

SABBATH BIBLE LESSONS

Senior Division

The City of Refuge

Vol. 84, No. 4

October–December, 2008

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

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Foreword

Last quarter, Sabbath school students around the world studied *The People of the Ark*. This current lesson, *The City of Refuge*, is actually a continuation of that general subject. These two quarterlies are designed to bring us highly relevant insights on the experience of ancient Israel in preparing for the Promised Land in their day—and to present us with important parallels for the eternal Promised Land so soon to come in our day.

"The history of the wilderness life of Israel was chronicled for the benefit of the Israel of God till the close of time. The record of God's dealing with the wanderers of the desert in all their marchings to and fro, in their exposure to hunger, thirst, and weariness, and in the striking manifestations of His power for their relief, is fraught with warning and instruction for His people in all ages. The varied experience of the Hebrews was a school of preparation for their promised home in Canaan. God would have His people in these days review with a humble heart and teachable spirit the trials through which ancient Israel passed, that they may be instructed in their preparation for the heavenly Canaan."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 293.

One key component throughout Israel's wilderness journey was the sacred Ark of the Covenant. Called to be distinct among all nations, the Israelites were to be recognized as God's chosen people throughout the world solely because of their worship of the Creator of heaven and earth—the one and only true God, the Lord Jehovah. The Ark of the Covenant was given as a monumental symbol of their faith. Beneath the mercy seat and inside that ark were three items:

1. The tables of stone with the Ten Commandments.
2. A pot of manna.
3. Aaron's rod that had budded.

These items were highly significant in their meaning and implications. It is also important to keep in mind that "the ark of the earthly sanctuary was the pattern of the true ark in heaven" (*The Signs of the Times*, June 24, 1880).

In *The People of the Ark* we studied the first two items in the ark. *The City of Refuge* will focus largely on the third item. As believers looking earnestly to the heavenly sanctuary, we certainly need to understand what is inside that Ark of the Covenant and what it means for us!

"In all the journeyings of Israel, 'the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them' (Numbers 10:33). . . . The sacred chest containing God's holy law was to lead" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 375, 376). Today, as we look heavenward, we pray that the heavenly Ark may guide our upward journey to purity and perfection by the mercy and strength of Jesus Christ, our High Priest!

The General Conference Sabbath School Department

First Sabbath Offering

for the Vietnamese Mission

Dear Brethren and Sisters around the World.

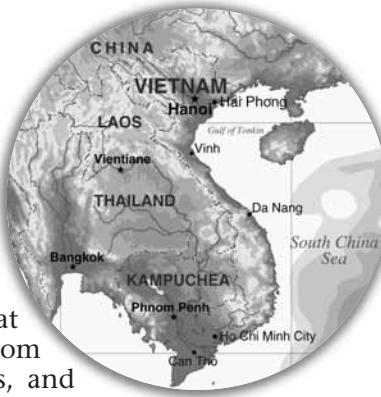
We thank the Lord for His great mercy and love for His people, whom He is calling out from all others, and bringing into His fold.

Vietnam is the country situated on the southeastern corner of the Asian region, with a growing population of over 87 million. It is also growing in industries and personal/family businesses. About 85% of the people profess Buddhism and about 8% of the population are Christians, of those about 1 million Protestants. The message of Reformation reached Vietnam in June 2000 through a brother from South Korea who was moved by the Lord to carry the message to this lovely country and its people.

From a small beginning the work continued to grow. We now have close to 30 members and others are waiting to join God's people. The work is organized with a group in the capital Ho Chi Minh City and a church some 70 km southwest. As our brethren have made plans and are continuing to carry them out to reach into the neighboring countries of Laos and Cambodia, it is important that a place is organized from where it will be possible to further let the light shine to all the region and beyond. While our brethren are willing to do—spend and be spent—they are small in number and in earthly goods. Therefore they are appealing to all our brethren around the world to come to their help to be able to obtain a small center from where the Light of truth will continue to shine forth.

We trust that our brethren will be touched by the Lord to contribute generously for this special project and make it possible for our Vietnamese brethren to carry the Lord's work not only in Vietnam but in other countries as well.

Your brethren and sisters from Vietnam



Rebellion at the Border

"Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king" (1 Samuel 15:23).

"As we approach the close of time, as the people of God stand upon the borders of the heavenly Canaan, Satan will, as of old, redouble his efforts to prevent them from entering the goodly land."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 457.

Suggested Reading: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 395–399.

Sunday

September 28

1. TWO ITEMS MISSING!

- a. What three items were inside the ark of the covenant? Hebrews 9:3, 4.

- b. By the time the Temple was built in Solomon's day, what two items were missing? 2 Chronicles 5:10. What happened later to the entire ark?

"God promised Solomon, if he would remain faithful, and his people would obey all His commandments, that that glorious temple should stand forever in all its splendor, as an evidence of the prosperity and exalted blessings resting upon Israel for their obedience.

"Because of Israel's transgression of the commandments of God and their wicked acts, God suffered them to go into captivity, to humble and punish them. Before the temple was destroyed, God made known to a few of His faithful servants the fate of the temple, which was the pride of Israel, and which they regarded with idolatry, while they were sinning against God. He also revealed to them the captivity of Israel. These righteous men, just before the destruction of the temple, removed the sacred ark containing the tables of stone, and with mourning and sadness secreted it in a cave where it was to be hid from the people of Israel because of their sins, and was to be no more restored to them. That sacred ark is yet hid. It has never been disturbed since it was secreted."—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 414.

2. THE HEAVENLY ARK COMPLETE

- a. Has the sacred ark of the covenant ever been restored to God's true and faithful people now looking to the heavenly sanctuary? Revelation 11:19. What about the items that were missing on earth?

"God's people are now to have their eyes fixed on the heavenly sanctuary, where the final ministration of our great High Priest in the work of the judgment is going forward—where He is interceding for His people."—*Evangelism*, p. 223.

"In the holiest I saw an ark; on the top and sides of it was purest gold. On each end of the ark was a lovely cherub, with its wings spread out over it. Their faces were turned toward each other, and they looked downward. Between the angels was a golden censer. Above the ark, where the angels stood, was an exceeding bright glory, that appeared like a throne where God dwelt. Jesus stood by the ark, and as the saints' prayers came up to Him, the incense in the censer would smoke, and He would offer up their prayers with the smoke of the incense to His Father. In the ark was the golden pot of manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of stone which folded together like a book."—*Early Writings*, p. 32.

- b. Seeing that the missing items have been restored, what hopeful aim should come to our heart? Psalm 94:14–16.

"Satan has laid every measure possible that nothing shall come among us as a people to reprove and rebuke us, and exhort us to put away our errors. But there is a people who will bear the ark of God. Some will go out from among us who will bear the ark no longer. But these cannot make walls to obstruct the truth; for it will go onward and upward to the end. In the past God has raised up men, and He still has men of opportunity waiting, prepared to do His bidding—men who will go through restrictions which are only as walls daubed with untempered mortar. When God puts His Spirit upon men, they will work. They will proclaim the word of the Lord; they will lift up their voice like a trumpet. The truth will not be diminished or lose its power in their hands. They will show the people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 411.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES IN LEADERSHIP

- a. In ancient Israel, who had appointed Moses and Aaron to their responsibilities? Exodus 3:7–10; 4:14–17.

"Moses heard the call from heaven to exchange his shepherd's crook for the rod of authority; to leave his flock of sheep and take the leadership of Israel. The divine command found him self-distrustful, slow of speech, and timid. . . . But he accepted the work, putting his whole trust in the Lord."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 475.

"God appointed Moses to lead out His people from their bondage in the land of Egypt. . . . Moses was their visible Leader, while Christ stood at the head of the armies of Israel, their invisible leader. If they could have always realized this they would not have rebelled and provoked God in the wilderness by their unreasonable murmurings."—*The Review and Herald*, March 3, 1874.

- b. What example shows our responsibility toward those whom God has called to be leaders? Against whom are we rebelling if we reject them—particularly when principle is not involved? 1 Samuel 24:5, 6, 10; 26:9; 1 Timothy 5:17.

"The conduct of David toward Saul has a lesson. By command of God, Saul had been anointed as king over Israel. Because of his disobedience the Lord declared that the kingdom should be taken from him; and yet how tender and courteous and forbearing was the conduct of David toward him!"—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 484.

"To neglect or despise those whom God has appointed to bear the responsibilities of leadership in connection with the advancement of the truth, is to reject the means that He has ordained for the help, encouragement, and strength of His people."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 164.

- c. Since God selects these individuals to their specific tasks, when are they free to let go of such responsibilities? 1 Corinthians 9:16.

"The humble shepherd's life of Moses had been far more peaceful and happy than his present position as leader of that vast assembly of turbulent spirits. Yet Moses dared not choose. In place of a shepherd's crook a rod of power had been given him, which he could not lay down until God should release him."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 396.

4. WANTING CONTROL

- a. Who was Korah? Numbers 16:1; Exodus 6:18, 20.

"Korah, the leading spirit in this [deep-laid conspiracy] movement, was a Levite, of the family of Kohath, and a cousin of Moses; he was a man of ability and influence."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 395.

- b. While holding a high position in the government of Israel, what additional position did Korah want? Numbers 16:8–10.

"Though appointed to the service of the tabernacle, he had become dissatisfied with his position and aspired to the dignity of the priesthood."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 395.

"The Lord knew that Korah was rebellious at heart, and was secretly at work against Moses in the congregation of Israel, although his rebellion had not yet developed itself. . . . Korah was not satisfied with his position. He was connected with the service of the tabernacle, yet he desired to be exalted to the priesthood. God had established Moses as chief governor, and the priesthood was given to Aaron and his sons. Korah determined to compel Moses to change the order of things, whereby he should be raised to the dignity of the priesthood. To be more sure of accomplishing his purpose, he drew Dathan and Abiram, the descendants of Reuben, into his rebellion."—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 296.

- c. How does one arrive at such a position of rebellion? Proverbs 16:18; 27:4; 1 Timothy 6:4.

"Korah and his fellow conspirators were men who had been favored with special manifestations of God's power and greatness. They were of the number who went up with Moses into the mount and beheld the divine glory. But since that time a change had come. A temptation, slight at first, had been harbored, and had strengthened as it was encouraged, until their minds were controlled by Satan, and they ventured upon their work of disaffection. Professing great interest in the prosperity of the people, they first whispered their discontent to one another and then to leading men of Israel. Their insinuations were so readily received that they ventured still further, and at last they really believed themselves to be actuated by zeal for God."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 396, 397.

5. GREATER FOLLY WHEN FOREWARNED

- a. Explain the uprising of Korah. Numbers 16:1–3.

"A deep-laid conspiracy was formed, the result of a determined purpose to overthrow the authority of the leaders appointed by God Himself."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 395.

"Jealousy had given rise to envy, and envy to rebellion. [Korah, Dathan, and Abiram] had discussed the question of the right of Moses to so great authority and honor, until they had come to regard him as occupying a very enviable position, which any of them could fill as well as he. And they deceived themselves and one another into thinking that Moses and Aaron had themselves assumed the positions they held."—Ibid., p. 397.

- b. How does God refer to rebellion? 1 Samuel 15:22, 23. What should our attitude be toward those in responsibility? Hebrews 13:5, 17 (margin).

"It is hardly possible for men to offer greater insult to God than to despise and reject the instrumentalities He would use for their salvation. The Israelites had not only done this, but had purposed to put both Moses and Aaron to death."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 402.

- c. How does God prepare us to face temptation? 1 Corinthians 10:11–13; John 15:22. What event had God allowed to warn Israel? Numbers 12:1–16.

"He who reads the secrets of all hearts had marked the purposes of Korah and his companions and had given His people such warning and instruction as might have enabled them to escape the deception of these designing men. They had seen the judgment of God fall upon Miriam because of her jealousy and complaints against Moses."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 396.

- d. Had Moses incited a rebellious attitude in the people by an overbearing type of leadership or rule? Numbers 12:3.

REVIEW AND THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- a. Has the ark, taken away at the time of the Babylonian captivity, ever been restored to God's people—and if so, in what sense?
- b. When God places individuals in a leadership role in His church, when are they free to leave such responsibilities?
- c. As relatives of Moses and Aaron, for what offices did Korah, Dathan, and Abiram yearn?
- d. What is the real act or the process of rebellion?
- e. What kind of leader was Moses?

"The discontented ones said that [Moses and Aaron] had exalted themselves above the congregation of the Lord, in taking upon them the priesthood and government, but their house was not entitled to distinction above others in Israel; they were no more holy than the people, and it should be enough for them to be on a level with their brethren."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 397.

"In the rebellion of Korah is seen the working out, upon a narrower stage, of the same spirit that led to the rebellion of Satan in heaven. It was pride and ambition that prompted Lucifer to complain of the government of God, and to seek the overthrow of the order which had been established in heaven. Since his fall it has been his object to infuse the same spirit of envy and discontent, the same ambition for position and honor, into the minds of men. He thus worked on the minds of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, to arouse the desire for self-exaltation and excite envy, distrust, and rebellion. Satan caused them to reject God as their leader, by rejecting the men of God's appointment. Yet while in their murmuring against Moses and Aaron they blasphemed God, they were so deluded as to think themselves righteous, and to regard those who had faithfully reproved their sins as actuated by Satan."—Ibid., p. 403.

"All rebellion against God is directly due to satanic influence. Those who set themselves against the government of God have entered into an alliance with the archapostate, and he will exercise his power and cunning to captivate the senses and mislead the understanding. He will cause everything to appear in a false light."—Ibid., p. 635.

"From the very infancy of this world God has been with His obedient children. We must show that we have confidence in God, and make it manifest to the world that we can trust Him because we believe in Him. His word is pledged that there shall no temptation come upon us, but that help shall be provided to sustain us."—*The Review and Herald*, April 15, 1890.

Leadership With Reproof

"All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the spirits" (*Proverbs 16:2*).

"To those who are in the wrong, and deserving of reproof, there is nothing more pleasing than to receive sympathy and praise."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 397.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 227–240.

1. A PERSISTENT REBELLION

- a. How did Moses respond to the rebellion that Korah had incited against him—but above all, against God? *Numbers 16:4–7*.
- b. How did the Israelites evidently spend the extra night granted them to reconsider their attitude? *Numbers 16:12*.

"[The Israelites] did not realize the necessity of seeking pardon of God for their grievous sin. That night of probation was not passed in repentance and confession, but in devising some way to resist the evidences which showed them to be the greatest of sinners. They still cherished hatred of the men of God's appointment, and braced themselves to resist their authority. Satan was at hand to pervert their judgment and lead them blindfold to destruction."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 402.

- c. How did those involved in rebellion view themselves? *Numbers 16:2, 3*.

"The charge that the murmurings of the people had brought upon them the wrath of God was declared to be a mistake. [The conspirators] said that the congregation were not at fault, since they desired nothing more than their rights; but that Moses was an overbearing ruler; that he had reproved the people as sinners, when they were a holy people, and the Lord was among them."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 397.

2. SELF-DECEIVED

- a. What principle did Korah violate? Luke 14:8–11; Revelation 3:17.

"Korah had cherished his envy and rebellion until he was self-deceived, and he really thought that the congregation was a very righteous people, and that Moses was a tyrannical ruler, continually dwelling upon the necessity of the congregation's being holy, when there was no need of it, for they were holy."—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 300.

- b. What mistake did the rebels make since they already knew God's law? 2 Corinthians 10:12.

"[Korah and his company] had flattered the people in general to believe that they were right, and that all their troubles arose from Moses their ruler, who was continually reminding them of their sins. The people thought that if Korah could lead them and encourage them and dwell upon their righteous acts, instead of reminding them of their failures, they should have a very peaceful, prosperous journey, and he would without doubt lead them, not back and forward in the wilderness, but into the Promised Land. They said that it was Moses who had told them that they could not go into the land, and that the Lord had not thus said."—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 300.

- c. What has always been a source of trouble with people with similar issues as those that Korah, Dathan, and Abiram had raised? 1 Kings 22:5–8.

"Korah reviewed the history of [the congregation's] travels through the wilderness, where they had been brought into strait places, and many had perished because of their murmuring and disobedience. His hearers thought they saw clearly that their troubles might have been prevented if Moses had pursued a different course. They decided that all their disasters were chargeable to him, and that their exclusion from Canaan was in consequence of the mismanagement of Moses and Aaron; that if Korah would be their leader, and would encourage them by dwelling upon their good deeds instead of reproving their sins, they would have a very peaceful, prosperous journey; instead of wandering to and fro in the wilderness, they would proceed directly to the Promised Land."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 397, 398.

3. SELF-INFILCTED BLINDNESS

- a. Of all the deceptions faced in the Christian warfare, which is the worst? Proverbs 3:7; 12:15; 16:2; 21:2.

"[The Israelites] had been flattered by Korah and his company until they really believed themselves to be very good people, and that they had been wronged and abused by Moses. Should they admit that Korah and his company were wrong, and Moses right, then they would be compelled to receive as the word of God the sentence that they must die in the wilderness. They were not willing to submit to this, and they tried to believe that Moses had deceived them. They had fondly cherished the hope that a new order of things was about to be established, in which praise would be substituted for reproof, and ease for anxiety and conflict. The men who had perished had spoken flattering words and had professed great interest and love for them, and the people concluded that Korah and his companions must have been good men, and that Moses had by some means been the cause of their destruction."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 401, 402.

- b. In order to convince themselves of a lie, what did the people have to imagine regarding the land of Egypt? Numbers 16:12, 13.

"[The rebels] accused Moses of being the cause of their not entering the Promised Land. They said that God had not dealt with them thus. He had not said that they should die in the wilderness. They would never believe that He had thus said; but that it was Moses who had said this, not the Lord; and that it was all arranged by Moses to never bring them to the land of Canaan. They spoke of his leading them from a land that flowed with milk and honey. They forgot in their blind rebellion their sufferings in the land of Egypt, and the desolating plagues brought upon that land. But they now accuse Moses of bringing them from a good land, to kill them in the wilderness that he might be made rich with their possessions. They inquired of Moses, in an insolent manner, if he thought that none of all the host of Israel were wise enough to understand his motives, and . . . to have him lead them about like blind men as he pleased, sometimes toward Canaan, then back again toward the Red Sea and Egypt. These words they spoke before the congregation, and utterly refused to any longer acknowledge the authority of Moses and Aaron."—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, pp. 298, 299.

4. THE SHOWDOWN

- a. Who gathered the entire congregation for the deciding event to determine true leadership? Numbers 16:14–19. Describe the contrasting attitudes.

"It was evident that the sympathies of the people were with the disaffected party; but Moses made no effort at self-vindication. He solemnly appealed to God, in the presence of the congregation, as a witness to the purity of his motives and the uprightness of his conduct, and implored Him to be his judge. . . .

"It was not Moses who assembled the congregation to behold the defeat of Korah and his company, but the rebels, in their blind presumption, had called them together to witness their victory. A large part of the congregation openly sided with Korah, whose hopes were high of carrying his point against Aaron."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 399, 400.

- b. Although encouraged at first by the solidarity with the majority of the Israelite leaders, why was a division created between the subversive leadership and the congregation? Numbers 16:20–27.

"The chief rebels saw themselves abandoned by those whom they had deceived, but their hardihood was unshaken. They stood with their families in the door of their tents, as if in defiance of the divine warning."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 400.

- c. By what miraculous event did God reveal that these apostates were determined to defy His will? Numbers 16:28–35.

"Satan caused [the rebels] to reject God as their leader, by rejecting the men of God's appointment. Yet while in their murmuring against Moses and Aaron they blasphemed God, they were so deluded as to think themselves righteous, and to regard those who had faithfully reproved their sins as actuated by Satan."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 403.

"God had given overwhelming evidence that He was leading Israel. But Korah and his companions rejected light until they became so blinded that the most striking manifestations of His power were not sufficient to convince them; they attributed them all to human or satanic agency. . . . It was this act that sealed their doom. They had committed the sin against the Holy Spirit."—*The Review and Herald*, November 12, 1903.

5. TRUE LEADERSHIP

- a. How do we know that not all the children of Korah were supportive of his rebellion? 1 Chronicles 6:33–38. What is another name for Shemuel? 1 Chronicles 6:28, 33.

- b. What lessons did Israel need to keep in memory as a result of this experience? Numbers 16:36–40.

- c. Instead of spending the night in repentance, what spirit did all Israel show after the punishment of the rebels? Numbers 16:41–43.

The same thing was done by the people, who the day after the destruction of the men who had deceived them, they dared to attribute His judgments to Satan, declaring that through the power of the evil one, Moses and Aaron had caused the death of good and holy men."—*The Review and Herald*, November 12, 1903.

- d. How did Moses and Aaron show their true spirit as leaders when the plague began to destroy the remaining participants in the rebellion? Numbers 16:44–50.

"The guilt of sin did not rest upon Moses, and hence he did not fear and did not hasten away and leave the congregation to perish. Moses lingered, in this fearful crisis manifesting the true shepherd's interest for the flock of his care. He pleaded that the wrath of God might not utterly destroy the people of His choice. By his intercession he stayed the arm of vengeance, that a full end might not be made of disobedient, rebellious Israel.

"But the minister of wrath had gone forth; the plague was doing its work of death. By his brother's direction, Aaron took a censer and hastened into the midst of the congregation to 'make an atonement for them.' 'And he stood between the dead and the living.' As the smoke of the incense ascended, the prayers of Moses in the tabernacle went up to God; and the plague was stayed; but not until fourteen thousand of Israel lay dead, an evidence of the guilt of murmuring and rebellion."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 402, 403.

REVIEW AND THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- a. What type of deception poses the greatest danger to believers?
- b. Similar to the prevalent modern thinking, what was the new method of labor that the people expected in the new order to be established by Korah?
- c. To what extent did self-deception lead the people in their remembrance of the land of Egypt?
- d. How does the experience of Korah show that children do not necessarily follow in the footsteps of their parents?
- e. What can we learn from the experience of Moses and Aaron during the height of the plague?

"The Hebrews were not willing to submit to the directions and restrictions of the Lord. They were restless under restraint, and unwilling to receive reproof. This was the secret of their murmuring against Moses. Had they been left free to do as they pleased, there would have been fewer complaints against their leader. All through the history of the church God's servants have had the same spirit to meet."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 404.

"There is nothing which will please the people better than to be praised and flattered when they are in darkness and wrong, and deserve reproof. Korah gained the ears of the people, and next their sympathies, by representing Moses as an overbearing leader. He said that he was too harsh, too exacting, too dictatorial, and that he reproved the people as though they were sinners when they were a holy people, sanctified to the Lord, and the Lord was among them. Korah rehearsed the incidents in their experience in their travels through the wilderness, where they had been brought into strait places, and where many of them had died because of murmuring and disobedience, and with their perverted senses they thought they saw very clearly that all their trouble might have been saved if Moses had pursued a different course. He was too unyielding, too exacting, and they decided that all their disasters in the wilderness were chargeable to him. Korah, the leading spirit, professed great wisdom in discerning the true reason for their trials and afflictions."—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, pp. 345, 346.

"The work of God in the earth presents, from age to age, a striking similarity in every great reformation or religious movement. The principles of God's dealing with men are ever the same. The important movements of the present have their parallel in those of the past, and the experience of the church in former ages has lessons of great value for our own time."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 343.

A Budding Staff With Almonds

"The Lord said unto Moses, Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels; and thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from me, that they die not" (Numbers 17:10).

"God mercifully condescended to give the host of Israel another evidence, one calculated to correct their perverted judgment."—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 305.

Suggested Reading: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 400–405.

Sunday

October 12

1. EACH LEADER WITH A ROD

- a. Throughout Old Testament times, of what has the rod been a symbol? Psalm 110:2; Isaiah 11:1–4; Jeremiah 51:19.

- b. As each leader in Israel was to present a rod, in what manner did God have the leadership of Aaron specifically identified? Numbers 17:1–4, 6, 7.

"By divine direction each tribe prepared a rod and wrote upon it the name of the tribe. The name of Aaron was upon that of Levi. The rods were laid up in the tabernacle, 'before the testimony.'"—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 403.

- c. What specific miracle was to identify God's chosen representative to the priesthood, and what was it designed to do? Numbers 17:5, 8, 9.

2. A SYMBOLIC MEMORIAL AND PROPHECY

- a. How was Aaron's priesthood confirmed as a reminder for future generations? Numbers 17:10–13.

"[In causing Aaron's rod to bud and bear almonds,] God . . . wrought a miracle which was sufficient to silence the complaints of the Israelites, and which was to be a standing testimony that God had settled the priesthood upon Aaron. All the remarkable changes in the rod occurred in one night, to convince them that God had positively distinguished between Aaron and the rest of the children of Israel. After this miracle of divine power, the authority of the priesthood was no longer called in question. This wonderful rod was preserved to be frequently shown to the people, to remind them of the past, to prevent them from murmuring, and again calling in question to whom the priesthood rightfully belonged.

"After the children of Israel were fully convinced of their wrong, in unjustly accusing Moses and Aaron as they had done, they saw their past rebellion in its true light, and they were terrified. They 'spake unto Moses, saying, Behold we die, we perish; we all perish' (Numbers 17:12). They are at length compelled to believe the unwelcome truth that their fate is to die in the wilderness. After they believed that it was indeed the Lord who had said that they should not enter the Promised Land, but should die, they then acknowledged that Moses and Aaron were right, and that they had sinned against the Lord, in rebelling against their authority. They also confessed that Korah, and those who perished with him, were sinners against the Lord, and that they had justly suffered his wrath."—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, pp. 305, 306.

- b. Who is our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary? Hebrews 8:1–5; 9:3, 4.

"The Chief Shepherd is looking down from the heavenly sanctuary upon the sheep of His pasture."—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 273.

"Now is the time when the Lord is testing character, weighing moral worth in the balances of the sanctuary. Oh, let us seek the gold tried in the fire, let us seek the white raiment of Christ's righteousness, that the shame of our nakedness do not appear, and anoint our eyes with the heavenly eyosalve, that we may discern the working of God."—*The Review and Herald*, July 28, 1891.

3. A PREPARATORY WORK

- a. What work was done by John the Baptist prior to Christ's first advent? Matthew 3:2; John 3:27–30.

"In this age, just prior to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, such a work as that of John is to be done. God calls for men who will prepare a people to stand in the great day of the Lord. The message preceding the public ministry of Christ was: 'Repent, publicans and sinners; repent, Pharisees and Sadducees; "repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"' (Matthew 3:2). As a people who believe in Christ's soon appearing, we have a message to bear 'Prepare to meet thy God' (Amos 4:12). Our message must be as direct as was the message of John. He rebuked kings for their iniquity. Notwithstanding that his life was imperiled, he did not hesitate to declare God's word. And our work in this age must be done as faithfully."—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 332, 333.

- b. What work is to be done in these closing days of earth's history? Isaiah 58:1; Amos 4:12.

"With no elaborate arguments or fine-spun theories did John declare his message. Startling and stern, yet full of hope, his voice was heard from the wilderness: 'Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand' (Matthew 3:2). With a new, strange power it moved the people. The whole nation was stirred. Multitudes flocked to the wilderness. . . .

"In order to give such a message as John gave, we must have a spiritual experience like his. The same work must be wrought in us. We must behold God, and in beholding Him, lose sight of self.

"John had by nature the faults and weaknesses common to humanity; but the touch of divine love had transformed him. When, after Christ's ministry began, the disciples of John came to him with the complaint that all men were following the new Teacher, John showed how clearly he understood his relation to the Messiah, and how gladly he welcomed the One for whom he had prepared the way."—*Gospel Workers*, pp. 54–56.

4. PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

- a. What type of experience must we have in order to be able to give a clear-cut message as did John the Baptist? *Isaiah 57:15; John 1:29.*

"John had risen to the height of self-abnegation. He sought not to attract men to himself, but to lift their thoughts higher and still higher, until they should rest upon the Lamb of God. He himself had been only a voice, a cry in the wilderness. Now with joy he accepted silence and obscurity, that the eyes of all might be turned to the Light of life.

"Those who are true to their calling as messengers for God will not seek honor for themselves. Love for self will be swallowed up in love for Christ. They will recognize that it is their work to proclaim, as did John the Baptist: 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world' (John 1:29). They will lift up Jesus, and with Him humanity will be lifted up."—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 333, 334.

- b. How did John manifest true self-abnegation when he heard that many of his followers had gone after Jesus? *John 3:22–30.*

"The soul of the prophet [John], emptied of self, was filled with the light of the Divine. In words that were almost a counterpart of the words of Christ Himself, he bore witness to the Saviour's glory. 'He that cometh from above,' he said, 'is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: He that cometh from heaven is above all. . . . For He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him' (John 3:31, 34).

"In this glory of Christ all His followers are to share. The Saviour could say: 'I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me' (John 5:30). 'And,' declared John, 'the Father giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him.' So with the followers of Christ. We can receive of heaven's light only as we are willing to be emptied of self. We can discern the character of God, and accept Christ by faith, only as we consent to the bringing into captivity of every thought to the obedience of Christ. To all who do this, the Holy Spirit is given without measure. In Christ 'dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him' (Colossians 2:9, 10)."—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 334.

5. MODERN KORAHS

- a. Though prophecy shows that men like Korah will exist in the last days, what does God seek from His true watchmen? *2 Timothy 4:1–4.*

"[2 Timothy 4:3, 4 quoted.] The apostle [Paul] does not here refer to the openly irreligious, but to the professing Christians who make inclination their guide, and thus become enslaved by self. Such are willing to listen to those doctrines only that do not rebuke their sins or condemn their pleasure-loving course. They are offended by the plain words of the faithful servants of Christ and choose teachers who praise and flatter them. And among professing ministers there are those who preach the opinions of men instead of the word of God. Unfaithful to their trust, they lead astray those who look to them for spiritual guidance."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 504, 505.

- b. By giving needed reproof, what kind of opposition did both Jesus and the apostles face? *John 8:40; 2 Peter 2:1–3; Jude 11.* How does this relate today to the Spirit of Prophecy? *Revelation 12:17; 19:10.*

"[Paul] was set for the defense of the church. He was to watch for souls as one that must render account to God, and should he not take notice of the reports concerning their state of anarchy and division? Most assuredly; and the reproof he sent them was written just as much under the inspiration of the Spirit of God as were any of his epistles. But when these reproofs came, some would not be corrected. They took the position that God had not spoken to them through Paul, that he had merely given them his opinion as a man, and they regarded their own judgment as good as that of Paul.

"So it is with many among our people who have drifted away from the old landmarks and who have followed their own understanding. What a great relief it would be to such could they quiet their conscience with the belief that my work is not of God. But your unbelief will not change the facts in the case. You are defective in character, in moral and religious experience. Close your eyes to the fact if you will, but this does not make you one particle more perfect. The only remedy is to wash in the blood of the Lamb.

"If you seek to turn aside the counsel of God to suit yourselves, if you lessen the confidence of God's people in the testimonies He has sent them, you are rebelling against God as certainly as were Korah, Dathan, and Abiram."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 65, 66.

REVIEW AND THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- a. How did God miraculously resolve the debate over church leadership?
- b. Where was Aaron's rod placed as a reminder for future generations?
- c. In the spirit of Elijah and John the Baptist, what work is to be done before the coming of Christ?
- d. Describe the character of the messengers that God wants to use in these difficult last days?
- e. What is today the clearest manifestation of the Korah leadership?

"The best efforts of the meekest man upon the earth could not quell [the Hebrews] insubordination. The unselfish interest of Moses was rewarded with jealousy, suspicion, and calumny. His humble shepherd's life was far more peaceful and happy than his present position as pastor of that vast congregation of turbulent spirits. Their unreasonable jealousies were more difficult to manage than the fierce wolves of the wilderness. But Moses dared not choose his own course and do as best pleased himself. He had left the shepherd's crook at God's command and in its place had received a rod of power. He dared not lay down this scepter and resign his position till God should dismiss him."—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, pp. 342, 343.

"Ministers of the gospel sometimes do great harm by allowing their forbearance toward the erring to degenerate into toleration of sins and even participation in them. Thus they are led to excuse and palliate that which God condemns, and after a time they become so blinded as to commend the very ones whom God commands them to reprove. He who has blunted his spiritual perceptions by sinful leniency toward those whom God condemns, will ere long commit a greater sin by severity and harshness toward those whom God approves."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 504.

"No stronger evidence can be given of Satan's delusive power than that many who are thus led by him deceive themselves with the belief that they are in the service of God. When Korah, Dathan, and Abiram rebelled against the authority of Moses, they thought they were opposing only a human leader, a man like themselves; and they came to believe that they were verily doing God service. But in rejecting God's chosen instrument they rejected Christ; they insulted the Spirit of God. So, in the days of Christ, the Jewish scribes and elders, who professed great zeal for the honor of God, crucified His Son. The same spirit still exists in the hearts of those who set themselves to follow their own will in opposition to the will of God."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 635.

Organization of the Melchizedek Priesthood

"We have [a hope] as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (Hebrews 6:19, 20).

"Melchizedek was not Christ, but he was the voice of God in the world, the representative of the Father."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 409.

Suggested Reading: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 411–416.

Sunday

October 19

1. TO BE LIKE OTHER NATIONS

- a. How did Israel change God's system of order from the leadership of priests and judges? 1 Samuel 8:4–9.

"The prophet [Samuel] was reproved for grieving at the conduct of the people toward himself as an individual. They had not manifested disrespect for him, but for the authority of God, who had appointed the rulers of His people. Those who despise and reject the faithful servant of God show contempt, not merely for the man, but for the Master who sent him. It is God's words, His reproofs and counsel, that are set at nought; it is His authority that is rejected.

"The days of Israel's greatest prosperity had been those in which they acknowledged Jehovah as their King—when the laws and the government which He had established were regarded as superior to those of all other nations. Moses had declared to Israel concerning the commandments of the Lord: 'This is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people' (Deuteronomy 4:6). But by departing from God's law the Hebrews had failed to become the people that God desired to make them, and then all the evils which were the result of their own sin and folly they charged upon the government of God. So completely had they become blinded by sin."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 605.

2. MAN'S FOLLY AND GOD'S MERCY

a. Why did God permit Israel to have a king? Hosea 13:11.

"The Lord had, through His prophets, foretold that Israel would be governed by a king; but it does not follow that this form of government was best for them or according to His will. He permitted the people to follow their own choice, because they refused to be guided by His counsel. Hosea declares that God gave them a king in His anger (Hosea 13:11). When men choose to have their own way, without seeking counsel from God, or in opposition to His revealed will, He often grants their desires, in order that, through the bitter experience that follows, they may be led to realize their folly and to repent of their sin. Human pride and wisdom will prove a dangerous guide. That which the heart desires contrary to the will of God will in the end be found a curse rather than a blessing."

"God desired His people to look to Him alone as their Law-giver and their Source of strength. Feeling their dependence upon God, they would be constantly drawn nearer to Him. They would become elevated and ennobled, fitted for the high destiny to which He had called them as His chosen people. But when a man was placed upon the throne, it would tend to turn the minds of the people from God. They would trust more to human strength, and less to divine power, and the errors of their king would lead them into sin and separate the nation from God."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 605, 606.

b. As a result of the new system of organization following the pattern of other nations, what happened to Aaron's rod? 2 Chronicles 5:10.

c. After which priesthood order did Jesus begin His work in the heavenly sanctuary? Hebrews 6:19, 20; 7:12, 28. How was this a fulfillment of prophecy? Psalm 110:1-4; Hebrews 9:11, 12.

"When Christ expired on the cross, crying with a loud voice, 'It is finished,' His work was completed. The way was laid open, the veil was rent in twain. Man could approach God without sacrificial offerings, without the service of earthly priests. Christ Himself was a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. Heaven was His home. He came to this world to reveal the Father."—*The Signs of the Times*, August 16, 1899.

3. THE PRIESTHOOD AND FOUNDATION

a. How was the Melchizedek priesthood superior to the Levitical, and why is it so significant? Hebrews 7:1-11, 22-24, 27, 28.

"[Christ] is a true high priest, for after enduring humiliation, shame, and reproach, after being crucified and buried, He was raised from the grave, triumphing over death. He is a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 12, p. 398.

b. In the order of Melchizedek priesthood, are there other priests associated with the High Priest? 1 Peter 2:5-9; 5:1-4.

c. What is the basis of this church governed by the Melchizedek priesthood? Matthew 16:13-19; 1 Corinthians 10:4; 3:11.

"Christ is the foundation of every true church."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 147.

"In the presence of God, and all the heavenly intelligences, in the presence of the unseen army of hell, Christ founded His church upon the living Rock. That Rock is Himself—His own body, for us broken and bruised. Against the church built upon this foundation, the gates of hell shall not prevail."

"How feeble the church appeared when Christ spoke these words! There was only a handful of believers, against whom all the power of demons and evil men would be directed; yet the followers of Christ were not to fear. Built upon the Rock of their strength, they could not be overthrown."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 413.

d. Why was it impossible for this Rock to be Peter? Matthew 16:21-23.

"'The keys of the kingdom of heaven' are the words of Christ (Matthew 16:19). All the words of Holy Scripture are His, and are here included. These words have power to open and to shut heaven. . . .

"The Saviour did not commit the work of the gospel to Peter individually. At a later time, repeating the words that were spoken to Peter, He applied them directly to the church."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 413, 414.

4. PURE, UNADULTERATED TRUTH

- a. Upon what point is Christ's church founded? Matthew 16:16, 17.

"[Matthew 16:17 quoted.] The truth which Peter had confessed is the foundation of the believer's faith."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 412.

- b. How does God's Word identify Truth? John 14:6.

"Christ is the complete system of truth."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 3, p. 198.

- c. What danger must be faced by those who profess to believe the truth? 1 John 3:3; 2:21; 2 John 9–11.

"This is the danger to which the church is now exposed—that the inventions of finite men shall mark out the precise way for the Holy Spirit to come. Though they would not care to acknowledge it, some have already done this. And because the Spirit is to come, not to praise men or to build up their erroneous theories, but to reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment, many turn away from it. They are not willing to be deprived of the garments of their own self-righteousness. They are not willing to exchange their own righteousness, which is unrighteousness, for the righteousness of Christ, which is pure, unadulterated truth. The Holy Spirit flatters no man, neither does it work according to the devising of any man. Finite, sinful men are not to work the Holy Spirit. When it shall come as a reprover, through any human agent whom God shall choose, it is man's place to hear and obey its voice."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 64, 65.

- d. Because the world is in intense darkness, how does God reveal truth to individuals? Proverbs 4:18.

"[Christ] made the church the depositary of sacred truth. He left His church a stewardship of sacred truth, and it is the work of the church to carry forward His mission of saving the world. He is the Sun of Righteousness, who is to impart bright rays to His followers; and they, in turn, are to shed His light upon others."—*The Review and Herald*, June 30, 1896.

5. "GUIDE YOU INTO ALL TRUTH"

- a. Since the true church is built on the pure truth, what does that church indeed become? 1 Timothy 3:15; Ephesians 2:19, 20.

"God is leading out a people to stand in perfect unity upon the platform of eternal truth. Christ gave Himself to the world that He might 'purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works' (Titus 2:14). This refining process is designed to purge the church from all unrighteousness and the spirit of discord and contention, that they may build up instead of tear down, and concentrate their energies on the great work before them. God designs that His people should all come into the unity of the faith."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 17.

"We are to unify, but not on a platform of error."—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 15, p. 259.

- b. What assurance comes to all who firmly determine to do God's will at any cost? John 7:17. How is this also a challenge? John 5:39.

"Whoever is with singleness of purpose seeking to do God's will, earnestly heeding the light already given, will receive greater light; to that soul some star of heavenly radiance will be sent to guide him into all truth."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 312.

- c. How can we find the pure truth and thus the true church? John 16:13.

"The wheat develops 'first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear' (Mark 4:28). The object of the husbandman in the sowing of the seed and the culture of the growing plant is the production of grain. He desires bread for the hungry, and seed for future harvests. So the divine Husbandman looks for a harvest as the reward of His labor and sacrifice. Christ is seeking to reproduce Himself in the hearts of men; and He does this through those who believe in Him. The object of the Christian life is fruit bearing—the reproduction of Christ's character in the believer, that it may be reproduced in others."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 67.

REVIEW AND THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- a. Why did the Israelites become restless without a king, and how did God fulfill their stubborn demand?
- b. Since Jesus was not a Levite from the generations of Aaron, why is He able to be our High Priest?
- c. Who is the true foundation of the believer's faith?
- d. What kind of truth are we to build upon as our eternal foundation?
- e. As we try to fulfill Christ's prayer before His crucifixion, can we unite with individuals or groups who are rejecting present truth?

"There is no union between the Prince of light and the prince of darkness, and there can be no union between their followers. When Christians consented to unite with those who were but half converted from paganism, they entered upon a path which led further and further from the truth. Satan exulted that he had succeeded in deceiving so large a number of the followers of Christ. He then brought his power to bear more fully upon these, and inspired them to persecute those who remained true to God. None understood so well how to oppose the true Christian faith as did those who had once been its defenders; and these apostate Christians, uniting with their half-pagan companions, directed their warfare against the most essential features of the doctrines of Christ.

"It required a desperate struggle for those who would be faithful to stand firm against the deceptions and abominations which were disguised in sacerdotal garments and introduced into the church. The Bible was not accepted as the standard of faith. The doctrine of religious freedom was termed heresy, and its upholders were hated and proscribed.

"After a long and severe conflict, the faithful few decided to dissolve all union with the apostate church if she still refused to free herself from falsehood and idolatry. They saw that separation was an absolute necessity if they would obey the word of God. They dared not tolerate errors fatal to their own souls, and set an example which would imperil the faith of their children and children's children. To secure peace and unity they were ready to make any concession consistent with fidelity to God; but they felt that even peace would be too dearly purchased at the sacrifice of principle. If unity could be secured only by the compromise of truth and righteousness, then let there be difference, and even war."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 45.

"There should be no union until there is a change."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 199.

First Sabbath Offering

Literature for needy countries

Christ said in Matthew 24:14 that "this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." These words are a command and a prophecy at the same time. As followers of Jesus we are commanded to preach the Gospel to every nation. How can we fulfill this command, since many nations expressly prohibit any propagation of religion, other than the State established religion (if any)? The written word will do the witnessing where we may not be able to speak openly about the Lord.

Especially in Muslim countries, the message may be presented by books and pamphlets. Therefore, there is an urgent need to provide the printed word to millions of people who have not heard the message of salvation. Take Pakistan for example, a Muslim nation with a population of 170 Million (the 6th most populous nation in the world). The precious souls in this country lack the essentials in Gospel literature. Believers do not have the basic witnessing books in Urdu (their native language). Our brethren in Pakistan have recently translated *Steps to Christ* and *The Ministry of Healing* into Urdu. Now, they need help in publishing these valuable books.

There are similar urgent needs in many places. Please donate generously for this designated First Sabbath Offering. Your offering will help hasten the coming of the Lord by contributing to the publishing of needed "tools" in the hands of very eager brethren.

May the Lord abundantly bless you as you take part in helping believers in needy countries with limited means to spread the Gospel message.

Paul Balbach, GC Publications Department Secretary



An Orderly God

"Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40).

"He who says or does anything that tends to separate the members of Christ's church is counterworking the Lord's purpose."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 145.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies*, vol. 3, pp. 428–433.

Sunday

October 26

1. THE ORIGIN OF ORDER

a. What condition characterizes everything in the work of God? How can we succeed in our work for the Lord? 1 Corinthians 14:40.

"God is a God of order. Everything connected with heaven is in perfect order; subjection and thorough discipline mark the movements of the angelic host. Success can only attend order and harmonious action. God requires order and system in His work now no less than in the days of Israel. All who are working for Him are to labor intelligently, not in a careless, haphazard manner. He would have His work done with faith and exactness, that He may place the seal of His approval upon it."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 376.

b. What does God expect from His creatures? 1 Peter 2:21; Psalm 119:133; 1 John 2:6.

"Order is heaven's first law, and the Lord desires His people to give in their homes a representation of the order and harmony that pervade the heavenly courts. Truth never places her delicate feet in a path of uncleanness or impurity. Truth does not make men and women coarse or rough and untidy. It raises all who accept it to a high level. Under Christ's influence, a work of constant refinement goes on."—*Counsels on Health*, p. 101.

Monday

October 27

2. CHURCH ORGANIZATION

a. What example did God leave us of thorough organization as a real blessing? Exodus 18:13–24. How is that implemented today?

"This counsel [of Jethro] was accepted, and it not only brought relief to Moses, but resulted in establishing more perfect order among the people.

"The Lord had greatly honored Moses, and had wrought wonders by his hand; but the fact that he had been chosen to instruct others did not lead him to conclude that he himself needed no instruction. The chosen leader of Israel listened gladly to the suggestions of the godly priest of Midian, and adopted his plan as a wise arrangement."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 301.

"God has not set any kingly power in the Seventh-day Adventist Church to control the whole body or to control any branch of the work. He has not provided that the burden of leadership shall rest upon a few men. Responsibilities are distributed among a large number of competent men.

"Every member of the church has a voice in choosing officers of the church. The church chooses the officers of the state conferences. Delegates chosen by the state conferences choose the officers of the union conferences, and delegates chosen by the union conferences choose the officers of the General Conference. By this arrangement every conference, every institution, every church, and every individual, either directly or through representatives, has a voice in the election of the men who bear the chief responsibilities in the General Conference."—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 236, 237.

b. What is key to Christian life? Deuteronomy 10:12, 13; Joshua 22:5.

"Evil does not result because of organization, but because of making organization everything, and vital godliness of little moment. When form and machinery take the preeminence, and a laborious task is made of carrying on the work that should be done with simplicity, evil will result, and little will be accomplished in proportion to the effort put forth. The object of organization is just the reverse of this; and should we disorganize, it would be like tearing down that which we have built up."—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 253.

3. GENUINE UNITY

- a. How does the church relate to Christ? Ephesians 1:17, 22, 23; Colossians 1:18. What result should follow among ourselves?

"Those who have a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus must now become one in heart and purpose. All differences must be swept away. The members of the church must work unitedly under the great Head of the church."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 93.

- b. As we dedicate ourselves to Jesus without reservation, what happens in our relations with others who have the same experience? John 17:21.

"A union of believers with Christ will as a natural result lead to a union with one another, which bond of union is the most enduring upon earth. We are one in Christ, as Christ is one with the Father."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 47.

"If we are united to Christ, we shall be united to one another."—*The Review and Herald*, December 6, 1892.

"Those who are truly converted will press together in Christian unity. Let there be no division in the church of God, no unwise authority exercised over those who accept the truth. The meekness of Christ is to appear in all that is said and done."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 147.

- c. What happens to our personal relations the closer we come to Jesus? John 13:34, 35.

"As [the disciples] were drawn to Christ in greater love, they were drawn to one another."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 664.

"True religion unites hearts not only with Christ, but with one another in a most tender union. When we know what it means to be thus united with Christ and with our brethren, a fragrant influence will attend our work wherever we go."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 145.

- d. How does unity relate to perfection of character? Ephesians 4:13.

"Unity is the sure result of Christian perfection."—*The Sanctified Life*, p. 85.

4. BEING PART OF CHRIST'S BODY

- a. As new believers in Jesus, how do we unite with Him in a practical way? Ephesians 5:23; 1 Corinthians 12:27.

"[An] obligation, too often lightly regarded—one that to the youth awakened to the claims of Christ needs to be made plain—is the obligation of church relationship.

"Very close and sacred is the relation between Christ and His church—He the bridegroom, and the church the bride; He the head, and the church the body. Connection with Christ, then, involves connection with His church.

"The church is organized for service; and in a life of service to Christ, connection with the church is one of the first steps. Loyalty to Christ demands the faithful performance of church duties. This is an important part of one's training; and in a church imbued with the Master's life, it will lead directly to effort for the world without."—*Education*, pp. 268, 269.

"To human agencies is committed the work of extending the triumphs of the cross from point to point. As the Head of the church, Christ is authoritatively calling upon everyone who claims to believe on Him to follow His example of self-denial and self-sacrifice in working for the conversion of those whom Satan and his vast army are exerting every power to destroy. God's people are called upon to rally without delay under the bloodstained banner of Christ Jesus. Unceasingly they are to continue their warfare against the enemy, pressing the battle even to the gates. And everyone who is added to the ranks by conversion is to be assigned his post of duty."—*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 30.

- b. How do we see, through the examples of Saul and Cornelius, that connection to the church is important? Acts 9:1–6, 17, 18; 10:1–6, 47, 48.

"God's Spirit convicts sinners of the truth, and He places them in the arms of the church. The ministers may do their part, but they can never perform the work that the church should do. God requires His church to nurse those who are young in faith and experience, to go to them, not for the purpose of gossiping with them, but to pray, to speak unto them words that are 'like apples of gold in pictures of silver' (Proverbs 25:11)."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 69.

5. THE VISIBLE CHURCH

- a. How do we know that the true church is a visible, tangible entity? 1 Corinthians 16:1, 19; 2 Corinthians 1:1; 8:1, 18.

"We should all feel our individual responsibility as members of the visible church and workers in the vineyard of the Lord."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 16.

- b. What happens if someone despises the God-given authority of the church? John 20:23.

"[John 20:23 quoted.] Christ here gives no liberty for any man to pass judgment upon others. In the Sermon on the Mount He forbade this. It is the prerogative of God. But on the church in its organized capacity He places a responsibility for the individual members. Toward those who fall into sin, the church has a duty, to warn, to instruct, and if possible to restore. 'Reprove, rebuke, exhort,' the Lord says, 'with all longsuffering and doctrine' (2 Timothy 4:2). Deal faithfully with wrongdoing. Warn every soul that is in danger. Leave none to deceive themselves. Call sin by its right name. Declare what God has said in regard to lying, Sabbath-breaking, stealing, idolatry, and every other evil. 'They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God' (Galatians 5:21). If they persist in sin, the judgment you have declared from God's word is pronounced upon them in heaven. In choosing to sin, they disown Christ; the church must show that she does not sanction their deeds, or she herself dishonors her Lord. She must say about sin what God says about it. She must deal with it as God directs, and her action is ratified in heaven. He who despises the authority of the church despises the authority of Christ Himself."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 805, 806.

- c. What is the major reason for having a church? Mark 16:15, 16.

"The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 9.

REVIEW AND THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- What "first law" does God expect from His creatures that obey Him?
- When a believer truly unites with Christ, what else happens?
- How important is our relation with other souls of like precious faith?
- Why does God place new believers into the arms of the church?
- What duties rest upon God's recognized and organized church?

"God has made His church on the earth a channel of light, and through it He communicates His purposes and His will. He does not give to one of His servants an experience independent of and contrary to the experience of the church itself. Neither does He give one man a knowledge of His will for the entire church while the church—Christ's body—is left in darkness. In His providence He places His servants in close connection with His church in order that they may have less confidence in themselves and greater confidence in others whom He is leading out to advance His work."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 163.

"The Redeemer of the world does not sanction experience and exercise in religious matters independent of his organized and acknowledged church. Many have an idea that they are responsible to Christ alone for their light and experience, independent of his recognized followers on earth. But in the history of the conversion of Saul, important principles are given us, which we should ever bear in mind. . . . The Saviour places him in connection with His church, and lets them direct him what to do."—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 3, p. 316.

"There is order in heaven, and it is to be imitated by those upon earth who are heirs of salvation. The nearer mortals attain to the order and arrangement of heaven, the nearer are they brought to that acceptable state before God which will make them subjects of the heavenly kingdom and give them that fitness for translation from earth to heaven which Enoch possessed preparatory to his translation."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 697, 698.

"If we see no necessity for harmonious action, and are disorderly, undisciplined, and disorganized in our course of action, angels, who are thoroughly organized and move in perfect order, cannot work for us successfully. They turn away in grief, for they are not authorized to bless confusion, distraction, and disorganization. All who desire the cooperation of the heavenly messengers must work in unison with them. Those who have the unction from on high will in all their efforts encourage order, discipline, and union of action, and then the angels of God can cooperate with them."—*Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 649.

Unity in Diversity

"Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind" (Philippians 2:2).

"All who believe are to be gathered into one church."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 821.

Suggested Reading: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 805, 806.

Sunday

November 2

1. COUNSELING TOGETHER

- a. To advance His cause on earth, what does God want us to do in forming plans of action? Proverbs 11:14; 15:22.

"The Lord does not apportion to any one man some special territory in which he alone is to labor. This is contrary to His plan. He designs that in every place where the truth is introduced, different minds, different gifts, shall be brought in to exert an influence upon the work. No one man has sufficient wisdom to manage an interest without helpers, and no one should think himself competent to do so. The fact that a person has ability in one direction, is no evidence that his judgment on all other subjects is perfect, and that the wisdom of some other mind does not need to be united with his."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 481.

- b. In order to work with others with whom we are bonded by the same precious faith, what is needed in each of us? 2 Chronicles 7:14; 34:27; Isaiah 57:15; 1 Peter 5:5, 6.

"Those who do labor together should seek to be in perfect harmony. And yet no one should feel that he cannot labor with those who do not see just as he sees, and who do not in their labors follow just his plans. If all manifest a humble, teachable spirit, there need be no difficulty. God has set in the church different gifts. These are precious in their proper places, and all may act a part in the work of preparing a people for Christ's soon coming."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 481.

Monday

November 3

2. UNITED IN DIVERSITY

- a. Why could Jesus speak with authority, and how can we teach with the same divine mandate? Matthew 7:28, 29; 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Peter 3:15.
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- b. What types of gifts are needed in the church, and why do we need people with varied abilities to reap the gospel harvest? 1 Corinthians 12:7–11.

"Many times the progress of the work has been hindered because the laborers thought their gifts all that were necessary for its advancement. The Lord has not done for His people what He would have done if so many of the workers had not limited the development of the work by refusing to cooperate with laborers who should have been given standing room and encouragement. In self-sufficiency, men have ignored and pushed aside those to whom God has given a special work."—*Pacific Union Recorder*, December 29, 1904.

"It may seem to some that the contrast between their gifts and the gifts of a fellow laborer is too great to allow them to unite in harmonious effort; but when they remember that there are varied minds to be reached, and that some will reject the truth as it is presented by one laborer, only to open their hearts to God's truth as it is presented in a different manner by another laborer, they will hopefully endeavor to labor together in unity."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 145.

- c. What will people recognize when they see that Christians are working harmoniously? Acts 4:13; John 13:34, 35; 17:21–23.

"Let the messengers whom [God] sends work so harmoniously that all will take knowledge that they have learned of Jesus."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 146.

- d. In Old Testament times, as entrusted according to specific families, what did each member of the tribe of Levi receive as a divine responsibility?
 1. Gershonites: Numbers 3:23–26.
 2. Kohathites: Verses 29–32.
 3. Merarites: Verses 35–37.

3. SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. In the case of Uzzah, what happened when he did another's work? 2 Samuel 6:6, 7; Numbers 3:38. How does this apply today?

"[One] remarkable exhibition to the nations round about was the perfect order observed in the camp of the Israelites. They could see the cloud hovering over the place where the tabernacle was to be pitched; they observed the priests and other appointed agencies going about their special work, each one doing the part assigned him in the work of preparing the camp for the night. No one did anything that someone else should do. Whoever would have tried to do another man's work would have suffered the death penalty. Each one attended to his special duty. In the erecting of the tabernacle, part fitted to part, and the house of the Lord was set up with beautiful precision. Not a word was spoken, not an order given, excepting by the one in charge. No one was confused."—*Lift Him Up*, p. 145.

"The directions in regard to order in the tabernacle service were recorded that lessons might be drawn from it by all who should live upon the earth. Men were selected to do various parts of the work of setting up and taking down the tabernacle, and if one strayed in carelessly and put his hands to the work assigned to another, he was to be put to death. We serve the same God today. But the death penalty has been abolished; had it not been, there would not now be so much careless, disorderly work in His cause. The God of heaven is a God of order, and He requires all His followers to have rules and regulations, and to preserve order."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 274.

- b. How does God intend to finish the work when we are composed of such a diverse group of believers? 1 Corinthians 12:14–18.

"The leaders among God's people are to guard against the danger of condemning the methods of individual workers who are led by the Lord to do a special work that but few are fitted to do. Let brethren in responsibility be slow to criticize movements that are not in perfect harmony with their methods of labor. Let them never suppose that every plan should reflect their own personality. Let them not fear to trust another's methods; for by withholding their confidence from a brother laborer who, with humility and consecrated zeal, is doing a special work in God's appointed way, they are retarding the advancement of the Lord's cause."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 488.

4. INDIVIDUALITY AMONG BELIEVERS

- a. How are we in danger of underestimating one another? Ephesians 4:7.

"Let us beware of allowing our minds to become fixed on ourselves, thinking that no one can be serving the Lord unless he is working on the same lines as those on which we are working.

"Never is a worker to say, 'I do not want to work with such a one, because he does not see things as I do. I wish to work with some one who will agree with all I say, and follow out all my ideas.' The one the worker thus refuses to connect with may have truths to present that have not yet been presented."—*Pacific Union Recorder*, December 29, 1904.

- b. Because we are all fellow believers, can we dictate the details of what each missionary worker shall do? Matthew 23:8.

"No human being is to seek to bind other human beings to himself as if he were to control them, telling them to do this and forbidding them to do that, commanding, dictating, acting like an officer over a company of soldiers. This is the way the priests and rulers did in Christ's day, but it is not the right way. After the truth has made the impression upon hearts, and men and women have accepted its teachings, they are to be treated as the property of Christ, not as the property of man."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 146.

"A strange thing has come into our churches. Men who are placed in positions of responsibility that they may be wise helpers to their fellow workers have come to suppose that they were set as kings and rulers in the churches, to say to one brother, Do this; to another, Do that; and to another, Be sure to labor in such and such a way. There have been places where the workers have been told that if they did not follow the instruction of these men of responsibility, their pay from the conference would be withheld.

"It is right for the workers to counsel together as brethren; but that man who endeavors to lead his fellow workers to seek his individual counsel and advice regarding the details of their work, and to learn their duty from him, is in a dangerous position and needs to learn what responsibilities are really comprehended in his office. God has appointed no man to be conscience for his fellowman."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 477.

5. DEVELOPING A SANCTIFIED UNITY

- a. Despite our great diversity, how will God's work be finished? *Isaiah 52:7, 8; 1 Corinthians 1:10.*

"The Reformation was greatly retarded by making prominent differences on some points of faith and each party holding tenaciously to those things where they differed. We shall see eye to eye ere long, but to become firm and consider it your duty to present your views in decided opposition to the faith or truth as it has been taught by us as a people, is a mistake, and will result in harm, and only harm, as in the days of Martin Luther. Begin to draw apart and feel at liberty to express your ideas without reference to the views of your brethren, and a state of things will be introduced that you do not dream of."—*Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p. 76.

- b. Where does God place believers, and why? *1 Corinthians 12:18–25.*

"Our Redeemer throws souls into the arms of the church, for them to care for unselfishly and train for heaven."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 331.

"The man who is truly united with Christ will never act as though he were a complete whole in himself. . . .

"The perfection of the church depends not on each member being fashioned exactly alike."—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1090.

- c. What type of authority does this united church have over its membership? *Matthew 18:16–18.*

"On the church has been conferred the power to act in Christ's stead. It is God's instrumentality for the preservation of order and discipline among His people. To it the Lord has delegated the power to settle all questions respecting its prosperity, purity, and order. Upon it rests the responsibility of excluding from its fellowship those who are unworthy, who by their unchristlike conduct would bring disonor on the truth. Whatever the church does that is in accordance with the directions given in God's word, will be ratified in heaven."—*Gospel Workers*, pp. 501, 502.

"Unless the advice and counsel of the church can be respected, it is indeed powerless. God has placed a voice in the church which must control its members."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 108.

REVIEW AND THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- a. Since God's work is diverse and complex, what do we greatly need?
- b. Why are various gifts and abilities important in the final harvest?
- c. What can we learn from the thorough order and organization of the Levitical system?
- d. How can we guard individual duty to the great Head of the church?
- e. How does respect for individuality relate to organizational structure?

"There is no person, no nation, that is perfect in every habit and thought. One must learn of another. Therefore God wants the different nationalities to mingle together, to be one in judgment, one in purpose."—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 2, p. 1029.

"Christ and His church are inseparable. To neglect or despise those whom God has appointed to lead out and to bear the responsibilities connected with His work and with the advancement and spread of the truth is to reject the means which God has ordained for the help, encouragement, and strength of His people. To pass these by and think your light must come through no other channel than directly from God places you in a position where you are liable to deception and to be overthrown."—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, pp. 418, 419.

"The evils of self-esteem and an unsanctified independence, which most impair our usefulness and which will prove our ruin if not overcome, spring from selfishness. 'Counsel together' is the message which has been again and again repeated to me by the angel of God. By influencing one man's judgment, Satan may endeavor to control matters to suit himself. He may succeed in misleading the minds of two persons; but, when several consult together, there is more safety."—*Ibid.*, vol. 5, pp. 29, 30.

"God would have His people disciplined and brought into harmony of action, that they may see eye to eye and be of the same mind and of the same judgment. In order to bring about this state of things, there is much to be done. The carnal heart must be subdued and transformed. God designs that there shall ever be a living testimony in the church. It will be necessary to reprove and exhort, and some will need to be rebuked sharply, as the case demands."—*Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 360.

"God's people are to be so earnest and faithful in their work for Him that all selfishness will be separated from their lives. His workers will then see eye to eye, and the arm of the Lord, the power of which was seen in the life of Christ, will be revealed. Confidence will be restored, and there will be unity in the churches throughout our ranks."—*Ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 33.

Organization

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25).

"God wants His people to be united in the closest bonds of Christian fellowship; confidence in our brethren is essential to the prosperity of the church; union of action is important in a religious crisis."—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 446.

Suggested Reading: *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 638–645, 659.

Sunday

November 9

1. IN THE AIR WE BREATHE

- a. As the originator of disorganization was expelled from heaven, with what atmosphere has he tainted this earth? Revelation 12:7–10; James 3:15, 16.

"The world is filled with strife for the supremacy. The spirit of pulling away from fellow laborers, the spirit of disorganization, is in the very air we breathe."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 257.

"We are inclined to exalt self. But God wants no self-exaltation in His work."—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 4, p. 354.

- b. Since the Roman Catholic organizational system is thoroughly hierarchical, what do some protestants fear will be the results of following order and organization? 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4.

"By some, all efforts to establish order are regarded as dangerous—as a restriction of personal liberty, and hence to be feared as popery. These deceived souls regard it a virtue to boast of their freedom to think and act independently. They declare that they will not take any man's say-so, that they are amenable to no man. I have been instructed that it is Satan's special effort to lead men to feel that God is pleased to have them choose their own course independent of the counsel of their brethren."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 257.

Monday

November 10

2. THOROUGH ORGANIZATION ESSENTIAL

- a. In order to avoid self-exaltation, what must we learn? Psalm 84:10; Philippians 4:11; 1 Timothy 6:6.

"Talent is too much idolized, and station too much coveted. There are too many who will do nothing unless they are recognized as leaders; too many who must receive praise, or they have no interest to labor. What we need to learn is faithfulness in making the utmost use of the powers and opportunities we have, and contentment in the lot to which Heaven assigns us."—*Education*, p. 117.

- b. What is God's plan for His gifts to the church? Ephesians 4:13.

"God is leading a people out from the world upon the exalted platform of eternal truth, the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. He will discipline and fit up His people. They will not be at variance, one believing one thing, and another having faith and views entirely opposite, each moving independently of the body. Through the diversity of the gifts and governments that He has placed in the church, they will all come to the unity of the faith. If one man takes his views of the Bible truth without regard to the opinions of his brethren, and justifies his course, alleging that he has a right to his own peculiar views, and then presses them upon others, how can he be fulfilling the prayer of Christ? . . . Where will be that harmony which existed between Christ and His Father, and which Christ prayed might exist among His brethren?"—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, pp. 446, 447.

- c. What principle, associated with diverse gifts, will promote unity in the church? Romans 12:6–9; Ephesians 4:15, 16.

"Oh, how Satan would rejoice if he could succeed in his efforts to get in among this people and disorganize the work at a time when thorough organization is essential and will be the greatest power to keep out spurious uprisings and to refute claims not endorsed by the word of God! We want to hold the lines evenly, that there shall be no breaking down of the system of organization and order that has been built up by wise, careful labor."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, pp. 257, 258.

3. IDENTIFYING AND OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

- a. How much can we accomplish if we work without using practical wisdom? Proverbs 24:3, 4; Ecclesiastes 10:10. Explain the importance of cooperation.

"It is not a good sign when men refuse to unite with their brethren and prefer to act alone. Let laborers take into their confidence the brethren who are free to point out every departure from right principles. If men wear the yoke of Christ, they cannot pull apart; they will draw with Christ.

"Some workers pull with all the power that God has given them, but they have not yet learned that they should not pull alone. Instead of isolating themselves, let them draw in harmony with their fellow laborers. Unless they do this, their activity will work at the wrong time and in the wrong way. They will often work counter to that which God would have done, and thus their work is worse than wasted."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, pp. 258, 259.

- b. In the days of Nehemiah, how did the enemies try to hinder God's work? Nehemiah 4:7–16. How did the reformer respond to distractions—and with what result? Nehemiah 4:6, 17, 18; 6:1–4, 15.

"[The enemies of Israel] attempted to cause division among the workmen by suggesting doubts and arousing unbelief as to their success. They also ridiculed the efforts of the builders, declared the enterprise an impossibility, and predicted a disgraceful failure. . . . Emisaries of the enemy, professing friendliness, mingled with the builders, suggesting changes in the plan, seeking in various ways to divert the attention of the workers."—*Christian Service*, p. 173.

"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' (Nehemiah 6:3). 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.

4. DANGERS

- a. What is one of the greatest problems with those who are called to be saved? Psalm 119:176; Isaiah 53:6.
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- b. How does Jesus deal with those who have a tendency to go astray? Matthew 18:12–14; 1 Peter 2:25.
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"If one strays from the fold, he is not followed with harsh words and with a whip, but with winning invitations to return."—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 273.

- c. What happens if we refuse to be rescued? Hebrews 12:25; 2:3; Isaiah 1:20.
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"Those who are inclined to regard their individual judgment as supreme are in grave peril. It is Satan's studied effort to separate such ones from those who are channels of light, through whom God has wrought to build up and extend His work in the earth. To neglect or despise those whom God has appointed to bear the responsibilities of leadership in connection with the advancement of the truth is to reject the means that He has ordained for the help, encouragement, and strength of His people. For any worker in the Lord's cause to pass these by, and to think that his light must come through no other channel than directly from God, is to place himself in a position where he is liable to be deceived by the enemy and overthrown. The Lord in His wisdom has arranged that by means of the close relationship that should be maintained by all believers, Christian shall be united to Christian and church to church. Thus the human instrumentality will be enabled to cooperate with the divine. Every agency will be subordinate to the Holy Spirit, and all the believers will be united in an organized and well-directed effort to give to the world the glad tidings of the grace of God."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 164.

"We are living amid the perils of the last days, and if we have a spirit of self-sufficiency and independence we shall be exposed to the wiles of Satan and be overcome. Self-importance must be put away from you, and you be hid in God, depending alone upon Him for strength. The churches do not need your labor. If you are consecrated to God, you can labor in new fields, and God will work with you. Purity of heart and life God will accept. Anything short of this, He will not regard. We must suffer with Christ if we would reign with Him."—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 66.

5. PRESS TOGETHER

- a. What was Christ's greatest concern for the young church after His departure? What "credentials" must we show before outsiders can believe that we are Christ's true followers? John 13:34, 35; 17:21.

"The world is against us, the popular churches are against us, the laws of the land will soon be against us. If there was ever a time when the people of God should press together, it is now. God has committed to us the special truth for this time to make known to the world. The last message of mercy is now going forth. We are dealing with men and women who are judgment bound. How careful should we be in every word and act to follow closely the Pattern, that our example may lead men to Christ. With what care should we seek so to present the truth that others by beholding its beauty and simplicity may be led to receive it. If our characters testify of its sanctifying power, we shall be a continual light to others—living epistles, known and read of all men. We cannot afford now to give place to Satan by cherishing disunion, discord, and strife."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 236.

"God has made His church a channel of light, and through it He communicates His purposes and His will. He does not give one an experience independent of the church. He does not give one man a knowledge of His will for the entire church, while the church, Christ's body, is left in darkness."—Ibid., vol. 3, p. 414.

"God has invested His church with special authority and power which no one can be justified in disregarding and despising, for in so doing he despises the voice of God."—Ibid., p. 417.

- b. Will there ever be a time when will cease to be appropriate for God's people church fellowship? John 10:16; Hebrews 10:25.

"Some have advanced the thought that, as we near the close of time, every child of God will act independently of any religious organization. But I have been instructed by the Lord that in this work there is no such thing as every man's being independent. The stars of heaven are all under law, each influencing the other to do the will of God, yielding their common obedience to the law that controls their action. And, in order that the Lord's work may advance healthfully and solidly, His people must draw together."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 258.

REVIEW AND THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- a. What attitude is in the very air we breathe? What is the difference between a hierarchy and God's system of organization?
- b. What has God provided in His church to facilitate unity of action?
- c. In order to succeed in accomplishing the work assigned to us in God's great vineyard, how must we work in relation to our fellow workers?
- d. What are some great dangers we face in these last days?
- e. What is a key component in our preparation for Christ's soon advent?

"The church of Christ is in constant peril. Satan is seeking to destroy the people of God, and one man's mind, one man's judgment, is not sufficient to be trusted. Christ would have His followers brought together in church capacity, observing order, having rules and discipline, and all subject one to another, esteeming others better than themselves. Union and confidence are essential to the prosperity of the church. If each member of the church feels at liberty to move independently of the others, taking his own peculiar course, how can the church be in any safety in the hour of danger and peril? The prosperity and very existence of a church depend upon the prompt, united action and mutual confidence of its members. When, at a critical time, one sounds the alarm of danger, there is need of prompt and active work, without stopping to question and canvass the whole subject from end to end, thus letting the enemy gain every advantage by delay, when united action might save many souls from perdition. . . .

"Jesus would have His followers subject one to another; then God can use them as instruments to save one another; for one may not discern the dangers which another's eye is quick to perceive; but if the undiscerning will in confidence obey the warning, they may be saved great perplexities and trials."—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, pp. 445, 446.

"There have ever been in the church those who are constantly inclined toward individual independence. They seem unable to realize that independence of spirit is liable to lead the human agent to have too much confidence in himself and to trust in his own judgment rather than to respect the counsel and highly esteem the judgment of his brethren, especially of those in the offices that God has appointed for the leadership of His people. God has invested His church with special authority and power which no one can be justified in disregarding and despising, for he who does this despises the voice of God."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 163, 164.

The Lord's Flock

"Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (John 10:16).

"While the great adversary will try his utmost to make of none effect the word of God, truth must go forth as a lamp that burneth."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 595.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 91–99.

1. THE SHEEPFOLD

- a. To what are Christ's followers often compared, and why? John 10:24–28.

"The sheep that has strayed from the fold is the most helpless of all creatures. It must be sought for by the shepherd, for it cannot find its way back. So with the soul that has wandered away from God; he is as helpless as the lost sheep, and unless divine love had come to his rescue he could never find his way to God."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 187.

"There is a large, a very large number of straying and lost sheep that have perished in the wild deserts of sin, simply because no one went after them, to search for them and to bring them back to the fold. Jesus uses the illustration of a lost sheep to show the need of seeking after those who have wandered from Him; for a sheep once lost will never find its way back to the fold without help. It must be sought for, it must be carried back to the fold."—*The Review and Herald*, June 30, 1896.

- b. What do we need to realize about the size and character of Christ's true fold? Luke 12:32; John 10:14, 15.

"The church on earth is greatly beloved by God. It is the fold provided for the sheep of His pasture."—*The Signs of the Times*, October 31, 1900.

2. ONE FINAL FOLD

- a. In what can Christ's torn, scattered flock rejoice? John 10:16.

"It is the unity of Christ's followers that convinces the world that God has indeed sent His Son to die for sinners, to make them partakers of His perfection, changing the sinful heart, and forming the character after the divine likeness."—*The Review and Herald*, July 21, 1903.

"All who believe are to be gathered into one church."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 28.

- b. When will many of the sheep come out of their churches and join God's true church, the one fold? Revelation 18:4.

"The time of God's destructive judgments is the time of mercy for those who have no opportunity to learn what is truth. Tenderly will the Lord look upon them. His heart of mercy is touched; His hand is still stretched out to save, while the door is closed to those who would not enter. Large numbers will be admitted who in these last days hear the truth for the first time."—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 979.

"God still has a people in Babylon; and before the visitation of His judgments these faithful ones must be called out, that they partake not of her sins and 'receive not of her plagues.' Hence the movement symbolized by the angel coming down from heaven, lightening the earth with his glory and crying mightily with a strong voice, announcing the sins of Babylon. In connection with his message the call is heard: 'Come out of her, My people' (Revelation 18:4). These announcements, uniting with the third angel's message, constitute the final warning to be given to the inhabitants of the earth."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 604.

"God has honest children among the nominal Adventists and the fallen churches, and before the plagues shall be poured out, ministers and people will be called out from these churches and will gladly receive the truth. Satan knows this; and before the loud cry of the third angel is given, he raises an excitement in these religious bodies, that those who have rejected the truth may think that God is with them. He hopes to deceive the honest and lead them to think that God is still working for the churches. But the light will shine, and all who are honest will leave the fallen churches, and take their stand with the remnant."—*Early Writings*, p. 261.

3. A HOLY NATION

- a. What other terms are used by Christ to describe His faithful church? Exodus 19:5, 6; Matthew 21:42, 43; 1 Peter 2:9.

"The Lord made a special covenant with ancient Israel: [Exodus 19:5, 6 quoted]. He addresses His commandment-keeping people in these last days: [1 Peter 2:9 quoted]."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 450.

- b. How can sinners become a part of God's holy nation? Matthew 21:44; 7:24, 25; 2 Corinthians 5:17.

"In both the Old and the New Testament the Lord has positively enjoined upon His people to be distinct from the world, in spirit, in pursuits, in practice, to be a holy nation, a peculiar people. The east is not farther from the west than are the children of light, in customs, practices, and spirit, from the children of darkness. And this distinction will be more marked, more decided, as we near the close of time. It is not a profession of faith, or a name registered in the church book, that constitutes us children of God. It is a vital connection with Christ. We must be one with Him, imbued with His Spirit, partakers of the divine nature, crucified to the world with its affections and lusts, renewed in knowledge and true holiness."—*The Review and Herald*, November 12, 1914.

- c. When and how did God open the door for the Gentiles to become "children of the living God"? 1 Peter 2:10; Romans 9:25, 26; Hosea 1:10; 2:23; Ephesians 2:13.

"The Saviour Himself, during His earthly ministry, foretold the spread of the gospel among the Gentiles. In the parable of the vineyard He declared to the impenitent Jews, 'The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof' (Matthew 21:43). And after His resurrection He commissioned His disciples to go 'into all the world' and 'teach all nations.' They were to leave none unwarned, but were to 'preach the gospel to every creature' (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15)."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 174.

"In the quarry of the Jewish and the Gentile world the apostles labored, bringing out stones to lay upon the foundation."—Ibid., p. 596.

4. PART OF GOD'S FINAL, TRUE FOLD

- a. How does one become part of God's final fold? Acts 2:37–41, 47.

"Present truth leads onward and upward, gathering in the needy, the oppressed, the suffering, the destitute. All that will come are to be brought into the fold. In their lives there is to take place a reformation that will constitute them members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King. By hearing the message of truth, men and women are led to accept the Sabbath and to unite with the church by baptism. They are to bear God's sign by observing the Sabbath of creation. They are to know for themselves that obedience to God's commandments means eternal life."—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 195, 196.

"Every believer should be wholehearted in his attachment to the church. Its prosperity should be his first interest, and unless he feels under sacred obligations to make his connection with the church a benefit to it in preference to himself, it can do far better without him."—Ibid., vol. 4, p. 18.

- b. Before new converts can be fellowshipped into God's true church, what must be done in their behalf and be manifested in their lives? Matthew 28:19, 20; 3:7, 8.

"There is need of a more thorough preparation on the part of candidates for baptism. They are in need of more faithful instruction than has usually been given them. The principles of the Christian life should be made plain to those who have newly come to the truth. None can depend upon their profession of faith as proof that they have a saving connection with Christ. We are not only to say, 'I believe,' but to practice the truth. It is by conformity to the will of God in our words, our deportment, our character, that we prove our connection with Him. Whenever one renounces sin, which is the transgression of the law, his life will be brought into conformity to the law, into perfect obedience. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. The light of the word carefully studied, the voice of conscience, the strivings of the Spirit, produce in the heart genuine love for Christ, who gave Himself a whole sacrifice to redeem the whole person, body, soul, and spirit. And love is manifested in obedience. The line of demarcation will be plain and distinct between those who love God and keep His commandments, and those who love Him not and disregard His precepts."—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 91, 92.

5. OBSTACLES TO MEET

a. What hinders the progress of God's truth? Matthew 13:24–30.

"Joining the church is one thing, and connecting with Christ is quite another. Not all the names registered in the church books are registered in the Lamb's book of life. Many, though apparently sincere believers, do not keep up a living connection with Christ. They have enlisted, they have entered their names on the register; but the inner work of grace is not wrought in the heart."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 278.

"Reformatory action is always attended with loss, sacrifice, and peril. It always rebukes love of ease, selfish interests, and lustful ambition. Hence, whoever initiates or prosecutes such action must encounter opposition, calumny, and hatred from those who are unwilling to submit to the conditions of reform. It is no easy matter to overcome sinful habits and practices. The work can be accomplished only with the help of divine grace; but many neglect to seek such help and endeavor to bring down the standard to meet their deficiencies, instead of bringing themselves up to meet the standard of God."—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, pp. 305, 306.

"There have ever been two classes among those who profess to be followers of Christ. While one class study the Saviour's life and earnestly seek to correct their defects and conform to the Pattern, the other class shun the plain, practical truths which expose their errors. Even in her best estate the church was not composed wholly of the true, pure, and sincere. Our Saviour taught that those who willfully indulge in sin are not to be received into the church; yet He connected with Himself men who were faulty in character, and granted them the benefits of His teachings and example, that they might have an opportunity to see their errors and correct them. Among the twelve apostles was a traitor."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 43.

b. When sin without repentance invades a faithful church, one of two things should happen. What are they? 1 Corinthians 5:11–13, 16.

"[In Corinth] one former convert had so far backslidden that his licentious course was a violation of even the low standard of morality held by the Gentile world. The apostle pleaded with the church to put away from among them 'that wicked person' (1 Corinthians 5:13)."—*The Acts of Apostles*, pp. 303, 304.

REVIEW AND THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- a. Why have God's people always been few and rejected by most?
- b. How did Jesus prophesy of unity in one church body?
- c. How do we become a part of God's church, His holy, spiritual nation?
- d. If one desires to become a member of Christ's visible church, what must he or she do?
- e. In teaching true reformation, what can we expect from most people?

"The early Christians were indeed a peculiar people. Their blameless deportment and unswerving faith were a continual reproof that disturbed the sinner's peace. Though few in numbers, without wealth, position, or honorary titles, they were a terror to evildoers wherever their character and doctrines were known."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 46.

"Those to whom the message of truth is spoken seldom ask, 'Is it true?' but, 'By whom is it advocated?' Multitudes estimate it by the numbers who accept it; and the question is still asked, 'Have any of the learned men or religious leaders believed?' Men are no more favorable to real godliness now than in the days of Christ. They are just as intently seeking earthly good, to the neglect of eternal riches; and it is not an argument against the truth, that large numbers are not ready to accept it, or that it is not received by the world's great men, or even by the religious leaders."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 459, 460.

"The test of discipleship is not brought to bear as closely as it should be upon those who present themselves for baptism. It should be understood whether those who profess to be converted are simply taking the name of Seventh-day Adventists, or whether they are taking their stand on the Lord's side to come out from the world and be separate and touch not the unclean thing. When they give evidence that they fully understand their position, they are to be accepted. But when they show that they are following the customs and fashions and sentiments of the world, they are to be faithfully dealt with. If they feel no burden to change their course of action, they should not be retained as members of the church. The Lord wants those who compose His church to be true, faithful stewards of the grace of Christ."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 128.

"One of the points upon which those newly come to the faith will need instruction is the subject of dress. Let the new converts be faithfully dealt with. Are they vain in dress? Do they cherish pride of heart? The idolatry of dress is a moral disease. It must not be taken over into the new life. In most cases, submission to the gospel requirements will demand a decided change in the dress."—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 96.

Ordination

"For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee" (Titus 1:5).

"The number of workers in the ministry is not to be lessened, but greatly increased. Where there is now one minister in the field, twenty are to be added; and if the Spirit of God controls them, these twenty will so present the truth that twenty more will be added."—*Gospel Workers*, pp. 65, 66.

Suggested Reading: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 812–815.

Sunday

November 23

1. CHURCH RESPONSIBILITIES

a. When we join the church, how are we interdependent? Ephesians 4:15, 16.

b. Who is the originator of all gifts in the church, and how will understanding this help us honor each other? 1 Corinthians 12:11; Romans 12:10.

"The Lord desires His church to respect every gift that He has bestowed on the different members."—*Pacific Union Recorder*, December 29, 1904.

c. Although all are brethren and sisters, what are some of the more important responsibilities in the organizational structure of the church? 1 Corinthians 12:28; Revelation 1:20; 2:1.

"God's ministers are symbolized by the seven stars, which He who is the first and the last has under His special care and protection. The sweet influences that are to be abundant in the church are bound up with these ministers of God, who are to represent the love of Christ."—*Gospel Workers*, pp. 13, 14.

Monday

November 24

2. THE WORK OF THE APOSTLES/MINISTERS

a. What are the main duties of an apostle? How does Paul show he took this work seriously? John 21:15–17; 2 Corinthians 11:28.

b. How does the care of Paul for the believers show the extent of an apostle's (minister's) work? 1 Corinthians 4:17; Colossians 4:15, 16.

"Our ministers should plan wisely, as faithful stewards. They should feel that it is not their duty to hover over the churches already raised up, but that they should be doing aggressive evangelistic work, preaching the Word and doing house-to-house work in places that have not yet heard the truth. . . . They will find that nothing is so encouraging as doing evangelistic work in new fields."—*Evangelism*, p. 382.

"Our ministers must not think that God has appointed them to hover over believers, or to tie themselves down to a business office. Let business men attend to the business, and let ministers be left free to labor in the camp meetings."—*The Review and Herald*, September 16, 1902.

"God has no use for those who seek a safe and easy place. By an unreserved consecration we are to prepare ourselves for God's service. Our ministers are not to hover over the churches, regarding the churches in some particular territory as their special care. Believers are to have root in themselves, striking firm root in Christ, that they may bear fruit to His glory. As one man, they are to strive to attain one object—the saving of souls."—*Pacific Union Recorder*, August 28, 1902.

c. In the days of the early church, who used to send forth the apostles? Acts 11:22, 23; 15:22, 25.

"God foresaw the difficulties that His servants would be called to meet, and, in order that their work should be above challenge, He instructed the church by revelation to set them apart publicly to the work of the ministry. Their ordination was a public recognition of their divine appointment to bear to the Gentiles the glad tidings of the gospel."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 161.

"Paul regarded the occasion of his formal ordination as marking the beginning of a new and important epoch in his lifework. It was from this time that he afterward dated the beginning of his apostleship in the Christian church."—*Ibid.*, pp. 164, 165.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES OF LOCAL ELDERS

- a. Aside from evangelism, nurturing churches, and other responsibilities in administration, what other work is highly important for an apostle (minister) to accomplish? Titus 1:5.

"Christ is about to ordain His disciples for their work. By these feeble agencies, through His Word and Spirit, He designs to place salvation within the reach of all."

"God and the holy angels beheld this scene with interest and with great gladness. The Father knew that from these men divine light would shine forth, that the words spoken by them as they witnessed for the truth would echo from generation to generation."—*The Signs of the Times*, July 18, 1900.

- b. What are the duties of a local elder? Acts 20:28–31; 1 Peter 5:1–6.

"[1 Peter 5:5 quoted.] This does not authorize any one man to undertake the work of ordering his brethren arbitrarily to do as he thinks advisable, irrespective of their own personal convictions of duty. Nor are God's chosen laborers to feel that at every step they must wait to ask some officer in authority whether they may do this or that. While cooperating heartily with their brethren in carrying out general plans that have been laid for the prosecution of the work, they are constantly to look to the God of Israel for personal guidance."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 491.

- c. How versed should an elder be in the Word of God? 2 Timothy 2:15.

"The cause of God needs efficient men; it needs men who are trained to do service as teachers and preachers."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 92.

- d. Because the elders' work is so important to the growth of the church, with what respect should we regard them? Hebrews 13:17, 18; 1 Peter 5:5. Why? 1 Corinthians 11:1.

4. PROCEDURES IN ORDINATION—I

- a. How were candidates for ordination chosen in the days of the apostles? Acts 6:1–4; Titus 1:5–9.

"Let not our young men be deterred from entering the ministry. There is danger that through glowing representations some will be drawn away from the path where God bids them walk. . . . The Lord calls for more ministers to labor in His vineyard. The words were spoken, 'Strengthen the outposts; have faithful sentinels in every part of the world.' God calls for you, young men. He calls for whole armies of young men who are large-hearted and large-minded, and who have a deep love for Christ and the truth."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 63.

"It is entirely wrong for teachers, by suggesting other occupations, to discourage young men who might be qualified to do acceptable work in the ministry. . . . There is among us more than an average of men of ability. If their capabilities were brought into use, we should have twenty ministers where we now have one."—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 135.

"None but God can decide who shall engage in the solemn work [of laboring for souls]. There were good men in the apostles' days, men who could pray with power and talk to the point; yet the apostles, who had power over unclean spirits and could heal the sick, dared not with merely their wisdom set one apart for the holy work of being mouthpiece for God. They waited unmistakable evidence of the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. . . . If it should be left to a few individuals here and there to decide who was sufficient for this great work, confusion and distraction everywhere would be the fruit."—*Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 208, 209.

- b. What preparation was required of the church, together with the apostles, before the ordination of Paul and Barnabas? Acts 13:1–3.

"Jesus, when preparing for some great trial or some important work, would resort to the solitude of the mountains and spend the night in prayer to His Father. A night of prayer preceded the ordination of the apostles."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 509.

"Before being sent forth as missionaries to the heathen world, [Paul and Barnabas] were solemnly dedicated to God by fasting and prayer and the laying on of hands. Thus they were authorized by the church, not only to teach the truth, but to perform the rite of baptism and to organize churches."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 161.

5. PROCEDURES IN ORDINATION — II

- a. How is an ordination performed? Acts 6:5, 6; 1 Timothy 4:14. Who does the actual ordination? Acts 14:23.

"The apostles were led by the Holy Spirit to outline a plan for the better organization of all the working forces of the church. The time had come, the apostles stated, when the spiritual leaders having the oversight of the church should be relieved from the task of distributing to the poor and from similar burdens, so that they might be free to carry forward the work of preaching the gospel. [Acts 6:3, 4 quoted.] This advice was followed, and by prayer and the laying on of hands, seven chosen men were solemnly set apart for their duties as deacons."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 89.

"God foresaw the difficulties that His servants would be called to meet, and, in order that their work should be above challenge, He instructed the church by revelation to set them apart publicly to the work of the ministry. Their ordination was a public recognition of their divine appointment to bear to the Gentiles the glad tidings of the gospel.

"Both Paul and Barnabas had already received their commission from God Himself, and the ceremony of the laying on of hands added no new grace or virtual qualification. It was an acknowledged form of designation to an appointed office and a recognition of one's authority in that office. By it the seal of the church was set upon the work of God.

"To the Jew this form was a significant one. When a Jewish father blessed his children, he laid his hands reverently upon their heads. When an animal was devoted to sacrifice, the hand of the one invested with priestly authority was laid upon the head of the victim. And when the ministers of the church of believers in Antioch laid their hands upon Paul and Barnabas, they, by that action, asked God to bestow His blessing upon the chosen apostles in their devotion to the specific work to which they had been appointed."—Ibid., pp. 161, 162.

- b. Whenever the apostles visited a place and needed to speak to a church, with whom did they consult? Acts 20:17. How did the deacons' ordination impact the church? Acts 6:1–7.

"That this step [the ordination of the seven deacons] was in the order of God is revealed in the immediate results for good that were seen."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 89.

REVIEW AND THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- Why is the work of the apostles (ministers) so important to the church?
- Why are ministers to spend little time in established churches?
- How does living by example inspire respect for the ministerial office?
- What qualifications should be considered in the examination of a candidate for ordination?
- What is the meaning of the laying on of hands?

"The accession of members who have not been renewed in heart and reformed in life is a source of weakness to the church. This fact is often ignored. Some ministers and churches are so desirous of securing an increase of numbers that they do not bear faithful testimony against unchristian habits and practices. Those who accept the truth are not taught that they cannot safely be worldlings in conduct while they are Christians in name. Heretofore they were Satan's subjects; henceforth they are to be subjects of Christ. The life must testify to the change of leaders. Public opinion favors a profession of Christianity. Little self-denial or self-sacrifice is required in order to put on a form of godliness and to have one's name enrolled upon the church book. Hence many join the church without first becoming united to Christ. In this Satan triumphs. Such converts are his most efficient agents. They serve as decoys to other souls. They are false lights, luring the unwary to perdition. It is in vain that men seek to make the Christian's path broad and pleasant for worldlings. God has not smoothed or widened the rugged, narrow way. If we would enter into life, we must follow the same path which Jesus and His disciples trod—the path of humility, self-denial, and sacrifice."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 172.

"Every soul united to Christ will be a living missionary to all around him. He will labor for those near and those afar off. He will have no sectional feeling, no interest merely to build up one branch of the work over which he presides and there let his zeal end."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, pp. 381, 382.

"There must be no belittling of the gospel ministry. No enterprise should be so conducted as to cause the ministry of the word to be looked upon as an inferior matter. It is not so. Those who belittle the ministry are belittling Christ. The highest of all work is ministry in its various lines, and it should be kept before the youth that there is no work more blessed of God than that of the gospel minister."—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 411.

"It is a very nice work to win souls to Christ. It is the greatest work ever given to mortal man, to deal with human minds."—*Gospel Workers* (1892), p. 395.

First Sabbath Offering

for the clinic in Paraguay

The Republic of Paraguay is a small subtropical country located in South America with a population of approximately 7 million inhabitants. The official languages are Spanish and Guarani. In the internal governance of our church, Paraguay is included in the South America Southern Union together with two other countries, Uruguay and Argentina.

The Reform message was brought to Paraguay in the year 1970 through the colporteuring work and the efforts of two colporteurs who came to work here. Today we have members in three main cities: Asuncion, Ciudad del Este, and Encarnacion. The message has also come to other places such as, Villa Rica, Coronel Oviedo, Paraguari Piribebuy, where souls are been taught about the truth.

In Paraguay the predominant religion is Roman Catholicism, followed by a smaller proportion of Protestantism. Due to the native culture, the medical missionary work has advanced greatly in this country. The history of our church here has been marked by the strong emphasis given to the health reform and by the institutions representing this work to the world. Currently we have three institutions that continue this work with much effort, among them, a small natural clinic and a vegetarian restaurant in Asuncion.

We see today a strong need to promote the "right arm" of the message so it can expand to the rest of our country.

This Sabbath we kindly request all to be generous in their offerings to help us improve and enlarge our clinic in Asuncion to better serve the population of Paraguay. Our goal is to reach more souls with the three angels' messages.

We thank all the believers in advance for their financial support.

Your brethren and sisters from Paraguay



Qualifications for Ordination

"[Our Saviour Jesus Christ] gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14).

"A reformation is needed among the people, but it should first begin its purifying work with the ministers."—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 469.

Suggested Reading: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 359–371.

Sunday

November 30

1. RAISING THE STANDARD

- a. How should one regard the responsibilities of an ordained office? 1 Timothy 3:1.

"Men who are chosen of God to labor in this cause will give proof of their high calling and will consider it their highest duty to grow and improve until they shall become able workmen. Then, as they manifest an earnestness to improve upon the talent which God has entrusted to them, they should be helped judiciously. But the encouragement given them should not savor of flattery, for Satan himself will do enough of that kind of work. Men who think that they have a duty to preach should not be sustained in throwing themselves and their families at once upon the brethren for support. They are not entitled to this until they can show good fruits of their labor."—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 446.

"In the home, in the school, in the church, men, women, and youth are to prepare to give the message to the world."—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 548.

- b. Why should we encourage more individuals to accept the call to the ministry as their life work? Matthew 9:38; Luke 10:2.

2. EVALUATION

- a. Avoiding prerequisites based solely on tradition (Mark 7:1–13), how do we know that God's requirements for the Old Testament priesthood still apply today? Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8; Matthew 5:20; 23:1–3.

- b. Name some qualifications a candidate for ordination and for leadership should have. Exodus 18:21; Deuteronomy 1:16, 17; Ezekiel 44:23.

"In [Moses'] charge to . . . elders at the time of their ordination, he outlined some of the qualifications that fit a man to be a wise ruler in the church. . . .

"In the work of setting things in order in all the churches, and ordaining suitable men to act as officers, the apostles held to the high standards of leadership outlined in the Old Testament Scriptures."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 94, 95.

"Those who claim to keep and teach the holy law of God, and yet are continually transgressing that law, are stumbling blocks both to sinners and to believers in the truth. The loose, lax way in which many regard the law of Jehovah and the gift of His Son, is an insult to God. The only way in which we can correct this widespread evil, is to examine closely everyone who would become a teacher of the Word. Those upon whom this responsibility rests, should acquaint themselves with his history since he professed to believe the truth. His Christian experience and his knowledge of the Scriptures, the way in which he holds present truth, should all be understood."—*Gospel Workers*, pp. 437, 438.

"Sisters are closely connected with the work of God if He has called their husbands to preach the present truth. These servants, if truly called of God, will feel the importance of the truth."—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 138.

"An unsanctified wife is the greatest curse that a minister can have."—*Ibid.*, p. 139.

"God will not entrust the care of His precious flock to men whose mind and judgment have been weakened by former errors that they have cherished, such as so-called perfectionism and Spiritualism. . . . Although they may now feel free from error and competent to go forth and to teach this last message, God will not accept them. He will not entrust precious souls to their care; for their judgment was perverted while in error, and is now weakened."—*Early Writings*, pp. 101, 102.

3. THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

- a. What sin is one of the most serious impediments to ordination? 1 Corinthians 6:18; Proverbs 6:32, 33.

"Immorality abounds everywhere. Licentiousness is the special sin of this age."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 346.

"Never was this sin [breaking the seventh commandment] regarded by God as being so exceedingly sinful as at the present time. Why? Because God is purifying unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."—*Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery, and Divorce*, p. 249.

- b. Name some abuses or misuses that will bring eternal loss. Matthew 25:14–30.

"If we dwarf our capabilities by inaction, if we deteriorate our talents, which are susceptible of the highest cultivation, we cannot in the better world redeem that past neglect of self-culture, that great loss."—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 9, p. 21.

"Every time one of the glorious faculties with which God has enriched man is abused or misused, that faculty loses forever a portion of its vigor and will never be as it was before the abuse it suffered. Every abuse inflicted upon our moral nature in this life is felt not only for time but for eternity. Though God may forgive the sinner, yet eternity will not make up that voluntary loss sustained in this life. . . .

"The capacities of enjoyment will be less in the future life for the misdemeanors and abuse of moral powers in this life."—*This Day with God*, p. 350.

- c. Name some moral issues to be examined in an ordination candidate and his wife—and even children. Leviticus 21:1, 5–7, 13, 14; Ezekiel 44:22; 1 Timothy 3:2–7; Titus 1:6–8.

"You excuse yourself by saying that your children are now beyond your control, too old for you to command. In this you mistake. None of your children are too old to respect your authority and obey your commands while they have the shelter of your roof. How old were Eli's sons? They were married men; and Eli, as a father and a priest of God, was required to restrain them."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 623, 624.

4. MAJOR QUALIFICATIONS

- a. In our eagerness to ordain more laborers to enter the great harvest field, of what should we be careful in order to preserve the integrity of God's work? *Ezekiel 34:2, 10; Revelation 2:2.*
- b. Why do we need to look at the experience of an individual? *1 Timothy 3:6.* How should persons be tested and selected for responsible positions?

"One man may be appointed to lead [a little company accepting the truth] for a week or a month, then another for a few weeks; and thus different persons may be enlisted in the work, and after a suitable trial someone should be selected by the voice of the church to be the acknowledged leader, never, however, to be chosen for more than one year. Then another may be selected, or the same one may be re-elected, if his service has proved a blessing to the church. The same principle should be followed in selecting men for other responsible positions, as in the offices of the conference. Untried men should not be elected as presidents of conferences."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 619.

- c. What other qualities must be considered in candidates for offices in the church? *Titus 1:7–11; 2 Timothy 2:24, 25.*

"Some who enter the field are mere novices in the Scriptures. In other things also they are incompetent and inefficient. They cannot read the Scriptures without hesitating, miscalling words, and jumbling them together in such a manner that the word of God is abused. Those who are not qualified to present the truth in a proper manner need not be perplexed with regard to their duty. Their place is that of learners, not teachers. . . .

"Those who cannot read correctly should learn, and they should become apt to teach before they attempt to stand before the public. . . .

"Ministers should be examined especially to see if they have an intelligent understanding of the truth for this time, so that they can give a connected discourse upon the prophecies or upon practical subjects. If they cannot clearly present Bible subjects they need to be hearers and learners still. They should earnestly and prayerfully search the Scriptures, and become conversant with them, in order to be teachers of Bible truth to others. All these things should be carefully and prayerfully considered before men are hurried into the field of labor."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 405–407.

5. APPEARANCE

- a. How do we know that the Old Testament statutes and judgments explaining the ten commandments still apply today? *Malachi 4:4, 5; Matthew 22:36–40.*

"Christ gave to Moses religious precepts which were to govern everyday life. These statutes were explicitly given to guard the ten commandments. They were not shadowy types to pass away with the death of Christ. They were to be binding upon men in every age as long as time should last."—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 1, p. 1104.

- b. In the Old Testament times, what disqualified men for ordination? *Leviticus 21:16–24.*

"I was pointed back to the children of Israel anciently and saw how pure and holy the ministers of the sanctuary had to be, because they were brought by their work into a close connection with God. They that minister must be holy, pure, and without blemish, or God will destroy them. God has not changed. He is just as holy and pure, just as particular, as He ever was."—*Early Writings*, p. 103.

- c. How are ordained men to consider their manner of dress? *Exodus 19:10, 11.*

"[God] has given us evidence that He may be honored or dishonored by the apparel of those who officiate before Him. He gave special directions to Moses in regard to everything connected with His service. He gave instruction even in regard to the arrangement of their houses and specified the dress which those should wear who were to minister in His service. They were to maintain order in everything and especially to preserve cleanliness. . . .

"There was to be nothing slack and untidy about those who appeared before Him when they came into His holy presence. And why was this? What was the object of all this carefulness? Was it merely to recommend the people to God? Was it merely to gain His approbation? The reason that was given me was this, that a right impression might be made upon the people. If those who ministered in sacred office should fail to manifest care, and reverence for God, in their apparel and their deportment, the people would lose their awe and their reverence for God and His sacred service."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 611, 612.

REVIEW AND THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- a. Considering the power of the gospel as revealed in the New Testament, are the qualifications for the ordained ministry to be higher or lower than in the Old Testament?
- b. To what extent are we to evaluate the life of the candidate and his wife prior to conversion? Why is the seventh commandment important in this process?
- c. Why is it essential to consider the character of a candidate's children?
- d. Since an elder's responsibilities are of a local nature, how long of an experience is necessary in order to evaluate him? How thorough should the evaluation of a minister be?
- e. How does one's outward appearance affect the ministry?

"Knowledge, benevolence, eloquence, gratitude, and zeal are all aids in the good work; but without the love of Jesus in the heart, the work of the Christian minister will prove a failure."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 183.

"The success of this cause [of God] does not depend upon our having a large number of ministers, but it is of the highest importance that those who do labor in connection with the cause of God should be men who really feel the burden and sacredness of the work to which He has called them. A few self-sacrificing godly men, small in their own estimation, can do a greater amount of good than a much larger number if a part of these are unqualified for the work, yet self-confident and boastful of their own talents."—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 442, 443.

"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*, p. 550.

"To those whom He calls to the work of the ministry, the Lord will give tact and skill and understanding. If after laboring for twelve months in evangelistic work, a man has no fruit to show for his efforts, if the people for whom he has labored are not benefited, if he has not lifted the standard in new places, and no souls are converted by his labors, that man should humble his heart before God, and endeavor to know if he has not mistaken his calling. The wages paid by the conference should be given to those who show fruit for their labor. The work of the one who recognizes God as his efficiency, who has a true conception of the value of souls, whose heart is filled with the love of Christ, will be fruitful."—*Evangelism*, pp. 686, 687.

Settling Divisions in the Church

"The apostles and elders [at Jerusalem] came together for to consider of this matter [about the Gentile converts and circumcision]" (Acts 15:6).

"Not until you feel that you could sacrifice your own self-dignity, and even lay down your life in order to save an erring brother, have you cast the beam out of your own eye so that you are prepared to help your brother."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 128.

Suggested Reading: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 187–200.

1. RESOLVING PERSONAL OFFENSES

- a. How are personal conflicts or private offenses between church members to be settled? Matthew 18:15, 20.

"No church officer should advise, no committee should recommend, nor should any church vote, that the name of a wrongdoer shall be removed from the church books, until the instruction given by Christ has been faithfully followed. When this has been done, the church has cleared herself before God. The evil must then be made to appear as it is, and must be removed, that it may not become more and more widespread. The health and purity of the church must be preserved, that she may stand before God unsullied, clad in the robes of Christ's righteousness."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 501.

- b. How does God view those who resolve difficulties by His method? James 5:19, 20.

"No one has ever been reclaimed from a wrong position by censure and reproach; but many have thus been driven from Christ and led to seal their hearts against conviction. A tender spirit, a gentle, winning deportment, may save the erring and hide a multitude of sins."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 129.

2. OPEN SIN AND DOUBT

- a. How may a private sin become open and require church discipline? Matthew 18:16–18. What action may be needed on special occasions? 1 Timothy 5:20.

"In dealing with erring church members, God's people are carefully to follow the instruction given by the Saviour in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 498.

- b. How are church members to resolve personal issues that do not require disciplinary action? 1 Corinthians 6:1–4.

"Christians should not appeal to civil tribunals to settle differences that may arise among church members. Such differences should be settled among themselves, or by the church, in harmony with Christ's instruction. Even though injustice may have been done, the follower of the meek and lowly Jesus will suffer himself 'to be defrauded' rather than open before the world the sins of his brethren in the church."

"Lawsuits between brethren are a reproach to the cause of truth. Christians who go to law with one another expose the church to the ridicule of her enemies and cause the powers of darkness to triumph. They are wounding Christ afresh and putting Him to open shame. By ignoring the authority of the church, they show contempt for God, who gave to the church its authority."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 305, 306.

"Those church members who appeal to the courts of the world show that they have chosen the world as their judge, and their names are registered in heaven as one with unbelievers."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 3, pp. 302, 303.

- c. As we near the end of the great controversy, what can we expect to see often? Matthew 15:14; Acts 20:28–31; 2 Timothy 4:3, 4.

"It has been the continual endeavor of the enemy to introduce into the church persons who assent to much that is truth, but who are not converted. Professed Christians who are false to their trust are channels through whom Satan works. He can use unconverted church members to advance his own ideas and retard the work of God. Their influence is always on the side of wrong. They place criticism and doubt as stumbling blocks in the way of reform."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 159.

"Evil angels in the form of believers will work in our ranks to bring in a strong spirit of unbelief."—Ibid., bk. 3, p. 410.

3. DIVISIONS

- a. What is the greatest evidence that Jesus is the one and only true Messiah? John 17:17–21; 13:34, 35; 1 Corinthians 1:13.

"Jesus knew that [the jealous priests and rabbis] would spare no effort to create a division between His own disciples and those of John [the Baptist]. . . . Wishing to avoid all occasion for misunderstanding or dissension, He quietly ceased His labors, and withdrew to Galilee. We also, while loyal to truth, should try to avoid all that may lead to discord and misapprehension. For whenever these arise, they result in the loss of souls. Whenever circumstances occur that threaten to cause division, we should follow the example of Jesus and of John the Baptist."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 181.

"The followers of Christ . . . should take every proper precaution to avoid disagreement; for in every division of interest, resulting in disputation and unhappy differences in the church, souls are lost that might have been saved in the kingdom of Heaven. In the occurrence of a religious crisis, leading men who profess to be God's instruments should follow the example of the great Master and that of the noble prophet John. They should stand firm and united in defense of the truth, while they carefully labor to avoid all injurious dissensions."—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, pp. 139, 140.

- b. What creates divisions in the church? 1 Corinthians 11:18, 19.

"The cause of division and discord in families and in the church is separation from Christ. To come near to Christ is to come near to one another. The secret of true unity in the church and in the family is not diplomacy, not management, not a superhuman effort to overcome difficulties—though there will be much of this to do—but union with Christ.

"Picture a large circle, from the edge of which are many lines all running to the center. The nearer these lines approach the center, the nearer they are to one another.

"Thus it is in the Christian life. The closer we come to Christ, the nearer we shall be to one another. God is glorified as His people unite in harmonious action."—*The Adventist Home*, p. 179.

- c. What should be done with the one that creates such divisions? Romans 16:17, 18.

4. THREATENED DIVISION IN ANTIOCH

- a. What serious problem developed in the church at Antioch that could have hurt the church as a whole? Acts 15:1, 5.

"[Certain Jews from Judea asserted] that none could be saved without being circumcised, and keeping the entire ceremonial law.

"This was an important question, and one which affected the church in a very great degree. Paul and Barnabas met it with promptness, and opposed introducing the subject to the Gentiles. They were opposed in this by the believing Jews of Antioch, who favored the position of those from Judea. The matter resulted in much discussion and want of harmony in the church, until finally the church at Antioch, apprehending that a division among them would occur from any further discussion of the question, decided to send Paul and Barnabas, together with some responsible men of Antioch, to Jerusalem, and lay the matter before the apostles and elders."—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 3, p. 369.

- b. What resolution was proposed to settle the division in the church? Who attended this general council? Acts 15:2, 6–20.

"The council which decided this case [of the new Gentile believers] was composed of the founders of the Jewish and Gentile Christian churches. Elders from Jerusalem and deputies from Antioch were present, and the most influential churches were represented. The council did not claim infallibility in their deliberations, but moved from the dictates of enlightened judgment, and with the dignity of a church established by the divine will. They saw that God Himself had decided this question by favoring the Gentiles with the Holy Ghost; and it was left for them to follow the guidance of the Spirit."—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 3, p. 376.

"There [at Jerusalem] [Paul and Barnabas and other responsible men of Antioch] they were to meet delegates from the different churches, and those who had come to attend the approaching annual festivals. Meanwhile all controversy was to cease, until a final decision should be made by the responsible men of the church. This decision was then to be universally accepted by the various churches throughout the country."—Ibid., p. 369.

- c. Why did this conference also inspire great rejoicing? Acts 15:3, 4.

5. SETTLING DOCTRINAL ISSUES

- a. How did the early Christians settle matters that threatened to create divisions? Acts 15:22.

"When dissension arose in a local church, as later it did arise in Antioch and elsewhere, and the believers were unable to come to an agreement among themselves, such matters were not permitted to create a division in the church, but were referred to a general council of the entire body of believers, made up of appointed delegates from the various local churches, with the apostles and elders in positions of leading responsibility."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 96.

"At times, when a small group of men entrusted with the general management of the work have, in the name of the General Conference, sought to carry out unwise plans and to restrict God's work, I have said that I could no longer regard the voice of the General Conference, represented by these few men, as the voice of God. But this is not saying that the decisions of a General Conference composed of an assembly of duly appointed, representative men from all parts of the field, should not be respected. God has ordained that the representatives of His church from all parts of the earth, when assembled in a General Conference, shall have authority."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 490.

- b. How was the whole body informed about the decision of the general council? Acts 15:19–23. Who heeded the resolution? Acts 15:30–33.

"The entire body of Christians were not called to vote upon the question [that had been raised at Antioch]. The apostles and elders—men of influence and judgment—framed and issued the decree, which was thereupon generally accepted by the Christian churches. All were not pleased, however, with this decision; there was a faction of false brethren who assumed to engage in a work on their own responsibility. They indulged in murmuring and faultfinding, proposing new plans and seeking to pull down the work of the experienced men whom God had ordained to teach the doctrine of Christ. The church has had such obstacles to meet from the first and will ever have them to the close of time."—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 3, p. 376.

"Unless the advice and counsel of the church can be respected, it is indeed powerless. God has placed a voice in the church which must control its members."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 108.

- c. What results followed this method? Acts 15:24–28, 34, 35; 16:4, 5.

REVIEW AND THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- a. How are we to deal with problems among members of the church?
- b. What type of influence is Satan trying to exert in our churches? How can we be sure not to be sidetracked from the message given us?
- c. What is the major cause of divisions among God's professed people?
- d. In the early church, who was sent to Jerusalem from different parts of the world to settle divisive issues?
- e. What type of authority has God given to this type of worldwide representative body?

"Every member of the church has a voice in choosing officers of the church. The church chooses the officers of the state conferences. Delegates chosen by the state conferences choose the officers of the union conferences, and delegates chosen by the union conferences choose the officers of the General Conference. By this arrangement every conference, every institution, every church, and every individual, either directly or through representatives, has a voice in the election of the men who bear the chief responsibilities in the General Conference."—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 236, 237.

"[God] values His church, not for its external advantages, but for the sincere piety which distinguishes it from the world."—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 565.

"The evils of self-esteem and an unsanctified independence, which most impair our usefulness and which will prove our ruin if not overcome, spring from selfishness. 'Counsel together' is the message which has been again and again repeated to me by the angel of God. . . .

"God is leading out a people and preparing them for translation. Are we, who are acting a part in this work, standing as sentinels for God? Are we seeking to work unitedly? Are we willing to become servants of all? Are we following our great Exemplar?"—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 29, 30.

"If there have been difficulties, . . . if envy, malice, bitterness, evil surmisings, have existed, confess these sins, not in a general way, but go to your brethren and sisters personally. Be definite. If you have committed one wrong and they twenty, confess that one as though you were the chief offender. Take them by the hand, let your heart soften under the influence of the Spirit of God, and say, 'Will you forgive me? I have not felt right toward you. I want to make right every wrong, that naught may stand registered against me in the books of heaven. I must have a clean record.' Who, think you, would withstand such a movement as this?"—*Our High Calling*, p. 370.

Old Testament Cities of Refuge

"Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die" (Numbers 35:30).

"In a trial for murder the accused was not to be condemned on the testimony of one witness, even though circumstantial evidence might be strong against him."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 516.

Suggested Reading: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 515–517.

Sunday

December 14

1. RETALIATION

- a. After Adam and Eve were expelled from the beautiful Garden, what controversy erupted between two brothers? Genesis 4:3–7.
- b. How did Cain decide to resolve the issue between them, and what curse was placed upon him? Genesis 4:8–15.

"In sparing the life of the first murderer, God presented before the whole universe a lesson bearing upon the great controversy. The dark history of Cain and his descendants was an illustration of what would have been the result of permitting the sinner to live on forever, to carry out his rebellion against God."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 78.

- c. How was the next murder viewed? Genesis 4:16–18, 23, 24.

"To the crime of murder, in which Cain had led the way, Lamech, the fifth in descent, added polygamy, and, boastfully defiant, he acknowledged God, only to draw from the avenging of Cain an assurance of his own safety."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 81.

- d. After the Flood, what principle was established? Genesis 9:6.

2. A SAFETY PRECAUTION

- a. What unique provision did God give Israel for those who were innocent of intentional killing? Joshua 20:1–3.

"This merciful provision [of appointing cities of refuge] was rendered necessary by the ancient custom of private vengeance, by which the punishment of the murderer devolved on the nearest relative or the next heir of the deceased. In cases where guilt was clearly evident it was not necessary to wait for a trial by the magistrates. The avenger might pursue the criminal anywhere and put him to death wherever he should be found. The Lord did not see fit to abolish this custom at that time, but He made provision to ensure the safety of those who should take life unintentionally."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 515.

- b. When a person's body was found and there was no suspect, what steps were promptly taken to find the slayer? Deuteronomy 21:1–9.

"To increase the horrors of murder and aid in the detection of the criminal, the Lord ordained that when the body of a murdered person was found in the land, the most solemn and public ceremony should be held, under the direction of the magistrates and elders in connection with the priests."—*The Signs of the Times*, January 20, 1881.

- c. How many cities in Israel were set aside for this purpose, and how were they distributed? Numbers 35:6, 9–14; Joshua 20:7–9.

"The cities of refuge were so distributed as to be within a half day's journey of every part of the land. The roads leading to them were always to be kept in good repair; all along the way signposts were to be erected bearing the word 'Refuge' in plain, bold characters, that the fleeing one might not be delayed for a moment. Any person—Hebrew, stranger, or sojourner—might avail himself of this provision. But while the guiltless were not to be rashly slain, neither were the guilty to escape punishment. The case of the fugitive was to be fairly tried by the proper authorities, and only when found innocent of intentional murder was he to be protected in the city of refuge. The guilty were given up to the avenger. And those who were entitled to protection could receive it only on condition of remaining within the appointed refuge."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 515, 516.

3. DECLARED INTENT

- a. Who was able to make use of these cities of refuge, and how urgent was their arrival there? Numbers 35:15, 22–24; Deuteronomy 19:4, 5. If the fugitive would escape with his life, what must he do?

"He who fled to the city of refuge could make no delay. Family and employment were left behind. There was no time to say farewell to loved ones. His life was at stake, and every other interest must be sacrificed to the one purpose—to reach the place of safety. Weariness was forgotten, difficulties were unheeded. The fugitive dared not for one moment slacken his pace until he was within the wall of the city."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 517.

- b. What were those who had fled required to publicly declare upon entrance into a city of refuge? Joshua 20:4, 5; Numbers 35:12.

c. Once a person found shelter, how long was he or she to remain in that city of refuge? Numbers 35:25, 32; Joshua 20:6.

- d. What if the prisoner decided to leave his place of security before he was legally released? Numbers 35:26–28.

"The prisoner who at any time went outside the city of refuge was abandoned to the avenger of blood. Thus the people were taught to adhere to the methods which infinite wisdom appointed for their security."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 517.

- e. Since the cities of refuge were provided only for those who had accidentally killed a person, what happened to an individual who was convicted for deliberate murder? Numbers 35:16, 21, 31.

"If the one tried for murder were proved guilty, no atonement or ransom could rescue him."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 516.

4. THE JUST PENALTY

- a. Why were the Israelites required to put the murderer to death? Exodus 21:14; Numbers 35:33, 34.

"The safety and purity of the nation demanded that the sin of murder be severely punished. Human life, which God alone could give, must be sacredly guarded."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 516.

"God regards as His enemies those who will by any act of negligence shield the guilty. They are in His sight partakers in the evil deeds of the sinner."—*The Signs of the Times*, January 20, 1881.

- b. In symbolic language, for what does the blood of a murdered victim cry? Who was to execute the judgment on the convicted murderer? Genesis 4:10; Revelation 6:9, 10; Numbers 35:19.

"Whosoever—be it individual or city—will excuse the crime of the murderer, when convinced of his guilt, is a partaker of his sin, and will surely suffer the wrath of God."—*The Signs of the Times*, January 20, 1881.

- c. What was one of the main crimes of the antediluvian world, and why is this bringing modern society to the same point of destruction? Genesis 6:11; Luke 17:26; Isaiah 59:14.

"Licentiousness, robbery, and murder, continually on the increase, are deluging our world, and preparing it to receive the unmixed wrath of God."—*The Signs of the Times*, January 20, 1881.

- d. What are some of the strict guidelines in determining innocence or guilt, and why? Numbers 35:30; Matthew 18:16.

"The provision that none should be condemned on the testimony of one witness was both just and necessary. One man might be controlled by prejudice, selfishness, or malice. But it was not likely that two or more persons would be so perverted as to unite in bearing false witness; and even should they do so, a separate examination would lead to a discovery of the truth."—*The Signs of the Times*, January 20, 1881.

5. PERFECT WISDOM AND BALANCE

- a. Explain how God's judicial system was based on mercy and justice. Psalm 89:14.

"While the Lord would have the crime of murder regarded with great abhorrence, He would carefully guard the innocent. Hence, without entirely destroying the custom of private vengeance, He makes the most thorough provision that the guiltless be not rashly slain without trial, nor the guilty escape punishment."—*The Signs of the Times*, January 20, 1881.

REVIEW AND THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- How did the concept of retaliation find an early foothold on earth?
- To protect those who accidentally killed someone, what unique plan did God introduce among His people?
- A person found innocent of intentional murder, for what length of time was he or she to remain in his or her city of refuge?
- How does toleration of intentional murderers affect the entire land?
- Why were two or more witnesses required in order to convict a person of intentional murder?

"It was the fact that licentiousness and murder were lightly regarded that fitted Sodom for God's judgments. Had those in authority taken upon themselves the work which the Lord had appointed them—fathers commencing in their own families to correct wrong, and magistrates and rulers acting with promptness and decision to punish the guilty—others would have feared, and crime would have decreased. God would not then have deemed it necessary to take the matter in hand Himself, and by terrible things in righteousness, execute the justice which had been perverted by men in authority."—*The Signs of the Times*, January 20, 1881.

"No one man's judgment is to control in any important matter. Mutual consideration and respect imparts proper dignity to the ministry, and unites the servants of God in close bonds of love and harmony. While they should depend upon God for strength and wisdom, ministers of the gospel should confer together in all matters requiring deliberation. 'That in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established' (Matthew 18:16)."—Ibid.

Jehovah's Modern City of Refuge

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust" (Psalm 91:1, 2).

"The cities of refuge appointed for God's ancient people were a symbol of the refuge provided in Christ."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 516.

Suggested Reading: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 9–16.

1. CONSTANT REFUGE

- a. Whom do we desperately need as we flee from the evil avenger? Deuteronomy 33:27, 28; 2 Samuel 22:1–4. How did David recognize this after his own personal deliverance? Psalm 9:10.

"The sinner is exposed to eternal death, until he finds a hiding place in Christ; and as loitering and carelessness might rob the fugitive of his only chance for life, so delays and indifference may prove the ruin of the soul. Satan, the great adversary, is on the track of every transgressor of God's holy law, and he who is not sensible of his danger, and does not earnestly seek shelter in the eternal refuge, will fall a prey to the destroyer."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 517.

- b. When we truly realize the faithfulness and surety of our refuge in Christ, what situations will cause us to be afraid? Psalms 46:1–3; 62:1–8. What kind of relationship with Him is needed? Psalm 91:1, 2.

- c. Why does the understanding of the sanctuary truth enable us to have a deeper connection with Jesus as our refuge? Hebrews 6:18–19.

2. PURE, UNADULTERATED TRUTH

- a. In what kind of refuge have those who believe lies placed their trust—and what is the result? Isaiah 28:14–21; 34:1–4, 8.

"To our merciful God the act of punishment is a strange act. Yet He will 'by no means clear the guilty' (Exodus 34:7). . . . The very fact of His reluctance to execute justice testifies to the enormity of the sins that call forth His judgments, and to the severity of the retribution awaiting the transgressor.

"All the inhabitants of earth are soon to meet the great Lawgiver over His broken law. There are many, many in the popular churches who know little of the real meaning of the message for this time."—*The Signs of the Times*, January 25, 1910.

- b. Do truth and lie have anything in common? 1 John 2:21. What steps should be taken when truth is neglected?

"As the light and life of men was rejected by the ecclesiastical authorities in the days of Christ, so it has been rejected in every succeeding generation. Again and again the history of Christ's withdrawal from Judea has been repeated. When the Reformers preached the word of God, they had no thought of separating themselves from the established church; but the religious leaders would not tolerate the light, and those that bore it were forced to seek another class, who were longing for the truth. In our day few of the professed followers of the Reformers are actuated by their spirit. Few are listening for the voice of God, and ready to accept truth in whatever guise it may be presented. Often those who follow in the steps of the Reformers are forced to turn away from the churches they love, in order to declare the plain teaching of the word of God. And many times those who are seeking for light are by the same teaching obliged to leave the church of their fathers, that they may render obedience."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 232.

- c. What is pure truth, and why must it be unadulterated—and preserved? John 14:6; 17:3; 1 Timothy 3:15; Isaiah 28:9–13.

"We are to stand upon the platform of eternal truth—pure, unadulterated truth. In this we may be considered singular, but this is the lot of all who make Christ their portion."—*Medical Ministry*, p. 161.

3. IN NAME ONLY

- a. What prophecy shows that the majority of churches will not accept the pure, unadulterated truth in these last days? *Isaiah 4:1.*

"Many feel that they must make some concessions to please their irreligious relatives and friends. As it is not always easy to draw the line, one concession prepares the way for another, until those who were once true followers of Christ, are in life and character conformed to the customs of the world. The connection with God is broken. They are Christians in name only. When the test hour comes, then their hope is seen to be without foundation. They have sold themselves and their children to the enemy."—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 2, p. 1001.

- b. How do we know that this prophecy refers to the time of the Investigative Judgment? *Isaiah 4:2–4.*

- c. How will those be treated who only want the name of Christ but not His character? *Matthew 7:21–23.*

"There are those in the church who, unless thoroughly converted, will crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame. I appeal to every church member to inquire, Am I doing all I can to honor my Redeemer? Truth held in unrighteousness is the greatest curse that can come to our world. But the truth as it is in Jesus is a savor of life unto life. It is worth possessing, worth living, worth defending. Christ calls upon us to enter the narrow pathway, where every step means a denial of self. He calls upon us to stand upon the platform of eternal truth, and contend, yes, contend earnestly, for the faith once delivered to the saints."—*The Review and Herald*, December 4, 1900.

- d. In light of this, how dangerous is willful sin? *Hebrews 10:26, 27.*

"If Christians are such in name only, they are like the salt that has lost its savor. They have no influence for good in the world. Through their misrepresentation of God they are worse than unbelievers."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 306.

4. THE CITY OF REFUGE ON EARTH

- a. What is the result of walking with Jesus in pure truth? *1 John 1:7.*

"A union of believers with Christ will as a natural result lead to a union with one another, which bond of union is the most enduring upon earth."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 47.

- b. What relationship does the church of God on earth have with heaven, and what hope does this bring us? *Ephesians 3:15; Hebrews 12:22, 23.*

"In order that the church may be an educating power in the world, she must cooperate with the church in heaven. Her members must represent Christ. Their hearts must be open to receive every ray of light that God may see fit to impart."—*The Review and Herald*, December 4, 1900.

- c. Why do we need to join the church? *Ephesians 4:4, 11–16; 5:23; 1 Corinthians 12:12–14; Acts 2:46, 47.*

"The church is God's fortress, His city of refuge, which He holds in a revolted world. Any betrayal of the church is treachery to Him who has bought mankind with the blood of His only begotten Son. From the beginning, faithful souls have constituted the church on earth. In every age the Lord has had His watchmen, who have borne a faithful testimony to the generation in which they lived. These sentinels gave the message of warning; and when they were called to lay off their armor, others took up the work. God brought these witnesses into covenant relation with Himself, uniting the church on earth with the church in heaven. He has sent forth His angels to minister to His church, and the gates of hell have not been able to prevail against His people."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 11.

"[An] obligation, too often lightly regarded—one that the youth awakened to the claims of Christ needs to be made plain—is the obligation of church relationship.

"Very close and sacred is the relation between Christ and His church—He the bridegroom, and the church the bride; He the head, and the church the body. Connection with Christ, then, involves connection with His church."—*Education*, p. 268.

5. RESIDING IN THE CITY OF REFUGE

- a. How does God intend to reveal His love to the world? John 13:34, 35; 17:20, 21. What is our privilege in relationship with the church? Hebrews 10:25; Psalm 27:4.

"The church is the repository of the riches of the grace of Christ; and through the church will eventually be made manifest, . . . the final and full display of the love of God."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 9.

"The church of Christ, enfeebled, defective as she may appear, is the one object on earth upon which He bestows in a special sense His love and His regard. The church is the theater of His grace, in which He delights in making experiments of His mercy on human hearts. The Holy Spirit is His representative, and it works to effect transformations so wonderful that angels look upon them with astonishment and joy. Heaven is full of rejoicing when the members of the human family are seen to be full of compassion for one another, loving one another as Christ has loved them. The church is God's fortress, His city of refuge, which He holds in a revolted world. Any betrayal of her sacred trust is treachery to Him who has bought her with the precious blood of His only begotten Son."—*The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, p. 1554.

- b. Since the church is to represent Christ on earth, what must we reveal to all? 2 Corinthians 5:20; 1 Peter 2:9.

"The church today needs men who, like Enoch, walk with God, revealing Christ to the world. Church members need to reach a higher standard. Heavenly messengers are waiting to communicate with those who have sunk self out of sight. . . . Christ is crucified afresh by many who through self-indulgence allow Satan to gain control over them. The church needs men of devotion to bear to the world the message of salvation, pointing sinners to the Lamb of God—men who, by their works of righteousness and their pure, true words, can lift their fellow men out of the pit of degradation."—*The Review and Herald*, December 4, 1900.

"It is Satan's work to mingle evil with good, and to remove the distinction between good and evil. Christ would have a church that labors to separate the evil from the good, whose members will not willingly tolerate wrongdoing, but will expel it from the heart and life."—Ibid.

"Sin may be called by false names and glossed over by plausible excuses and pretended good motives, but this does not lessen its guilt in the sight of God."—*The Signs of the Times*, January 20, 1881.

REVIEW AND THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- Where does the sin-sick soul find true lasting refuge?
- Why is it so important to seek after and find pure, unadulterated truth?
- In what dangers does willful sin place us?
- What has God instituted on earth to provide peace and safety for the believer?
- Through His church, what is God trying to reveal to the entire world?

"Jesus knew that He could do the scribes and Pharisees no good, unless they would empty themselves of self-importance. He chose new bottles for His new wine of doctrine, and made fishermen and unlearned believers the heralds of His truth to the world. And yet, though His doctrine seemed new to the people, it was in fact not a new doctrine, but the revelation of the significance of that which had been taught from the beginning. It was His design that His disciples should take the plain, unadulterated truth for the guide of their life."—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 5, p. 1089.

"We are now in a time when we are to stand steadfast for the truth. We are to cherish love for souls, but never, never are we to surrender the least vital point of truth, for it is by maintaining truth, pure, unadulterated truth, that we can at this time bring honor and glory to Jesus Christ."—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 196.

"There are grievous sins indulged by individual members of the church—covetousness, overreaching, deception, fraud, falsehood, and many others. If these sins are neglected by those who have been placed in authority in the church, the blessing of the Lord is withheld from His people, and the innocent suffer with the guilty. The officers in the church should be earnest, energetic men, having a zeal for God, and they should take the most prompt and thorough measures to condemn and correct these wrongs. In this work they should act, not from selfishness, jealousy, or personal prejudice, but in all meekness and lowliness of mind, with a sincere desire that God may be glorified."—*The Signs of the Times*, January 20, 1881.

"Earthly kingdoms rule by the ascendancy of physical power; but from Christ's kingdom every carnal weapon, every instrument of coercion, is banished. This kingdom is to uplift and ennoble humanity. God's church is the court of Holy life, filled with varied gifts and endowed with the Holy Spirit. The members are to find their happiness in the happiness of those whom they help and bless."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 12.

First Sabbath Offerings



OCTOBER 4
for the Vietnamese
Mission
(See p. 4.)

NOVEMBER 1
Literature for
needy countries
(See p. 29)



DECEMBER 6
for the clinic
in Paraguay
(See p. 60.)