



SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

for the First Half 2008

**Epistle of Paul the Apostle
to the Hebrews**

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Design, Edition and Translation
by the Publishing Department of the General Conference

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Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews

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

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INTRODUCTION

The subject of study of these Sabbath School Lessons is the Epistle to the Hebrews written by Apostle Paul from Italy. It is highly probable that he wrote this epistle after being released from his first imprisonment by Emperor Nero.

There are 26 lessons based on the 13 chapters of this epistle studied verse by verse. Sometimes Apostle Paul repeats certain expressions; nevertheless, we proceeded from the first to the last verse according to our 26 lessons.

We have added a good number of statements from the Spirit of Prophecy which fully support the teaching of the Apostle and his explanation of the relation between the Levitical priesthood and the priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek.

In the early Christian times many Jewish people accepted the gospel of Christ and were baptized according to the baptism introduced by Jesus and were called Christians. With time many of these Christians began losing their strong faith in Jesus being influenced by the teaching of the leaders of the Jewish nation, that Christ cannot be a priest because he was not of the family of Aaron. This is why Apostle Paul undertook a thorough study of this subject and proved by ancient prophecy that the Son of God will forever be a priest according to the order of Melchizedek. His research of the Old Testament demonstrated that the sanctuary services in the Mosaic system could avail nothing in the matter of salvation of sinful humanity. There is but one man, Jesus Christ, who died and shed His blood outside the walls of Jerusalem for everyone who accepts Him as his personal Savior.

This theme of the Apostle Paul is deep and persuasive and requires our diligent study and understanding of the plan of salvation designed by God before the creation of this world. The Mosaic system was used temporarily to symbolize the great sacrifice made by God in giving His only begotten Son to this world that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Abraham's intended sacrifice of Isaac shows how deep was the struggle in his soul before he was stopped by the angel from killing Isaac. Apostle Paul used this example to show us that God made His sacrifice for humanity by giving His only begotten Son but not without any struggle in Himself. The very plan required that Christ be born in a human body which had been degrading for 4000 years since the creation. And being a man, He was tempted in all points as we are which carried in itself the possibility that Christ could commit any kind of error or sin and so be lost forever. While Christ was on the cross, not one angel or human was permitted to help him and it appeared that even His Father had forsaken Him. That was the real sacrifice which we need to understand and appreciate, and preach it with all our hearts as our sacred duty.

We wish all our members and friends who will study these lessons God's richest blessings so that we can understand what God did for us and what we should return to Him out of gratitude for His great sacrifice.

-The Brethren of the General Conference

**The Special Sabbath School Offering
is dedicated to Brasil**

*Remember to give your offering as an expression
of love and gratitude.*

1

Sabbath, January 5, 2008

The Personality of God

INTRODUCTION

“He [Christ] represented God not as an essence that pervaded nature, but as a God who has a personality. Christ was the express image of His Father’s person; and He came to our world to restore in man God’s moral image, in order that man, although fallen, might through obedience to God’s commandments become enstamped with the divine image and character—adorned with the beauty of divine loveliness (MS 24, 1891).” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 921.

SUPREMACY OF CHRIST OVER THE PROPHETS

- 1. How did God communicate with His people on this earth in ancient times? Hebrews 1:1.**
- 2. How did God reveal Himself to humanity in the New Testament times? What position was held by that Being? Hebrews 1:2.**

“The Scriptures clearly indicate the relation between God and Christ, and they bring to view as clearly the personality and individuality of each.

‘God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son; . . . who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said He at any time, ‘Thou art My Son, This day have I begotten Thee? And again, I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son?’ Hebrews 1:1-5.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 421.

3. What attributes and acts are ascribed to the Son of God? Hebrews 1:3.

CHRIST IS SUPERIOR TO ANGELS

4. What difference always existed between the Son of God and the angels? Hebrews 1:4, 7; Revelation 22:8, 9.

THOU ART MY SON, THIS DAY HAVE I BEGOTTEN THEE

5. In what unique event was the prophecy of Psalm 2:7 fulfilled? Romans 1:2-4.

“This statement must not be construed as implying an original generation of the Son. ‘In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived’ (DA 530). The Bible is its own best interpreter. Inspired writers must be permitted to make the precise application of Old Testament prophecies. All other applications are human opinion, and as such lack a plain ‘Thus saith the Lord’. The inspired apostle’s comment on the prophecy of this text makes the psalmist’s words a prediction of the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 13:30-33). The resurrection from the dead in a unique way proclaimed Jesus to be the Son of God (Rom. 1:4).”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 3, p. 634.

6. What do the Scriptures say about the possibility that God had promoted an angel to be His Son? Hebrews 1:5, 13.

“The anticipated answer to the question is, ‘God never called an angel ‘my Son,’ neither did He ever invite one to sit at His right hand—to share His position and prerogatives.”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 401.

7. What promise was given to the Son of God? Hebrews 1:6, 8, 9; Deuteronomy 33:27; Psalm 45:6.

“The relation between Jehovah and the Messiah is such that any request of the Son would be granted. The utter futility of any attempt of the rebels to overthrow the government of the Anointed One is emphasized. As heir, the Son inherits all things, and is thus able to share them with us as heirs together with Him (See on Rom. 8:17).” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 634.

8. What creative power was promised to the Son of God in ancient prophecy? Hebrews 1:10-12; Psalms 102: 25-27.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

“Jesus seldom referred to Himself by the title ‘Son of God’ (John 9:35-37; 10:36), though He often implied the Father and Son relationship (Matt. 11:27; Luke 10:21; John 5:18-23; 10:30; 14:28; etc.). Before stepping ‘down from the throne of the universe’ (See DA 23; PP 64) Christ was ‘equal with God’ (Phil. 2:6), ‘one with the Father’ (DA 19; see also John 10:30). At the incarnation He voluntarily humbled Himself and accepted a position subordinate to the Father (Phil. 2:7; Heb. 2:9). Various statements by Christ while here on earth testify to His voluntary and temporary surrender of the prerogatives, though not the nature, of Deity (Phil. 2:6-8), as when He said, ‘My Father is greater than I’ (John 14:28), or, ‘The Son can do nothing of himself’ (John 5:19). See on Luke 2:49.

“The Father attested Christ’s Sonship at His birth (Luke 1:35; Heb. 1:5, 6), at His baptism (Luke 3:22), at His transfiguration (Luke 9:35), and again at His resurrection (Ps. 2:7; Acts 13:32, 33; Rom. 1:4). John the Baptist also bore witness to Him as the ‘Son of God’ (John 1:34), and the Twelve came to recognize Him as such (Matt. 14:33; 16:16). Even the evil spirits admitted that He was the Son of God (Mark 3:11; 5:7). After healing the man born blind, Christ testified before the leaders that He was the ‘Son of God’ (John 10:35-37). It was His admission to being indeed *the* ‘Son of God’ that finally brought about His condemnation and death (Luke 22:70, 71).

“Christ referred to God as ‘my Father’ (Matt. 16:17). He desires that we learn to know God as ‘our Father’ (Matt. 6:9), and understand how God thinks of us (See on Matt. 6:9). ‘Christ teaches us to address Him [God] by a new name. . . . He gives us the privilege of calling the infinite God our Father,’ as ‘a sign of our love and trust toward Him, and a pledge of His regard and relationship to us’ (COL 141, 142; see also 388).

“Of Christ God says, ‘I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son’ (Heb. 1:5). And of one who by faith is adopted into the heavenly family as a son of ‘our Father,’ God says again, ‘I will be his God, and he shall be my son’ (Rev. 21:7). He who is truly ‘begotten of God’ (1 John 5:18) ‘overcometh the world’ (v. 4) as Christ did, and ‘sinneth not’ (v. 18). The grand objective of the plan of salvation is to bring ‘many sons unto glory’ (Heb. 2:10; cf. 1 John 3:1, 2). See Additional Note on John 1; see on Matt. 16:16-20; Mark 2:10; Luke 2:49.”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 5, pp. 683, 684.

“In this language is represented the omnipotence of the Lord Jesus. He is introduced to the Bible student as the Creator of the world, and was its rightful Ruler. [Heb. 1:13, 14 quoted.]

“The first chapter of Hebrews contrasts the position of the angels and the position of Christ. God has spoken words concerning Christ that are not to be applied to the angels. They are ‘sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation,’ but Christ, as Mediator, is the great Minister in the work of redemption. The Holy Spirit is His representative in our world, to execute the divine purpose of bringing to fallen man power from above, that he may be an overcomer. All who enter into a covenant with Jesus Christ become by adoption the children of God. They are cleansed by the regenerating power of the Word, and angels are commissioned to minister unto them (MS 57, 1907).”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 922.

2

Sabbath, January 12, 2008

Power and Efficiency for the Church

INTRODUCTION

“The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.” Psalms 34:7.

MINISTERING ANGELS

- 1. What assignment has been given to angels? Hebrews 1:7.**
- 2. To whom do the ministering angels render service? Hebrews 1:14; Psalm 103:20; Romans 8:17.**
- 3. What quantity of angels do the Holy Scriptures present? Revelation 5:11; Hebrews 12:22.**
- 4. What is one of the angels’ services? Psalm 34:7.**

“If in our ignorance we make missteps, the Saviour does not forsake us. We need never feel that we are alone. Angels are our companions. The Comforter that Christ promised to send in His name abides with us. In the way that leads to the City of God there are no difficulties which those who trust in Him may not overcome. There are no dangers which they may not escape. There is not a sorrow, not a grievance, not a human weakness, for which He has not provided a remedy.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 249.

5. **Whose dream illustrates the constant communication the Lord has with humanity? Genesis 28:12, 13.**

6. **How did the angels minister to Christ while He was on this earth? Matthew 4:11.**

7. **When will the ministry of angels be fully understood? 1 Corinthians 13:12.**

“Every redeemed one will understand the ministry of angels in his own life. The angel who was his guardian from his earliest moment; the angel who watched his steps, and covered his head in the day of peril; the angel who was with him in the valley of the shadow of death, who marked his resting place, who was the first to greet him in the resurrection morning--what will it be to hold converse with him, and to learn the history of divine interposition in the individual life, of heavenly co-operation in every work for humanity!”—*Education*, p. 305.

“The first chapter of Hebrews contrasts the position of the angels and the position of Christ. God has spoken words concerning Christ that are not to be applied to the angels. They are ‘sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation,’ but Christ, as Mediator, is the great Minister in the work of redemption. The Holy Spirit is His representative in our world, to execute the divine purpose of bringing to fallen man power from above, that he may be an overcomer. All who enter into a covenant with Jesus Christ become by adoption the children of God. They are cleansed by the regenerating power of the Word, and angels are commissioned to minister unto them (MS 57, 1907).”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 922.

Sabbath, January 19, 2008

Sundering of the Divine Powers

INTRODUCTION

“The Captain of our salvation was perfected through suffering. His soul was made an offering for sin. It was necessary for the awful darkness to gather about His soul because of the withdrawal of the Father’s love and favor; for He was standing in the sinner’s place, and this darkness every sinner must experience. The righteous One must suffer the condemnation and wrath of God, not in vindictiveness; for the heart of God yearned with greatest sorrow when His Son, the guiltless, was suffering the penalty of sin. This sundering of the divine powers will never again occur throughout the eternal ages (MS 93, 1899).” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 924.

DANGER OF NEGLECTING TO ACCEPT THE GOSPEL

1. What important counsel was given by the apostle Paul to all believers? Hebrews 2:1.

“We are neglecting our salvation if we give authors who have but a confused idea of what religion means, the most conspicuous place and devoted respect, and make the Bible secondary. Those who have been enlightened in reference to the truth for these last days will not find instruction in the books generally studied today, in regard to the things which are coming upon our world; but the Bible is full of the knowledge of God, and is competent to educate the student for usefulness in this life and for the eternal life.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 404.

2. What example from ancient times did he give to support this warning? Hebrews 2:2.

3. Whose neglect is more dangerous: ancient Israel’s or Christian believers? Hebrews 2:3.

“Considering at what an immense cost our salvation has been purchased, what will be the fate of those who neglect so great salvation? What will be the punishment of those who profess to be followers of Christ, yet fail to bow in humble obedience to the claims of their Redeemer, and who do not take the cross as humble disciples of Christ and follow Him from the manger to Calvary? ‘He that gathereth not with Me,’ says Christ, ‘scattereth abroad.’”—*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 2, p. 213.

- 4. What does God always do for His people in order to help them to obey His will? Hebrews 2:4.**

CHRIST IS SUPERIOR BECAUSE OF HIS HUMANITY

- 5. Under whose subjection did God place the works of His hands at the time of creation? Psalm 8:4-8; Hebrews 2:5-7.**

“Created to be ‘the image and glory of God’ (1 Corinthians 11:7), Adam and Eve had received endowments not unworthy of their high destiny. Graceful and symmetrical in form, regular and beautiful in feature, their countenances glowing with the tint of health and the light of joy and hope, they bore in outward resemblance the likeness of their Maker. Nor was this likeness manifest in the physical nature only. Every faculty of mind and soul reflected the Creator’s glory. Endowed with high mental and spiritual gifts, Adam and Eve were made but ‘little lower than the angels’ (Hebrews 2:7), that they might not only discern the wonders of the visible universe, but comprehend moral responsibilities and obligations.”—*Education*, p. 20.

- 6. Who took over the rulership of this earth after Adam fell into sin? Romans 5:14; Luke 4:5-8; 2 Peter 2:19; Hebrews 2:8.**

- 7. Have all things on this earth been under continual subjection to man? Hebrews 2:8.**

- 8. To whom will finally all things of this world be brought into subjection? Hebrews 2:9, 10.**

“The final overthrow of all earthly dominions is plainly foretold in the word of truth. In the prophecy uttered when sentence from God was pronounced upon the last king of Israel is given the message:

‘Thus saith the Lord God; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: ... exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him.’ Ezekiel 21:26, 27.

“The crown removed from Israel passed successively to the kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. God says, ‘It shall be no more, until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him.’

“That time is at hand. Today the signs of the times declare that we are standing on the threshold of great and solemn events. Everything in our world is in agitation. Before our eyes is fulfilling the Saviour’s prophecy of the events to precede His coming: ‘Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars... Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.’ Matthew 24:6, 7.”—*Education*, p. 179.

4

Sabbath, January 26, 2008

God Reached Humanity through Humanity

INTRODUCTION

“Christ alone was able to represent the Deity. He who had been in the presence of the Father from the beginning, He who was the express image of the invisible God, was alone sufficient to accomplish this work. No verbal description could reveal God to the world. Through a life of purity, a life of perfect trust and submission to the will of God, a life of humiliation such as even the highest seraph in heaven would have shrunk from, God Himself must be revealed to humanity. In order to do this, our Saviour clothed His divinity with humanity. He employed the human faculties, for only by adopting these could He be comprehended by humanity. Only humanity could reach humanity. He lived out the character of God through the human body which God had prepared for Him. He blessed the world by living out in human flesh the life of God, thus showing that He had the power to unite humanity to divinity”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 924.

1. **What was the relationship between man and Christ when He came to this earth? Hebrews 2:11-13.**

2. **What has always been the spiritual condition of humanity? Matthew 24:31-39; Romans 3:9-19.**

3. **What was necessary for Christ to do in order to free all men from their bondage of sin? Hebrews 2:14.**

“With a holy sadness Jesus comforted and cheered the angels and informed them that hereafter those whom He should redeem would be with Him, and that by His death He should ransom many and destroy him who had the power of death. And His Father would give Him the kingdom and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, and He would possess it forever and ever. Satan and sinners would be destroyed, nevermore to disturb heaven or the purified new earth. Jesus bade the heavenly host be reconciled to the plan that His Father had accepted and rejoice that through His death fallen man could again be exalted to obtain favor with God and enjoy heaven.”—*Early Writings*, p. 151.

4. **Whom did Christ come to this earth to free from bondage? Hebrews 2:15.**

5. **How did Jewish leaders accept Christ’s offer to save them from the bondage of sin? John 8:31-37.**

6. **What nature did Christ take on while on this earth in order to be a perfect high priest? Hebrews 2:17.**

7. How only could Christ understand humanity in their debased condition? Hebrews 2:18.

“The Child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon Him.’ Luke 2:40.

“Thus prepared, He went forth to His mission, in every moment of His contact with men exerting upon them an influence to bless, a power to transform, such as the world had never witnessed.”—*Education*, p. 78.

“Moses was a type of Christ. He himself had declared to Israel, ‘The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him ye shall hearken.’ Deuteronomy 18:15. God saw fit to discipline Moses in the school of affliction and poverty before he could be prepared to lead the hosts of Israel to the earthly Canaan. The Israel of God, journeying to the heavenly Canaan, have a Captain who needed no human teaching to prepare Him for His mission as a divine leader; yet He was made perfect through sufferings; and ‘in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted.’ Hebrews 2:10, 18. Our Redeemer manifested no human weakness or imperfection; yet He died to obtain for us an entrance into the Promised Land.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 480.

5

Sabbath, February 2, 2008

A Heavier Retribution than Israel’s

INTRODUCTION

“See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven.” Hebrews 12:25.

CHRIST IS SUPERIOR TO MOSES IN HIS WORK

- 1. Why was Christ considered superior to Moses? Hebrews 3:1-4; Ephesians 2:10.**

2. What is the difference between Moses and Christ in their service to God? Hebrews 3:5, 6.

THE DANGER OF HARDENING THE HEART

3. What admonition was given to the followers of Christ? Hebrews 3:7-10.

“Even one wrong trait of character, one sinful desire, persistently cherished, will eventually neutralize all the power of the gospel. Every sinful indulgence strengthens the soul’s aversion to God. The man who manifests an infidel hardihood, or a stolid indifference to divine truth, is but reaping the harvest of that which he has himself sown. In all the Bible there is not a more fearful warning against trifling with evil than the words of the wise man that the sinner ‘shall be holden with the cords of his sins.’ Proverbs 5:22.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 34.

4. What was the result of the Israelites’ continual unbelief? Hebrews 3:11, 12.

“Says the apostle Paul, ‘Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.’ Hebrews 3:12. In view of all that God has wrought for us, our faith should be strong, active, and enduring. Instead of murmuring and complaining, the language of our hearts should be, ‘Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.’ Psalm 103:1, 2.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 294.

5. How can we help one another not to be deceived and hardened by sin? Hebrews 3:13.

“I saw that we are now in the shaking time. Satan is working with all his power to wrest souls from the hand of Christ and cause them to trample underfoot the Son of God. An angel slowly and emphatically repeated these words: ‘Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?’”—*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 1, p. 429.

6. What is the ideal life for those who accept Christ? Hebrews 3:14.

“Character is being developed. Angels of God are weighing moral worth. God is testing and proving His people. These words were presented to me by the angel: ‘Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.’”—*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 1, p. 429.

7. How much time is given for a sinner to repent? Hebrews 3:15.

“Oh, that now, while it is called today, you would turn to the Lord! Your every deed is making you either better or worse. If your actions are on Satan’s side, they leave behind them an influence that continues to work its baleful results. Only the pure, the clean, and the holy can enter the city of God, ‘To day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts,’ but turn to the Lord, that the path you travel may not leave desolation in its track.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 358.

“The Word makes the proud humble, the perverse meek and contrite, the disobedient obedient. The sinful habits natural to man are interwoven with the daily practice. But the Word cuts away the fleshly lusts. It is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the mind. It divides the joints and marrow, cutting away the lusts of the flesh, making men willing to suffer for their Lord (MS 42, 1901).”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 928.

A Rebellious Nation

INTRODUCTION

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

- 1. How many Israelites rebelled against God while on their journey to the Promised Land? Hebrews 3:16.**
- 2. What was the result of their sinning against God? Hebrews 3:17.**
- 3. What promise was revoked to those who disobeyed the will of God? Hebrews 3:18.**
- 4. What was the first step in their disobedience to God? Hebrews 3:19.**

“It was not the will of God that Israel should wander forty years in the wilderness; He desired to lead them directly to the land of Canaan and estab-

lish them there, a holy, happy people. But ‘they could not enter in because of unbelief.’ Hebrews 3:19. Because of their backsliding and apostasy they perished in the desert, and others were raised up to enter the Promised Land. In like manner, it was not the will of God that the coming of Christ should be so long delayed and His people should remain so many years in this world of sin and sorrow. But unbelief separated them from God. As they refused to do the work which He had appointed them, others were raised up to proclaim the message. In mercy to the world, Jesus delays His coming, that sinners may have an opportunity to hear the warning and find in Him a shelter before the wrath of God shall be poured out.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 458.

5. For what purpose was the history of the Israelites recorded in the Holy Scriptures? 1 Corinthian 10:11, 12.

“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.’ 1 Corinthians 10:11, 12. Satan well knows the material with which he has to deal in the human heart. He knows--for he has studied with fiendish intensity for thousands of years--the points most easily assailed in every character; and through successive generations he has wrought to overthrow the strongest men, princes in Israel, by the same temptations that were so successful at Baalpeor. All along through the ages there are strewn wrecks of character that have been stranded upon the rocks of sensual indulgence. As we approach the close of time, as the people of God stand upon the borders of the heavenly Canaan, Satan will, as of old, redouble his efforts to prevent them from entering the goodly land. He lays his snares for every soul. It is not the ignorant and uncultured merely that need to be guarded; he will prepare his temptations for those in the highest positions, in the most holy office; if he can lead them to pollute their souls, he can through them destroy many. And he employs the same agents now as he employed three thousand years ago. By worldly friendships, by the charms of beauty, by pleasure seeking, mirth, feasting, or the wine cup, he tempts to the violation of the seventh commandment.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 457, 458.

6. What was the main reason of their dissatisfaction with God? Psalm 78:17-31.

7. What did God do for Israel in order to establish them as a strong and prosperous nation? Nehemiah 9:13, 14.

8. What was the result of their rebellion against God? 2 Chronicles 36:14-21.

“There is no encouragement given for unbelief. The Lord manifests His grace and His power over and over again, and this should teach us that it is always profitable under all circumstances to cherish faith, to talk faith, to act faith. We are not to have our hearts and hands weakened by allowing the suggestions of suspicious minds to plant in our hearts the seeds of doubt and distrust.”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 928.

7

Sabbath, February 16, 2008

Challenge to Enter God’s Rest

INTRODUCTION

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28.

1. What warning was given to the Hebrew Christians concerning the rest of God? Hebrews 4:1.

“The Lord would have His people trust in Him and abide in His love, but that does not mean that we shall have no fear or misgivings. Some seem to think that if a man has a wholesome fear of the judgments of God, it is a proof that he is destitute of faith; but this is not so.

“A proper fear of God, in believing His threatenings, works the peaceable fruits of righteousness, by causing the trembling soul to flee to Jesus. Many ought to have this spirit today, and turn to the Lord with humble contrition, for the Lord has not given so many terrible threatenings, pronounced so severe judgments in His Word, simply to have them recorded, but He means what He says. One says, ‘Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law,’ Paul says, ‘Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.’”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, p. 1100.

2. Why did the gospel preached to ancient Israel not benefit them? Hebrews 4:2.

“**Gospel.** Literally, ‘good news’. The statement may be rendered, ‘we have been gospelized, just as they also.’ In OT times the gospel was ‘preached’ through type and ceremony, in sacrifice and ritual, but it was the same gospel as that more recently proclaimed by Christ.

“**The word preached.** Literally, ‘the word of hearing,’ or ‘the heard word.’

“**Not profit them.** Unless ‘the word preached’ meets with faith on the part of the hearer, it cannot benefit him. The effectiveness of Christ’s personal message, when here on earth, was likewise limited by the receptiveness of His hearers. Of Nazareth it is said that ‘he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief’ (Matt. 13:58). The outworking of this principle is clearly illustrated in the parable of the Sower.”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 418.

3. How did Christ’s teaching profit His hearers? Matthew 7:24-27; 13:22, 23.

4. How do the believers respond to the call to enter into spiritual rest? Hebrews 4:3 (first part).

“**We which have believed.** That is, we Christians, meaning particularly converted Jews in the apostolic church.

“**Do enter.** Or, ‘are entering.’ The invitation is still valid; furthermore, some are accepting the invitation and entering into God’s ‘rest,’ by faith.

“**Rest.** Literally, ‘the rest,’ meaning the very same ‘rest’ to which reference has already been made in chs. 3:11, 18; 4:1. The ‘rest’ into which Christians, including converted Jews, enter is the very same spiritual ‘rest’ into which God had invited ancient Israel to enter—the ‘rest’ of soul that comes with full surrender to Christ and with the integration of the life into the eternal purpose of God (cf. Isa. 30:15; Jer. 6:16; Matt. 11:29).

“**As he said.** The writer has just affirmed that, one by one, Christian believers are entering into the very same spiritual ‘rest’ into which God formerly purposed that ancient Israel should enter, but from which they, as a nation, were now barred. Beginning at this point and continuing on through v. 8 he sets forth the evidence on which he bases his conclusion, a conclusion shocking to unconverted Jews and perhaps an enigma to many, if not most,

converted Jews. In v. 9 he concludes this line of reasoning by reaffirming the validity of his major premise, namely, that admission to God's 'rest' is now through the Christian faith as it formerly was through Judaism."—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 418.

5. Why did the ancient Israel not enter into their promised spiritual rest? Hebrews 4:3 (second part).

"1. God had sworn that literal Israel should not enter into His 'rest.'

"2. Nevertheless, God's 'works'—here His purpose for mankind—were 'finished [finalized]' from the foundation of the world.' In the beginning God had determined that men should enter into His 'rest.' Thus, God's oath barring ancient Israel from the promised 'rest' might appear, on the surface, to be in conflict with His original purpose. Does the oath mean that God has rescinded His original design? Or does He pursue an objective until He secures it?

"3. To prove that God achieves His purposes, the writer points (v. 4) to the 'works' of creation. God set out to create this world; He completed His 'works' of creation; His rest on the seventh day testifies to a completed creation. Note the words 'finished' and 'ended' in Gen. 2:1-3 and the emphasis on completion.

"4. In Heb. 4:5 God's oath that ancient Israel should not enter into His 'rest' is repeated and placed in juxtaposition with the thought of v. 4, that God accomplishes what He sets out to do, as illustrated by the completed work of creation.

"5. A completed creation, as testified to by God's rest on the seventh day of creation week, is evidence of the immutability of God's purposes. This is Paul's major premise. His minor premise is the fact that God had purposed that His chosen people should enter into His 'rest,' but that 'they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief.' This brings him to the conclusion that 'it remaineth that some must enter therein' (v. 6).

"6. As further evidence for the validity of his conclusion, the writer points again, in v. 7, to the words of Ps. 95, to the effect that the failure of earlier generations had neither altered God's original purpose nor withdrawn the original invitation. Compare the repeated invitations to the great banquet (see Luke 14:16-24).

"7. In v. 8 he draws the further conclusion from the observation in v. 7 that God's mention of 'another day' in the time of David is evidence that although Joshua had indeed given Israel 'rest' in the literal land of Canaan, he had definitely not led them into the spiritual 'rest' God intended them to enjoy.

"8. From the entire line of argument set forth in vs. 3-8 the writer concludes it to be certain that 'there remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God' (v. 9)."—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, pp. 418, 419.

6. **Where do we find the original description of God’s rest? Hebrews 4:4; Genesis 2:2.**

7. **What was the serious reason why ancient Israel could not enter into God’s rest? Psalm 95:9, 10; 78:18, 19.**

8. **What decision did God make because of their unbelief? Hebrews 4:5; Psalm 95:11.**

“The Lord works in cooperation with the will and action of the human agent. It is the privilege and duty of every man to take God at His word, to believe in Jesus as his personal Saviour, and to respond eagerly, immediately, to the gracious propositions which He makes. He is to study to believe and obey the divine instruction in the Scriptures. He is to base his faith not on feeling but upon the evidence and the Word of God (MS 3, 1895).” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 928.

8

Sabbath, February 23, 2008

Transforming Power of the Word

INTRODUCTION

“The Word makes the proud humble, the perverse meek and contrite, the disobedient obedient. The sinful habits natural to man are interwoven with the daily practice. But the Word cuts away the fleshly lusts. It is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the mind. It divides the joints and marrow, cutting away the lusts of the flesh, making men willing to suffer for their Lord (MS 42, 1901).” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 928.

1. To whom was the promise given when the ancient Israel was not eligible to enter into rest because of their disbelief? Hebrews 4:5-7.

“The son who for a time refused obedience to his father’s command was not condemned by Christ; and neither was he commended. The class who act the part of the first son in refusing obedience deserve no credit for holding this position. Their frankness is not to be regarded as a virtue. Sanctified by truth and holiness, it would make men bold witnesses for Christ; but used as it is by the sinner, it is insulting and defiant, and approaches to blasphemy. The fact that a man is not a hypocrite does not make him any the less really a sinner. When the appeals of the Holy Spirit come to the heart, our only safety lies in responding to them without delay. When the call comes, ‘Go work today in My vineyard,’ do not refuse the invitation. ‘Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.’ Heb. 4:7. It is unsafe to delay obedience. You may never hear the invitation again.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 280, 281.

2. If ancient Israel found their rest in Canaan, why was another call to enter into God’s rest given in the prophecy in Psalms? Hebrews 4:8; Psalm 95:7, 8.

3. What hope was there for the people of God in the old times? Hebrews 4:9.

4. What must every human being accomplish in his life before he can enter into God’s rest? Hebrews 4:10.

“The rest here spoken of is the rest of grace, obtained by following the prescription, Labor diligently. Those who learn of Jesus His meekness and lowliness find rest in the experience of practicing His lessons. It is not in indolence, in selfish ease and pleasure-seeking, that rest is obtained. Those who are unwilling to give the Lord faithful, earnest, loving service will not find spiritual rest in this life or in the life to come. Only from earnest labor comes peace and joy in the Holy Spirit—happiness on earth and glory hereafter.

“Let us therefore labor. Speak often words that will be a strength and an inspiration to those who hear. We are altogether too indifferent in regard to one another. We forget that our fellow laborers are often in need of words of hope and cheer. When one is in trouble, call upon him and speak comforting words to him. This is true friendship (MS 42, 1901).”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 928.

5. How well must all Christians be prepared to enter God’s rest? Hebrews 4:11.

“The Bible does not acknowledge a believer who is idle, however high his profession may be. There will be employment in heaven. The redeemed state is not one of idle repose. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God, but it is a rest found in loving service.”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 3, p. 1164.

6. In what can every Christian find a transforming power? Hebrews 4:12.

7. How many beings are under God’s constant watch? Hebrews 4:13.

“It is for the eternal interest of every one to search his own heart, and to improve every God-given faculty. Let all remember that there is not a motive in the heart of any man that the Lord does not clearly see. The motives of each one are weighed as carefully as if the destiny of the human agent depended upon this one result. We need a connection with divine power that we may have an increase of clear light and an understanding of how to reason from cause to effect. We need to have the powers of the understanding cultivated, by our being partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. Let each one consider carefully the solemn truth, God in heaven is true, and there is not a design, however intricate, nor a motive, however carefully hidden, that He does not clearly understand. He reads the secret devisings of every heart. Men may plan out crooked actions for the future, thinking that God does not understand; but in that great day when the books are opened, and every man is judged by the things written in the books, those actions will appear as they are. . . .

“The Lord sees and understands all dishonesty in planning, all unlawful appropriation in any degree of property or means, all injustice in man’s dealing with his fellow men.”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 3, p. 1160.

9

Sabbath, March 1, 2008

Christ’s Superiority in Priesthood

INTRODUCTION

“We have not a high priest’--master teacher, for the priests were teachers—‘we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but One that hath been in all points tempted like as we are.’ Hebrews 4:15, R.V.”—*Education*, p. 78.

1. What description do Christians have of their high priest? Hebrews 4:14.

“The Son of God . . . has fulfilled His pledge, and has passed into the heavens, to take upon Himself the government of the heavenly host. He fulfilled one phase of His priesthood by dying on the cross for the fallen race. He is now fulfilling another phase by pleading before the Father the case of the repenting, believing sinner, presenting to God the offerings of His people. Having taken human nature and in this nature having overcome the temptations of the enemy, and having divine perfection, to Him has been committed the judgment of the world. The case of each one will be brought in review before Him. He will pronounce judgment, rendering to every man according to his works (MS 42, 1901).”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 929.

2. How many human temptations did Christ have to go through in order to be able to sympathize with humanity? Hebrews 4:15.

“Those who claim that it was not possible for Christ to sin, cannot believe that He really took upon Himself human nature. But was not Christ actually tempted, not only by Satan in the wilderness, but all through His life, from childhood to manhood? In all points He was tempted as we are, and because He successfully resisted temptation under every form, He gave man the perfect example, and through the ample provision Christ has made, we may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust.”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 929.

“The Son of God was assaulted at every step by the powers of darkness. After His baptism He was driven of the Spirit into the wilderness, and suffered temptation for forty days. Letters have been coming in to me, affirming that Christ could not have had the same nature as man, for if He had, He would have fallen under similar temptations. If He did not have man’s nature, He could not be our example. If He was not a partaker of our nature, He could not have been tempted as man has been. If it were not possible for Him to yield to temptation, He could not be our helper. It was a solemn reality that Christ came to fight the battles as man, in man’s behalf. His temptation and victory tell us that humanity must copy the Pattern; man must become a partaker of the divine nature.”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 5, p. 1082.

3. What encouragement is given to the faithful believers of all times? Hebrews 4:16.

“As used in the Bible, the expression ‘kingdom of God’ is employed to designate both the kingdom of grace and the kingdom of glory. The kingdom of grace is brought to view by Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews. After pointing to Christ, the compassionate intercessor who is ‘touched with the feeling of our infirmities,’ the apostle says: ‘Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace.’ Hebrews 4:15, 16. The throne of grace represents the kingdom of grace; for the existence of a throne implies the existence of a kingdom. In many of His parables Christ uses the expression ‘the kingdom of heaven’ to designate the work of divine grace upon the hearts of men.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 347.

AARONIC PRIESTHOOD

4. What was every high priest from Aaron’s family required to do in ceremonial services? Hebrews 5:1-4.

- 5. What prophecy do we have about Christ's priesthood? Hebrews 5:5, 6; Psalms 110:4.**

- 6. What was the difference between the Aaronic priesthood and the order of Melchizedek? Psalms 40:6-8.**

- 7. What did Christ, as a high priest, offer to God instead of animal sacrifices? Hebrews 5:7, 8.**

“God is displeased with the lack of self-denial in some of His servants. They have not the burden of the work upon them. They seem to be in a deathlike stupor. Angels of God stand amazed and ashamed of this lack of self-denial and perseverance. While the Author of our salvation was laboring and suffering for us, He denied Himself, and His whole life was one continued scene of toil and privation. He could have passed His days on earth in ease and plenty, and appropriated to Himself the pleasures of this life; but He considered not His own convenience. He lived to do others good. He suffered to save others from suffering. He endured to the end and finished the work which was given Him to do. All this was to save us from ruin. And now, can it be that we, the unworthy objects of so great love, will seek a better position in this life than was given to our Lord? Every moment of our lives we have been partakers of the blessings of His great love, and for this very reason we cannot fully realize the depths of ignorance and misery from which we have been saved. Can we look upon Him whom our sins have pierced and not be willing to drink with Him the bitter cup of humiliation and sorrow? Can we look upon Christ crucified and wish to enter His kingdom in any other way than through much tribulation? —*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 1, p. 370.

- 8. By what attributes did Christ become our redeemer? Hebrews 5:9, 10.**

“By His humanity, Christ touched humanity; by His divinity, He lays hold upon the throne of God. As the Son of man, He gave us an example of obedience; as the Son of God, He gives us power to obey. It was Christ who

from the bush on Mount Horeb spoke to Moses saying, 'I AM THAT I AM. . . . Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.' Ex. 3:14. This was the pledge of Israel's deliverance. So when He came 'in the likeness of men,' He declared Himself the I AM. The Child of Bethlehem, the meek and lowly Saviour, is God 'manifest in the flesh.' 1 Tim. 3:16. And to us He says: 'I AM the Good Shepherd.' 'I AM the living Bread.' 'I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life.' 'All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth.' John 10:11; 6:51; 14:6; Matt. 28:18. I AM the assurance of every promise. I AM; be not afraid. 'God with us' is the surety of our deliverance from sin, the assurance of our power to obey the law of heaven."—*Desire of Ages*, pp. 24, 25.

10

Sabbath, March 8, 2008

Duties of Learning

INTRODUCTION

"A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels." Proverbs 1:5.

1. **What exhortation was given to the Jewish Christians in Judaea? Hebrews 5:11-14.**

"Paul longed to speak to the church in Corinth of spiritual things. But to his sorrow he found it in great weakness. The church members could not even bear to hear the truth concerning themselves. [1 Cor. 3:1, 2 quoted.] The Spiritual growth of this people was so dwarfed that a plain 'Thus saith the Lord' was an offense to them. Paul knew that by giving them the truth he would be ranked as an accuser and faultfinder (MS 74, 1899).

"Those addressed in these words had not been feeding on Christ, and therefore they were not advanced in spiritual knowledge. Paul said, 'I have fed you with milk'--the plainest, most simple truths, suitable for converts young in the faith; "not with meat"--the solid, nourishing, spiritual food suited to those who have made progress in a knowledge of divine things. They were

living on a low level, dwelling on the surface truths which call for no thought, no deep research (MS 70, 1901).

“There can be no stronger evidence in churches that the truths of the Bible have not sanctified the receivers than their attachment to some favorite minister, and their unwillingness to accept and be profited by the labors of some other teacher who is sent to them in the providence of God. The Lord sends help to His church as they need, not as they choose; for short-sighted mortals cannot discern what is for their best good. It is seldom than one minister has all the qualifications necessary to perfect any one church in all the requirements of Christianity; therefore God sends other ministers to follow him, one after another, each one possessing some qualifications in which the others were deficient.”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, p. 1086.

NEED FOR MINISTRY

2. What higher education is provided for all Christians? Hebrews 6:1, 2.

“The Scriptures plainly show that the work of sanctification is progressive. When in conversion the sinner finds peace with God through the blood of the atonement, the Christian life has but just begun. Now he is to ‘go on unto perfection;’ to grow up ‘unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.’ Says the apostle Paul: ‘This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.’ Philippians 3:13, 14. And Peter sets before us the steps by which Bible sanctification is to be attained: ‘Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. . . . If ye do these things, ye shall never fall.’ 2 Peter 1:5-10.

“Those who experience the sanctification of the Bible will manifest a spirit of humility. Like Moses, they have had a view of the awful majesty of holiness, and they see their own unworthiness in contrast with the purity and exalted perfection of the Infinite One.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 470.

3. Under what condition should Christians repeat the basic teachings of Christ? Hebrews 6:3.

4. To what danger do Christians expose themselves if they fall away from the truth by which they were converted? What would be required for their new conversion? Hebrews 6: 4-6.

“The example of those who minister in holy things should be such as to impress the people with reverence for God and with fear to offend Him. When men, standing ‘in Christ’s stead’ (2 Corinthians 5:20) to speak to the people God’s message of mercy and reconciliation, use their sacred calling as a cloak for selfish or sensual gratification, they make themselves the most effective agents of Satan. Like Hophni and Phinehas, they cause men to ‘abhor the offering of the Lord.’ They may pursue their evil course in secret for a time; but when at last their true character is exposed, the faith of the people receives a shock that often results in destroying their confidence in religion. There is left upon the mind a distrust of all who profess to teach the word of God. The message of the true servant of Christ is doubtfully received. The question constantly arises, ‘Will not this man prove to be like the one we thought so holy, and found so corrupt?’ Thus the word of God loses its power upon the souls of men.

“In Eli’s reproof to his sons are words of solemn and fearful import—words that all who minister in sacred things would do well to ponder: ‘If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?’ Had their crimes injured only their fellow men, the judge might have made reconciliation by appointing a penalty and requiring restitution; and thus the offenders might have been pardoned. Or had they not been guilty of a presumptuous sin, a sin offering might have been presented for them. But their sins were so interwoven with their ministrations as priests of the Most High, in offering sacrifice for sin, the work of God was so profaned and dishonored before the people, that no expiation could be accepted for them. Their own father, though himself high priest, dared not make intercession in their behalf; he could not shield them from the wrath of a holy God. Of all sinners, those are most guilty who cast contempt upon the means that Heaven has provided for man’s redemption—who ‘crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame.’ Hebrews 6:6.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 580.

EXAMPLE FROM NATURE

5. How does God look upon the earth that drinks in the rain that falls upon it and yields a useful crop to those for whom it is cultivated? Hebrews 6:7.

“Notwithstanding all that has been said and written concerning the dignity of labor, the feeling prevails that it is degrading. Young men are anxious to become teachers, clerks, merchants, physicians, lawyers, or to occupy some other position that does not require physical toil. Young women shun housework and seek an education in other lines. These need to learn that no man or woman is degraded by honest toil. That which degrades is idleness and selfish dependence. Idleness fosters self-indulgence, and the result is a life empty and barren—a field inviting the growth of every evil. ‘The earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.’ Hebrews 6:7, 8.” —*Education*, pp. 215, 216.

- 6. How does He regard another piece of land which is dressed the same way like the previous one, but brings only thorns and briers? Hebrews 6:8.**

EXHORTATION TO MINISTRY

- 7. What will God not forget if we serve him faithfully? Hebrews 6:9-12.**

11

Sabbath, March 15, 2008

Promises Made to Abraham

INTRODUCTION

“And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.” Genesis 15:5.

- 1. By whom did God swear when making promise to Abraham? Hebrews 6:13.**

2. On what other occasion did God make that oath? Hebrews 6:14; Genesis 22:15-17.

“I was bidden by the angel to notice that God swears by Himself. Genesis 22:16; Hebrews 6:13, 17. He swore to Abraham (Genesis 26:3), to Isaac (Psalm 105:9; Jeremiah 11:5), and to David (Psalm 132:11; Acts 2:30). God required of the children of Israel an oath between man and man. Exodus 22:10, 11. Jesus submitted to the oath in the hour of His trial. The high priest said unto Him: ‘I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God.’ Jesus said unto him: ‘Thou hast said.’ If Jesus in His teachings to His disciples referred to the judicial oath, He would have reproved the high priest, and there enforced His teachings, for the good of His followers present. Satan has been pleased that some have viewed oath taking in a wrong light; for it has given him opportunity to oppress them and take from them their Lord’s money. The stewards of God must be more wise, lay their plans, and prepare themselves to withstand Satan’s devices; for he is to make greater efforts than ever before.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 1, pp. 202, 203.

3. How do men usually end all their disputes? Hebrews 6:15, 16; Exodus 22:11.

4. Should Christian swear in the name of God? Philippians 1:8.

“I saw that if there is anyone on earth who can consistently testify under oath, it is the Christian. He lives in the light of God’s countenance. He grows strong in His strength. And when matters of importance must be decided by law, there is no one who can so well appeal to God as the Christian.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 1, p. 202.

5. Why did God confirm His promise to Abraham with an oath? Hebrews 6:17.

“Hope and courage are essential to perfect service for God. These are the fruit of faith. Despondency is sinful and unreasonable. God is able and willing ‘more abundantly’ (Hebrews 6:17) to bestow upon His servants the strength they need for test and trial. The plans of the enemies of His work may seem

to be well laid and firmly established, but God can overthrow the strongest of these. And this He does in His own time and way, when He sees that the faith of His servants has been sufficiently tested.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 164.

6. What were the two immutable things contained in the promise of God to Abraham? Hebrews 6:18 (first part); Genesis 22:17.

“Another compact—called in Scripture the ‘old’ covenant—was formed between God and Israel at Sinai, and was then ratified by the blood of a sacrifice. The Abrahamic covenant was ratified by the blood of Christ, and it is called the ‘second,’ or ‘new,’ covenant, because the blood by which it was sealed was shed after the blood of the first covenant. That the new covenant was valid in the days of Abraham is evident from the fact that it was then confirmed both by the promise and by the oath of God—the ‘two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie.’ Hebrews 6:18.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 371.

7. What does this promise mean to us who have fled this world to find refuge in God? Hebrews 6:18 (second part).

“The cities of refuge appointed for God’s ancient people were a symbol of the refuge provided in Christ. The same merciful Saviour who appointed those temporal cities of refuge has by the shedding of His own blood provided for the transgressors of God’s law a sure retreat, into which they may flee for safety from the second death. No power can take out of His hands the souls that go to Him for pardon. ‘There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.’ ‘Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us;’ that ‘we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.’ Romans 8:1, 34; Hebrews 6:18.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 516, 517.

8. How did the apostle describe our hope which enters into the Most Holy Place? Hebrews 6:19.

“Our faith must pierce beyond the veil, seeing things that are invisible. No one else can look for you. You must behold for yourself. In the place of murmuring for blessings that are withheld, let us remember and appreciate the blessings already bestowed (MS 42, 1901).”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 930.

9. Who entered into the most Holy Place for us and with what authority? Hebrews 6:20.

“Thither the faith of Christ’s disciples followed Him as He ascended from their sight. Here their hopes centered, ‘which hope we have,’ said Paul, ‘as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest forever.’ ‘Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.’ Hebrews 6:19, 20; 9:12.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 421.

12

Sabbath, March 22, 2008

Tithing System

INTRODUCTION

“But the tithing system did not originate with the Hebrews. From the earliest times the Lord claimed a tithe as His, and this claim was recognized and honored. Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, the priest of the most high God. Genesis 14:20. Jacob, when at Bethel, an exile and a wanderer, promised the Lord, ‘Of all that Thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto Thee.’ Genesis 28:22. As the Israelites were about to be established as a nation, the law of tithing was reaffirmed as one of the divinely ordained statutes upon obedience to which their prosperity depended.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 525.

IDENTIFICATION OF MELCHIZEDEK

1. **What information do we have in the Bible concerning Melchizedek? Hebrews 7:1; Genesis 14:18-20. What did Abraham do after he was blessed by Melchizedek? Hebrews 7:2.**

“Another who came out to welcome the victorious patriarch was Melchizedek, king of Salem, who brought forth bread and wine for the refreshment of his army. As ‘priest of the most high God,’ he pronounced a blessing upon Abraham, and gave thanks to the Lord, who had wrought so great a deliverance by his servant. And Abraham ‘gave him tithes of all.’—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 136.

“Melchizedek, in bestowing the benediction upon Abraham, had acknowledged Jehovah as the source of his strength and the author of the victory: ‘Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand.’ Genesis 14:19, 20. God was speaking to that people by His providence, but the last ray of light was rejected as all before had been.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 157.

2. What is impossible to find in Biblical genealogy about this king and priest? With whom is Melchizedek compared? Hebrews 7:3.

3. Was Melchizedek a heavenly or human being? Hebrews 7:4.

“There has been much discussion as to who Melchisedec was. Information concerning him is meager. He is mentioned in the OT only in Gen. 14:18-20; Ps. 110:4, and in the NT only in the book of Hebrews. There are some who believe that He was Christ; others, the Holy Spirit; others, Shem; still others, a supernatural being from another world. In the absence of good evidence for any of these positions, this commentary holds that Melchisedec was one of the contemporaries of Abraham, king of one of the small principalities of that time. He is set forth in Hebrews as a type of Christ, a representation based on the Messianic prediction in Ps. 110:4.”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 439.

“It was Christ that spoke through Melchisedek, the priest of the most high God. Melchisedek was not Christ, but he was the voice of God in the world, the representative of the Father. And all through the generations of the past, Christ has spoken; Christ has led His people, and has been the light of the world. When God chose Abraham as a representative of His truth, He took him out of his country, and away from his kindred, and set him apart. He desired to mold him after His own model. He desired to teach him according to His own plan.”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1, p. 1093.

4. **From whom did the Levites take tithes and why? Hebrews 7:5.**

SUPERIORITY OF MELCHIZEDEK

5. **How superior was Melchizedek to Abraham? Hebrews 7:6.**
6. **What is absolutely the truth about who is the greater of the two? Hebrews 7:7.**
7. **Which tithing system is most recognized? Hebrews 7:8. Who is that being who liveth?**

“The tithing system reaches back beyond the days of Moses. Men were required to offer to God gifts for religious purposes before the definite system was given to Moses, even as far back as the days of Adam. In complying with God’s requirements, they were to manifest in offerings their appreciation of His mercies and blessings to them. This was continued through successive generations, and was carried out by Abraham, who gave tithes to Melchizedek, the priest of the most high God. The same principle existed in the days of Job. Jacob, when at Bethel, an exile and penniless wanderer, lay down at night, solitary and alone, with a rock for his pillow, and there promised the Lord: ‘Of all that Thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto Thee.’ God does not compel men to give. All that they give must be voluntary. He will not have His treasury replenished with unwilling offerings.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 3, p. 393.

“This, of course, would not be literally true of Melchisedec, nor is the explanation adequate that this simply means that there is no record in the Bible of Melchisedec’s death. It appears that these words reach beyond Melchisedec to the greater One whom he represents. Of Christ it is affirmed that ‘he ever liveth’ (v. 25). The Melchisedec priesthood lives in Jesus Christ’s priesthood.”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 440.

8. Who else paid tithes to Melchizedek? Hebrews 7:9, 10.

“The apostle here referred to the Lord’s plan for the maintenance of the priests who ministered in the temple. Those who were set apart to this holy office were supported by their brethren, to whom they ministered spiritual blessings. ‘Verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law.’ Hebrews 7:5. The tribe of Levi was chosen by the Lord for the sacred offices pertaining to the temple and the priesthood. Of the priest it was said, ‘The Lord thy God hath chosen him . . . to stand to minister in the name of the Lord.’ (Deuteronomy 18:5.) One tenth of all the increase was claimed by the Lord as His own, and to withhold the tithe was regarded by Him as robbery.”—*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 336.

ADDITIONAL STUDY

“**Melchizedek.** The priest-king of Salem joins the king of Sodom in welcoming Abram. In the days of Abram, Jerusalem was known as Salem, or Shalem, ‘peace,’ or ‘security’ (see Ps. 76:2). The city of Jerusalem is first attested in Egyptian records of the 19th century B.C., and was then ruled by Amorite kings. Jerusalem means ‘city of peace,’ and Melchizedek, ‘my king is righteous’ or ‘King of righteousness,’ as the name is interpreted in Heb. 7:2. While Sodom’s king came to meet Abram with the purpose of obtaining the release of his subjects (Gen. 14:21), Melchizedek came to bless the victorious commander.

“**Bread and wine.** These were the chief products of Canaan. The purpose of Melchizedek’s meeting Abram with bread and wine has been the subject of much speculation. Some have thought that these were presented to Abram and his soldiers as refreshments, others consider them symbolic of the transfer of the soil of Canaan to the patriarch. Most likely they were simply a token of gratitude to Abram for recovering peace, freedom, and prosperity to the land.

“**He was the priest.** The occurrence of the term ‘priest,’ here used for the first time, implies the existence of a regularly constituted form of sacrificial worship.

“**The most high God.** Hebrew *‘El-‘Elyon*, this name for God occurs only here and in v. 22. The first part of this word, *‘El*, from the same root as *‘Elohim*, signifies the ‘Strong One.’ It is seldom applied to God without some qualifying attribute, as in *El-Shaddai*, ‘God Almighty,’ or *‘Eloe-Yisra’El*, ‘God of Israel.’ The second term, *‘Elyon*, occurring frequently in the OT (Num. 24:16; Deut. 32:8; 2 Sam. 22:14; etc.), describes God as ‘the Highest,’ ‘the Exalted,’ ‘the Supreme One.’ It is surprising indeed to find among the wicked Canaanites and Amorites of Abram’s time a local ruler who was not only loyal to the true God but also officiated in a priestly capacity (cf. Ex. 2:16). It shows that God still had His faithful ones scattered here and there. Although in the minor-

ity, God's true servants had by no means vanished from the face of the earth. God has never been without faithful witnesses, however dark the period or however wicked its people.

"Bible commentators have speculated much about the person of Melchizedek, a priest-king who appears suddenly in the Biblical narrative only to disappear again into the impenetrable obscurity of ancient history. Such speculation is almost entirely without value. 'Melchizedek was not Christ' (EGW, RH, Feb. 18, 1890), but his work prefigured that of Christ (Ps. 110:4; Heb. 6:20 to 7:21; DA 578). His unexpected appearance makes him in a certain sense a timeless figure, and his priesthood a type of the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

"And he blessed him. In pronouncing the blessing of 'the most high God' upon Abram, Melchizedek acts in the role of a true priest (see on v. 20). The blessing itself is clothed in poetical language and consists of two parallelisms.

"Tithes of all. That Abram, and not Melchizedek, was the tithe payer is clearly stated in Heb. 7:4. Giving the tenth of the booty taken from the enemy was an acknowledgment of the divine priesthood of Melchizedek, and proves that Abram was well acquainted with the sacred institution of tithe paying.

"This is the first mention of tithing, repeatedly recognized throughout both the OT and the NT as a divine requirement (see Gen. 28:22; Lev. 27:30-33; Num. 18:21-28; Neh. 13:12; Matt. 23:23; Heb. 7:8). That Abram paid tithe shows clearly that this institution was not a later, temporary expedient to provide for the sacrificial services, but that it was a divinely instituted practice from the earliest times. By returning to God one tenth of his income the believer recognizes God's ownership over all his property. Abram, of whom God testified that he had kept His commandments, statutes, and laws (Gen. 26:5), performed all his religious duties conscientiously. One of them was to return to God a tenth of his increase. In this act the father of the faithful set an example for all those who desire to serve God and share in the divine blessing. As in days of old, God's promises for faithfulness in tithe paying are still valid (see Mal. 3:10). God is still ready to fulfill His promises and richly bless those who, like Abram, return to him a faithful tithe of their increase."—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1, pp. 308, 309.

**Please,
read the Report from Mongolia
on page 44.**

A Change of Priesthood

INTRODUCTION

“The high priest was designed in a special manner to represent Christ, who was to become a high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec. This order of priesthood was not to pass to another, or be superseded by another.”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 930.

1. Why was there a necessity of a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek? Hebrews 7:11.

“Perfection. “The Levitical priesthood and the ceremonial law were provisional and shadowy, pointing forward to the work that Christ was to perform. Perfection came not through the law but through the Christ to whom it pointed. This thought is further developed in chs. 9; 10.

“Law. Here, the entire Jewish system instituted at Sinai.

“What further need. The Levitical system was never intended to be an end in itself. It was to point men to Christ, in whom alone is salvation. If the system could have provided salvation apart from the work of Christ, then there would have been no need for the ministry of Christ.”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 440.

2. What other change followed the change of priesthood? Hebrews 7:12.

“The priesthood being changed. That is, from the Levitical to the Melchisedec.

“Change also of the law. The law provided that only the Levites could serve at the tabernacle, and that only the sons of Aaron could be priests. Furthermore, it regulated the services of the priests with reference to the dispensation in which they served. It would be necessary to change the law if a priest were selected from another tribe (v. 13) and a new order of things were introduced (ch. 8:13).”— *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 441.

3. What two legal evidences were related to Christ's priesthood? Which evidence was more legitimate? Hebrews 7:13-16.

“**13. He.** That is, Christ (v. 14).

“**Another tribe.** See on v. 14.

“**Gave attendance.** Or, ‘officiated.’

“**14. Juda.** See Micah 5:2; Matt. 1:1; Mark 10:47, 48; Luke 3:33; Rom. 1:3; Rev. 5:5.

“**Moses spake nothing.** The laws regulating the priesthood were given through Moses (Num. 3; 4).

“**15. More evident.** This seems to refer to the proposition set forth in v. 12, namely, that a change in law was necessary. Some hold that it refers to the temporary character of the Levitical priesthood. The prophecy referred to in v. 17, predicting that the new priesthood would be of a different order, makes it more evident that there must be a change in the law of the priesthood, or that the Levitical priesthood was provisional.

“**16. Carnal commandment.** Doubtless called ‘carnal’ with reference to the fact that the commandment specified succession by physical descent (Ex. 29:29, 30; Num. 20:26, 28).”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 441.

4. From which tribe and family could a high priest be chosen according to the Mosaic system? Numbers 3:1-3.

5. To which family and priesthood would a new high priest be related according to the prophecy? Hebrews 7:17; Psalm 110:4; Matthew 1:1; 21:9; 22:41-44.

6. For what reason must the Aaronic priesthood come to an end? Hebrews 7:18, 19 (first part).

“**18. For there is.** According to the Greek the connection between vs. 18, 19 is as follows: ‘There is, on the one hand, a disannulling of the commandment. . . and on the other, the bringing in of a better hope.’

“**A disannulling.** A stronger term than ‘being changed’ (v. 12). The law of the Levitical priesthood was designed to operate only until Jesus Christ, the great High Priest, took over His office. Then it was to be annulled.

“**Going before.** Or, ‘preceding,’ ‘former.’

“Weakness and unprofitableness. Not that it was so inherently, for God Himself had instituted it. But it failed because of the people’s attitude toward it. They made the law an end in itself and believed that obedience to it would bring them salvation. They had the gospel preached unto them, but it did not profit them, not being mixed with faith (ch. 4:2).

“19. The law made nothing perfect. That is, the law in and of itself. This does not mean that salvation was impossible for men in OT times. Perfection was possible, but by the same means it is achieved today--faith in Jesus Christ. ‘The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ. . . . But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster’ (See on Gal. 3:24, 25).”— *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 441.

7. **What kind of hope do we have through this new priesthood? Hebrews 7:19 (last part).**

“Bringing in of a better hope. For the connection of this phrase with its context see on v. 18. The better hope centers in Christ. He takes the place of the Levitical priesthood. This is the hope that is ‘set before us,’ our ‘anchor,’ ‘which entereth into that within the veil’ (ch. 6:18-20).

“Draw nigh unto God. This had been the purpose of the Levitical priesthood, but through faulty instruction and administration men felt that God was far removed from them. Now Jesus Christ, the High Priest, has entered ‘within the veil’ (ch. 6:19). He is seated ‘on the right hand of the Majesty on high’ (ch. 1:3); therefore men may ‘come boldly unto the throne of grace’ (ch. 4:16) and in full assurance draw near to God.”— *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 441.

8. **What was the connection of the two priesthoods to an oath of God? Hebrews 7:20, 21.**

“20. Not without an oath. See on ch. 6:17

“21. With an oath. The contrast is here set forth to show the superiority of the Melchisedec high priesthood. For the importance of the oath see on ch. 6:17.

“Repent. Gr. metamelomai, ‘to change one’s mind,’ ‘to regret’ (See on 2 Cor. 7:8, 9).

“After the order of Melchisedec. Textual evidence is divided (cf. p. 10) as to the retention or omission of this phrase. It is fully attested in v. 17.”— *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, pp. 441, 442.

MISSIONARY REPORT FROM MONGOLIA

To be read on Sabbath, March 29, 2008

*The Special Sabbath School Offering
will be gathered on Sabbath, April 5, 2008*

“This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” Matthews 24:14.

Greetings to all the brethren around the world in the loving name of our Lord.

Here are statistics about Mongolia and a report about our pioneering work there.

Mongolia has 2.8 million inhabitants; most of the land is covered with desert and plains. The relatively small population makes one think it is a little country, but in fact it covers 604,209 square miles of land. The country looks small on the world map because it is located between Russia and China.

The descendants of Genghis Khan, who once conquered Asia and parts of Europe, now inhabit Mongolia. Its main religion is Lamaist Buddhism of the Tibetan variety. Until the 20th century, the country was a land of Gentiles since there was no contact with Christianity. When Communism fell in 1990, however, missionaries were sent from Christian countries to preach the gospel.

Christianity has spread around the capital city, Ulaanbaatar, where there are around 24,000 Christians—about 3 percent of the registered population of the city. The interest in Christianity is relatively high and, as freedom increases, there is a high probability for Mongolia to become another Christian country in Asia.

The country’s economy depends mainly on underground resources such as copper, coal, tin, and gold, and primitive stock farming.

Most of the people, except for some in the capital city, eat mainly mutton (sheep meat) and drink milk. Bread is not common. Vegetables and fruits, imported from other countries, are considered food for the wealthy. Rural families live in small, round tents called yurts, made of leather and cloth. The economic standard is still very low.

Dear brothers and sisters, should not the message of the angel who will enlighten the whole world be preached in Mongolia also? On October 14, 2004, I arrived in that country without knowing anybody. I prayed that the Lord would open the way to preach the message there.

With the help of the Lord, I met a sister who speaks Korean. Through her, we started working to gain more interested souls. I met her relatives and the principal of a government nursery school. When I explained that the purpose of my visit was to preach the gospel, the principal gave me the opportunity to preach to her and the other teachers who worked at the school.

Then we started Bible studies with people who had never heard about Jesus or even seen a Bible. They were quite interested in the gospel. At first, only five to six people joined in the study; but later on, ten to twelve people did. They were all very interested and decided to believe in God.

In a short period of time, they heard about creation, the fall of man, and the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God. I could see that their hearts were touched. The gospel changed their hearts, and twelve souls decided to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour.

Several Protestants are now interested in the message and are studying about the Sabbath. This is just the beginning. The foundation is laid for a church in Mongolia. We could not baptize these people because they still have to study our principles of faith, but the seed of the gospel was sown, has germinated, and will continue to grow.

Now they need a place to gather. It is not possible to continue missionary activities without having a meeting place. Neither can the Mongolian brethren afford to build a church.

Therefore, I appeal to all brothers and sisters around the world. Thousands of years have passed since this earth was created, but Mongolia had never heard about creation and the Creator until a few years ago. We cannot expect Christ to come until the gospel of heaven has been preached to all nations and tongues. Shouldn't we continue to preach the gospel in Mongolia? We need a church building for this purpose. I appeal to you: pray for Mongolia and show your interest by supporting the work there. The resources that we have now surely have been given to us for times like this.

May God bless your willing offerings. Thank you for your support.

-Dai Chun Kang
Regional Representative

SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

for the First Half 2008

Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews

**The Special Sabbath School Offering
is dedicated to Mongolia**

*Remember to give your offering as an expression
of love and gratitude.*

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Sabbath, April 5, 2008

A New Covenant

INTRODUCTION

“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah” Jeremiah 31:31.

- 1. Of which covenant did Christ become the guarantor? Hebrews 7:22.**

- 2. What happened with the high priests, the guarantors of the Mosaic covenant? Hebrews 7:23.**

- 3. What was stated about the priesthood of Christ in the new covenant? Hebrews 7:24.**

“The high priest was designed in an especial manner to represent Christ, who was to become a high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec. This order of priesthood was not to pass to another, or be superseded by another”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 930.

4. Why is Christ's guarantee better than that of the high priest of Old Testament times? Hebrews 7:25; Jude 24.

"Christ offered up His broken body to purchase back God's heritage, to give man another trial. 'Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.' Heb. 7:25. By His spotless life, His obedience, His death on the cross of Calvary, Christ interceded for the lost race. And now, not as a mere petitioner does the Captain of our salvation intercede for us, but as a Conqueror claiming His victory. His offering is complete, and as our Intercessor He executes His self-appointed work, holding before God the censer containing His own spotless merits and the prayers, confessions, and thanksgiving of His people. Perfumed with the fragrance of His righteousness, these ascend to God as a sweet savor. The offering is wholly acceptable, and pardon covers all transgression."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 156.

"Let us raise our eyes to the open door of the sanctuary above, where the light of the glory of God shines in the face of Christ, who 'is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.' . . .

"The soul may ascend nearer heaven on the wings of praise. God is worshiped with song and music in the courts above, and as we express our gratitude, we are approximating to the worship of the heavenly hosts. 'Whoso offereth praise glorifieth' God. Let us with reverent joy come before our Creator, with 'thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.'"—*My Life Today*, p. 33.

"By His spotless life, His obedience, His death on the cross of Calvary, Christ interceded for the lost race. And now not as a mere petitioner does the Captain of our salvation intercede for us, but as a conqueror claiming His victory. His offering is complete, and as our intercessor He executes His self-appointed work, holding before God the censer containing His own spotless merits and the prayers, confessions, and thanksgiving of His people. Perfumed with the fragrance of His righteousness, the incense ascends to God as a sweet savor. The offering is wholly acceptable, and pardon covers all transgression. To the true believer Christ is indeed the minister of the sanctuary, officiating for him in the sanctuary, and speaking through God's appointed agencies.

"Christ is able to save to the uttermost all who come to Him in faith. He will cleanse them from all defilement if they will let Him. But if they cling to their sins, they cannot possibly be saved; for Christ's righteousness covers no sin unrepented of. God has declared that those who receive Christ as their Redeemer, accepting Him as the One who takes away all sin, will receive pardon for their transgressions. These are the terms of our election. Man's salvation depends upon his receiving Christ by faith. Those who will not receive Him lose eternal life because they refused to avail themselves of the only means provided by the Father and the Son for the salvation of a perishing world (MS 142, 1899)."—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, pp. 930-931.

5. What kind of high priest do sinners need? Hebrews 7:26, 27; 1 John 2:1, 2.

“Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. ‘With His stripes we are healed.’—*Desire of Ages*, p. 25.

6. How was the high priest appointed according to the Aaronic system, and how was he appointed according to the New Testament? Hebrews 7:28.

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Sabbath, April 12, 2008

A Better Covenant

INTRODUCTION

“And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” Matthew 26:27, 28.

1. How important is it that we have a high priest in the heavenly sanctuary? Hebrews 8:1.

“This is the only sanctuary that ever existed on the earth, of which the Bible gives any information. This was declared by Paul to be the sanctuary of the first covenant. But has the new covenant no sanctuary?

“Turning again to the book of Hebrews, the seekers for truth found that the existence of a second, or new-covenant sanctuary, was implied in the words of Paul already quoted: ‘Then verily the first covenant had also ordi-

nances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.’ And the use of the word ‘also’ intimates that Paul has before made mention of this sanctuary. Turning back to the beginning of the previous chapter, they read: ‘Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a Minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.’ Hebrews 8:1, 2.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 412, 413.

2. What kind of sanctuary exists in heaven? Hebrews 8:2.

“The Jewish tabernacle was a type of the Christian church. . . . The church on earth, composed of those who are faithful and loyal to God, is the ‘true tabernacle,’ whereof the Redeemer is the minister. God, and not man, pitched this tabernacle on a high, elevated platform.

“This tabernacle is Christ’s body, and from north, south, east, and west He gathers those who shall help to compose it. . . . A holy tabernacle is built up of those who receive Christ as their personal Saviour. . . . Christ is the minister of the true tabernacle, the high priest of all who believe in Him as a personal Saviour.”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 931.

3. In the Old Testament times, the high priest had to offer gifts and sacrifices in the earthly sanctuary. What does our High Priest have to offer in the heavenly sanctuary? Hebrews 8:3; Ephesians 5:2.

“Christ Jesus is represented as continually standing at the altar, momentarily offering up the sacrifice for the sins of the world. He is a minister of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man. The typical shadows of the Jewish tabernacle no longer possess any virtue. A daily and yearly typical atonement is no longer to be made, but the atoning sacrifice through a mediator is essential because of the constant commission of sin. Jesus is officiating in the presence of God, offering up His shed blood, as it had been a lamb slain. Jesus presents the oblation offered for every offense and every shortcoming of the sinner.”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, p. 1077.

4. Would Christ have been a priest here on earth? Hebrews 8:4.

5. According to what pattern did Moses make the sanctuary? Hebrews 8:5.

“In the building of the sanctuary as a dwelling place for God, Moses was directed to make all things according to the pattern of things in the heavens. God called him into the mount, and revealed to him the heavenly things, and in their similitude the tabernacle, with all that pertained to it, was fashioned.”—*Education*, p. 35.

6. What ministry was given to Christ in the heavenly sanctuary? Hebrews 8:6.

“God’s people are justified through the administration of the ‘better covenant,’ through Christ’s righteousness. A covenant is an agreement by which parties bind themselves and each other to the fulfillment of certain conditions. Thus the human agent enters into agreement with God to comply with the conditions specified in His Word. His conduct shows whether or not he respects these conditions.

“Man gains everything by obeying the covenant-keeping God. God’s attributes are imparted to man, enabling him to exercise mercy and compassion. God’s covenant assures us of His unchangeable character. Why, then, are those who claim to believe in God changeable, fickle, untrustworthy? Why do they not do service heartily, as under obligation to please and glorify God? It is not enough for us to have a general idea of God’s requirements. We must know for ourselves what His requirements and our obligations are. The terms of God’s covenant are, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.’ These are the conditions of life. ‘This do,’ Christ said, ‘and thou shalt live.’”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 932.

7. Why was it necessary to make a new covenant? Hebrews 8:7-9.

“The blessings of the new covenant are grounded purely on mercy in forgiving unrighteousness and sins. The Lord specifies, I will do thus and thus unto all who turn to Me, forsaking the evil and choosing the good. ‘I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.’ All who humble their hearts, confessing their sins, will find mercy

and grace and assurance. Has God, in showing mercy to the sinner, ceased to be just? Has He dishonored His holy law, and will He henceforth pass over the violation of it? God is true. He changes not. The conditions of salvation are ever the same. Life, eternal life, is for all who will obey God's law. . . .

“Under the new covenant, the conditions by which eternal life may be gained are the same as under the old—perfect obedience. Under the old covenant, there were many offenses of a daring, presumptuous character, for which there was no atonement specified by law. In the new and better covenant, Christ has fulfilled the law for the transgressors of law, if they receive Him by faith as a personal Saviour. ‘As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.’ Mercy and forgiveness are the reward of all who come to Christ trusting in His merits to take away their sins. In the better covenant we are cleansed from sin by the blood of Christ (Letter 276, 1904).”— *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 931.

8. What kind of new covenant will God make with His people? Hebrews 8:10-13.

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Sabbath, April 19, 2008

Sanctuary of the Old Covenant

INTRODUCTION

“And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.” Exodus 25:8.

- 1. The first covenant had its ordinances of divine service and its sanctuary, but how was the sanctuary described? Hebrews 9:1.**

- 2. What objects were located in the Most Holy Place? Hebrews 9:3-5 (first part); Exodus 40:1-3.**

“This altar was the most important object in the holy place. It seems unlikely that the author would omit mentioning it, especially since he is enumerating the articles which each apartment contains.

“However, the translation ‘altar of incense’ introduces a problem, since this altar seems here to be represented as situated in the most holy place, whereas in the ancient tabernacle it stood in the first apartment (Ex. 30:6). It is to be noted that the author does not state that the altar of incense *stood* in the second apartment; but only that the most holy ‘had’ the altar. The word translated ‘had’ may be rendered ‘contain,’ but this is not its only or necessary meaning.

“The connection between the altar and the most holy place here indicated may be that its function was closely connected with the most holy place. The incense offered daily on this altar was directed to the mercy seat in the most holy. There God manifested His presence between the cherubim, and as the incense ascended with the prayers of the worshipers, it filled the most holy place as well as the holy. The veil that separated the two apartments did not extend to the ceiling but reached only part way. Thus incense could be offered in the holy place—the only place where ordinary priests might enter—and yet reach the second apartment, the place to which it was directed. In 1 Kings 6:22 the altar of incense of Solomon’s Temple is described as being ‘by the oracle,’ that is, related to the most holy place, or belonging to the most holy place.”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 449.

- 3. What pieces of furniture were located in the first part, called the sanctuary? Hebrews 9:2; Exodus 40:4-5.**

- 4. What did the apostle Paul note after mentioning the cherubim of God’s glory? Hebrews 9:5 (second part).**

SACRIFICES OF THE OLD COVENANT

- 5. Who were serving daily in the first part of the sanctuary? Hebrews 9:6.**

- 6. How many times a year did the high priest enter into the most holy place? For whose sins did he there offer the blood? Hebrews 9:7; Leviticus 16:11-17.**

7. When did the Holy Spirit indicate the way into the Most Holy would be revealed? Hebrews 9:8.

“Christ was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. To many it has been a mystery why so many sacrificial offerings were required in the old dispensation, why so many bleeding victims were led to the altar. But the great truth that was to be kept before men, and imprinted upon mind and heart, was this, ‘Without shedding of blood is no remission.’ In every bleeding sacrifice was typified ‘the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’

“Christ Himself was the originator of the Jewish system of worship, in which, by types and symbols, were shadowed forth spiritual and heavenly things. Many forgot the true significance of these offerings; and the great truth that through Christ alone there is forgiveness of sin, was lost to them. The multiplying of sacrificial offerings, the blood of bulls and goats, could not take away sin.”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, pp. 932, 933.

8. What offerings and sacrifices were presented in the earthly sanctuary which was the symbol of the sanctuary in heaven? Hebrews 9:9, 10.

“A lesson was embodied in every sacrifice, impressed in every ceremony, solemnly preached by the priest in his holy office, and inculcated by God Himself --that through the blood of Christ alone is there forgiveness of sins. How little we as a people feel the force of this great truth! How seldom, by living, acting faith, do we bring into our lives this great truth, that there is forgiveness for the least sin, forgiveness for the greatest sin (RH Sept. 21, 1886)!

“Christ was without sin, else His life in human flesh and His death on the cross would have been of no more value in procuring grace for the sinner than the death of any other man. While He took upon Him humanity, it was a life taken into union with Deity. He could lay down His life as priest and also victim. He possessed in Himself power to lay it down and take it up again. He offered Himself without spot to God.

“The atonement of Christ sealed forever the everlasting covenant of grace. It was the fulfilling of every condition upon which God suspended the free communication of grace to the human family. Every barrier was then broken down which intercepted the freest exercise of grace, mercy, peace, and love to the most guilty of Adam’s race (MS 92, 1899).”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 933.

9. When did this reformation take place? Matthew 27:50, 51.

“After Christ died on the cross as a sin offering the ceremonial law could have no force. Yet it was connected with the moral law, and was glorious. The whole bore the stamp of divinity, and expressed the holiness, justice, and righteousness of God. And if the ministration of the dispensation to be done away was glorious, how much more must the reality be glorious, when Christ was revealed, giving His life-giving, sanctifying, Spirit to all who believe (RH April 22, 1902)?”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, p. 1095.

17

Sabbath, April 26, 2008

Sanctuary of the New Covenant

INTRODUCTION

“Jesus stands in the holy of holies, now to appear in the presence of God for us. There He ceases not to present His people moment by moment, complete in Himself. But because we are thus represented before the Father, we are not to imagine that we are to presume upon His mercy, and become careless, indifferent, and self-indulgent. Christ is not the minister of sin. We are complete in Him, accepted in the Beloved, only as we abide in Him by faith”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 933.

1. **In which sanctuary is Christ officiating as the high priest? Hebrews 9:11.**
2. **With what blood did Christ enter the most holy place? Hebrews 9:12.**

“The sacrificial service that had pointed to Christ passed away; but the eyes of men were turned to the true sacrifice for the sins of the world. The earthly priesthood ceased; but we look to Jesus, the minister of the new covenant, and ‘to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.’ The way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: . . . but Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, . . . by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.’ Heb. 12:24; 9:8-12.”—*Desire of Ages*, p. 166.

“Christ’s priestly intercession is now going on in the sanctuary above in our behalf. But how few have a real understanding that our great High Priest presents before the Father His own blood, claiming for the sinner who receives Him as his personal Saviour all the graces which His covenant embraces as the reward of His sacrifice. This sacrifice made Him abundantly able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him, seeing He liveth to make intercession for them (MS 92, 1899).” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 932.

3. What is the difference between the cleansing of sins with the blood of animals presented in the earthly sanctuary and the presentation of the blood of Christ in the most holy place in the heavenly sanctuary? Hebrews 9:13, 14.

“My much-respected brethren, you have not that earnest and unselfish devotion to the work of God that He requires of you. You have given your attention to temporal matters. You have trained your minds for business in order to thereby benefit yourselves. But God calls for you to come into closer union with Him, that He may mold and train you for His work. A solemn statement was made to ancient Israel that the man who should remain unclean and refuse to purify himself should be cut off from among the congregation. This has a special meaning for us. If it was necessary in ancient times for the unclean to be purified by the blood of sprinkling, how essential for those living in the perils of the last days, and exposed to the temptations of Satan, to have the blood of Christ applied to their hearts daily. ‘For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?’

“You should both do much more than you have done toward bearing the burdens of the work of the Lord. I adjure you to arouse from your lethargy, leave the vain idolatry of worldly things, and be in earnest to secure a title to your immortal inheritance. Work while it is day. Do not imperil your souls by forfeiting present opportunities. Do not make your eternal interests of sec-

ondary importance. Do not put the world before religion, and toil day after day to acquire its riches, while the peril of eternal bankruptcy threatens you. Every day is bringing you nearer to the final reckoning. Be ready to yield up the talents lent you, with the increase gained by their wise use.

“You cannot afford to sacrifice heaven or to jeopardize your safety. Do not let the deceitfulness of riches lead you to neglect the immortal treasure. Satan is a wily foe, and he is ever on your track, striving to ensnare you and compass your ruin. We are in the waiting time; let your loins be girded about and your lights shining, that you may wait for the Lord when He returns from the wedding, that when He comes and knocks you may open unto Him immediately.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 4, pp. 123, 124.

“Christ was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. To many it has been a mystery why so many sacrificial offerings were required in the old dispensation, why so many bleeding victims were led to the altar. But the great truth that was to be kept before men, and imprinted upon mind and heart, was this, ‘Without shedding of blood is no remission.’ In every bleeding sacrifice was typified ‘the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 932.

- 4. What did Christ accomplish for sinners in the heavenly sanctuary with His death? Hebrews 9:15.**

- 5. What is a person who makes a testament called? Only when does a testament become valid? Hebrews 9:16, 17.**

- 6. Only how could the first covenant be ratified? Hebrews 9:18-22.**

“Then followed the ratification of the covenant. An altar was built at the foot of the mountain, and beside it twelve pillars were set up, ‘according to the twelve tribes of Israel,’ as a testimony to their acceptance of the covenant. Sacrifices were then presented by young men chosen for the service.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 312.

7. How was the confirmation of the new testament made? Hebrews 9:23-28.

“It was Christ that spoke to His people through the prophets. The apostle Peter, writing to the Christian church, says that the prophets ‘prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.’ 1 Peter 1:10, 11. It is the voice of Christ that speaks to us through the Old Testament. ‘The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.’ Revelation 19:10.

“In His teachings while personally among men Jesus directed the minds of the people to the Old Testament. He said to the Jews, ‘Ye search the Scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of Me.’ John 5:39, R.V. At this time the books of the Old Testament were the only part of the Bible in existence. Again the Son of God declared, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’ And He added, ‘If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.’ Luke 16:29, 31.

“The ceremonial law was given by Christ. Even after it was no longer to be observed, Paul presented it before the Jews in its true position and value, showing its place in the plan of redemption and its relation to the work of Christ; and the great apostle pronounces this law glorious, worthy of its divine Originator. The solemn service of the sanctuary typified the grand truths that were to be revealed through successive generations. The cloud of incense ascending with the prayers of Israel represents His righteousness that alone can make the sinner’s prayer acceptable to God; the bleeding victim on the altar of sacrifice testified of a Redeemer to come; and from the holy of holies the visible token of the divine Presence shone forth. Thus through age after age of darkness and apostasy faith was kept alive in the hearts of men until the time came for the advent of the promised Messiah.

“Jesus was the light of His people--the Light of the world--before He came to earth in the form of humanity. The first gleam of light that pierced the gloom in which sin had wrapped the world, came from Christ. And from Him has come every ray of heaven’s brightness that has fallen upon the inhabitants of the earth. In the plan of redemption Christ is the Alpha and the Omega--the First and the Last.

“Since the Saviour shed His blood for the remission of sins, and ascended to heaven ‘to appear in the presence of God for us’ (Hebrews 9:24), light has been streaming from the cross of Calvary and from the holy places of the sanctuary above. But the clearer light granted us should not cause us to despise that which in earlier times was received through the types pointing to the coming Saviour. The gospel of Christ sheds light upon the Jewish economy and gives significance to the ceremonial law. As new truths are revealed, and

that which has been known from the beginning is brought into clearer light, the character and purposes of God are made manifest in His dealings with His chosen people. Every additional ray of light that we receive gives us a clearer understanding of the plan of redemption, which is the working out of the divine will in the salvation of man. We see new beauty and force in the inspired word, and we study its pages with a deeper and more absorbing interest.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 366-368.

18

Sabbath, May 3, 2008

The Time of Reformation

INTRODUCTION

“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.” Hebrews 10:4.

1. What could the ceremonial sacrifices not accomplish for those who continually offered them? Hebrews 10:1.

“God’s people, whom He calls His peculiar treasure, were privileged with a two-fold system of law; the moral and the ceremonial. The one, pointing back to creation to keep in remembrance the living God who made the world, whose claims are binding upon all men in every dispensation, and which will exist through all time and eternity. The other, given because of man’s transgression of the moral law, the obedience to which consisted in sacrifices and offerings pointing to the future redemption. Each is clear and distinct from the other.

“From the creation the moral law was an essential part of God’s divine plan, and was as unchangeable as Himself. The ceremonial law was to answer a particular purpose in Christ’s plan for the salvation of the race. The typical system of sacrifices and offerings was established that through these services the sinner might discern the great offering, Christ. But the Jews were so blinded by pride and sin that but few of them could see farther than the death of beasts as an atonement for sin; and when Christ, whom these offerings prefigured, came, they could not discern Him. The ceremonial law was glorious; it was the provision made

by Jesus Christ in counsel with His Father, to aid in the salvation of the race. The whole arrangement of the typical system was founded on Christ. Adam saw Christ prefigured in the innocent beast suffering the penalty of his transgression of Jehovah's law (RH May 6, 1875).”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, pp. 1094, 1095.

- 2. If the sins of the people could be purged by the animal sacrifices, why did they need to continue making them day after day? Hebrews 10:2.**

- 3. What purpose did animal sacrifices serve? Hebrews 10:3.**

- 4. What can never be removed by the blood of animals? Hebrews 10:4.**

- 5. What did the Son of God declare when He was ready to come to this world? Hebrews 10:5-7; Psalms 40:6-8.**

“Nearly two thousand years ago, a voice of mysterious import was heard in heaven, from the throne of God, ‘Lo, I come.’ ‘Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me. . . . Lo, I come (in the volume of the Book it is written of Me,) to do Thy will, O God.’ Heb. 10:5-7. In these words is announced the fulfillment of the purpose that had been hidden from eternal ages. Christ was about to visit our world, and to become incarnate. He says, ‘A body hast Thou prepared Me.’ Had He appeared with the glory that was His with the Father before the world was, we could not have endured the light of His presence. That we might behold it and not be destroyed, the manifestation of His glory was shrouded. His divinity was veiled with humanity,—the invisible glory in the visible human form.”—*Desire of Ages*, p. 23.

- 6. What sacrifices was the Son of God ready to make on this earth? Hebrews 10:8, 9.**

“This great purpose had been shadowed forth in types and symbols. The burning bush, in which Christ appeared to Moses, revealed God. The symbol chosen for the representation of the Deity was a lowly shrub, that seemingly had no attractions. This enshrined the Infinite. The all-merciful God shrouded His glory in a most humble type, that Moses could look upon it and live. So in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, God communicated with Israel, revealing to men His will, and imparting to them His grace. God’s glory was subdued, and His majesty veiled, that the weak vision of finite men might behold it. So Christ was to come in ‘the body of our humiliation’ (Phil. 3:21, R. V.), ‘in the likeness of men.’ In the eyes of the world He possessed no beauty that they should desire Him; yet He was the incarnate God, the light of heaven and earth. His glory was veiled, His greatness and majesty were hidden, that He might draw near to sorrowful, tempted men.”— *Desire of Ages*, p. 23

7. What was the result of the offering made by Christ according to God’s will? Hebrews 10:10.

“The death of Jesus Christ for the redemption of man lifts the veil and reflects a flood of light back hundreds of years, upon the whole institution of the Jewish system of religion. Without the death of Christ all this system was meaningless. The Jews reject Christ, and therefore their whole system of religion is to them indefinite, unexplainable, and uncertain. They attach as much importance to shadowy ceremonies of types which have met their antitype as they do to the law of the ten commandments, which was not a shadow, but a reality as enduring as the throne of Jehovah. The death of Christ elevates the Jewish system of types and ordinances, showing that they were of divine appointment, and for the purpose of keeping faith alive in the hearts of His people”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, p. 1097.

8. What could the daily sacrifices offered by the Levitical priests not remove? Hebrews 10:11.

9. How many sacrifices for sin did Christ offer for all time? Hebrews 10:12.

“Beholding Christ means studying His life as given in His Word. We are to dig for truth as for hidden treasure. We are to fix our eyes upon Christ.

When we take Him as our personal Saviour, this gives us boldness to approach the throne of grace. By beholding we become changed, morally assimilated to the One who is perfect in character. By receiving His imputed righteousness, through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, we become like Him. The image of Christ is cherished, and it captivates the whole being (MS 148, 1897).”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, p. 1098.

19

Sabbath, May 10, 2008

All Power Was Given to Him

INTRODUCTION

“I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” Daniel 7:13, 14.

1. **To whom was given all the power of the universe after the victory on Calvary? Hebrews 10:13; Psalm 110:1; Matthew 28:18.**

“And, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away.’ Daniel 7:13, 14. The coming of Christ here described is not His second coming to the earth. He comes to the Ancient of Days in heaven to receive dominion and glory and a kingdom, which will be given Him at the close of His work as a mediator. It is this coming, and not His second advent to the earth, that was foretold in prophecy to take place at the termination of the 2300 days in 1844. Attended by heavenly angels, our great High Priest enters the holy of holies and there appears in the presence of God to engage in the last acts of His ministration in behalf of man—to

perform the work of investigative judgment and to make an atonement for all who are shown to be entitled to its benefits.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 479, 480.

2. **What effect did Christ’s offering have on them that are being sanctified? Hebrews 10:14.**

3. **Of what change in the spiritual life is the Holy Spirit a witness? Hebrews 10:15, 16.**

4. **How can believers enter into the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary? Hebrews 10:17.**

HOLD FAST TO THE CONFESSION OF FAITH

5. **What will no longer be needed when sins have been forgiven? Hebrews 10:18.**

6. **What does the veil, through which believers can enter into the most holy place, symbolize? Hebrews 10:20, 21; John 10:7-9; 14:6.**

7. **How then should we, as true believers, approach God? Hebrews 10:22, 23.**

8. **How should we treat one another? Hebrews 10:24.**

“In the history of Joseph, Daniel, and his fellows we see how the golden chain of truth may bind the youth to the throne of God. They could not be tempted to turn aside from their course of integrity. They valued the favor of God far above the favor and praise of princes, and God loved them, and spread His shield over them. Because of their faithful integrity, because of their determination to honor God above every human power, the Lord signally honored them before men. They were honored by the Lord God of hosts, whose power is over all the works of His hand in heaven above and the earth beneath. These youth were not ashamed to display their true colors. Even in the court of the king, in their words, their habits, their practices, they confessed their faith in the Lord God of heaven. They refused to bow to any earthly mandate that detracted from the honor of God. They had strength from heaven to confess their allegiance to God. . . .” —*My Life Today*, p. 120.

“Though the Jews had the Scriptures which testified of Christ, they were not able to discern Christ in the Scriptures; and although we have the Old and the New Testament, men wrest the Scriptures to evade their truths; and in their interpretations of the Scriptures, they teach, as did the Pharisees, the maxims and traditions of men for the commandments of God. In Christ’s day the religious leaders had so long presented human ideas before the people, that the teaching of Christ was in every way opposed to their theories and practice. His sermon on the mount virtually contradicted the doctrines of the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees. They had so misrepresented God that He was looked upon as a stern judge, incapable of compassion, mercy, and love. They presented to the people endless maxims and traditions as proceeding from God, when they had no ‘Thus saith the Lord’ for their authority. Though they professed to know and to worship the true and living God, they wholly misrepresented Him; and the character of God, as represented by His Son, was as an original subject, a new gift to the world. Christ made every effort so to sweep away the misrepresentations of Satan, that the confidence of man in the love of God might be restored. He taught man to address the Supreme Ruler of the universe by the new name—‘Our Father.’ This name signifies His true relation to us, and when spoken in sincerity by human lips, it is music in the ears of God. Christ leads us to the throne of God by a new and living way, to present Him to us in His paternal love.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 309.

Holy Convocation

INTRODUCTION

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” Colossian 3:16.

- 1. About what were the Hebrew Christians admonished? What was the custom of some of them? Why should they be more faithful in this matter? Hebrews 10:25.**

“Some are indulging lustful appetite which wars against the soul and is a constant hindrance to their spiritual advancement. They constantly bear an accusing conscience, and if straight truths are talked they are prepared to be offended. They are self-condemned and feel that subjects have been purposely selected to touch their case. They feel grieved and injured, and withdraw themselves from the assemblies of the saints. They forsake the assembling of themselves together, for then their consciences are not so disturbed. They soon lose their interest in the meetings and their love for the truth, and, unless they entirely reform, will go back and take their position with the rebel host who stand under the black banner of Satan. If these will crucify fleshly lusts which war against the soul, they will get out of the way, where the arrows of truth will pass harmlessly by them. But while they indulge lustful appetite, and thus cherish their idols, they make themselves a mark for the arrows of truth to hit, and if truth is spoken at all, they must be wounded. Some think that they cannot reform, that health would be sacrificed should they attempt to leave the use of tea, tobacco, and flesh meats. This is the suggestion of Satan. It is these hurtful stimulants that are surely undermining the constitution and preparing the system for acute diseases by impairing Nature’s fine machinery and battering down her fortifications erected against disease and premature decay.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 1, pp. 548, 549.

- 2. If we willfully persist in sin after receiving the knowledge of the truth, what solemn reality must we face? Hebrews 10:26.**

3. Only what is left for those who sin willfully? Hebrews 10:27; Zephaniah 1:18.

“The confession was forced from his guilty soul by an awful sense of condemnation and a fearful looking for of judgment. The consequences that were to result to him filled him with terror, but there was no deep, heartbreaking grief in his soul, that he had betrayed the spotless Son of God and denied the Holy One of Israel. Pharaoh, when suffering under the judgments of God, acknowledged his sin in order to escape further punishment, but returned to his defiance of Heaven as soon as the plagues were stayed. These all lamented the results of sin, but did not sorrow for the sin itself.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 24.

4. What happened to anyone who disregarded the Law of Moses? Hebrews 10:28.

5. What, then, of the person who despises the Son of God? Hebrews 10:29.

“We are living in the most solemn period of this world’s history. The destiny of earth’s teeming multitudes is about to be decided. Our own future well-being and also the salvation of other souls depend upon the course which we now pursue. We need to be guided by the Spirit of truth. Every follower of Christ should earnestly inquire: ‘Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?’ We need to humble ourselves before the Lord, with fasting and prayer, and to meditate much upon His word, especially upon the scenes of the judgment. We should now seek a deep and living experience in the things of God. We have not a moment to lose. Events of vital importance are taking place around us; we are on Satan’s enchanted ground. Sleep not, sentinels of God; the foe is lurking near, ready at any moment, should you become lax and drowsy, to spring upon you and make you his prey.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 601.

6. To whom alone does vengeance belong and who will be the final judge of His people? Hebrews 10:30, 31.

- 7. Of what previous experiences did the apostle remind the Hebrew Christians? Hebrews 10:32, 33.**

- 8. What experience did they have in common with Apostle Paul? How did they endure their loss and why? Hebrews 10:34.**

- 9. How did they receive the promise of God, and what were they admonished not to do? Hebrews 10:35.**

“That this admonition is addressed to the church in the last days is evident from the words pointing to the nearness of the Lord’s coming: ‘For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come and will not tarry.’ And it is plainly implied that there would be a seeming delay and that the Lord would appear to tarry. The instruction here given is especially adapted to the experience of Adventists at this time. The people here addressed were in danger of making shipwreck of faith. They had done the will of God in following the guidance of His Spirit and His word; yet they could not understand His purpose in their past experience, nor could they discern the pathway before them, and they were tempted to doubt whether God had indeed been leading them. At this time the words were applicable: ‘Now the just shall live by faith.’ As the bright light of the ‘midnight cry’ had shone upon their pathway, and they had seen the prophecies unsealed and the rapidly fulfilling signs telling that the coming of Christ was near, they had walked, as it were, by sight. But now, bowed down by disappointed hopes, they could stand only by faith in God and in His word. The scoffing world were saying: ‘You have been deceived. Give up your faith, and say that the advent movement was of Satan.’ But God’s word declared: ‘If any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him.’ To renounce their faith now, and deny the power of the Holy Spirit which had attended the message, would be drawing back toward perdition. They were encouraged to steadfastness by the words of Paul: ‘Cast not away therefore your confidence;’ ‘ye have need of patience,’ ‘for yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.’ Their only safe course was to cherish the light which they had already received of God, hold fast to His promises, and continue to search the Scriptures, and patiently wait and watch to receive further light.”— *The Great Controversy*, p. 408.

10. What do Christians who are waiting for the second coming of Christ need? How would Apostle Paul react to the news that some of them have gone away from the faith? Hebrews 10:36-38.

“Many have an idea that they must do some part of the work alone. They have trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sin, but now they seek by their own efforts to live aright. But every such effort must fail. Jesus says, ‘Without Me ye can do nothing.’ Our growth in grace, our joy, our usefulness,—all depend upon our union with Christ. It is by communion with Him, daily, hourly,—by abiding in Him,—that we are to grow in grace. He is not only the Author, but the Finisher of our faith. It is Christ first and last and always. He is to be with us, not only at the beginning and the end of our course, but at every step of the way. David says, ‘I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.’ Psalm 16:8.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 69.

11. With what hope and conviction did Apostle Paul end his writing on this subject? Hebrews 10:39.

21

Sabbath, May 24, 2008

Heroes of faith in Pre-Mosaic Time

INTRODUCTION

“Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall: The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob...” Genesis 49:22-24.

DEFINITION OF FAITH

1. What is faith? Hebrews 11:1.

“Perfect faith, the surrender of self to God, simple trust in His pledged word, should be a part of every minister’s experience. Only as a minister has this experience can he make the subject of faith plain to the doubting and distrustful.

“Faith is not feeling. ‘Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.’ [Heb. 11:1.] True faith is in no sense allied to presumption. Only he who has true faith is secure against presumption, for presumption is Satan’s counterfeit of faith.

“Faith claims God’s promises and brings forth fruit in obedience. Presumption also claims the promises, but uses them as Satan did, to excuse transgression. Faith would have led our first parents to trust the love of God and to obey His commands. Presumption led them to transgress His law, believing that His great love would save them from the consequences of their sin. It is not faith that claims the favor of Heaven without complying with the conditions on which mercy is to be granted. Genuine faith has its foundation in the promises and provisions of the Scriptures.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 260.

2. What did the men of old obtain by faith? Hebrews 11:2.

“In the beginning God.’ Genesis 1:1. Here alone can the mind in its eager questioning, fleeing as the dove to the ark, find rest. Above, beneath, beyond, abides Infinite Love, working out all things to accomplish ‘the good pleasure of His goodness.’ 2 Thessalonians 1:11.”—*Education*, p. 134.

3. What do we understand by faith? Hebrews 11:3.

“The deepest students of science are constrained to recognize in nature the working of infinite power. But to man’s unaided reason, nature’s teaching cannot but be contradictory and disappointing. Only in the light of revelation can it be read aright. ‘Through faith we understand.’ Hebrews 11:3.”—*Education*, 134.

ABEL

4. What kind of sacrifice did Abel offer to God? What was essential in his sacrifice? Hebrews 11:4.

“So far as birth and religious instruction were concerned, these brothers were equal. Both were sinners, and both acknowledged the claims of God to reverence and worship. To outward appearance their religion was the same up to a certain point, but beyond this the difference between the two was great.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 72.

ENOCH

5. How did Enoch’s life on this earth end? Hebrews 11:5. What was his special spiritual gift? Jude 14, 15.

“To such communion God is calling us. As was Enoch’s, so must be their holiness of character who shall be redeemed from among men at the Lord’s second coming.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 54.

“Enoch continued to grow more heavenly while communing with God. His face was radiant with a holy light which would remain upon his countenance while instructing those who would hear his words of wisdom. His heavenly and dignified appearance struck the people with awe. The Lord loved Enoch because he steadfastly followed Him and abhorred iniquity and earnestly sought heavenly knowledge, that he might do His will perfectly. He yearned to unite himself still more closely to God, whom he feared, revered, and adored. God would not permit Enoch to die as other men, but sent His angels to take him to heaven without seeing death. In the presence of the righteous and the wicked, Enoch was removed from them. Those who loved him thought that God might have left him in some of his places of retirement, but after seeking him diligently, and being unable to find him, reported that he was not, for God took him.”—*The Story of Redemption*, p. 59.

6. How only can we please God? Hebrews 11:6.

“But faith is in no sense allied to presumption. Only he who has true faith is secure against presumption. For presumption is Satan’s counterfeit of faith. Faith claims God’s promises, and brings forth fruit in obedience. Presumption also claims the promises, but uses them as Satan did, to excuse transgression. Faith would have led our first parents to trust the love of God, and to obey His

commands. Presumption led them to transgress His law, believing that His great love would save them from the consequence of their sin. It is not faith that claims the favor of Heaven without complying with the conditions on which mercy is to be granted. Genuine faith has its foundation in the promises and provisions of the Scriptures.”—*Desire of Ages*, p. 126.

NOAH

7. How was Noah’s faith perfected? Hebrews 11:7.

“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.’ Hebrews 11:7. While Noah was giving his warning message to the world, his works testified of his sincerity. It was thus that his faith was perfected and made evident. He gave the world an example of believing just what God says. All that he possessed, he invested in the ark. As he began to construct that immense boat on dry ground, multitudes came from every direction to see the strange sight and to hear the earnest, fervent words of the singular preacher. Every blow struck upon the ark was a witness to the people.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 95.

ABRAHAM AND SARAH

8. When was Abraham’s supernatural faith demonstrated? Hebrews 11:8-19

“In the obedience of faith, Abraham had forsaken his native country--had turned away from the graves of his fathers and the home of his kindred. He had wandered as a stranger in the land of his inheritance. He had waited long for the birth of the promised heir. At the command of God he had sent away his son Ishmael. And now, when the child so long desired was entering upon manhood, and the patriarch seemed able to discern the fruition of his hopes, a trial greater than all others was before him.

“The command was expressed in words that must have wrung with anguish that father’s heart: ‘Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, . . . and offer him there for a burnt offering.’ Isaac was the light of his home, the solace of his old age, above all else the inheritor of the promised blessing. The loss of such a son by accident or disease would have been heart rending to the fond father; it would have bowed down his whitened head with grief; but he was commanded to shed the blood of that son with his own hand. It seemed to him a fearful impossibility.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 148.

ISAAC

9. Who was the main figure in the blessing referred to here? Hebrews 11:20; Genesis 27:26-40.

JACOB

10. What blessing did Jacob give to the sons of Joseph before his death? Hebrews 11:21; Genesis 48:1-22.

JOSEPH

11. What did Joseph prophecy at the end of his life? What instruction did he give concerning his bones? Hebrews 11:22; Genesis 50:24, 25.

22

Sabbath, May 31, 2008

Heroes of Faith in Post-Mosaic Time

INTRODUCTION

“And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place.” Judges 7:7.

MOSES

1. Who had a part in the saving of Moses' life shortly after he was born? Exodus 2:1-10.

“The mother succeeded in concealing the child for three months. Then, finding that she could no longer keep him safely, she prepared a little ark of rushes, making it watertight by means of slime and pitch; and laying the babe therein, she placed it among the flags at the river’s brink. She dared not remain to guard it, lest the child’s life and her own should be forfeited; but his sister, Miriam, lingered near, apparently indifferent, but anxiously watching to see what would become of her little brother. And there were other watchers. The mother’s earnest prayers had committed her child to the care of God; and angels, unseen, hovered above his lowly resting place. Angels directed Pharaoh’s daughter thither. Her curiosity was excited by the little basket, and as she looked upon the beautiful child within, she read the story at a glance. The tears of the babe awakened her compassion, and her sympathies went out to the unknown mother who had resorted to this means to preserve the life of her precious little one. She determined that he should be saved; she would adopt him as her own.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 243.

2. **What decision did Moses make when he was forty years old? Hebrews 11:24-26; Acts 7:22-25.**

3. **How did Moses choose between the king of Egypt and the God of heaven? Hebrews 11:27.**

4. **What dramatic events did the Israelites experience as they were led out of Egypt by Moses? Hebrews 11:28, 29.**

“Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength: thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters. Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness.” Psalms 74:13, 14.

“**Heads of leviathan.** See on Isa. 27:1. Evidently another allusion to Egypt’s power (see on v. 13).

“**People inhabiting.** The wild creatures of the desert (see Prov. 30:25, 26). The literal language portrays the monsters of the deep killed, thrown upon the shore, and made food for the wild creatures.”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 3, p. 807.

“Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan. He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; and he made the waters to stand as an heap. In the daytime also he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire. He clave the rocks in the wilder-

ness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths. He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers.” Psalms 78:12-16.

“Nevertheless he saved them for his name’s sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known. He rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through the depths, as through the wilderness. And he saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left.” Psalms 106:8-11.

- 5. What two miraculous events did Joshua and Rahab pass through? Hebrews 11:30, 31; Joshua 2:1.**

MANY OTHER HEROES OF FAITH

- 6. How many more heroes of faith and their fate were mentioned in the last part of this chapter? Hebrews 11:32-40.**
- 7. Which women received their dead resurrected? Hebrews 11:35; 1 Kings 11:17-24; 2 Kings 4:31-37.**
- 8. Who was sawn asunder? Hebrews 11:37.**

“**Sawn asunder.** According to tradition this was the fate of Isaiah.”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 478.

- 9. How many people were hidden in caves according to one account? Hebrews 11:38; 1 Kings 18:4.**

Endurance by Faith

INTRODUCTION

“Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” Revelation 14:12.

EXAMPLE OF CHRIST’S ENDURANCE

- 1. What are all Christians admonished to do by looking unto Jesus as their example? Hebrews 12:1, 2.**

“Paul presents the contrast between the chaplet of fading laurel received by the victor in the foot races, and the crown of immortal glory that will be given to him who runs with triumph the Christian race. ‘They do it,’ he declares, ‘to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.’ To win a perishable prize, the Grecian runners spared themselves no toil or discipline. We are striving for a prize infinitely more valuable, even the crown of everlasting life. How much more careful should be our striving, how much more willing our sacrifice and self-denial!”—*Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 311, 312.

- 2. Why should Christians not be tired or discouraged in their suffering? Hebrews 12:3.**

“Let us, then, cheerfully suffer something for Jesus’ sake, crucify self daily, and be partakers of Christ’s sufferings here, that we may be made partakers with Him of His glory, and be crowned with glory, honor, immortality, and eternal life.”—*Early Writings*, p. 114.

- 3. What have many Christians not yet experienced in their struggle with sin? Hebrews 12:4.**

“The Christian life is a warfare. The apostle Paul speaks of wrestling against principalities and powers as he fought the good fight of faith. Again, he declares: ‘Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.’ Ah, no. Today sin is cherished and excused. The sharp sword of the Spirit, the word of God, does not cut to the soul. Has religion changed? Has Satan’s enmity to God abated? A religious life once presented difficulties and demanded self-denial. All is made very easy now. And why is this? The professed people of God have compromised with the power of darkness.”—*Testimonies to the Church*, Vol. 5, p. 222.

EXHORTATION TO ENDURE GOD’S CHASTENING

4. What Biblical exhortation did many Christians forget? Hebrews 12:5, 6; Revelation 3:19.

“Our heavenly Father is never unmindful of those whom sorrow has touched. When David went up the Mount Olivet, ‘and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot’ (2 Samuel 15:30), the Lord was looking pityingly upon him. David was clothed in sackcloth, and his conscience was scourging him. The outward signs of humiliation testified of his contrition. In tearful, heartbroken utterances he presented his case to God, and the Lord did not forsake His servant. Never was David dearer to the heart of Infinite Love than when, conscience-smitten, he fled for his life from his enemies, who had been stirred to rebellion by his own son. The Lord says, ‘As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.’ Revelation 3:19. Christ lifts up the contrite heart and refines the mourning soul until it becomes His abode.”—*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 11.

5. What is proven when God or natural parents discipline their children? Hebrews 12:7.

6. If you escape the discipline in which all sons share, what does it mean? Hebrews 12:8.

7. If we pay due respect to the earthly fathers who discipline us, how should we submit to our heavenly Father? Hebrews 12:9, 10.

“The Saviour’s words have a message of comfort to those also who are suffering affliction or bereavement. Our sorrows do not spring out of the ground. God ‘doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.’ Lamentations 3:33. When He permits trials and afflictions, it is ‘for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness.’ Hebrews 12:10. If received in faith, the trial that seems so bitter and hard to bear will prove a blessing. The cruel blow that blights the joys of earth will be the means of turning our eyes to heaven. How many there are who would never have known Jesus had not sorrow led them to seek comfort in Him!”—*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 10.

8. Even though the chastening is never pleasant, how should we strengthen one another’s hands and make straight paths for our feet? Hebrews 12:11-13.

“Christ identifies His interest with that of humanity. The work that bears the divine credentials is that which manifests the spirit of Jesus, which reveals His love, His carefulness, His tenderness in dealing with the minds of men. What revelations would come to man if the curtain should be rolled back and you could see the result of your work in dealing with the erring who have needed most judicious treatment lest they should be turned out of the way. ‘Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.’”—*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 184.

Pursuing Peace

INTRODUCTION

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”
Matthew 5:9.

1. What should all Christians practice in their lives without which no one will see the Lord? Hebrews 12:14.

“The wilderness itself has neither glory nor excellence, and to the Lord is to be ascribed all the honor for the transformation wrought. This great work is of God. Therefore magnify not the men who are under the special working of His power. Glorify God, and He will continue to work.

“The Lord has a special work for His people to do at this time. He says: ‘Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees.’ This is the very work that the apostle Paul charges the churches to do. ‘Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees,’ he says, ‘and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.’ Hebrews 12:12-15.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 8, pp. 79, 80.

2. What should the children of God guard against? Hebrews 12:15.

“I pray that now as never before both ministers and church members may come up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty powers of darkness. Study prayerfully the seventeenth chapter of John. This chapter is not only to be read again and again; its truths are to be eaten and assimilated. ‘For their sakes,’ Christ prayed: ‘I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in

Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me.' John 17:19-23.

"Are these words, of such wonderful import to us, to be always neglected? God calls upon those who profess to be His children to study these words, to eat them, to live them. He calls upon them to seek for unity and love, else the candlestick will be moved out of its place."—*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 8, p. 80.

3. What immoral and worldly person was given as an example of someone we should not follow? Hebrews 12:16, 17.

"Esau had lightly valued the blessing while it seemed within his reach, but he desired to possess it now that it was gone from him forever. All the strength of his impulsive, passionate nature was aroused, and his grief and rage were terrible. He cried with an exceeding bitter cry, 'Bless me, even me also, O my father!' 'Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?' But the promise given was not to be recalled. The birthright which he had so carelessly bartered he could not now regain. 'For one morsel of meat,' for a momentary gratification of appetite that had never been restrained, Esau sold his inheritance; but when he saw his folly, it was too late to recover the blessing. 'He found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.' Hebrews 12:16, 17. Esau was not shut out from the privilege of seeking God's favor by repentance, but he could find no means of recovering the birthright. His grief did not spring from conviction of sin; he did not desire to be reconciled to God. He sorrowed because of the results of his sin, but not for the sin itself."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 181.

4. What were the Hebrew Christians reminded of in relation to the experience of Israel at Mount Sinai? Hebrews 12:18-21.

"The preparations were made, according to the command; and in obedience to a further injunction, Moses directed that a barrier be placed about the mount, that neither man nor beast might intrude upon the sacred precinct. If any ventured so much as to touch it, the penalty was instant death."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 304.

5. To what place did the New Testament believers come to accept the new covenant mediated by Christ? Hebrews 12:22-24.

“It was their own evil heart of unbelief, controlled by Satan, that led them to hide their light, instead of shedding it upon surrounding peoples; it was that same bigoted spirit that caused them either to follow the iniquitous practices of the heathen or to shut themselves away in proud exclusiveness, as if God’s love and care were over them alone.

“As the Bible presents two laws, one changeless and eternal, the other provisional and temporary, so there are two covenants. The covenant of grace was first made with man in Eden, when after the Fall there was given a divine promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head. To all men this covenant offered pardon and the assisting grace of God for future obedience through faith in Christ. It also promised them eternal life on condition of fidelity to God’s law. Thus the patriarchs received the hope of salvation.

“This same covenant was renewed to Abraham in the promise, ‘In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.’ Genesis 22:18. This promise pointed to Christ. So Abraham understood it (see Galatian 3:8, 16), and he trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sins. It was this faith that was accounted unto him for righteousness. The covenant with Abraham also maintained the authority of God’s law. The Lord appeared unto Abraham, and said, ‘I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect.’ Genesis 17:1. The testimony of God concerning His faithful servant was, ‘Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.’ Genesis 26:5. And the Lord declared to him, ‘I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee.’ Genesis 17:7.

“Though this covenant was made with Adam and renewed to Abraham, it could not be ratified until the death of Christ. It had existed by the promise of God since the first intimation of redemption had been given; it had been accepted by faith; yet when ratified by Christ, it is called a new covenant. The law of God was the basis of this covenant, which was simply an arrangement for bringing men again into harmony with the divine will, placing them where they could obey God’s law.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 370, 371.

DANGER OF REFUSING GOD

6. What is more dangerous: to refuse God’s voice at Mount Sinai or the voice of the New Covenant? Hebrews 12:25, 26; Haggai 2:6.

“An earthquake marked the hour when Christ laid down His life, and another earthquake witnessed the moment when He took it up in triumph. He who had vanquished death and the grave came forth from the tomb with

the tread of a conqueror, amid the reeling of the earth, the flashing of lightning, and the roaring of thunder. When He shall come to the earth again, He will shake 'not the earth only, but also heaven.' 'The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage.' 'The heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll,' 'the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.' But 'the Lord will be the hope of His people, and the strength of the children of Israel.' Heb. 12:26; Isa. 24:20; 34:4; 2 Peter 3:10; Joel 3:16.

"At the death of Jesus the soldiers had beheld the earth wrapped in darkness at midday; but at the resurrection they saw the brightness of the angels illuminate the night, and heard the inhabitants of heaven singing with great joy and triumph: Thou hast vanquished Satan and the powers of darkness; Thou hast swallowed up death in victory!

"Christ came forth from the tomb glorified, and the Roman guard beheld Him. Their eyes were riveted upon the face of Him whom they had so recently mocked and derided. In this glorified Being they beheld the prisoner whom they had seen in the judgment hall, the one for whom they had plaited a crown of thorns. This was the One who had stood unresisting before Pilate and Herod, His form lacerated by the cruel scourge. This was He who had been nailed to the cross, at whom the priests and rulers, full of self-satisfaction, had wagged their heads, saying, 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save.' Matt. 27:42. This was He who had been laid in Joseph's new tomb. The decree of heaven had loosed the captive. Mountains piled upon mountains over His sepulcher could not have prevented Him from coming forth."—*Desire of Ages*, pp. 780, 781.

7. What do the words "Yet once more I shake..." signify? Hebrews 12:27.

"All who occupy positions in our institutions will be tested. If they will make Christ their pattern, He will give them wisdom and knowledge and understanding; they will grow in grace and aptitude in Christ's way; their characters will be molded after His similitude. If they fail of keeping the way of the Lord, another spirit will control the mind and judgment, and they will plan without the Lord and will take their own course and leave the positions they have occupied. The light has been given them; if they depart from it, let no man present a bribe to induce them to remain. They will be a hindrance and a snare. The time has come when everything is to be shaken that can be shaken, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Every case is coming in review before God; He is measuring the temple and the worshipers therein."—*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 7, p. 219.

8. How should we receive the promise of a new kingdom which cannot be moved? Hebrews 12:28, 29.

“All who became the subjects of Christ’s kingdom, he said, would give evidence of faith and repentance. Kindness, honesty, and fidelity would be seen in their lives. They would minister to the needy, and bring their offerings to God. They would shield the defenseless, and give an example of virtue and compassion. So the followers of Christ will give evidence of the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. In the daily life, justice, mercy, and the love of God will be seen. Otherwise they are like the chaff that is given to the fire.”—*Desire of Ages*, p. 107.

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Sabbath, June 21, 2008

Christian Love in the Social Realm

INTRODUCTION

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.” Matthew 5:43-44.

1. What should continue among Christians without ceasing? Hebrews 13:1.

“No matter how high the profession, he whose heart is not filled with love for God and his fellow men is not a true disciple of Christ. Though he should possess great faith and have power even to work miracles, yet without love his faith would be worthless. He might display great liberality; but should he, from some other motive than genuine love, bestow all his goods to feed the poor, the act would not commend him to the favor of God. In his zeal he might even meet a martyr’s death, yet if not actuated by love, he would be regarded by God as a deluded enthusiast or an ambitious hypocrite.”—*Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 318, 319.

2. Why is it important for Christians to practice hospitality? Hebrews 13:2.

“Paul exhorts the Hebrews: ‘Let brotherly love continue.’ Do not flatter yourselves that there is a time when this exhortation will not be needed; when brotherly love may cease. He continues: ‘Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.’ Please read Matthew 25:31 and onward. Read it, brethren, the next time you take the Bible at your morning or evening family devotions. The good works performed by those who are to be welcomed to the kingdom were done to Christ in the person of His suffering people. Those who had done these good works did not see that they had done anything for Christ. They had done no more than their duty to suffering humanity. Those on the left hand could not see that they had abused Christ in neglecting the wants of His people. But they had neglected to do for Jesus in the person of His saints, and for this neglect they were to go away into everlasting punishment. And one definite point of their neglect is thus stated: ‘I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in.’”—*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 1, pp. 679, 680.

3. Whom should Christians always keep in remembrance? Hebrews 13:3.

4. What human relation should always be kept honorable? Hebrews 13:4.

5. What will happen to fornicators and adulterers? Revelation 21:8. Why? Exodus 20:14.

“The ideas of courtship have their foundation in erroneous ideas concerning marriage. They follow impulse and blind passion. The courtship is carried on in a spirit of flirtation. The parties frequently violate the rules of modesty and reserve and are guilty of indiscretion, if they do not break the law of God. The high, noble, lofty design of God in the institution of marriage is not discerned; therefore the purest affections of the heart, the noblest traits of character are not developed.

“Not one word should be spoken, not one action performed, that you would not be willing the holy angels should look upon and register in the books above. You should have an eye single to the glory of God. The heart should have only pure, sanctified affection, worthy of the followers of Jesus Christ, exalted in its nature, and more heavenly than earthly. Anything different from this is debasing, degrading in courtship; and marriage cannot be holy and honorable in the sight of a pure and holy God, unless it is after the exalted Scriptural principle.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 55.

“After the creation of Adam every living creature was brought before him to receive its name; he saw that to each had been given a companion, but among them ‘there was not found an help meet for him.’ Among all the creatures that God had made on the earth, there was not one equal to man. And God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.’ Man was not made to dwell in solitude; he was to be a social being. Without companionship the beautiful scenes and delightful employments of Eden would have failed to yield perfect happiness. Even communion with angels could not have satisfied his desire for sympathy and companionship. There was none of the same nature to love and to be loved.

“God Himself gave Adam a companion. He provided ‘an help meet for him’—a helper corresponding to him—one who was fitted to be his companion, and who could be one with him in love and sympathy. Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him. A part of man, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, she was his second self, showing the close union and the affectionate attachment that should exist in this relation. ‘For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it.’ Ephesians 5:29. ‘Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one.’”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 46.

“God celebrated the first marriage. Thus the institution has for its originator the Creator of the universe. ‘Marriage is honourable’; it was one of the first gifts of God to man, and it is one of the two institutions that, after the fall, Adam brought with him beyond the gates of Paradise. When the divine principles are recognized and obeyed in this relation, marriage is a blessing; it guards the purity and happiness of the race, it provides for man’s social needs, it elevates the physical, the intellectual, and the moral nature.”—*The Adventist Home*, pp. 25, 26.

6. With what should every Christian be content? Hebrews 13:5; Deuteronomy 31:6, 8; Joshua 1:5.

“Christ did not tell His disciples that their work would be easy. He showed them the vast confederacy of evil arrayed against them. They would have to fight ‘against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the dark-

ness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.’ Ephesians 6:12. But they would not be left to fight alone. He assured them that He would be with them; and that if they would go forth in faith, they should move under the shield of Omnipotence. He bade them be brave and strong; for One mightier than angels would be in their ranks--the General of the armies of heaven. He made full provision for the prosecution of their work and took upon Himself the responsibility of its success. So long as they obeyed His word, and worked in connection with Him, they could not fail. Go to all nations, He bade them. Go to the farthest part of the habitable globe and be assured that My presence will be with you even there. Labor in faith and confidence; for the time will never come when I will forsake you. I will be with you always, helping you to perform your duty, guiding, comforting, sanctifying, sustaining you, giving you success in speaking words that shall draw the attention of others to heaven.”—*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 29.

7. In whom should be our trust? Hebrews 13:6; Psalm 27:1; 118:6.

“None should be allowed to pursue a course of study that will weaken their faith in the truth or in the Lord’s power, or diminish their respect for a life of holiness. I would warn the students not to advance one step in these lines, not even upon the advice of their instructors or men in positions of authority, unless they have first sought God individually with their hearts thrown open to the influences of the Holy Spirit and have obtained His counsel concerning the contemplated course of study. Let every unholy ambition be blotted out. Let every selfish desire to distinguish yourselves be set aside; let every suggestion from humanity be taken to God, and trust in the guidance of His Spirit....

“Do not commit yourselves to the keeping of men, but say, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will seek His counsel; I will be a doer of His will.’ All the advantages you may have cannot be a blessing to you, neither can the highest education qualify you to become a channel of light, unless you have the co-operation of the divine Spirit. It is as impossible for us to receive qualifications from men, without the divine enlightenment, as it was for the gods of Egypt to deliver those who trusted in them.”—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 411.

**Please,
read the Report from the
South Pacific Islands on page 91.**

Christian Love in the Religious Realm

INTRODUCTION

“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.” 1 Corinthians 13:13.

1. **Whom should Christians always respect? Hebrews 13:7.**

2. **Why should Christ always be our example? Hebrews 13:8.**

“The consecrated messengers who in the early days of Christianity carried to a perishing world the glad tidings of salvation, allowed no thought of self-exaltation to mar their presentation of Christ and Him crucified. They coveted neither authority nor pre-eminence. Hiding self in the Saviour, they exalted the great plan of salvation, and the life of Christ, the Author and Finisher of this plan. Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever, was the burden of their teaching.

“If those who today are teaching the word of God, would uplift the cross of Christ higher and still higher, their ministry would be far more successful. If sinners can be led to give one earnest look at the cross, if they can obtain a full view of the crucified Saviour, they will realize the depth of God’s compassion and the sinfulness of sin.

“Christ’s death proves God’s great love for man. It is our pledge of salvation. To remove the cross from the Christian would be like blotting the sun from the sky. The cross brings us near to God, reconciling us to Him. With the relenting compassion of a father’s love, Jehovah looks upon the suffering that His Son endured in order to save the race from eternal death, and accepts us in the Beloved.”—*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 209.

3. **What admonition is given us regarding strange doctrines? Hebrews 13:9.**

“I saw that our heavenly Father has bestowed upon us the great blessing of light upon the health reform that we may obey the claims which He has upon us and glorify Him in our bodies and spirits which are His and finally stand without fault before the throne of God. Our faith requires us to elevate the standard and take advance steps. While many question the course pursued by other health reformers, they as reasonable men should do something themselves. Our race is in a deplorable condition, suffering from disease of every description. Many have inherited disease and are great sufferers because of the wrong habits of their parents, and yet they pursue the same wrong course in regard to themselves and their children which was pursued toward them. They are ignorant in regard to themselves. They are sick and do not know that their own wrong habits are causing them immense suffering.

“There are but few as yet who are aroused sufficiently to understand how much their habits of diet have to do with their health, their characters, their usefulness in this world, and their eternal destiny. I saw that it is the duty of those who have received the light from heaven and have realized the benefit of walking in it, to manifest a greater interest for those who are still suffering for want of knowledge. Sabbathkeepers who are looking for the soon appearing of their Saviour should be the last to manifest a lack of interest in this great work of reform. Men and women must be instructed, and ministers and people should feel that the burden of the work rests upon them to agitate the subject and urge it home upon others.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol.1, pp. 488, 489.

- 4. What sacrifices cannot be eaten by the priests but are burnt outside the camp? Hebrews 13:10, 11.**

- 5. Where did Christ suffer and shed His blood? Hebrews 13:12-14.**

“Christ suffered without the gates of Jerusalem, for Calvary was outside the city walls. This was to show that He died, not for the Hebrews alone, but for all mankind. He proclaims to a fallen world that He is their Redeemer, and urges them to accept the salvation He offers (SW Sept. 4, 1906).”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 934.

- 6. With what kind of sacrifices is God well pleased? Hebrews 13:15, 16.**

“We are to be Christ’s representatives on the earth--pure, kind, just, and merciful, full of compassion, showing unselfishness in word and deed. Avarice and covetousness are vices that God abominates. They are the offspring of selfishness and sin, and they spoil every work with which they are allowed to mingle. Roughness and coarseness of character are imperfections which the Scriptures decidedly condemn as dishonoring to God.

‘Let your conversation--your disposition and habits--be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.’ ‘Therefore as ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also--the grace of Christian liberality. ‘To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.’”—*Medical Ministry*, p. 184.

7. Whom should Christians obey and why? Hebrews 13:17.

“The heart of the true Christian is imbued with true love, with a most earnest hunger for souls. He is not at rest until he is doing all that is in his power to seek and to save that which is lost. Time and strength are spent; toilsome work is not shunned. Others must be given the truth which has brought to his own soul such gladness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

“When the truly converted soul enjoys the love of God, he will feel his obligation to yoke up with Christ and work in harmony with Him. The Spirit of Christ rests upon him. He reveals the Saviour’s love, pity, and compassion, because he is one with Christ. He yearns to bring others to Jesus. His heart is melted with tenderness as he sees the peril of the souls that are out of Christ. He watches for souls as one that must give an account. With invitations and pleadings mingled with assurances of the promises of God, he seeks to win souls to Christ; and it is registered in the books of record. He is a laborer together with God.”—*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 122.

8. For what cause should Hebrew Christians pray for the apostle? Hebrews 13:18, 19.

9. With what well wishing salutation did Paul close his epistle? Hebrews 13:20-25.

“The religion of Jesus Christ means something more than talk. The righteousness of Christ consists in right actions and good works from pure, unselfish motives....Christ came to do His Father’s will. Are we following in His steps? All who have named the name of Christ should be constantly seeking for a more intimate acquaintance with Him, that they may walk even as He walked, and do the works of Christ. . . .

“It is the work we do, or do not do, that tells with tremendous power upon our lives and destinies. God requires us to improve every opportunity for usefulness that is offered us. Neglect in doing this is perilous to our spiritual growth. We have a great work to do.

“The duties that the Lord places in our way we are to perform, not as a cold, dreary exercise, but as a service of love. Bring into your work your highest powers and sympathies, and you will find that Christ is in it. His presence will make the work light, and your heart will be filled with joy. You will work in harmony with God, and in loyalty and love and fidelity. We are to be sincere, earnest Christians, doing faithfully the work placed in our hands.

“Every one who kindles his taper from the divine altar holds his lamp firmly. He does not use common fire upon his censer, but the holy fire, kept burning by the power of God day and night. Those who walk in the footsteps of Jesus, who will surrender their lives to His guidance and to His service, have the golden oil in their vessels with their lamps. They will never be placed in a position for which God has not made provision. The lamp of life is always trimmed by the very hand that lit it.”—*My Life Today*, p. 217.

MISSIONARY REPORT FROM THE SOUTH PACIFIC ISLANDS

To be read on Sabbath, June 28, 2008

*The Special Sabbath School Offering
will be gathered on Sabbath, July 5, 2008*

“And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.” Isaiah 11:11, 12.

Greetings to All in the Wonderful Name of Jesus!

The South Pacific Islands Mission Field does not have a long history, but the Lord Jesus has done an amazing work of grace in this region. The work began in New Zealand a number of years ago, and although it took considerable time to see signs of growth, members and friends have ever since been increasing in number. Likewise, the work in the South Pacific Islands is also growing, and today Fiji, Tonga, New Caledonia, Tahiti, Samoa, American Samoa and Papua New Guinea are all members of the South Pacific Islands Mission Field. The Islands are very difficult to minister because there are in fact too many of them--approximately 30,000 islands--that make up this Field. Since we are short of laborers for the Lord and have financial difficulties, the vast majority of these islands will not be ministered for some time.

The South Pacific Islands missionary field is not self sufficient, but its spiritual needs are supplied by Christchurch, New Zealand where the headquarters of the Field is located. The income from the islands is not enough to sustain an increasing number of Bible workers, as well as other means that would help spread the Word further to other islands. It is a blessing to see how these dear souls minister for the Lord in very tiring and difficult situations. It is, however, pleasing to see new members and friends on a regular basis.

The South Pacific Mission Field is unique in a number of ways. When the Sabbath is beginning in New Zealand, Fiji and Tonga, it is ending in Samoa and American Samoa. Besides, the South Pacific Mission Field is centered on three corners of the earth and it is a very special feeling to know that we, in the South Pacific Islands Mission Field, are called to preach “Jesus Christ our Righteous-

ness” and that this message has now reached three areas of the globe. This is in itself a sure sign that Jesus will return soon.

We need help to purchase property, build churches, hire more Bible workers and supply the spiritual needs of the people in this region. Many different languages are spoken in the various islands that must be cared for. To translate and then print the Sabbath School Lessons, the Sabbath Watchman, the Readings for the Week of Prayer, and other material is a major task and extremely expensive. Likewise, there are numerous other expenses, for example, salaries for Bible workers and travel costs for missionary trips. It should also be stated here that there is considerable poverty in the South Pacific Islands, and this is something that we must deal with by giving urgently needed help to these dear souls. Housing, clothing, food, medical and educational books and equipment, and other essentials are needed to provide a healthier way of life for all concerned.

It is our prayer that you will assist us to continue the “THE GREAT COMMISSION” here in the South Pacific. We have only reached a small number of islands and it is our earnest desire to be able to preach the Gospel to all the islands in the South Pacific, thereby fulfilling Jesus’ command, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” Matthew 28:19, 20.

Our prayers, love and blessings remain with you all as you consider our request for assistance to minister His name in fullness and truth to all the nations in the South Pacific Islands.

—Anton Salavyov
Regional Representative

