it up and make provision for the Lord's needy ones. Provision should also be made for the orphans. If these cannot be taken care of by their relatives, then the church or the conference must take the care of them, and place them in suitable homes." – (Manuscript 151, 1898) *Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 331.

Thank you for your prayers and gifts.

—Adalicio Fontes de Souza
Portuguese Field President

END NOTES

NOTE 1

"The text of 1 Samuel 18:10 and others related to Saul's strange behavior reports that 'the evil spirit from God came upon Saul.' How is to be understood this sentence? A scholar notes that God only gave permission to the evil spirit to come upon him. 'The Spirit of the Lord departed from him. If God and His grace do not rule us, sin and Satan will have possession of us. The devil, by the Divine permission, troubled and terrified Saul, by the corrupt humors of his body, and passions of his mind.'" —*Matthew Henry Commentary* on 1 Samuel 16:14.

NOTE 2

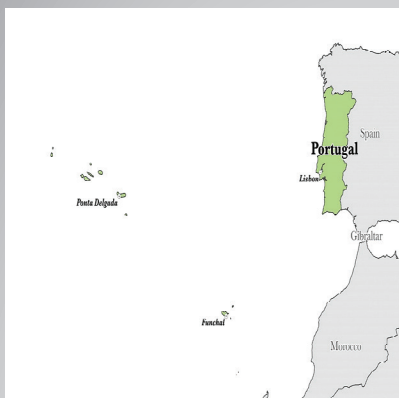
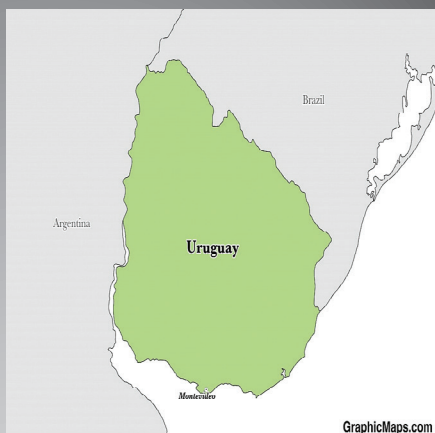
According the Sister Ellen G. White, writing in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, when the women sang, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands," then "The demon of jealousy entered the heart of the king." She also wrote that "Saul gave himself up to the control of the wicked spirit that ruled over him" and that "the demon of passion ... had been slumbering in Saul's breast."

NOTE 3

"The 'stone' here announced represents Christ, who in the previous verse is called 'My servant' and 'the Branch.' Zechariah 3:8. In this Stone are 'eyes,' indicating that it is a 'living stone.' 1 Peter 2:4. When He is accepted as a personal Saviour in one day is removed the iniquity of individuals and of the people, because He is the one that takes 'away the sin of the world.' John 1:29. The justification that the law could not give because of the weakness of the flesh (Romans 8:3), through Him is possible (Acts 13:39); by Him we are free from the condemnation and from the dominion of sin. Romans 4:7; 5:1; 6:12, 14.

"The 'stone' that the Lord laid before Joshua represents 'Christ the Stone of Israel,' whom the builders refused, the foundation and corner stone of the spiritual building, the church: and this was laid before Joshua to build his faith upon, to view his safety and security on it, and to take comfort from it for himself; and to lay it before others, and instruct them in the nature and use of it, for their comfort also. It was prophetically laid before him in the prophecies of Christ, that went before; and typically, when the foundation of the temple was laid (Ezra 3:9), the temple being a type of the church, and the foundation of it a type of Christ: and this being done by Jehovah, shows that He is the chief builder; that this stone must be an excellent one, that is of his laying; that that building must stand...." —*Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*, comments on Zechariah 3:9.

URUGUAYAN FIELD



SPECIAL SABBATH SCHOOL OFFERINGS

PORTUGUESE FIELD

ECUADORIAN FIELD

