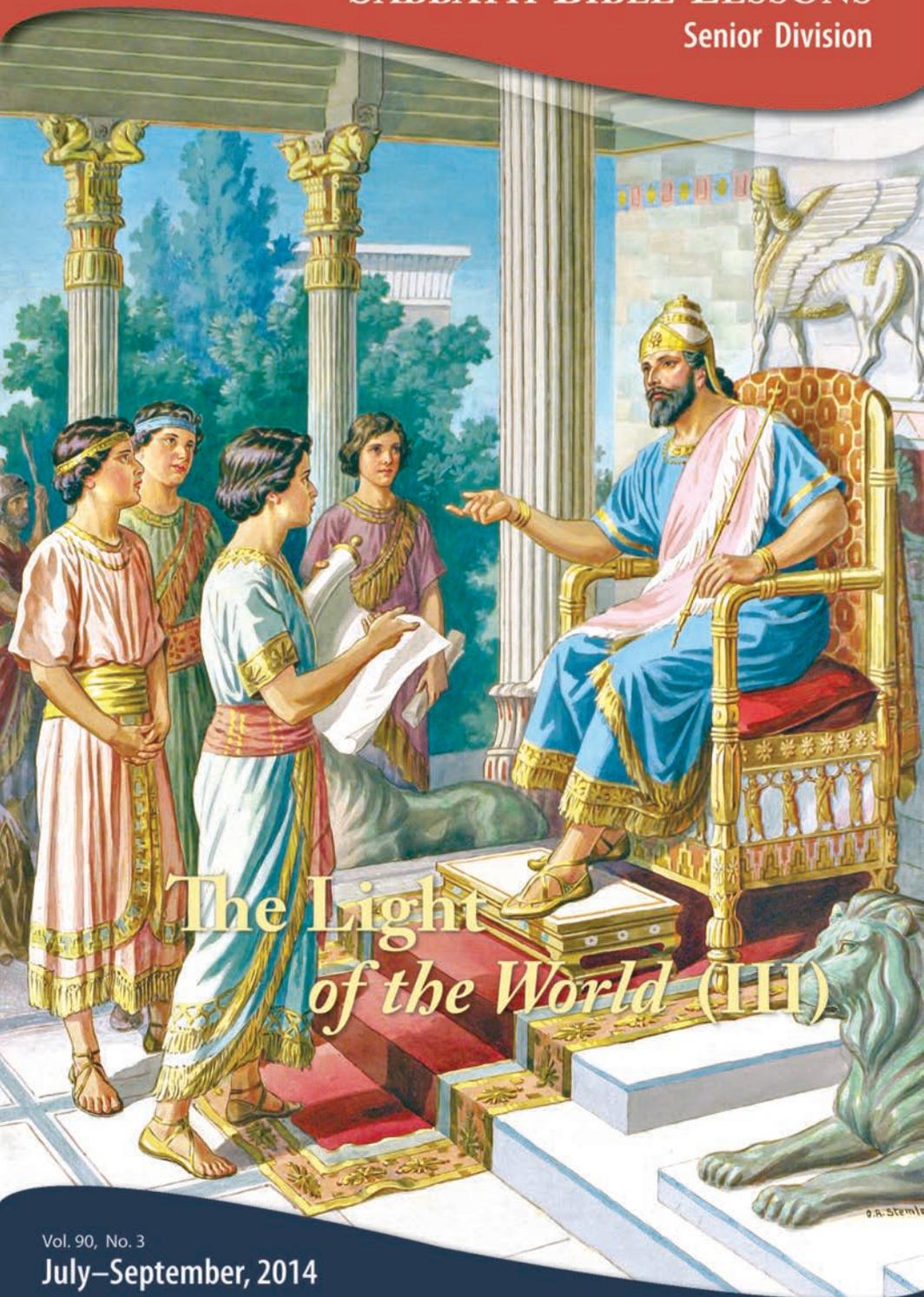


# SABBATH BIBLE LESSONS

Senior Division



## The Light of the World (III)

Vol. 90, No. 3

July–September, 2014

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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

During the first two quarters of this year we studied lessons in evangelism from the history of God's people. Near the end of our last quarter we followed the history of the southern kingdom of Judah, with its lessons in evangelism. In this quarter we will go back and look at lessons of evangelism in the experience of the northern kingdom. We will also observe God's efforts to reveal Himself to the ancient world through His servants during the period of the captivity.

"It was God's purpose that by the revelation of His character through Israel men should be drawn unto Him. To all the world the gospel invitation was to be given. Through the teaching of the sacrificial service, Christ was to be uplifted before the nations, and all who would look unto Him should live. All who, like Rahab the Canaanite and Ruth the Moabitess, turned from idolatry to the worship of the true God were to unite themselves with His chosen people. As the numbers of Israel increased, they were to enlarge their borders until their kingdom should embrace the world.

"But ancient Israel did not fulfill God's purpose. The Lord declared, 'I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto Me?' 'Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself' (Jeremiah 2:21; Hosea 10:1). . . .

"The Lord had through Moses set before His people the result of unfaithfulness. By refusing to keep His covenant, they would cut themselves off from the life of God, and His blessing could not come upon them. At times these warnings were heeded, and rich blessings were bestowed upon the Jewish nation and through them upon surrounding peoples. But more often in their history they forgot God and lost sight of their high privilege as His representatives."—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 19, 20.

We will see that, in a sense, their exile worked as a blessing for them, because it led many of God's professed people to find repentance. And it gave them an opportunity to testify in behalf of the truth before heathen nations. As a matter of fact, some let their light shine also in the presence of governors and kings, revealing the character of God in their conduct and speech. The lessons covering these facts are especially important for those who are studying to become efficient evangelists.

May the blessings of our heavenly Father be with all our Sabbath School teachers and students.

*The General Conference Sabbath School Department*

## First Sabbath Offering for the East European publishing work

“Let the publications containing Bible truth be scattered like the leaves of autumn. Lift Him up, the Saviour of souls, lift Him up higher and still higher.”—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 323.

These words spoken through the prophet of our times, E. G. White, are timely indeed. The brethren and sisters from the East European Union have the same desire, the same aspiration.

Having endured seventy years of state-imposed atheism, the believers in this part of the world know the value of freedom. Though we still have freedom, we see the signs of the soon-approaching end. The laws restricting religious freedom are already in force throughout the region. Using this God-given freedom, the brethren and sisters go to different cities and villages, giving out different tracts and other spiritual literature. We need to print hundreds of thousands copies of tracts and booklets, such as *Steps to Christ, Sabbath or Sunday*, a variety of health books, children’s sabbath school lessons, and other materials. Now we’re doing our best to print these booklets in different languages as this Union includes most of the countries that formerly belonged to the USSR.

“Our publications should go everywhere. Let them be issued in many languages. The third angel’s message is to be given through this medium.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 62.

We ask you to help us financially, as the territory is vast and the church in our region isn’t rich and cannot cover the tremendous expenses required.

We earnestly ask you to use this opportunity and remember this vital publishing work in this vast region with your generous gifts and prayers. May the hand of the giver be bountiful! We thank you for your help.

*Your brethren and sisters from the East European Union*



# God's Missionary Program to the World

“And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths” (Isaiah 2:3).

“It was God's purpose that by the revelation of His character through Israel men should be drawn unto Him.”—*Christ's Objects Lessons*, p. 290.

**Suggested Readings:** *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 17–22;  
*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 14–16.

## Sunday

June 29

### 1. A GREAT RESPONSIBILITY BEFORE GOD'S PEOPLE

- a. Which was the first great nation that Heaven wanted to bless with the knowledge of the true God? Psalm 135:9.

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“The descendants of Abraham . . . were brought down to Egypt that . . . they might reveal the principles of God's kingdom. The integrity of Joseph and his wonderful work in preserving the lives of the whole Egyptian people were a representation of the life of Christ. Moses and many others were witnesses for God.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 286.

- b. What evidence shows that the king, his courtiers, and the people in general had chosen to remain in spiritual darkness? Exodus 5:1, 2.

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“The Lord would give the Egyptians an opportunity to see how vain was the wisdom of their mighty men, how feeble the power of their gods, when opposed to the commands of Jehovah.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 263.

“If we sow pride, we shall reap pride; if we sow stubbornness, we shall reap stubbornness.”—*Lift Him Up*, p. 266.

## 2. GOD'S PLAN FOR ISRAEL

- a. What important mission was entrusted to the children of Israel when they numbered over 2,000,000—and the time of their deliverance from Egypt had arrived? John 4:22; Deuteronomy 4:6–8.
- 

“God chose Israel to reveal His character to men. He desired them to be as wells of salvation in the world. To them were committed the oracles of heaven, the revelation of God’s will.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 14.

- b. For what purpose did God establish Israel in a strategic place, “in the midst of the nations”? Ezekiel 5:5.
- 

“God had designed that His people should be the light of the world. From them was to shine forth the glory of His law as revealed in the life practice. For the carrying out of this design, He had caused the chosen nation to occupy a strategic position among the nations of earth.

“In the days of Solomon the kingdom of Israel extended from Hamath on the north to Egypt on the south, and from the Mediterranean Sea to the river Euphrates. Through this territory ran many natural highways of the world’s commerce, and caravans from distant lands were constantly passing to and fro. . . .

“Placed at the head of a nation that had been set as a beacon light to the surrounding nations, Solomon should have used his . . . influence in . . . directing a great movement for the enlightenment of those who were ignorant of God and His truth.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 70, 71.

- c. How did the powers of darkness work to thwart the plan of God? 1 Kings 11:1, 2; Ecclesiastes 2:8, 9; 10:1.
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“The missionary spirit that God had implanted in the heart of Solomon and in the hearts of all true Israelites was supplanted by a spirit of commercialism. The opportunities afforded by contact with many nations were used for personal aggrandizement.”—*Ibid.*, p. 71.

### 3. GOD'S MERCY AND JUSTICE

- a. Why were other nations disqualified for evangelizing the world? Leviticus 18:24, 25; Deuteronomy 9:4. What lesson did the inhabitants of the world gradually forget after the Flood? Genesis 6:5, 11, 17.
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- b. What conditions prevalent among many heathen nations demanded their destruction? Romans 1:19, 21, 23–25.
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“In many nations parents were abandoned or put to death as soon as age had rendered them incapable of providing for themselves. . . . By perverted conceptions of divine attributes, heathen nations were led to believe human sacrifices necessary to secure the favor of their deities; and the most horrible cruelties have been perpetrated under the various forms of idolatry. Among these was the practice of causing their children to pass through the fire before their idols. . . . The most licentious and abominable rites were made a part of the heathen worship. The gods themselves were represented as impure, and their worshipers gave the rein to the baser passions. Unnatural vices prevailed and the religious festivals were characterized by universal and open impurity.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 337, 338.

- c. Does God send destruction without first sending warnings and calls for repentance? Ezekiel 18:21, 23; Amos 3:7. What happens to those who have exhausted the patience of God and are considered incurable? 2 Peter 3:5–7.
- 

“Could those whose hearts are filled with hatred of God, of truth and holiness, mingle with the heavenly throng and join their songs of praise? Could they endure the glory of God and the Lamb? No, no; years of probation were granted them, that they might form characters for heaven; but they have never trained the mind to love purity; they have never learned the language of heaven, and now it is too late. A life of rebellion against God has unfitted them for heaven.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 542, 543.

**4. GOD'S MERCY AND JUSTICE (CONTINUED)**

- a. How do we know that the mercy of God was still extended towards the various nations that had not reached the point of no return? What was still granted to the Amorites under this plan? Genesis 15:16.
- 

“In the early days of Israel the nations of the world, through corrupt practices, had lost the knowledge of God. They had once known Him; but because ‘they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, . . . their foolish heart was darkened’ (Romans 1:21). Yet in His mercy God did not blot them out of existence. He purposed to give them an opportunity of again becoming acquainted with Him through His chosen people.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 14.

- b. What lesson can we learn from the way that God dealt with Nineveh? Jonah 3:10; 4:10, 11. What kind of missionary spirit did Jonah have?
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“When Jonah learned of God’s purpose to spare the city that, notwithstanding its wickedness, had been led to repent in sackcloth and ashes, he should have been the first to rejoice because of God’s amazing grace; but instead he allowed his mind to dwell upon the possibility of his being regarded as a false prophet.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 271.

- c. What encouraging message does God send to every missionary working in the cities? Acts 18:9.
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“God’s messengers in the great cities are not to become discouraged over the wickedness, the injustice, the depravity, which they are called upon to face while endeavoring to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation. . . . Let those engaged in soul-saving ministry remember that while there are many who will not heed the counsel of God in His word, the whole world will not turn from light and truth, from the invitations of a patient, forbearing Saviour.”—*Ibid.*, p. 277.

## 5. GOD'S JUDGMENTS STILL MINGLED WITH MERCY

- a. Specify the two main effects of the judgment reserved for the time of the end. Isaiah 24:4–6; 26:21, 9.

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“The time is at hand when there will be sorrow in the world that no human balm can heal. The Spirit of God is being withdrawn. Disasters by sea and by land follow one another in quick succession. How frequently we hear of earthquakes and tornadoes, of destruction by fire and flood, with great loss of life and property! Apparently these calamities are capricious outbreaks of disorganized, unregulated forces of nature, wholly beyond the control of man; but in them all, God’s purpose may be read. They are among the agencies by which He seeks to arouse men and women to a sense of their danger.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 277.

- b. What does God say while His merciful hand is still held out to save those who want to be saved? Isaiah 55:6, 7.

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“In every city, filled though it may be with violence and crime, there are many who with proper teaching may learn to become followers of Jesus. Thousands may thus be reached with saving truth and be led to receive Christ as a personal Saviour.”—*Ibid.*

## PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why did God bring the descendents of Abraham out of Egypt?
2. What are we to learn today from the way God strategically established Israel “in the midst of the nations”?
3. How did the powers of darkness work to thwart God’s missionary plan?
4. How does the book of Jonah teach that God is happy to save rather than destroy wicked people?
5. What does the Lord want us to realize about those around us?

# God's Sentinels

“O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel” (Ezekiel 33:7).

“The stewards of the mysteries of God should stand as watchmen upon the walls of Zion. . . . Ambassadors of Christ should take heed that they do not, through their unfaithfulness, lose their own souls and the souls of those who hear them.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 403.

**Suggested Reading:** *The Desire of Ages*, p. 355.

*Sunday*

July 6

## 1. WATCHERS ON THE WALLS OF ZION

- a. What is the difference between a faithful and an unfaithful watcher? Ezekiel 33:2–6.

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“In ancient times, sentinels were often stationed on the walls of cities, where, from points of vantage, they could overlook important points to be guarded and give warning of the approach of an enemy. Upon their faithfulness depended the safety of all within. At stated intervals they were required to call to one another, to make sure that all were awake, and that no harm had befallen any. The cry of good cheer or of warning was borne from one to another, each repeating the call till it echoed round the city.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 14.

- b. Why do we as individual Christians need to be concerned about the souls of those who are without God and without salvation? Ezekiel 33:7–9.

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- c. Does the Lord seek to destroy—or to save? Ezekiel 33:11.

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**2. CERTAIN OR UNCERTAIN SOUNDS?**

- a. **What happens when the watcher blows the trumpet but does not give a distinct sound? 1 Corinthians 14:8.**
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“Let the watchman beware lest, through his hesitancy and delay, souls shall be left to perish, and their blood shall be required at his hand.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 716.

- b. **Under the symbol of an evil servant, how did Christ describe a large class of unfaithful sentinels? Matthew 24:48–51.**
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“The evil servant says in his heart, ‘My lord delayeth his coming’ (Luke 12:45). He does not say that Christ will not come. He does not scoff at the idea of His second coming. But in his heart and by his actions and words he declares that the Lord’s coming is delayed. He banishes from the minds of others the conviction that the Lord is coming quickly. His influence leads men to presumptuous, careless delay. They are confirmed in their worldliness and stupor. Earthly passions, corrupt thoughts, take possession of the mind. The evil servant eats and drinks with the drunken, unites with the world in pleasure seeking. He smites his fellow servants, accusing and condemning those who are faithful to their Master. He mingles with the world. Like grows with like in transgression.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 635.

- c. **What warning did the apostle Paul give us about these sentinels? 1 Thessalonians 5:3.**
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“The advent of Christ will surprise the false teachers. They are saying, ‘Peace and safety.’ Like the priests and teachers before the fall of Jerusalem, they look for the church to enjoy earthly prosperity and glory. The signs of the times they interpret as foreshadowing this. But what saith the word of Inspiration? ‘Sudden destruction cometh upon them’ (1 Thessalonians 5:3). Upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth, upon all who make this world their home, the day of God will come as a snare.”—*Ibid.*

### 3. CHARACTERISTICS OF INCOMPETENT SENTINELS

#### a. How can we identify a disqualified watcher? Isaiah 56:10–12.

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“Some who occupy the position of watchmen to warn the people of danger have given up their watch and recline at ease. They are unfaithful sentinels. They remain inactive, while their wily foe enters the fort and works successfully by their side to tear down what God has commanded to be built up. They see that Satan is deceiving the inexperienced and unsuspecting; yet they take it all quietly, as though they had no special interest, as though these things did not concern them. They apprehend no special danger; they see no cause to raise an alarm. To them everything seems to be going well, and they see no necessity of raising the faithful, trumpet notes of warning which they hear borne by the plain testimonies, to show the people their transgressions and the house of Israel their sins. These reproofs and warnings disturb the quiet of these sleepy, ease-loving sentinels, and they are not pleased. They say in heart, if not in words: ‘This is all uncalled for. It is too severe, too harsh. These men are unnecessarily disturbed and excited, and seem unwilling to give us any rest or quietude.’”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 440.

#### b. What warning should we bear in mind regarding the work of spiritually-blind watchers? Matthew 15:14. How does the servant of the Lord describe one such sentinel in the history of Adventism?

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“Some have been so blinded by their own unbelief that they could not discern the spirit of Brother B. . . . He has refused to walk in the light of truth which God has given His people, and those who would walk in the light he has hindered.

“He feels that it is an honor to suggest doubts and unbelief in regard to the established faith of God’s commandment-keeping people. The truth that he once rejoiced in is now darkness to him, and, unless he changes his course, he will fall back into a mixture of the views of the different denominations, but will agree in the whole with none of them; he will be a distinct church of himself. . . . Satan is surely leading him, as he has led many others, away from the body in a course of deception and error.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 441.

#### 4. CHARACTERISTICS OF QUALIFIED SERVANTS

- a. Describe the characteristics of a faithful servant of Christ. 1 Timothy 4:12–16; Titus 2:7, 8.
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“It is the privilege of the watchmen on the walls of Zion to live so near to God, and to be so susceptible to the impressions of His Spirit, that He can work through them to tell sinners of their peril, and point them to the place of safety. Chosen of God, sealed with the blood of consecration, they are to rescue men and women from impending destruction. Faithfully are they to warn their fellow men of the sure result of transgression, and faithfully are they to safeguard the interest of the church. At no time may they relax their vigilance. Theirs is a work requiring the exercise of every faculty of the being. In trumpet tones their voices are to be lifted, and never should they sound one wavering, uncertain note. Not for wages are they to labor, but because they cannot do otherwise, because they realize that there is a woe upon them if they fail to preach the gospel.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 15.

- b. What work has Christ entrusted to us individually? Matthew 24:45; 2 Timothy 4:2, 5.
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“Among earth’s inhabitants, scattered in every land, there are those who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Like the stars of heaven, which appear only at night, these faithful ones will shine forth when darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people. In heathen Africa, in the Catholic lands of Europe and of South America, in China, in India, in the islands of the sea, and in all the dark corners of the earth, God has in reserve a firmament of chosen ones that will yet shine forth amidst the darkness, revealing clearly to an apostate world the transforming power of obedience to His law. Even now they are appearing in every nation, among every tongue and people. . . . The darker the night, the more brilliantly will they shine. . . .

“Then let no man attempt to number Israel today, but let everyone have a heart of flesh, a heart of tender sympathy, a heart that, like the heart of Christ, reaches out for the salvation of a lost world.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 188, 189.

## 5. WHAT REJOICING THERE WILL BE!

- a. When the redeemed get to heaven, will they recognize each other? 1 Corinthians 13:12. What will they hear from the mouth of those whom they led to Christ?

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“The redeemed will meet and recognize those whose attention they have directed to the uplifted Saviour. What blessed converse they have with these souls! ‘I was a sinner,’ it will be said, ‘without God and without hope in the world, and you came to me and drew my attention to the precious Saviour as my only hope. . . .’ Others will say, ‘I was a heathen in heathen lands. You left your friends and comfortable home and came to teach me how to find Jesus and believe in Him as the only true God. I demolished my idols and worshiped God, and now I see Him face to face. I am saved, eternally saved, ever to behold Him whom I love.’”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 311.

- b. What will Christ declare to them? Matthew 25:34–40.

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“Others will express their gratitude to those who fed the hungry and clothed the naked. ‘When despair bound my soul in unbelief, the Lord sent you to me,’ they say, ‘to speak words of hope and comfort. You brought me food for my physical necessities, and you opened to me the word of God, awakening me to my spiritual needs. You treated me as a brother.’”—*Ibid.*

## PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Differentiate between faithful and unfaithful watchers.
2. What is Christ’s description of unfaithful sentinels?
3. How are many in danger of the trap of “Brother B” in 3T 441?
4. How can we reflect more closely the characteristics of faith?
5. Relate the tremendously rewarding words of gratitude that will be expressed in Heaven.

# Reformation in Elijah's Time

"Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit" (James 5:17, 18).

"God was seeking to free the people [of Israel] from their delusion and lead them to understand their accountability to the One to whom they owed their life and all things."—*The Review and Herald*, August 21, 1913.

**Suggested Reading:** *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 119–154.

*Sunday*

July 13

## 1. A CALL FOR REPENTANCE AND REFORMATION

- a. **What mission did God entrust to Elijah when Israel was controlled by the priests of Baal and Ashtoreth? What did he say to Ahab, the king? 1 Kings 17:1.**
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"God's message to Ahab gave Jezebel and her priests and all the followers of Baal and Ashtoreth opportunity to test the power of their gods, and, if possible, to prove the word of Elijah false."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 124.

- b. **As God sought to speak to the king, the leaders, and the people through judgments—calling for repentance and reformation, how did the heathen priests seek to keep the nation deceived?**
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"The people were urged by their leaders to have confidence in the power of Baal and to set aside as idle words the prophecy of Elijah. The priests still insisted that it was through the power of Baal that the showers of rain fell."—*Ibid.*, p. 123.

## 2. A SAVOR OF LIFE OR OF DEATH

- a. When they met face to face, with what question did the king try to rebuke Elijah? 1 Kings 18:17. What must God's messenger expect from those who refuse to receive the truth?

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“The prophets of God were hated by apostate Israel because through them their hidden sins were brought to light. Ahab regarded Elijah as his enemy because the prophet was faithful to rebuke the king's secret iniquities. So today the servant of Christ, the reprover of sin, meets with scorn and rebuffs.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 587.

“As men see that they cannot maintain their position by the Scriptures, many determine to maintain it at all hazards, and with a malicious spirit they assail the character and motives of those who stand in defense of unpopular truth. It is the same policy which has been pursued in all ages. Elijah was declared to be a troubler in Israel, Jeremiah a traitor, Paul a polluter of the temple. From that day to this, those who would be loyal to truth have been denounced as seditious, heretical, or schismatic.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 458, 459.

- b. What can we expect from the vast majority, even when the truth is presented to them? Isaiah 59:14, 15; 2 Timothy 3:10–12. How is this to affect us?

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“Multitudes who are too unbelieving to accept the sure word of prophecy will receive with unquestioning credulity an accusation against those who dare to reprove fashionable sins. This spirit will increase more and more. . . .

“In view of this, what is the duty of the messenger of truth? Shall he conclude that the truth ought not to be presented, since often its only effect is to arouse men to evade or resist its claims? No; he has no more reason for withholding the testimony of God's word, because it excites opposition, than had earlier Reformers. . . .

“The great obstacle both to the acceptance and to the promulgation of truth is the fact that it involves inconvenience and reproach. . . . But this does not deter the true followers of Christ. These do not wait for truth to become popular. Being convinced of their duty, they deliberately accept the cross”—*Ibid.*, pp. 459, 460.

### 3. THE DANGER OF SMOOTH SERMONS

- a. **When King Ahab accused Elijah of being a troubler of Israel, how did the prophet respond? 1 Kings 18:18.**
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“Standing in conscious innocence before Ahab, Elijah makes no attempt to excuse himself or to flatter the king. Nor does he seek to evade the king’s wrath by the good news that the drought is almost over. He has no apology to offer. Indignant, and jealous for the honor of God, he casts back the imputation of Ahab.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 140.

- b. **What kind of sermons are needed in calling for repentance and reformation? Isaiah 58:1. What is wrong with smooth sermons?**
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“The smooth sermons so often preached make no lasting impression; the trumpet does not give a certain sound. Men are not cut to the heart by the plain, sharp truths of God’s word.”—*Ibid.*

“Those ministers who are men pleasers, who cry, Peace, peace, when God has not spoken peace, might well humble their hearts before God, asking pardon for their insincerity and their lack of moral courage. It is not from love for their neighbor that they smooth down the message entrusted to them, but because they are self-indulgent and ease-loving. . . .

“God calls for men like Elijah, Nathan, and John the Baptist—men who will bear His message with faithfulness, regardless of the consequences; men who will speak the truth bravely, though it call for the sacrifice of all they have.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 141, 142.

- c. **When will the accusations of Ahab be repeated against the servants of God? Revelation 13:15–17.**
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“As the wrath of the people shall be excited by false charges, they will pursue a course toward God’s ambassadors very similar to that which apostate Israel pursued toward Elijah.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 590.

#### 4. A CONTEST BETWEEN TWO POWERS

- a. After rebuking Ahab, what did Elijah demand? 1 Kings 18:19, 20.
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“[1 Kings 18:19 quoted.] The command was issued by one who seemed to stand in the very presence of Jehovah; and Ahab obeyed at once, as if the prophet were monarch, and the king a subject. Swift messengers were sent throughout the kingdom with the summons to meet Elijah and the prophets of Baal and Ashtoreth.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 143.

- b. What challenge did Elijah put before the people? 1 Kings 18:21 (first part).
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“Facing King Ahab and the false prophets, and surrounded by the assembled hosts of Israel, Elijah stands, the only one who has appeared to vindicate the honor of Jehovah. He whom the whole kingdom has charged with its weight of woe is now before them, apparently defenseless in the presence of the monarch of Israel, the prophets of Baal, the men of war, and the surrounding thousands. But Elijah is not alone. Above and around him are the protecting hosts of heaven, angels that excel in strength.”—*Ibid.*, p. 147.

- c. What answer did Elijah get from the assembled multitude? 1 Kings 18:21 (second part).
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“The Lord abhors indifference and disloyalty in a time of crisis in His work. The whole universe is watching with inexpressible interest the closing scenes of the great controversy between good and evil. The people of God are nearing the borders of the eternal world; what can be of more importance to them than that they be loyal to the God of heaven? All through the ages, God has had moral heroes, and He has them now—those who, like Joseph and Elijah and Daniel, are not ashamed to acknowledge themselves His peculiar people.”—*Ibid.*, p. 148.

5. THE TEMPORARY PROTECTION OF ISRAEL

a. When Elijah proposed that, in the impending contest, “the God that answereth by fire, let him be God,” what did the people say? 1 Kings 18:22–24.

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b. After the people had seen that the heathen priests were deceivers, what did Elijah do? 1 Kings 18:30–34. And then, what happened when he prayed to the Lord to manifest Himself? Verses 36–38.

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c. At the end of the contest, when the people saw the fire from heaven consuming the sacrifice and the water, what did they do and say of the true and only God? 1 Kings 18:39. What order did Elijah give concerning the false teachers? Verse 40.

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“The priests of Baal . . . would still remain the prophets of Baal. Thus they showed themselves ripe for destruction. That repentant Israel may be protected from the allurements of those who have taught them to worship Baal, Elijah is directed by the Lord to destroy these false teachers.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 153, 154.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Describe the operation of the great controversy as it related to Ahab against Elijah.
2. Explain our duty when facing the unbelieving multitudes.
3. Why are smooth messages especially perilous today?
4. When, in the near future, will the accusation of Ahab be repeated against the servants of God?
5. How are we warned against false religious teachers?

# Tempted to Doubt

**“It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers” (1 Kings 19:4).**

“A fugitive, far from the homes of men, his spirits crushed by bitter disappointment, [Elijah] desired never to look upon the faces of men again.”—*The Review and Herald*, October 16, 1913.

**Suggested Reading:** *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 155–176.

*Sunday*

July 20

## 1. ELIJAH’S FAITH SEVERELY TESTED

- a. **When Jezebel, the idolatrous queen, heard of the slaying of the false prophets, what message did she send Elijah? 1 Kings 19:1, 2.**

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“Jezebel, hardened and impenitent, became infuriated. She refused to recognize in the events on Carmel the overruling providence of God, and, still defiant, she boldly declared that Elijah should die.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 159.

- b. **After revealing undaunted courage in the contest on Mount Carmel, how did Elijah show human weakness? 1 Kings 19:3.**

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“Elijah should not have fled from his post of duty. He should have met the threat of Jezebel with an appeal for protection to the One who had commissioned him to vindicate the honor of Jehovah. He should have told the messenger that the God in whom he trusted would protect him against the hatred of the queen.”—*Ibid.*, p. 160.

- c. **To what admonition should every worker in the cause of God give serious consideration? 1 Corinthians 10:12.**

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## 2. DISCOURAGED

- a. Utterly discouraged, what did Elijah request in his prayer to God? 1 Kings 19:4. What must every witness in the cause of God expect to endure? 2 Corinthians 4:8, 9.
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“Into the experience of all there come times of keen disappointment and utter discouragement—days when sorrow is the portion, and it is hard to believe that God is still the kind benefactor of His earthborn children; days when troubles harass the soul, till death seems preferable to life. It is then that many lose their hold on God and are brought into the slavery of doubt, the bondage of unbelief.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 162.

“The servants of the Lord must expect every kind of discouragement. They will be tried, not only by the anger, contempt, and cruelty of enemies, but by the indolence, inconsistency, lukewarmness, and treachery of friends and helpers. . . . Even some who seem to desire the work of God to prosper, will yet weaken the hands of His servants by hearing, reporting, and half believing the slanders, boasts, and menaces of their adversaries.”—*Christian Service*, pp. 239, 240.

- b. What is the remedy for discouragement? Luke 21:36; 1 Thessalonians 5:8, 17. How did the apostle Paul fight off discouragement? 2 Corinthians 12:10.
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“For the disheartened there is a sure remedy—faith, prayer, work. Faith and activity will impart assurance and satisfaction that will increase day by day. Are you tempted to give way to feelings of anxious foreboding or utter despondency? In the darkest days, when appearances seem most forbidding, fear not. Have faith in God. He knows your need. He has all power. His infinite love and compassion never weary. Fear not that He will fail of fulfilling His promise.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 164, 165.

- c. Instead of granting the thoughtless request of His servant, how did God show him that his work was not yet finished? 1 Kings 19:5–8.
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### 3. A POINTED QUESTION

- a. **What did the Lord ask Elijah after he took refuge in a cave? 1 Kings 19:9. What rebuke was contained in the question?**

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“[The Lord God of hosts] sent you to the brook Cherith and afterward to the widow of Sarepta. I commissioned you to return to Israel and to stand before the idolatrous priests on Carmel, and I girded you with strength to guide the chariot of the king to the gate of Jezreel. But who sent you on this hasty flight into the wilderness?”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 168.

- b. **In bitterness of soul, what complaint did Elijah make? 1 Kings 19:10. What lesson do you think God was teaching His servant through this experience?**

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“[God] desired to teach Elijah that it is not always the work that makes the greatest demonstration that is most successful in accomplishing His purpose. . . .

“While Elijah waited for the revelation of the Lord, a tempest rolled, the lightnings flashed, and a devouring fire swept by; but God was not in all this. Then there came a still, small voice, and the prophet covered his head before the presence of the Lord. His petulance was silenced, his spirit softened and subdued. He now knew that a quiet trust, a firm reliance on God, would ever find for him a present help in time of need.” —*Ibid.*, pp. 168, 169.

- c. **How had Elijah expected the Lord would reveal His power? 1 Kings 19:11, 12. What did Elijah finally understand when he considered the way of the Lord to convert souls? Zechariah 4:6.**

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“It is not always the most learned presentation of God’s truth that convicts and converts the soul. Not by eloquence or logic are men’s hearts reached but by the sweet influences of the Holy Spirit, which operate quietly yet surely in transforming and developing character. It is the still, small voice of the Spirit of God that has power to change the heart.”—*Ibid.*, p. 169.

**4. THE BEGINNING OF A DECIDED REFORM**

- a. **What question did the Lord repeat to Elijah, and what complaint did Elijah repeat to the Lord? 1 Kings 19:13, 14. How did God assure Elijah that the unrepentant rebels in Israel would be punished? 1 Kings 19:15–17.**

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“The Lord answered Elijah that the wrongdoers in Israel should not go unpunished. Men were to be especially chosen to fulfill the divine purpose in the punishment of the idolatrous kingdom. There was stern work to be done, that all might be given opportunity to take their position on the side of the true God. Elijah himself was to return to Israel and share with others the burden of bringing about a reformation.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 169.

- b. **Who, among others, was chosen to help Elijah promote the reformation that had commenced? 1 Kings 19:19–21.**

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- c. **What parallel can be drawn between the apostasy prevalent in Israel in the days of Elijah and the apostasy which is spreading in the world today? 2 Peter 3:3–5.**

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“The law of God, the divine standard of righteousness, is declared [in this age] to be of no effect. The enemy of all truth is working with deceptive power to cause men and women to place human institutions where God should be, and to forget that which was ordained for the happiness and salvation of mankind.

“Yet this apostasy, widespread as it has come to be, is not universal. Not all in the world are lawless and sinful; not all have taken sides with the enemy God has many thousands who have not bowed the knee to Baal, many who long to understand more fully in regard to Christ and the law, many who are hoping against hope that Jesus will come soon to end the reign of sin and death. And there are many who have been worshiping Baal ignorantly, but with whom the Spirit of God is still striving.

“These need the personal help of those who have learned to know God and the power of His word. In such a time as this, every child of God should be actively engaged in helping others.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 170, 171.

## 5. OUR EVANGELISTIC RESPONSIBILITY TODAY

- a. When Elijah complained that he alone was left, what did the Lord reveal to him? 1 Kings 19:18.

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“What strange work Elijah would have done in numbering Israel at the time when God’s judgments were falling upon the backsliding people! He could count only one on the Lord’s side.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 189.

- b. What is our duty in view of the fact that “God has many thousands who have not bowed the knee to Baal” and “with whom the Spirit of God is still striving”? Matthew 28:19, 20.

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“Among earth’s inhabitants, scattered in every land, there are those who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Like the stars of heaven, which appear only at night, these faithful ones will shine forth when darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people. . . . God has in reserve a firmament of chosen ones that will yet shine forth amidst the darkness, revealing clearly to an apostate world the transforming power of obedience to His law. . . . The darker the night, the more brilliantly will they shine. . . .

“Then let no man attempt to number Israel today, but let everyone have a heart of flesh, a heart of tender sympathy, a heart that, like the heart of Christ, reaches out for the salvation of a lost world.”—*Ibid.* pp. 188, 189.

## PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How did Elijah show spiritual cowardice after demonstrating great moral strength?
2. What admonition should be seriously pondered by every believer—as each of us has been called to witness for Christ?
3. What is the remedy for discouragement?
4. When Elijah complained of being alone, what did God declare?
5. What is our duty to all who have never bowed the knee to Baal?

## First Sabbath Offering for a missionary school in the DR Congo

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is one of the largest countries in the African continent, with a population of approximately 75 million. This central African nation is rich in mineral resources, including cobalt, industrial and gem diamonds, gold, and copper. It borders the Central African Republic and South Sudan to the north; Zambia and Angola to the south; the Republic of the Congo and a very small coast on the Atlantic to the west; and Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania to the east.



The main religions practiced in the DR Congo are Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam. There are a variety of Christian denominations—in fact, the DR Congo has the second-highest total Christian population in Africa—about 96%. There is full religious liberty. French is the official language.

In 1972, the work of the SDARM was first organized in the DR Congo (then referred to as Zaire) as a culmination of 12 years of voluntary efforts by local layworkers who had refused to compromise the principles of true Sabbathkeeping, even when such a stand meant suffering serious financial hardship.

Today, our church in Congo is comprised of 7 missions, with a total of approximately 1,500 members—40% of whom are young people. While the world is feeding the youth with vain philosophies, we need to nourish them with solid Bible truths! To accomplish this goal, a good missionary school course is needed. The keen interest that we have in young people impels us to go forward with such a project—to build a strong missionary school that can greatly benefit our French-speaking youth.

Above all, we pray that after their training, these young people will become true missionaries and defenders of the truth because of their great love for Christ who gave His life on Calvary.

Thus, we appeal to all the believers around the world to assist in this important plan with their prayers and financial resources. May the Lord abundantly bless all who directly or indirectly will support this vital missionary project!

*Regional Secretary for Africa*

# Called for Service

“No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62).

“To everyone who becomes a partaker of His grace, the Lord appoints a work for others.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 148.

**Suggested Reading:** *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 217–228.

*Sunday*

July 27

## 1. “FAITHFUL IS HE THAT CALLETH YOU”

- a. How did the divine call come to the prophets of God? 1 Kings 12:22; 1 Chronicles 17:3; Luke 3:2. Explain the difference between the true prophets and the self-appointed ones. Jeremiah 14:14, 15; 23:21, 32.
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- b. How did the prophetic call come to Elisha? 1 Kings 19:16. What attributes had he revealed before this call? Verse 19.
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“The prophetic call came to Elisha while, with his father’s servants, he was plowing in the field. He had taken up the work that lay nearest. He possessed both the capabilities of a leader among men and the meekness of one who is ready to serve. Of a quiet and gentle spirit, he was nevertheless energetic and steadfast. Integrity, fidelity, and the love and fear of God were his, and in the humble round of daily toil he gained strength of purpose and nobleness of character, constantly increasing in grace and knowledge. While cooperating with his father in the home-life duties, he was learning to cooperate with God.

“By faithfulness in little things, Elisha was preparing for weightier trusts. . . . He learned to serve; and in learning this, he learned also how to instruct and lead. The lesson is for all. None can know what may be God’s purpose in His discipline; but all may be certain that faithfulness in little things is the evidence of fitness for greater responsibilities.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 218.

## 2. THE CERTAINTY OF GOD'S CALL

- a. **As with every servant of God, what factors did Elisha have to consider when the divine call came to him? 1 Kings 19:20, 21; Luke 14:28.**

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“Elisha must count the cost—decide for himself to accept or reject the call. . . .

“The call to place all on the altar of service comes to each one. We are not all asked to serve as Elisha served, nor are we all bidden to sell everything we have; but God asks us to give His service the first place in our lives, to allow no day to pass without doing something to advance His work in the earth. . . . God accepts the offering of each. It is the consecration of the life and all its interests, that is necessary. Those who make this consecration will hear and obey the call of Heaven.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 220, 221.

- b. **What was Elisha's only request at the end of his association with Elijah? 2 Kings 2:9.**

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“Elisha asked not for worldly honor, or for a high place among the great men of earth. That which he craved was a large measure of the Spirit that God had bestowed so freely upon the one about to be honored with translation. He knew that nothing but the Spirit which had rested upon Elijah could fit him to fill the place in Israel to which God had called him.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 226, 227.

- c. **What can we lose by neglecting our duties, our abilities, and our opportunities? Mathew 25:28, 29 (last part). What will happen, on the other hand, if we are diligent in the faithful and honest use of the “capital” we already have received from God? Verse 29 (first part).**

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“Jesus has pointed out the way of life, He has made manifest the light of truth, He has given the Holy Spirit and endowed us richly with everything essential to our perfection.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 218.

### 3. ELISHA'S WILLINGNESS TO LEARN

- a. **What should we learn from Elisha's willingness to perform menial duties? 2 Kings 3:11 (last part).**
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"It was no great work that was at first required of Elisha; commonplace duties still constituted his discipline. He is spoken of as pouring water on the hands of Elijah, his master. He was willing to do anything that the Lord directed, and at every step he learned lessons of humility and service. As the prophet's personal attendant, he continued to prove faithful in little things, while with daily strengthening purpose he devoted himself to the mission appointed him by God."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 222.

- b. **What must a servant of God demonstrate before he can be promoted to carry higher responsibilities? Luke 16:10–12.**
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"None can know what may be God's purpose in His discipline; but all may be certain that faithfulness in little things is the evidence of fitness for greater responsibilities. Every act of life is a revelation of character."—*Ibid.*, p. 218.

- c. **How does the thinking and acting of many resemble the attitude of the slothful servant who had received only one talent? Matthew 25:14, 18, 24–28.**
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"Because they are not connected with some directly religious work, many feel that their lives are useless, that they are doing nothing for the advancement of God's kingdom. If they could do some great thing how gladly they would undertake it! But because they can serve only in little things, they think themselves justified in doing nothing. In this they err. A man may be in the active service of God while engaged in the ordinary, everyday duties—while felling trees, clearing the ground, or following the plow. The mother who trains her children for Christ is as truly working for God as is the minister in the pulpit."—*Ibid.*, p. 219.

**4. MINISTRY INCLUDES TRAINING YOUNG MEN**

- a. What is one of the most important duties of a competent and faithful minister? 2 Timothy 2:1, 2.**

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“Ministry comprehends far more than preaching the word. It means training young men as Elijah trained Elisha, taking them from their ordinary duties, and giving them responsibilities to bear in God’s work—small responsibilities at first, and larger ones as they gain strength and experience. . . . Young, inexperienced workers should be trained by actual labor in connection with these experienced servants of God. Thus they will learn how to bear burdens.

“Those who undertake this training of young workers are doing noble service. The Lord Himself cooperates with their efforts. And the young men to whom the word of consecration has been spoken, whose privilege it is to be brought into close association with earnest, godly workers, should make the most of their opportunity. God has honored them by choosing them for His service and by placing them where they can gain greater fitness for it, and they should be humble, faithful, obedient, and willing to sacrifice. If they submit to God’s discipline, carrying out His directions and choosing His servants as their counselors, they will develop into righteous, high-principled, steadfast men, whom God can entrust with responsibilities. . . .

“For several years after the call of Elisha, Elijah and Elisha labored together, the younger man daily gaining greater preparedness for his work.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 222–224.

- b. What points did the apostle Paul stress in the training of Timothy? 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14–17.**

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“The piety and influence of [Timothy’s] home life was not of a cheap order, but pure, sensible, and uncorrupted by false sentiments. The moral influence of his home was substantial, not fitful, not impulsive, not changeable. The Word of God was the rule which guided Timothy. . . . His home instructors cooperated with God in educating this young man to bear the burdens that were to come upon him at an early age.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 918.

## 5. TEACHING AND LEARNING; LEARNING AND TEACHING

- a. How was Elisha's faith tested while traveling with Elijah? 2 Kings 2:5, 6.

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"The schools of the prophets, established by Samuel, had fallen into decay during the years of Israel's apostasy. Elijah re-established these schools, making provision for young men to gain an education that would lead them to magnify the law and make it honorable. Three of these schools, one at Gilgal, one at Bethel, and one at Jericho, are mentioned in the record. Just before Elijah was taken to heaven, he and Elisha visited these centers of training. The lessons that the prophet of God had given them on former visits, he now repeated. . . . He also impressed upon their minds the importance of letting simplicity mark every feature of their education. Only in this way could they receive the mold of heaven and go forth to work in the ways of the Lord. . . .

"As Elisha accompanied the prophet on his round of service from school to school, his faith and resolution were once more tested. . . . And now the tried servant of the man of God kept close beside him."—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 224, 225.

- b. What lesson can we all learn from the successful collaboration of these two faithful and diligent workers of God? 1 Corinthians 3:8, 9.

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"The angels of God will be much better pleased and will be attracted to us when the servants in the field can come together, and bow down together, and pray with tears and contrition of heart; when they can talk about the work, no matter whose that work will be."—*Sermons and Talks*, vol. 2, p. 15.

## PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What did Elisha ask Elijah immediately before his ascension?
2. Explain the peril of neglecting opportunities.
3. How much can we gain by using well what we have already?
4. What must we reveal before receiving greater responsibilities?
5. What can we learn from the collaboration of Elijah and Elisha?



SPECIAL OFFERING TO BE COLLECTED FOR THE

## Abundant Life Media Project

ON AUGUST 9, 2014

To our dear brethren and friends around the world,

“Media” has been used by the messengers of God to reach humanity with the present truth in all periods of world history.

In the days of Noah, oral media was used to warn the world of impending destruction and to invite people to be saved. Under divine guidance, Moses also used verbal and written communication (the media in his days) for the Exodus movement. The same resources were used in the days of Solomon when the territory of Israel included “many natural highways of the world's commerce, and caravans from distant lands were constantly passing to and fro. Thus there was given to Solomon and his people opportunity to reveal to men of all nations the character of the King of kings, and to teach them to reverence and obey Him.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 70.

Another example was the method used by Christ: “[Christ] took advantage of the opportunities to be found along the great thoroughfares of travel. In the intervals of His journeys to and fro, Jesus dwelt at Capernaum, which came to be known as ‘His own city.’ (Matthew 9:1). Situated on the highway from Damascus to Jerusalem and Egypt and to the Mediterranean Sea, it was well adapted to be the center of the Saviour's work.”—*Ibid.*, p. 73.

The first book ever to be printed on a printing press was the Bible, allowing the message of salvation to reach multitudes more easily. At the beginning of the Advent movement, God instructed James White to publish the message of present truth in a little paper, from which streams of light would shine all around the world.

Based on these thoughts, a project has been approved by the General Conference to establish a television broadcasting studio for the Reform Movement, to be transmitted in three languages, English, Portuguese, and Spanish. The General Conference Council has decided that this project should be developed in Brazil. Therefore, a plot of land has been separated from the total area of the headquarters of the South Brazilian Union property, and construction has begun specifically in behalf of the “Abundant Life Media Project.”

The new building has an area of approximately 1,200m<sup>2</sup> (or nearly 13,000 square feet), and will have space for two film studios, one studio for audio recording, plus additional rooms for translation, editing, and administrative offices. The construction of the building began in August 2012, and the first phase has already been completed. So far, the cost of the building has been paid for by the General Conference, along with around 1,500 brethren, sisters, and friends from all over Brazil, who are contributing monthly with their offerings and donations for the completion of this great project.

The second stage—the finishing touch—has now started, but this part will require a greater amount of funds since it involves the most expensive phase of the plan. Besides the completion of the building, the culmination of this project will require the purchase of all the necessary technical equipment to begin the operation of the studio.

We must emphasize that the goal of this project is to bring the knowledge of the present truth to places the Reform message has not yet reached, and to proclaim the everlasting gospel through the most powerful and advanced means of communication available today. Therefore, the opportunity has come for you to share in this great work by contributing generously toward this worldwide evangelistic project. The result of this undertaking will be seen only in time and in eternity. . . . Our appeal is that you kindly separate a portion of the resources with which God has blessed you—and donate generously for the completion of this monumental project! Thanking you in advance,

—The General Conference Media Department



# A Prophet of Peace

“I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me” (2 Kings 2:9).

“When the Lord in His providence sees fit to remove from His work those to whom He has given wisdom, He helps and strengthens their successors, if they will look to Him for aid and will walk in His ways.”—*Conflict and Courage*, p. 223.

**Suggested Reading:** *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 235–264.

## Sunday

August 3

### 1. ELISHA'S PROPHETIC MINISTRY

a. What happened to Elijah after his reformatory work in Judah and Israel? 2 Kings 2:11, 12.

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b. In summary, how did Elisha benefit from the time spent with Elijah? 2 Kings 2:2. What was the basic difference between the work assigned them? 1 Kings 17:1; 2 Kings 2:20–22.

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“As Elijah’s successor, Elisha, by careful, patient instruction, must endeavor to guide Israel in safe paths. His association with Elijah, the greatest prophet since the days of Moses, prepared him for the work that he was soon to take up alone.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 224.

“The work of Elisha as a prophet was in some respects very different from that of Elijah. To Elijah had been committed messages of condemnation and judgment; his was the voice of fearless reproof, calling king and people to turn from their evil ways. Elisha’s was a more peaceful mission; his it was to build up and strengthen the work that Elijah had begun; to teach the people the way of the Lord. Inspiration pictures him as coming into personal touch with the people, surrounded by the sons of the prophets, bringing by his miracles and his ministry healing and rejoicing.”—*Ibid.*, p. 235.

## 2. EVEN THE SYRIANS KNEW!

- a. When the king of Syria suspected treason in his government, how did he try to figure out where it was coming from? 2 Kings 6:8–11. Who was the actual source of the information that was given to the king of Israel? Verse 12.
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- b. What order did the Syrian king issue to solve the difficulty that was bothering him? When the spy (or spies) found out the whereabouts of the prophet, what did the king do? Verses 13, 14.
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“In continued wars with the Syrians, Jehoahaz, Jehu’s successor, had lost some of the cities lying east of the Jordan. For a time it had seemed as if the Syrians might gain control of the entire kingdom.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 254.

“On one occasion, during a Syrian invasion, the king of Syria sought to destroy Elisha because of his activity in apprising the king of Israel of the plans of the enemy. The Syrian king had taken counsel with his servants, saying, ‘In such and such a place shall be my camp’ (2 Kings 6:8). This plan was revealed by the Lord to Elisha.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 255, 256.

- c. What promise should the servants of God claim when they are in a very serious difficulty or when their life is threatened? Psalm 34:7.
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“When the people of God are brought into strait places, and apparently there is no escape for them, the Lord alone must be their dependence.”—*Ibid.*, p. 257.

“Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us of which we know nothing. Those who accept the one principle of making the service of God supreme, will find perplexities vanish, and a plain path before their feet. . . .

“In the darkest days, when appearances seem most forbidding, have faith in God.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 481, 482.

### 3. STRUCK WITH BLINDNESS

- a. **What message did Elisha's terrified servant bring to his master? 2 Kings 6:15. What answer did Elisha give his servant to calm him down? Verse 16.**
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“Between the servant of God and the hosts of armed foemen was an encircling band of heavenly angels. They had come down in mighty power, not to destroy, not to exact homage, but to encamp round about and minister to the Lord's weak and helpless ones.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 257.

- b. **What incontrovertible truth does Elisha's answer teach? Romans 8:31.**
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“In comparison with the millions of the world, God's people will be, as they have ever been, a little flock; but if they stand for the truth as revealed in His word, God will be their refuge. They stand under the broad shield of Omnipotence. God is always a majority.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 590.

- c. **What should we thoughtfully ponder from the way Elisha treated the Syrian army? 2 Kings 6:17–20.**
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“A single unrighteous act of will, or bitterness, envy, jealousy, or evil surmising will quench the Spirit of God and banish from your heart true happiness. . . .

“Even hatred to an evil worker will place you in a position where your judgment will be warped and you will not be a doer of the work of Christ to render good for evil. While you despise the sin, you should love the souls of those for whom Christ has paid the price of His own blood.

“The desire for revenge, or any emotion but that of tender, pitying love as Jesus exercises toward us, fallen sinful humanity, injures the soul and is registered against us in heaven.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 21, pp. 164, 165.

**4. WISE PEOPLE TRY TO MAKE PEACE; FOOLS MAKE WAR**

- a. What should we learn from the advice Elisha gave the king of Israel? 2 Kings 6:21–23. What is the best way to disarm an enemy? Romans 12:20.
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“We do not cultivate a disposition to kindness; we want everything to come in an easy way to ourselves. But the question of greatest importance to each one of us should be not how we can carry our own plans against the plans of others, but how we can have the power to live for Christ every day. Christ came to earth and gave His life that we might have eternal salvation. He wants to encircle each of us with the atmosphere of heaven, that we may give to the world an example that will honor the religion of Christ.”—*Loma Linda Messages*, p. 602.

- b. What happened to the Israelites after they turned further from the Lord? How did the judgments predicted in Deuteronomy 5:9 fall upon them in the time of the kings of Syria? 2 Kings 6:24, 25.
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- c. What happened when the famine in Samaria drove the king and the people to desperate measures? 2 Kings 7:1–9, 16, 20.
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“It was because of His love for erring Israel that God permitted the Syrians to scourge them. It was because of His compassion for those whose moral power was weak that He raised up Jehu to slay wicked Jezebel and all the house of Ahab. Once more, through a merciful providence, the priests of Baal and of Ashtoreth were set aside and their heathen altars thrown down. God in His wisdom foresaw that if temptation were removed, some would forsake heathenism and turn their faces heavenward, and this is why He permitted calamity after calamity to befall them. His judgments were tempered with mercy; and when His purpose was accomplished, He turned the tide in favor of those who had learned to inquire after Him.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 254, 255.

## 5. AN IMPORTANT LESSON FOR US

- a. What lesson did Elisha, during his last days, try to teach the king of Israel? 2 Kings 13:14–17.
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- b. How did the prophet expect the young king to show that he had understood the lesson? Verses 18, 19.
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“The lesson is for all in positions of trust. When God opens the way for the accomplishment of a certain work and gives assurance of success, the chosen instrumentality must do all in his power to bring about the promised result. In proportion to the enthusiasm and perseverance with which the work is carried forward will be the success given. God can work miracles for His people only as they act their part with untiring energy. He calls for men of devotion to His work, men of moral courage, with ardent love for souls, and with a zeal that never flags. Such workers will find no task too arduous, no prospect too hopeless; they will labor on, undaunted, until apparent defeat is turned into glorious victory. Not even prison walls nor the martyr's stake beyond will cause them to swerve from their purpose of laboring together with God for the upbuilding of His kingdom.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 263.

## PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Is God calling me to be more of an Elijah-type witness for Him right now or an Elisha-type?
2. Explain how God is willing to give divine insight to us today, just as He did in the days of Elisha.
3. Contrary to the king's own hostile intention, what advice did Elisha give him—and why?
4. Name some examples by which we—in our circumstances today—can reflect Elisha's approach toward the Syrian army.
5. Explain the formula for spiritual success as it was taught to Joash.

# Jonah

“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me” (Jonah 1:2).

“The responsibility placed upon Jonah, in the charge given him to warn the inhabitants of Nineveh, was indeed great; yet he who had bidden him go was well able to sustain His servant and give him success.”—*The Review and Herald*, December 4, 1913.

**Suggested Reading:** *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 265–278.

## Sunday

August 10

### 1. “NINEVEH, THAT GREAT CITY”

- a. What was the moral condition of Nineveh at the time Jonah was sent there? Nahum 3:1.

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“In the time of its temporal prosperity Nineveh was a center of crime and wickedness. . . .

“Yet Nineveh, wicked though it had become, was not wholly given over to evil. He who ‘beholdeth all the sons of men’ (Psalm 33:13) and ‘seeth every precious thing’ (Job 28:10) perceived in that city many who were reaching out after something better and higher, and who, if granted opportunity to learn of the living God, would put away their evil deeds and worship Him.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 265, 266.

- b. Compare the cities of Sodom and Nineveh, considering the number of souls within the reach of the Holy Spirit? Genesis 18:32; Jonah 4:11. What warning echoes down to us today?

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“The sins of Sodom are repeated in our day, and the earth is destroyed and corrupted under the inhabitants thereof; but the worst feature of the iniquity of this day is a form of godliness without the power thereof. Those who profess to have great light are found among the careless and indifferent, and the cause of Christ is wounded in the house of its professed friends. Let those who would be saved, arouse from their lethargy, and give the trumpet a certain sound; for the end of all things is at hand.”—*The Signs of the Times*, October 16, 1893.

## 2. JONAH'S FAITH TESTED

- a. **Who was commissioned to call the Ninevites to repentance, and how did the devil tempt him to doubt, hesitate, and finally try to reject God's call? Jonah 1:2, 3.**
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"As the prophet thought of the difficulties and seeming impossibilities of this commission, he was tempted to question the wisdom of the call. From a human viewpoint it seemed as if nothing could be gained by proclaiming such a message in that proud city. He forgot for the moment that the God whom he served was all-wise and all-powerful. While he hesitated, still doubting, Satan overwhelmed him with discouragement. The prophet was seized with a great dread, and he 'rose up to flee unto Tarshish'. . . .

"In the charge given him, Jonah had been entrusted with a heavy responsibility; yet He who had bidden him go was able to sustain His servant and grant him success. Had the prophet obeyed unquestioningly, he would have been spared many bitter experiences, and would have been blessed abundantly."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 266.

- b. **What happened while Jonah was sleeping under the impression that he was safely fleeing from his God-given responsibility? Jonah 1:4, 5.**
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"If, when the call first came to him, Jonah had stopped to consider calmly, he might have known how foolish would be any effort on his part to escape the responsibility placed upon him. But not for long was he permitted to go on undisturbed in his mad flight."—*Ibid.*, p. 267.

- c. **What should all learn from the captain's rebuke with which he awakened the sleeping prophet? Jonah 1:6. What did the mariners do as a last resort to still the storm? Verse 7.**
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"The prayers of the man who had turned aside from the path of duty brought no help."—*Ibid.*

**3. EVANGELISM THROUGH PROVIDENTIAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

- a. When the ship's crew interrogated Jonah, how did the prophet identify himself? Jonah 1:8, 9.
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- b. How did those mariners finally become acquainted with the true God? Jonah 1:10–16.
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- c. What opportunities and privileges for witnessing do we often forfeit, and why? 1 Peter 3:15.
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“If the needs of the Lord’s work were set forth in a proper light before those who have means and influence, these men might do much to advance the cause of present truth. God’s people have lost many privileges of which they could have taken advantage, had they not chosen to stand independent of the world.

“In the providence of God, we are daily brought into connection with the unconverted. By His own right hand God is preparing the way before us, in order that His work may progress rapidly. As collaborators with Him, we have a sacred work to do. We are to have travail of soul for those who are in high places; we are to extend to them the gracious invitation to come to the marriage feast.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 186.

“Many flatter themselves that they could do great things if they only had the opportunity, but something has always prevented them; Providence has hedged their way in so that they could not do what they desired to do. We expect no great opportunity will meet us on the road, but by prompt and vigorous action we must seize the opportunities, make opportunities and master difficulties.

“You are in need of vital energy from heaven. We must in our work not only strike the iron when it is hot but make the iron hot by striking. Slow, easy, indolent movements will do nothing for us in this work. We must be instant in season, out of season. These are critical times for work. By hesitation and delay we lose many good opportunities. . . .

“That which stands most in the way of your performing duty is irresolution, weakness of purpose, indecision.”—*Evangelism*, p. 647.

**4. A LESSON FOR GOD’S MESSENGERS**

- a. **After Jonah had been vomited upon the dry land, what command did he receive from the Lord the second time? Jonah 3:1, 2.**
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- b. **What did he do as soon as he entered the doomed city? Jonah 3:3, 4. In what way did God demonstrate His mercy towards Nineveh, and why? Verses 5–10.**
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“As Jonah entered the city, he began at once to ‘cry against’ it the message, ‘Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown’ (Jonah 3:4). From street to street he went, sounding the note of warning. . . .

“As king and nobles, with the common people, the high and the low, ‘repented at the preaching of Jonas’ (Matthew 12:41) and united in crying to the God of heaven, His mercy was granted them. . . . Their doom was averted, the God of Israel was exalted and honored throughout the heathen world, and His law was revered. Not until many years later was Nineveh to fall a prey to the surrounding nations through forgetfulness of God and through boastful pride.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 270, 271.

- c. **What comparison did Jesus make between the repentant heathen and the Jews who refused to repent? Matthew 12:41.**
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“God allows men a period of probation; but there is a point beyond which divine patience is exhausted, and the judgments of God are sure to follow. The Lord bears long with men, and with cities, mercifully giving warnings to save them from divine wrath; but a time will come when pleadings for mercy will no longer be heard, and the rebellious element that continues to reject the light of truth will be blotted out, in mercy to themselves and to those who would otherwise be influenced by their example.”—*Ibid.*, p. 276.

“We shall not be held accountable for the light that has not reached our perception, but for that which we have resisted and refused.”—*The Review and Herald*, April 25, 1893.

## 5. JONAH IS BROUGHT TO HIS SENSES

- a. Instead of rejoicing over the repentance of Nineveh, how did Jonah complain to the Lord, and what excuse did Jonah make for his doubts and disobedience? Jonah 4:1–3.
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- b. What should we learn from the way God sought to bring Jonah to his senses? Jonah 4:5–11.
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“Confused, humiliated, and unable to understand God’s purpose in sparing Nineveh, Jonah nevertheless had fulfilled the commission given him to warn that great city; and though the event predicted did not come to pass, yet the message of warning was nonetheless from God. And it accomplished the purpose God designed it should. The glory of His grace was revealed among the heathen.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 272, 273.

“Our God is a God of mercy. With long-sufferance and tender compassion He deals with the transgressors of His law. And yet, in this our day, when men and women have so many opportunities for becoming familiar with the divine law as revealed in Holy Writ, the great Ruler of the universe cannot behold with any satisfaction the wicked cities, where reign violence and crime.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 275, 276.

“Every angel in glory is interested in the work being done for the salvation of souls. We are not awake as we should be.”—*Evangelism*, p. 282.

## PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What was the main difference between Sodom and Nineveh?
2. Name some ways by which we may be in danger of imitating Jonah’s hesitation, doubt, and attempt to escape God’s voice.
3. How might God surprise us as He did Jonah after fulfilling his duty to warn of impending judgment?
4. How is our attitude too often like Jonah’s after the victory?
5. What kind of illustrations to awaken us does God give us today?

# Extraordinary Ways to Reach the Worldly-Minded

“I will set my glory among the heathen” (Ezekiel 39:21).

“Even among the heathen there were men through whom Christ was working to uplift the people from their sin and degradation.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 35.

**Suggested Reading:** *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 244–253.

*Sunday*

August 17

## 1. HOME TRAINING

- a. **What are some names mentioned in the Bible in connection with the right kind of home training?** 1 Samuel 1:20; 2 Kings 5:2; Ruth 4:22; Daniel 1:6.
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“God had commanded the Hebrews to teach their children His requirements and to make them acquainted with all His dealings with their fathers. This was one of the special duties of every parent—one that was not to be delegated to another. In the place of stranger lips the loving hearts of the father and mother were to give instruction to their children. Thoughts of God were to be associated with all the events of daily life.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 592.

- b. **What is the first duty of Christian parents?** Proverbs 22:6.
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“Let us teach [our children] the claims which God has upon them, that it is their duty to carry religion into every department of life, that they should love God supremely, and love their neighbor, not neglecting the little courtesies of life which are essential to happiness.”—*The Health Reformer*, May 1, 1877.

**2. A LITTLE MAID IN CAPTIVITY**

- a. **How did a little girl, who had been properly educated by her parents, serve as one of God’s witnesses among the heathen? 2 Kings 5:2, 3.**
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“The parents of that Hebrew maid, as they taught her of God, did not know the destiny that would be hers. But they were faithful to their trust; and in the home of the captain of the Syrian host, their child bore witness to the God whom she had learned to honor.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 246.

- b. **Name the most precious gift with which we can endow our children. Deuteronomy 4:10.**
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“There is no higher trust than that committed to fathers and mothers in the care and training of their children. Parents have to do with the very foundations of habit and character. By their example and teaching the future of their children is largely decided. . . . Parents who impart to the child such a gift have endowed him with a treasure more precious than the wealth of all the ages, a treasure as enduring as eternity.

“We know not in what line our children may be called to serve. They may spend their lives within the circle of the home; they may engage in life’s common vocations, or go as teachers of the gospel to heathen lands; but all are alike called to be missionaries for God, ministers of mercy to the world. They are to obtain an education that will help them to stand by the side of Christ in unselfish service.”—*Ibid.*, p. 245.

- c. **What must we sometimes realize when we think of the unusual things that happen to us? Jeremiah 10:23; Proverbs 16:9.**
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“A slave, far from her home, this little maid was nevertheless one of God’s witnesses, unconsciously fulfilling the purpose for which God had chosen Israel as His people.”—*Ibid.*, p. 244.

**3. NAAMAN**

- a. **How did Jehoram, the king of Israel, respond when he read a letter from the king of Syria, and how did Elisha seek to encourage him? 2 Kings 5:7, 8.**
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- b. **When Naaman came to the door of Elisha's residence, how was his faith tested? 2 Kings 5:9–12. Describe the miracle that served to both heal Naaman and convert him to worship the God of Israel. Verses 13, 14.**
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“Naaman had expected to see some wonderful manifestation of power from heaven. ‘I thought,’ he said, ‘he will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.’ When told to wash in the Jordan, his pride was touched, and in mortification and disappointment he exclaimed, ‘Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean?’ So he turned and went away in a rage’ (2 Kings 5:11, 12).

“The proud spirit of Naaman rebelled against following the course outlined by Elisha. The rivers mentioned by the Syrian captain were beautified by surrounding groves, and many flocked to the banks of these pleasant streams to worship their idol gods. It would have cost Naaman no great humiliation of soul to descend into one of those streams. But it was only through following the specific directions of the prophet that he could find healing. Willing obedience alone would bring the desired result.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 248, 249.

- c. **How did Naaman confess his conversion to the true God? 2 Kings 5:15, 16, 19. Many centuries later, in what way did Jesus commend the faith of Naaman? Luke 4:27.**
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“Centuries after Naaman returned to his Syrian home, healed in body and converted in spirit, his wonderful faith was referred to and commended by the Saviour as an lesson for all who claim to serve God.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 252, 253.

**4. GEHAZI**

- a. **How was Gehazi used by the devil to put a stumbling block before those whom the Holy Spirit was working to save? 2 Kings 5:20–24.**
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“Gehazi, Elisha’s servant, had had opportunity during the years to develop the spirit of self-denial characterizing his master’s lifework. It had been his privilege to become a noble standard-bearer in the army of the Lord. The best gifts of Heaven had long been within his reach; yet, turning from these, he had coveted instead the base alloy of worldly wealth. And now the hidden longings of his avaricious spirit led him to yield to an overmastering temptation.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 250.

“[Gehazi] dwelt in the household of the holy prophet Elisha, saw his godly life, heard his fervent prayers, and his inculcation of correct principles. Yet he was not made better.”—*The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, p. 1529.

- b. **What is required of every Christian, especially of those called to work as teachers, church officers, or evangelists? Hebrews 12:13.**
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“Wrongs perpetrated by believers in the truth bring great weakness upon the church. They are stumbling blocks in the way of sinners and prevent them from coming to the light.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 252

“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. No one should be accepted as a laborer in the cause of God, until he makes it manifest that he has a real, living experience in the things of God.”—*Gospel Workers*, pp. 437, 438.

- c. **On what does our spiritual security depend? 1 Corinthians 10:12; 2 Corinthians 13:5.**
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5. MEN CANNOT DECEIVE GOD

a. What happened to Gehazi as soon as he uttered a second falsehood? 2 Kings 5:25–27.

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b. What does the Bible say about those who speak lies? Proverbs 19:5; Colossians 3:25; Revelation 22:15.

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“Truth is of God; deception in all its myriad forms is of Satan, and whoever in any way departs from the straight line of truth is betraying himself into the power of the wicked one. Those who have learned of Christ will ‘have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness’ (Ephesians 5:11). In speech, as in life, they will be simple, straightforward, and true, for they are preparing for the fellowship of those holy ones in whose mouth is found no guile. See Revelation 14:5.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 252.

“False speaking in any matter, every attempt or purpose to deceive our neighbor, is here included [in the ninth commandment]. An intention to deceive is what constitutes falsehood. By a glance of the eye, a motion of the hand, an expression of the countenance, a falsehood may be told as effectually as by words. All intentional overstatement, every hint or insinuation calculated to convey an erroneous or exaggerated impression, even the statement of facts in such a manner as to mislead, is falsehood. This precept forbids every effort to injure our neighbor’s reputation by misrepresentation or evil surmising, by slander or tale bearing. Even the intentional suppression of truth, by which injury may result to others, is a violation of the ninth commandment.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 309.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How can we prepare our children to be like the little Israelite maid?
2. What is the calling of our youth—in whatever area they serve?
3. How can people be touched today, just as Naaman was?
4. What spirit of Gehazi can spoil our best evangelistic efforts?
5. What is required of all Christians—especially when witnessing?

# Four Successful Missionaries

“Now from among those [captives] of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah” (Daniel 1:6, NKJV).

“Among the children of Israel who were carried captive to Babylon at the beginning of the seventy years’ captivity were Christian patriots.”—*A Call to Stand Apart*, p. 52.

**Suggested Reading:** *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 479–490, 499–502, 510–513, 539–548.

## Sunday

August 24

### 1. IN THE COURT OF BABYLON

- a. What providential decision put King Nebuchadnezzar in contact with four Hebrew captives and, later, with their God? Daniel 1:3–5.

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- b. What were the names of the young men chosen for that purpose? Daniel 1:6. After being approved to take part in a three-year training course, how and why were their names changed? Verse 7.

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“The [Babylonish] king did not compel the Hebrew youth to renounce their faith in favor of idolatry, but he hoped to bring this about gradually. By giving them names significant of idolatry, by bringing them daily into close association with idolatrous customs, and under the influence of the seductive rites of heathen worship, he hoped to induce them to renounce the religion of their nation and to unite with the worship of the Babylonians.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 481.

“When the enemy thrusts into our souls his subtle doubts and temptations, we are to close the door quickly and dispel the influence of his suggestion.”—*The Review and Herald*, August 7, 1888.

**2. FAITHFULNESS ATTENDED WITH GOD'S BLESSINGS**

- a. **How did God help those young Hebrews to be a shining light among the heathen during their difficult circumstances? Daniel 1:17.**
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“In the land of their captivity these [children of Israel] were to carry out God’s purpose by giving to heathen nations the blessings that come through a knowledge of Jehovah. They were to be His representatives.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 479.

- b. **What was their decision in view of the temptation surrounding them? James 1:12.**
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“[Daniel 1:8 quoted.] In reaching this decision, the Hebrew youth did not act presumptuously but in firm reliance upon God. They did not choose to be singular, but they would be so rather than dishonor God. Should they compromise with wrong in this instance by yielding to the pressure of circumstances, their departure from principle would weaken their sense of right and their abhorrence of wrong. The first wrong step would lead to others, until, their connection with Heaven severed, they would be swept away by temptation.”—*Ibid.*, p. 483.

- c. **How did God bless their faithful efforts? Daniel 1:19.**
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“For three years the Hebrew youth studied to acquire ‘the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.’ During this time they held fast their allegiance to God and depended constantly upon His power. With their habits of self-denial they united earnestness of purpose, diligence, and steadfastness. It was not pride or ambition that had brought them into the king’s court, into companionship with those who neither knew nor feared God; they were captives in a strange land, placed there by Infinite Wisdom. Separated from home influences and sacred associations, they sought to acquit themselves creditably, for the honor of their down-trodden people, and for the glory of Him whose servants they were.”—*Ibid.*, p. 484.

**3. DIVINE POWER COMBINED WITH HUMAN EFFORT**

- a. **How and why did the Hebrew youth excel? Daniel 1:20.**
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“At the court of Babylon were gathered representatives from all lands, men of the highest talent, men the most richly endowed with natural gifts, and possessed of the broadest culture that the world could bestow; yet among them all, the Hebrew youth were without a peer. In physical strength and beauty, in mental vigor and literary attainment, they stood unrivaled. The erect form, the firm, elastic step, the fair countenance, the undimmed senses, the untainted breath—all were so many certificates of good habits, insignia of the nobility with which nature honors those who are obedient to her laws.

“In acquiring the wisdom of the Babylonians, Daniel and his companions were far more successful than their fellow students; but their learning did not come by chance. They obtained their knowledge by the faithful use of their powers, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 485, 486.

- b. **What did they realize—and what should be likewise considered by all who are called to represent true religion? 2 Timothy 2:15.**
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“[Daniel and his companions] realized that in order to stand as representatives of true religion amid the false religions of heathenism they must have clearness of intellect and must perfect a Christian character.”—*Ibid.*, p. 486.

- c. **What method of successful evangelism did Jesus teach—especially since the world around us looks for something holier in us than in themselves? Matthew 5:13–16.**
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“While God was working in Daniel and his companions ‘to will and to do of His good pleasure,’ they were working out their own salvation’ (Philippians 2:13).”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 486.

## 4. NEBUCHADNEZZAR GIVES GLORY TO GOD

- a. Soon after Daniel and his companions entered the service of the Babylonish king, what event offered Daniel an opportunity to testify in behalf of God? Daniel 2:1, 2.
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- b. In response to the revelation of the king's dream through Daniel, how did Nebuchadnezzar acknowledge the God of heaven? Verse 47. What declaration did Nebuchadnezzar later make in response to the faithful witness that Daniel's companions gave on the plain of Dura? Daniel 3:27–29.
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“The three Hebrews declared to the whole nation of Babylon their faith in Him whom they worshiped. They relied on God. In the hour of their trial they remembered the promise, ‘When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee’ (Isaiah 43:2). And in a marvelous manner their faith in the living Word had been honored in the sight of all. The tidings of their wonderful deliverance were carried to many countries by the representatives of the different nations that had been invited by Nebuchadnezzar to the dedication.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 512.

- c. In His mercy and patience with Nebuchadnezzar, how did God warn the monarch? Daniel 4:5, 10–16, 19–22. After explaining the king's second dream, what appeal did Daniel make to him? Verse 27. What humbling experience led to Nebuchadnezzar's full conversion? Verses 30–34, 37.
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“Under the rebuke of God the proud heart of Nebuchadnezzar was humbled.”—*The Review and Herald*, September 8, 1896.

“The once proud monarch had become a humble child of God; the tyrannical, overbearing ruler, a wise and compassionate king. . . . Under the rebuke of Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords, Nebuchadnezzar had learned at last the lesson which all rulers need to learn—that true greatness consists in true goodness.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 521.

## 5. THE LIGHT OF HEAVEN SHINES UPON KING DARIUS

a. How was the faith of Daniel tested when he was serving under Darius, whom he had already influenced for the truth? Explain the snare prepared for him. Daniel 6:1, 2, 5–9.

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b. How did Daniel respond to the decree? Daniel 6:10–13.

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c. How did King Darius feel when he realized he had been deceived by the very men who pretended to be concerned for the safety of his throne? Daniel 6:14, 18–23. How did the heathen king exalt the God of Daniel as the only true God? Verses 25, 26.

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“From the story of Daniel’s deliverance we may learn that in seasons of trial and gloom God’s children should be just what they were when their prospects were bright with hope and their surroundings all that they could desire. Daniel in the lions’ den was the same Daniel who stood before the king as chief among the ministers of state and as a prophet of the Most High. A man whose heart is stayed upon God will be the same in the hour of his greatest trial as he is in prosperity, when the light and favor of God and of man beam upon him. . . .

“Heaven is very near those who suffer for righteousness’ sake.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 545.

## PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Explain how subtle snares are placed before us and our youth today, just as they were in the case of the three Hebrews in Babylon.
2. What was the secret of the young men’s success?
3. When the unholy multitudes meet us, for what are many hoping?
4. What lesson taught to Nebuchadnezzar must be enshrined in every one of us—whether or not we are prominent people?
5. Give evidence of the Holy Spirit’s working in the heart of Darius.

## First Sabbath Offering for the headquarters in Namibia

Dear Brethren and Sisters around the world: Christian greetings with 2 Corinthians 9:6–8. Remember that “He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”

Namibia is situated in southern Africa, bordering with Angola and Zambia to the north, Botswana to the east, and South Africa to the south and east, and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. A large number of people are Christians, mainly Lutherans. Catholics, Methodists, Anglicans, Dutch Reform, Mormons, and Adventists have a smaller number of followers. This country enjoys complete religious liberty.

The Reform Movement began its work in Namibia in 1992 when a group of Angolan brethren running away from the war settled in Osire. These refugee believers with their missionary zeal began to contact not only persons that were refugees themselves but also were looking for opportunities to evangelize the natives of Namibia. It was hard work to find souls that were sensitive to the message, but after years the first fruits began to show with a baptism of more than 10 souls.

The South Angolan Mission gave excellent support to the new souls by sending them *Sabbath Bible Lessons* and pastors to hold the sacred rites of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Currently the Mission in Namibia has 20 baptized members and other candidates that are being prepared for the next baptism. The work is growing, but there is not an appropriate place that can be used as the headquarters of the work.

We appeal to all the believers around the world to assist in this project in Windhoek, the capital of Namibia, with their prayers and financial resources. May the Lord bless all those that directly or indirectly will help with this project.



*Regional Secretary for Africa*

# A Great Crisis in Israel

“Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14).

“In the providence of God, Esther, a Jewess who feared the Most High, had been made queen of the Medo-Persian kingdom.”—*Conflict and Courage*, p. 244.

**Suggested Reading:** *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 598–606.

*Sunday*

*August 31*

## 1. A WICKED DECREE CAUSES A GREAT CRISIS

a. What were the names of the Medo-Persian kings that signed the first two decrees (in B.C. 536 and 528 respectively) allowing the Jews to return to their homeland? Ezra 1:1–3; 6:1, 2, 6–8.

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b. What crisis did the children of Israel meet during the reign of Ahasuerus in B.C. 510? Esther 3:8–13. What anguish did the decree cause among the Jews? Esther 4:3.

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c. What message had the Lord sent to them before the crisis? Zechariah 2:6–9.

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“The Lord foresaw the troublous times that were to follow during the reign of Xerxes—the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther—and He not only wrought a change of feeling in the hearts of men in authority but also inspired Zechariah to plead with the exiles to return. . . .

“It was still the Lord's purpose, as it had been from the beginning, that His people should be a praise in the earth, to the glory of His name.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 598, 599.

## 2. GOD'S PROVIDENCE DEFEATS THE PLAN OF SATAN

- a. When faced with a crisis, what should God's people always remember? Romans 8:31. How did the providence of God work to defeat the plan of the enemy? Esther 2:15, 16.
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"Satan himself, the hidden instigator of the scheme, was trying to rid the earth of those who preserved the knowledge of the true God. . . . But the plots of the enemy were defeated by a Power that reigns among the children of men."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 601.

- b. Did the king know that his decree would include his own Jewish wife in the prospective massacre? Why did Mordecai find it providential that Esther was now queen? Esther 4:13, 14.
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"Mordecai was a near relative of [Esther's]. In their extremity they decided to appeal to Xerxes in behalf of their people. Esther was to venture into his presence as an intercessor."—*Ibid.*

- c. What instruction did Queen Esther send to Mordecai? What shows that she was ready to sacrifice her life in behalf of her people? Esther 4:16.
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"The crisis that Esther faced demanded quick, earnest action; but both she and Mordecai realized that unless God should work mightily in their behalf, their own efforts would be unavailing. So Esther took time for communion with God, the source of her strength." —*Ibid.*

"The trying experiences that came to God's people in the days of Esther were not peculiar to that age alone. . . .

"The same spirit that in ages past led men to persecute the true church, will in the future lead to the pursuance of a similar course toward those who maintain their loyalty to God. Even now preparations are being made for this last great conflict."—*Ibid.*, p. 605.

**3. WHAT PRAYING AND FASTING CAN DO**

- a. After Esther had spent three days praying and fasting, what favorable reaction did she receive when she appeared before her husband? Esther 5:1–3.
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“At a time when it seemed that no power could save them, Esther and the women associated with her, by fasting and prayer and prompt action, met the issue.”—*Conflict and Courage*, p. 245.

- b. What invitation did Esther extend to her husband and Haman, and what was Haman’s reaction upon its fulfillment? Esther 5:4, 5, 12, 13. What did Haman’s wife suggest to him when she saw his hatred of Mordecai? Verse 14.
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- c. How was God’s providence at work the night before the second banquet? Esther 6:1–3. What did the king tell Haman to do just as he arrived to ask permission to kill Mordecai? Verses 4–10.
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- d. How did Haman feel when he hurried home to tell what had just happened? Esther 6:11, 12. What warning did Zeresh give her husband? Verse 13.
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“God’s love for us is proved daily; yet we are thoughtless of His favors and indifferent to His entreaties. He seeks to impress us with His Spirit of tenderness, His love and forbearance; but we scarcely recognize the marks of His kindness and have little sense of the lesson of love He desires us to learn. Some, like Haman, forget all God’s favors, because Mordecai is before them and is not disgraced; because their hearts are filled with enmity and hatred rather than love, the spirit of our dear Redeemer, who gave His precious life for His enemies. We profess to have the same Father, to be bound for the same immortal home, to enjoy the same solemn faith, and to believe the same testing message; and yet many are at strife with one another like quarrelsome children.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 222.

**4. GOD CAN REVERSE DIFFICULT SITUATIONS**

- a. **What petition did Esther make to King Ahasuerus at the second banquet? Esther 7:3, 4. Astonished by the words of Esther, what did the king ask her? Verses 5, 6.**
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- b. **What did the chamberlains suggest to the king when they saw his anger against Haman? Esther 7:7, 10. What should wicked people bear in mind when they are intent on hurting others? Proverbs 26:27.**
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“Mordecai was given the position of honor formerly occupied by Haman. He ‘was next unto King Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren’ (Esther 10:3); and he sought to promote the welfare of Israel. Thus did God bring His chosen people once more into favor at the Medo-Persian court, making possible the carrying out of His purpose to restore them to their own land. But it was not until several years later, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes I, the successor of Xerxes the Great, that any considerable number returned to Jerusalem, under Ezra.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 602–605.

- c. **What counter decree was ordered by Ahasuerus? Esther 8:5, 13. How were the Jews, who had been seeking the Lord’s help through prayer and fasting, delivered? Esther 9:1, 2, 16, 17.**
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“God wrought marvelously for His penitent people; and a counter decree issued by the king, allowing them to fight for their lives, was rapidly communicated to every part of the realm by mounted couriers, who were ‘hastened and pressed on by the king’s commandment’ (Esther 8:14).”—*Ibid.*, p. 602.

“For certain things, fasting and prayer are recommended and appropriate. In the hand of God they are a means of cleansing the heart and promoting a receptive frame of mind. We obtain answers to our prayers because we humble our souls before God.”—*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, pp. 187, 188.

## 5. HOW HISTORY WILL BE REPEATED

- a. What prophetic words will the commandment-keeping people of God see fulfilled in the near future? Matthew 24:9; Revelation 12:17.

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“The same spirit that in ages past led men to persecute the true church, will in the future lead to the pursuance of a similar course toward those who maintain their loyalty to God. Even now preparations are being made for this last great conflict.

“The decree that will finally go forth against the remnant people of God will be very similar to that issued by Ahasuerus against the Jews. Today the enemies of the true church see in the little company keeping the Sabbath commandment, a Mordecai at the gate. . . .

“Satan will arouse indignation against the minority who refuse to accept popular customs and traditions. Men of position and reputation will join with the lawless and the vile to take counsel against the people of God. Wealth, genius, education, will combine to cover them with contempt. Persecuting rulers, ministers, and church members will conspire against them. With voice and pen, by boasts, threats, and ridicule, they will seek to overthrow their faith. By false representations and angry appeals, men will stir up the passions of the people. Not having a ‘Thus saith the Scriptures’ to bring against the advocates of the Bible Sabbath, they will resort to oppressive enactments to supply the lack. . . . On this battlefield will be fought the last great conflict in the controversy between truth and error.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 605, 606.

## PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How did God foretell the crisis during Esther’s reign faced by the Jews?
2. What was Esther’s first step in seeking to avert the catastrophe?
3. How did God change the plans of evil men and devils in Esther’s time? Will He do the same today?
4. How did God punish Haman for instigating the crisis?
5. How did God use this crisis, providentially, as a tool for evangelism—and explain the way history will victoriously repeat itself.

# Ezra, the Skilled Scribe

“Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments” (Ezra 7:10).

“The experience of Ezra . . . attracted the favorable notice of King Artaxerxes, with whom Ezra freely conversed regarding the power of the God of heaven, and His purpose in restoring His people to Jerusalem.”—*The Review and Herald*, January 30, 1908.

**Suggested Reading:** *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 607–624.

*Sunday*

September 7

## 1. EZRA AND ARTAXERXES

- a. What significance does the name of Artaxerxes Longimanus, king of Medo-Persia, hold in the history of the people of God? Ezra 7:8, 10–14. What year was Artaxerxes’ decree issued?

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“It was during [Artaxerxes’] reign that Ezra and Nehemiah lived and labored. He is the one who in 457 B.C. issued the third and final decree for the restoration of Jerusalem.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 607.

- b. What position did Ezra hold in the court of Artaxerxes? How was he able to help God’s people who were still in captivity? Ezra 7:1, 6, 10, 21.

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“During his long rule [Artaxerxes] often showed favor to God’s people, and in his trusted and well-beloved Jewish friends, Ezra and Nehemiah, he recognized men of God’s appointment, raised up for a special work.

“The experience of Ezra while living among the Jews who remained in Babylon was so unusual that it attracted the favorable notice of King Artaxerxes, with whom he talked freely regarding the power of the God of heaven, and the divine purpose in restoring the Jews to Jerusalem.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 607, 608.

## 2. EZRA'S MAIN WORK

- a. What other important work did Ezra accomplish? Ezra 7:10.
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“The efforts of Ezra to revive an interest in the study of the Scriptures were given permanency by his painstaking, lifelong work of preserving and multiplying the Sacred Writings. He gathered all the copies of the law that he could find and had these transcribed and distributed. The pure word, thus multiplied and placed in the hands of many people, gave knowledge that was of inestimable value.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 609.

- b. What did his faith in God, his love for the people in Israel, and his friendly relationship with the king lead him to do? Ezra 7:9.
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“Ezra’s faith that God would do a mighty work for His people, led him to tell Artaxerxes of his desire to return to Jerusalem to revive an interest in the study of God’s word and to assist his brethren in restoring the Holy City. As Ezra declared his perfect trust in the God of Israel as one abundantly able to protect and care for His people, the king was deeply impressed. He well understood that the Israelites were returning to Jerusalem that they might serve Jehovah; yet so great was the king’s confidence in the integrity of Ezra that he showed him marked favor, granting his request and bestowing on him rich gifts for the temple service. He made him a special representative of the Medo-Persian kingdom and conferred on him extensive powers for the carrying out of the purposes that were in his heart.

“The decree of Artaxerxes Longimanus for the restoring and building of Jerusalem, the third issued since the close of the seventy years’ captivity, is remarkable for its expressions regarding the God of heaven, for its recognition of the attainments of Ezra, and for the liberality of the grants made to the remnant people of God.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 609, 610.

- c. Summarize the decree of King Artaxerxes. Ezra 7:12–21.
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### 3. LESSONS TO GUARD AND PROTECT

- a. **What precaution was used in the transfer of the sacred treasure (gold and silver) from Babylon to Jerusalem? Ezra 8:24–29.**
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“The blessing of God, however, did not make unnecessary the exercise of prudence and forethought. As a special precaution in safeguarding the treasure, Ezra ‘separated twelve of the chief of the priests’—men whose faithfulness and fidelity had been proved—‘and weighed unto them the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, even the offering of the house of our God, which the king, and his counselors, and his lords, and all Israel there present, had offered’ (Ezra 8:24, 25). These men were solemnly charged to act as vigilant stewards over the treasure entrusted to their care. . . .

“In the appointment of faithful officers to act as treasurers of the Lord’s goods, Ezra recognized the necessity and value of order and organization in connection with the work of God”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 616, 617.

- b. **What lesson should we all—and especially church leaders and officers—learn from the care and prudence used in the transfer of the Lord’s treasury?**
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“The care exercised by Ezra in providing for the transportation and safety of the Lord’s treasure teaches a lesson worthy of thoughtful study. Only those whose trustworthiness had been proved were chosen, and they were instructed plainly regarding the responsibility resting on them.”—*Ibid.*, p. 617.

“Angels of God will preserve His people while they walk in the path of duty, but there is no assurance of such protection for those who deliberately venture upon Satan’s ground.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 198.

- c. **When they were ready for the long and dangerous journey, what did Ezra and his company do before departure? Ezra 8:21, 23.**
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“The spirit of true fasting and prayer is the spirit which yields mind, heart, and will to God.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 324.

#### 4. EZRA IS CONSISTENT WITH HIS PROFESSION

- a. Why did Ezra decide to require no group of soldiers for protection on the way from Babylon to Jerusalem? Ezra 8:22.

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“Ezra and his companions saw an opportunity to magnify the name of God before the heathen. Faith in the power of the living God would be strengthened if the Israelites themselves should now reveal implicit faith in their divine Leader. They therefore determined to put their trust wholly in Him. They would ask for no guard of soldiers. They would give the heathen no occasion to ascribe to the strength of man the glory that belongs to God alone. They could not afford to arouse in the minds of their heathen friends one doubt as to the sincerity of their dependence on God as His people.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 615, 616.

“All were preserved in safety. Their enemies were restrained from harming them.”—*Ibid.*, p. 617.

- b. What expressions of the king, in his letter to Ezra, show that Ezra had a beneficial religious influence on the king and his counselors? Ezra 7:11, 15, 21.

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- c. How did God use the dispersion of the Jews to bring the knowledge of the truth to the attention of the heathen? When did the Lord use a similar method? Acts 8:1.

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“From all lands the Jews of the dispersion gathered to Jerusalem. . . . As these returned to the places of their sojourn, they could spread throughout the world the tidings of the Messiah’s coming.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 32.

“Often the Israelites seemed unable or unwilling to understand God’s purpose for the heathen. . . . Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment of the temple courts, that every soul may have free access to God.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 367, 370.

5. A WONDERFUL REVIVAL AND REFORMATION

a. Upon his arrival in Jerusalem, what spiritual situation did Ezra find among those who had returned in advance? Ezra 9:1–3.

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b. What were the main points of the prayer Ezra offered at the opening of the assembly? Ezra 9:6–15.

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c. What did the priests and the people decide in that assembly? Ezra 10:3–5, 7–12.

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“Among those [first exiles] who had returned to Jerusalem in former years, there were many who had remained true to God as long as they lived; but a considerable number of the children and the children’s children lost sight of the sacredness of God’s law. Even some of the men entrusted with responsibilities were living in open sin. Their course was largely neutralizing the efforts made by others to advance the cause of God; for so long as flagrant violations of the law were allowed to go unrebuked, the blessing of Heaven could not rest upon the people.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 618, 619.

“[Ezra 9:1–10:5 quoted.] This was the beginning of a wonderful reformation. With infinite patience and tact, and with a careful consideration for the rights and welfare of every individual concerned, Ezra and his associates strove to lead the penitent of Israel into the right way.”—*Ibid.*, p. 622.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How was Ezra able to help God’s people under Artaxerxes?
2. What work did Ezra do to help preserve the Bible?
3. How did God help him through his friendship with the king?
4. What lessons of divine protection and personal accountability can we learn from the way the treasury was transported?
5. How was the dispersion of the Jews a tool in evangelism?

# Nehemiah, a Decided Reformer

“Remember me, O my God, for good” (Nehemiah 13:31).

“Through [Nehemiah] . . . God purposed to bring blessing to His people in the land of their fathers.”—*Conflict and Courage*, p. 262.

**Suggested Reading:** *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 628–660.

*Sunday*

*September 14*

## 1. GOD HELPS NEHEMIAH

- a. Who was Nehemiah? What news did he receive from Jerusalem that led him to mourn, fast, and pray? Nehemiah 1:2–5.

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“Nehemiah had often poured out his soul in behalf of his people. But now as he prayed a holy purpose formed in his mind. He resolved that if he could obtain the consent of the king, and the necessary aid in procuring implements and material, he would himself undertake the task of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and restoring Israel’s national strength. And he asked the Lord to grant him favor in the sight of the king, that this plan might be carried out.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 629, 630.

- b. How long had Nehemiah waited for an opportunity to talk to the king about his need? Relate their conversation. Nehemiah 2:2, 3.

- c. How did Nehemiah’s prayer bring the power of the Almighty to his aid? How did he pray? Nehemiah 2:4–6.

## 2. IMPORTANT LESSONS FOR US

- a. **What lesson should we learn from Nehemiah's prayer? Nehemiah 2:4 (last part).**
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"To pray as Nehemiah prayed in his hour of need is a resource at the command of the Christian under circumstances when other forms of prayer may be impossible. Toilers in the busy walks of life, crowded and almost overwhelmed with perplexity, can send up a petition to God for divine guidance. Travelers by sea and land, when threatened with some great danger, can thus commit themselves to Heaven's protection. In times of sudden difficulty or peril the heart may send up its cry for help to One who has pledged Himself to come to the aid of His faithful, believing ones whenever they call upon Him. In every circumstance, under every condition, the soul weighed down with grief and care, or fiercely assailed by temptation, may find assurance, support, and succor in the unfailing love and power of a covenant-keeping God."—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 631, 632.

- b. **Explain Nehemiah's care to obtain a clear definition of his authority and of the privileges granted him? Nehemiah 2:7–9.**
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"This example of [Nehemiah's] wise forethought and resolute action should be a lesson to all Christians. God's children are not only to pray in faith, but to work with diligent and provident care. They encounter many difficulties and often hinder the working of Providence in their behalf, because they regard prudence and painstaking effort as having little to do with religion. Nehemiah did not regard his duty done when he had wept and prayed before the Lord. He united his petitions with holy endeavor, putting forth earnest, prayerful efforts for the success of the enterprise in which he was engaged. Careful consideration and well-matured plans are as essential to the carrying forward of sacred enterprises today as in the time of the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls. . . .

"And the Lord is still willing to move upon the hearts of those in possession of His goods, in behalf of the cause of truth. Those who labor for Him are to avail themselves of the help that He prompts men to give."—*Ibid.*, pp. 633, 634.

### 3. LEARNING TO WORK FOR GOD

- a. What was Nehemiah's first work in Jerusalem, and how did he gain the cooperation of the local people? Nehemiah 2:11–16.
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"In secrecy and silence Nehemiah completed his circuit of the walls. [Nehemiah 2:16 quoted.] The remainder of the night he spent in prayer; for he knew that the morning would call for earnest effort to arouse and unite his dispirited and divided countrymen.

"Nehemiah bore a royal commission requiring the inhabitants to cooperate with him in rebuilding the walls of the city, but he did not depend upon the exercise of authority. He sought rather to gain the confidence and sympathy of the people, knowing that a union of hearts as well as of hands was essential in the great work before him."—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 636, 637.

- b. What appeal did Nehemiah make to the people, and what was their response? Nehemiah 2:17, 18.
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"When on the morrow he called the people together he presented such arguments as were calculated to arouse their dormant energies and unite their scattered numbers.

"Nehemiah's hearers did not know, neither did he tell them, of his midnight circuit of the night before. But the fact that he had made this circuit contributed greatly to his success; for he was able to speak of the condition of the city with an accuracy and a minuteness that astonished his hearers. The impression made upon him as he had looked upon the weakness and degradation of Jerusalem gave earnestness and power to his words. . . .

"Having shown that he was sustained by the combined authority of the God of Israel and the Persian king, Nehemiah asked the people directly whether they would take advantage of this opportunity and arise and build the wall.

"The appeal went straight to their hearts. The thought of how Heaven's favor had been manifested toward them put their fears to shame. . . .

"Nehemiah's whole soul was in the enterprise he had undertaken. His hope, his energy, his enthusiasm, his determination, were contagious, inspiring others with the same high courage and lofty purpose."—*Ibid.*, pp. 637, 638.

#### 4. OPPOSITION FROM THE ENEMIES

- a. **What method will some use to hide their anger or fear? When the enemies of Israel heard that the Jews had again started to build, how did they laugh at them? Nehemiah 4:1–4.**
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- b. **When the enemies of Israel saw that their fears were coming true, what plan did they adopt? Nehemiah 4:11. How did Satan try to discourage the builders through the Jews that refused to collaborate in the work? Verse 12.**
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“Discouragement came from still another source. ‘The Jews which dwelt by,’ those who were taking no part in the work, gathered up the statements and reports of their enemies and used these to weaken courage and create disaffection.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 643.

- c. **What happened when the Jews were informed the plan of their enemies? Instead of being intimidated, under what conditions did they continue the work? Nehemiah 4:15–18.**
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“The opposition and discouragement that the builders in Nehemiah’s day met from open enemies and pretended friends is typical of the experience that those today will have who work for God. Christians are tried, not only by the anger, contempt, and cruelty of enemies, but by the indolence, inconsistency, lukewarmness, and treachery of avowed friends and helpers. Derision and reproach are hurled at them. And the same enemy that leads to contempt, at a favorable opportunity uses more cruel and violent measures.

“Satan takes advantage of every unconsecrated element for the accomplishment of his purposes. Among those who profess to be the supporters of God’s cause there are those who unite with His enemies and thus lay His cause open to the attacks of His bitterest foes. . . . But, like Nehemiah, God’s people are neither to fear nor to despise their enemies. Putting their trust in God, they are to go steadily forward, doing His work with unselfishness, and committing to His providence the cause for which they stand.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 644, 645.

**5. DETECTING SATAN'S PLANS**

- a. What happened when the enemies of Israel realized the Jews had almost completed the wall? How did the enemies change their tactics? Nehemiah 6:1–3.
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“Pretending to desire a compromise of the opposing parties, [Sanballat and his confederates] sought a conference with Nehemiah, and invited him to meet them in a village on the plain of Ono. But enlightened by the Holy Spirit as to their real purpose, he refused.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 653.

- b. What new stratagem did Sanballat and his confederates use? What did Nehemiah answer them? Nehemiah 6:5–8. What mistake was Nehemiah careful to avoid?
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“He who by any unguarded act exposes the cause of God to reproach, or weakens the hands of his fellow workers, brings upon his own character a stain not easily removed, and places a serious obstacle in the way of his future usefulness.”—*Ibid.*, p. 659.

- c. Describe the outpouring of emotion upon the completion of the wall and the gates. Nehemiah 8:16, 17. How did the enemies of the people of God feel? Nehemiah 6:15, 16.
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**PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. What did Nehemiah do before answering King Artaxerxes?
2. How did Nehemiah exercise care in all the arrangements?
3. What did the reformer do first in Jerusalem—and why?
4. How can we gain advantage over the tactics of Satan today—just as the builders of the wall did in their time?
5. What was Nehemiah able to detect about the enemies?

# Onward Reformation!

“Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof” (Nehemiah 13:14).

“The world has gone astray from God, and its lawless state should strike terror to the heart, and lead all who are loyal to the great King to work for a reformation.”—*The Signs of the Times*, January 17, 1884.

**Suggested Reading:** *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 669–678.

## Sunday

September 21

### 1. NEHEMIAH’S FIRST ACTIONS

a. After the Jews settled in their homeland and pledged themselves to obey God, what happened in the absence of Nehemiah? Nehemiah 8:18; 9:1, 2; 10:28–31; 13:6.

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b. What situation did he find upon his return to Jerusalem? Nehemiah 13:7.

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“Idolaters not only gained a foothold in the city, but contaminated by their presence the very precincts of the temple. Through intermarriage, a friendship had been brought about between Eliashib the high priest and Tobiah the Ammonite, Israel’s bitter enemy. As a result of this unhallowed alliance, Eliashib had permitted Tobiah to occupy an apartment connected with the temple, which heretofore had been used as a storeroom for tithes and offerings of the people.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 669.

c. In defiance of the word of God (Deuteronomy 23:3–6), what did Eliashib, the high priest, do? What first step did Nehemiah take in the work of reform? Nehemiah 13:7–9.

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## 2. WHEN TO APPEAL FOR COOPERATION

- a. As the offerings had been misapplied, in what sense did many people become discouraged? Nehemiah 13:4, 5. What were many servants of the temple led to do out of necessity? Nehemiah 13:10.
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“In defiance of [God’s command], the high priest had cast out the offerings stored in the chamber of God’s house, to make a place for this representative of a proscribed race. Greater contempt for God could not have been shown than to confer such a favor on this enemy of God and His truth.

“On returning from Persia, Nehemiah learned of the bold profanation and took prompt measures to expel the intruder. . . .

“Not only had the temple been profaned, but the offerings had been misapplied. This had tended to discourage the liberalities of the people. They had lost their zeal and fervor and were reluctant to pay their tithes. The treasuries of the Lord’s house were poorly supplied; many of the singers and others employed in the temple service, not receiving sufficient support, had left the work of God to labor elsewhere.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 670.

- b. How did the people respond to Nehemiah’s decisive leadership in making reformatory efforts? Nehemiah 13:11–13.
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“Nehemiah set to work to correct these abuses. He gathered together those who had left the service of the Lord’s house, ‘and set them in their place.’ This inspired the people with confidence, and all Judah brought ‘the tithe of the corn and the new wine and the oil.’ Men who ‘were counted faithful’ were made ‘treasurers over the treasuries,’ ‘and their office was to distribute unto their brethren’ [Nehemiah 13:11–13].”—*Ibid.*

“The success attending Nehemiah’s efforts shows what prayer, faith, and wise, energetic action will accomplish. Nehemiah was not a priest; he was not a prophet; he made no pretension to high title. He was a reformer raised up for an important time. It was his aim to set his people right with God. Inspired with a great purpose, he bent every energy of his being to its accomplishment.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 675, 676.

### 3. SABBATHKEEPING RESTORED

- a. How was the sign distinguishing the Israelites from the heathen disregarded during Nehemiah's absence? Nehemiah 13:15, 16.
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"Another result of intercourse with idolaters was a disregard of the Sabbath, the sign distinguishing the Israelites from all other nations as worshipers of the true God. Nehemiah found that heathen merchants and traders from the surrounding country, coming to Jerusalem, had induced many among the Israelites to engage in traffic on the Sabbath. There were some who could not be persuaded to sacrifice principle, but others transgressed and joined with the heathen in their efforts to overcome the scruples of the more conscientious. Many dared openly to violate the Sabbath. . . .

"This state of things might have been prevented had the rulers exercised their authority; but a desire to advance their own interests had led them to favor the ungodly."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 671.

- b. How and why did Nehemiah rebuke the leaders for their neglect of duty? Nehemiah 13:17, 18.
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"Not inclined to abandon their purpose, 'the merchants and sellers of all kind of ware lodged without Jerusalem once or twice,' hoping to find opportunity for traffic (Nehemiah 13:20)."—*Ibid.*, p. 672.

- c. How did Nehemiah act to correct this state of things? Nehemiah 13:19–23.
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"[Nehemiah] also directed the Levites to guard the gates, knowing that they would command greater respect than the common people, while from their close connection with the service of God it was reasonable to expect that they would be more zealous in enforcing obedience to His law."—*Ibid.*, p. 673.

"For evils that we might have checked, we are just as responsible as if we were guilty of the acts ourselves."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 441.

#### 4. STANDING BY OUR CONVICTIONS

- a. How did God help Nehemiah to arouse the consciousness of the people to the need of a decided reformation in their marriage relationships? Nehemiah 13:23–27.
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“These unlawful alliances [from intermarriage and association with idolaters] were causing great confusion in Israel; for some who entered into them were men in high position, rulers to whom the people had a right to look for counsel and a safe example. Foreseeing the ruin before the nation if this evil were allowed to continue, Nehemiah reasoned earnestly with the wrongdoers. . . .

“As he set before them God’s commands and threatenings, and the fearful judgments visited on Israel in the past for this very sin, their consciences were aroused, and a work of reformation was begun that turned away God’s threatened anger and brought His approval and blessing.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 673, 674.

- b. What was one thing that Nehemiah did, in his human weakness, that a worker in the Lord’s vineyard should never do? Nehemiah 13:25.
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“Reformers must advance, not retreat. They must be decided, firm, resolute, unflinching; but firmness must not degenerate into a domineering spirit.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 151.

- c. What was the main reason why Eliashib, the high priest, his son, and his grandson became disqualified for the priesthood? Nehemiah 13:28, 29. What happens to those who have opinions but have no convictions? Matthew 15:14.
- 

“There were some in sacred office who pleaded for their heathen wives, declaring that they could not bring themselves to separate from them. But no distinction was made; no respect was shown for rank or position. Whoever among the priests or rulers refused to sever his connection with idolaters was immediately separated from the service of the Lord. A grandson of the high priest, having married a daughter of the notorious Sanballat, was not only removed from office but promptly banished from Israel.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 674.

## 5. LESSONS FOR US TODAY

- a. What lessons should we learn from the work of Ezra and Nehemiah? Isaiah 57:12–14; Romans 15:4.

“In the work of reform to be carried forward today, there is need of men who, like Ezra and Nehemiah, will not palliate or excuse sin, nor shrink from vindicating the honor of God. Those upon whom rests the burden of this work will not hold their peace when wrong is done, neither will they cover evil with a cloak of false charity. They will remember that God is no respecter of persons, and that severity to a few may prove mercy to many. They will remember also that in the one who rebukes evil the spirit of Christ should ever be revealed.

“In their work, Ezra and Nehemiah humbled themselves before God, confessing their sins and the sins of their people, and entreating pardon as if they themselves were the offenders. Patiently they toiled and prayed and suffered.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 675.

“[This] work of restoration and reform . . . presents a picture of a work of spiritual restoration that is to be wrought in the closing days of this earth’s history. . . .

“In the time of the end every divine institution is to be restored. The breach made in the law at the time the Sabbath was changed by man is to be repaired. God’s remnant people, standing before the world as reformers, are to show that the law of God is the foundation of all enduring reform and that the Sabbath of the fourth commandment is to stand as a memorial of creation, a constant reminder of the power of God. In clear, distinct lines they are to present the necessity of obedience to all the precepts of the Decalogue. Constrained by the love of Christ, they are to cooperate with Him in building up the waste places. They are to be repairers of the breach, restorers of paths to dwell in.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 677, 678.

# Friday

## PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How did Nehemiah promote his reformatory efforts?
2. How was Sabbathkeeping restored?
3. God has a present truth in every generation. What is His will today regarding the sanctity and preservation of marriage?
4. Explain the relevance of the experiences of Ezra and Nehemiah in our time.
5. What question should we all ask ourselves as Christ’s witnesses?

# 22nd General Conference Session

## Roanoke 2015, USA

- **Event:** Spiritual Meetings
- **Dates:** September 10–13 (Thursday–Sunday)
- **Place:** Roanoke, Virginia, USA
- **Theme:** “Christ Is All, and in All”





We are pleased to announce the Spiritual Meetings of the 22nd General Conference Session to be held in Roanoke, Virginia, USA, on September 10–13, 2015. The timely theme for these meetings is based on Colossians 3:11.

This will be a wonderful occasion. It has been over 30 years since an SDARM General Conference Session was held in the United States, so the brethren and sisters in this country are looking forward to the rare privilege of hosting this event.

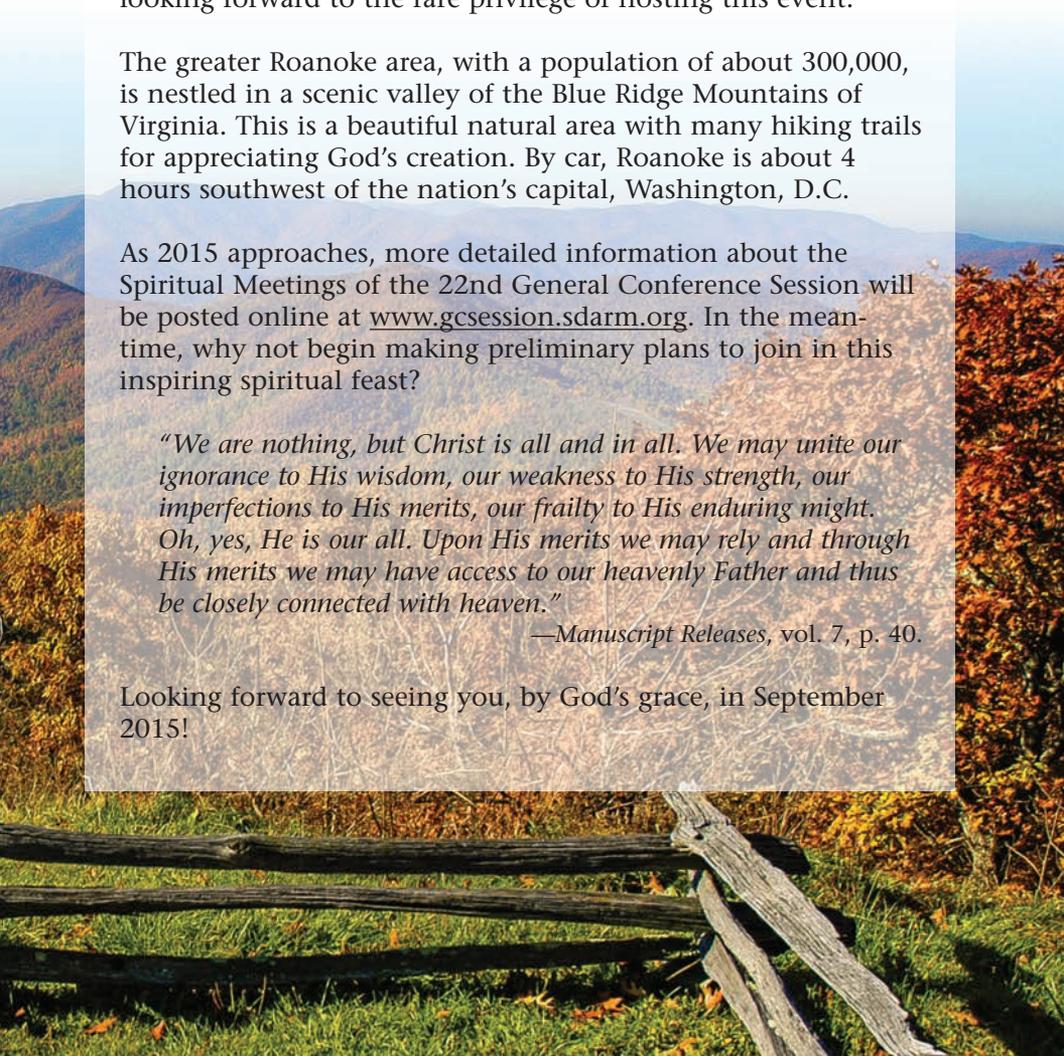
The greater Roanoke area, with a population of about 300,000, is nestled in a scenic valley of the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. This is a beautiful natural area with many hiking trails for appreciating God's creation. By car, Roanoke is about 4 hours southwest of the nation's capital, Washington, D.C.

As 2015 approaches, more detailed information about the Spiritual Meetings of the 22nd General Conference Session will be posted online at [www.gcsession.sdarm.org](http://www.gcsession.sdarm.org). In the meantime, why not begin making preliminary plans to join in this inspiring spiritual feast?

*"We are nothing, but Christ is all and in all. We may unite our ignorance to His wisdom, our weakness to His strength, our imperfections to His merits, our frailty to His enduring might. Oh, yes, He is our all. Upon His merits we may rely and through His merits we may have access to our heavenly Father and thus be closely connected with heaven."*

—Manuscript Releases, vol. 7, p. 40.

Looking forward to seeing you, by God's grace, in September 2015!

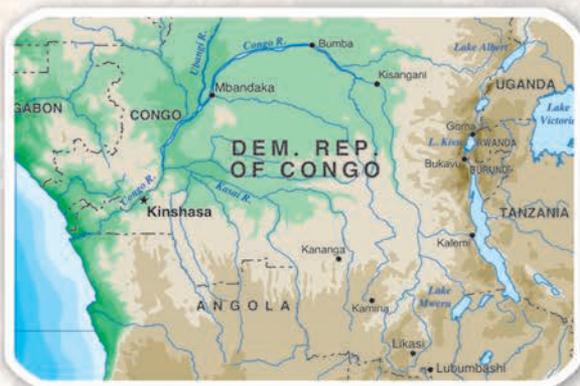


# First Sabbath Offerings



**JULY 5**  
for the East European  
publishing work  
(See p. 4.)

**AUGUST 2**  
for a missionary school  
in the DR Congo  
(See p. 25.)



**SEPTEMBER 6**  
for the headquarters  
in Namibia  
(See p. 53.)

