

The background of the cover is a high-angle, wide shot of the ancient Inca city of Machu Picchu. The city's stone ruins, including terraces, walls, and buildings, are spread across a lush green valley. In the center, there is a large, open grassy area. The city is surrounded by steep, forested mountains. The most prominent feature is a massive, jagged mountain peak that rises sharply behind the city, its slopes covered in dense green vegetation. The sky is a clear, vibrant blue. The title 'The Reformation Messenger' is overlaid on the top half of the image. 'The Reformation' is in a smaller, elegant script, while 'Messenger' is in a large, bold, golden-yellow script. Below the title, the volume and issue information is printed in a smaller, bold, yellow font.

# *The Reformation* **Messenger**

**VOLUME 30, NUMBER 5, SEPTEMBER/ OCTOBER 2023**

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His Son, Jesus Christ. He is the Owner and Sustainer. He met the challenge to His loving leadership and authority by reconciling the world to Himself through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, the Word made flesh. The Holy Spirit, Jesus' representative on earth convicts of sin, guides into truth, and gives strength to overcome all unrighteousness.

The Bible is the record of God's dealings with mankind and the standard of all doctrine, the Ten Commandments are the transcript of His character and the foundation of all enduring reform. His people, in harmony with God's word and under the direction of the Holy Spirit call all men everywhere to be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus. Bible prophecy reveals that earth's history will soon close with the visible return of Jesus Christ as King to claim all who have accepted Him as the world's only Redeemer and their Lord.

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### **PHOTO CREDITS**

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# Old Things are Passed Away

*"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."  
2 Corinthians 5:17*

"Those who become new creatures in Christ Jesus will bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.' Galatians 5:22, 23. They will no longer fashion themselves according to the former lusts, but by the faith of the Son of God they will follow in His steps, reflect His character, and purify themselves even as He is pure. The things they once hated they now love, and the things they once loved they hate. The proud and self-assertive become meek and lowly in heart. The vain and supercilious become serious and unobtrusive. . . . The vain customs and fashions of the world are laid aside."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 58

"Through the power of Christ, men and women have broken the chains of sinful habit. They have renounced selfishness. The profane have become reverent, the drunken sober, the profligate pure. Souls that have borne the likeness of Satan have become transformed into the image of God. This change is in itself the miracle of miracles. A change wrought by the Word, it is one of the deepest mysteries of the Word. We cannot understand it; we can only believe, as declared by the Scriptures, it is 'Christ in you, the hope of glory.'"—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 476

"Nothing but divine power can regenerate the human heart and imbue souls with the love of Christ, which will ever manifest itself with love for those for whom He died. . . . When a man is converted to God, a new moral taste is supplied, a new motive power is given, and he loves the things that God loves; for his life is bound up by the golden chain of the immutable promises to the life of Jesus. Love, joy, peace, and inexpressible gratitude will pervade the soul, and the language of him who is blessed will be, 'Thy gentleness hath made me great' (Psalm 18:35)." — *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 336

"The old nature, born of blood and the will of the flesh, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The old ways, the hereditary tendencies, the former habits, must be given up; for grace is not inherited. The new birth consists in having new motives, new tastes, new tendencies. Those who are begotten unto a new life by the Holy Spirit, have become partakers of the divine nature, and in all their habits and practices they will give evidence of their relationship to Christ." —*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1101

"As the sinner, drawn by the power of Christ, approaches the uplifted cross, and prostrates himself before it, there is a new creation. A new heart is given him. He becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. Holiness finds that it has nothing more to require. God Himself is 'the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.' Romans 3:26. And 'whom He justified, them He also glorified.' Romans 8:30. Great as is the shame and degradation through sin, even greater will be the honor and exaltation through redeeming love. To human beings striving for conformity to the divine image there is imparted an outlay of heaven's treasure, an excellency of power, that will place them higher than even the angels who have never fallen."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 162

"Conversion is a work that most do not appreciate. It is not a small matter to transform an earthly, sin-loving mind and bring it to understand the unspeakable love of Christ, the charms of His grace, and the excellency of God, so that the soul shall be imbued with divine love and captivated with the heavenly mysteries. When he understands these things, his former life appears disgusting and hateful. He hates sin, and, breaking his heart before God, he embraces Christ as the life and joy of the soul. He renounces his former pleasures. He has a new mind, new affections, new interest, new will; his sorrows, and desires, and love are all new. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, which have heretofore been preferred before Christ, are now turned from, and Christ is the charm of his life, the crown of his rejoicing. Heaven, which once possessed no charms, is now viewed in its riches and glory; and he contemplates it as his future home, where he shall see, love, and praise the One who hath redeemed him by His precious blood." — *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 294

*Ellen G. White*



## True Thanksgiving Through Obedience

*“O give thanks unto the LORD, for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever.” Psalm 107:1*

God has given us many bountiful blessings that we can be thankful for. Besides the greatest blessing, His love in giving His Son to die for our sins, He provides us with the marvelous works of His creation, His watchful care over us, and our daily bread. Even waking from sleep every morning is a blessing from God. In gratitude for all that He has given us, we give Him thanks. There are many different ways in which we can give thanks.

In the time of the Israelites, the people gave thanks to the Lord by singing praises to Him. They also thanked God by bringing a thank offering to the temple. All that we have comes from God. Therefore, it is good to thank Him. Not only in words, but by presenting offerings and gifts to Him.

We look at the example of Solomon, whose offering was accepted by God. “And Solomon went up thither to the brazen altar before the LORD, which was at the tabernacle of the congregation, and offered a thousand burnt offerings upon it. In that night did God appear unto Solomon, and said unto Him, Ask what I shall give thee.” 1 Chronicles 1:6–7. Because the Lord was pleased with Solomon’s offering, He told Solomon to ask of Him whatever he wished.

But, there is yet a better way to give thanks than through offerings. What could that be? What does God ask us to do to show our thanks to Him for all that He

has done for us? Let us read this in the following Bible verses:

“And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” 1 Samuel 15:22

“To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. . . . Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil.” Isaiah 1:11, 16

“Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” Micah 6:6–8

The many sacrifices performed by the Jewish people to atone for their sins, while lacking repentance, was displeasing to God. What is the better way to give thanks, more so than by a multitude of burnt offerings? To obey is better than sacrifice. Costly gifts cannot win the fa-

vour of God if we do not come to Him with a humble and contrite spirit, confessing our sins and obeying His word.

"But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God." Romans 2:8-11

Here we see the end result for the two classes of people on this earth. To those who do not obey, they will suffer for the deeds they have done. The righteous will receive the favour of God and will be blessed for their good deeds.

Paul tells us in Romans that we are servants to the one to whom we obey. We are either servants to sin, the result being eternal death. Or for those who are obedient to God, they are the servants of righteousness, having the reward of eternal life (Romans 6:16-18).

If we want to please God for all His bountiful blessings, we will show our thanksgiving to Him by rendering obedience to Him.

Adam and Eve obeyed the serpent instead of God and now the whole world is under the curse of sin because of their disobedience. Cain brought a thanks offering to God, but he did not obey God. In the end, he killed his brother, Abel.

Can we do this? Can we bring an offering to God in prayer, praise Him in song, give of our means? And then kill our brother by speaking evil of him, kill his reputation? Are we not like Cain when we do this?

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life in him." 1 John 3:14-15

When we have love for our brethren, this is evidence that we have passed from the death of sin unto life eternal. If there is someone that you do not love, you remain under the death of sin. Hatred towards someone is shown in evil speaking, in unkind criticism, and in hurting another's feelings. In this we are counted as murderers before God and all our thanksgiving and praise to God will be of no value.

Balaam took his journey to meet King Balak, who requested of him to curse Israel. God had already told

Balaam that he was not to go. Despite Balaam's initial misgivings, it seemed like a profitable business trip to gain gold and silver and great honour. But, was it the way of God or was it his own way? He disobeyed God and chose his own way. Many men go their own way and do their own will because of the potential to gain money. For example, many people work on Sabbath in order to earn more money. Judas went his own way because it was a profitable business to make 30 pieces of silver for the little work he was asked to do.

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Isaiah 53:6

There are very few who can see the wisdom in God's way. When the rich young man approached Jesus, to ask what he must do to gain eternal life, Jesus said to him, go and sell all that you have and give your money to the poor. Despite his boast to Jesus that he had kept all the commandments from his youth up, he went away from Jesus sorrowful because his love of money was keeping him from total obedience to God's law of love. Man's way is to hold onto his riches; he has worked hard for his money. God's way is to give of our money to help others.

Man's way is to seek revenge, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. God's way is to love your enemies, do good to them that hate you.

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts higher than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:9

A very common saying today is, "I don't feel like it." This is man's way. "I don't feel like going to do missionary work today." Did Abraham say to God, "I don't feel like sacrificing my son?" What if Jesus had said, "I don't feel like giving my life for sinners?" Many decisions are made based on feelings and emotions. Are they dependable? Can we trust them to guide us?"

All men are given a chance to learn of God. And if by chance they might feel after God, we show them a wonderful picture of our God, of Jesus, of salvation, trying to arouse the feelings of the people after God. "That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us." Acts 17:27

When people find God, they are interested in following Him; they feel like having peace, happiness, they like heaven, eternal life. They feel good about this all. Then along comes commandment-keeping, obedience, tithe

paying, Sabbath-keeping, a healthy diet. And the people do not feel so great about this religion any more, and many turn away. Their feelings went against obedience to God.

Often people say, "I don't like this church. I don't like that other church. I don't like these people." Whom do they then obey? Not God. Not the Bible. But their own feelings and emotions. And what can these lead to?

"These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever." Jude 12-13

"For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed." James 1:6

"And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it." Matthew 7:27

What are these floods, rains, and winds mentioned in the above verses? These are the trials, difficulties, affliction, and offenses that will come upon us. And those who are not firmly secured to the Rock, which is Jesus Christ, will rely on their own feelings to guide them. However, our feelings and emotions can deceive us and lead us away from God. Human wisdom is not able to understand truth. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Corinthians 2:14

Jesus said, I thank Thee Father, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent (Luke 10:21). Human wisdom says that man cannot walk on the water. God's wisdom says you can, and Peter did. Man's wisdom says that the world evolved over billions of years. God's wisdom says that God spoke and the earth was made. Man's wisdom says, no one can be made perfect. God's wisdom says, be ye perfect, now, today.

There is a group of people, the 144,000, who do not follow their own intelligence, feelings, or emotions. Whom do they follow? "These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb." Revelation 4:14. The 144,000 follow the Lamb, Jesus Christ.

In order to be with Christ, you may need to be in the company of those who are like Judas who betrayed Jesus, like doubting Thomas, like Peter who denied his Lord, or with the Sons of Thunder—John and James. We are told in Psalms, "I will declare Thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee." Psalm 22:22

Let us not give the Lord only lip service. Let us give the offering of obedience. Then our songs of praise will be accepted by our God. Children, if you want to thank your parents for all they have done for you, obey them, honour them. This is the best gift you can ever give them. In the same way, we honour God for all that He has done for us by our obedience. Amen.

*Sermon by Timo Martin*

**"No One to Live an Aimless Life.--Every soul is to minister. He is to use every physical, moral, and mental power--through sanctification of the Spirit--that he may be a laborer together with God. All are bound to devote themselves actively and unreservedly to God's service. They are to cooperate with Jesus Christ in the great work of helping others. Christ died for every man. He has ransomed every man by giving His life on the cross. This He did that man might no longer live an aimless, selfish life but that he might live unto Jesus Christ, who died for his salvation. All are not called upon to enter the ministry, but nevertheless, they are to minister. It is an insult to the Holy Spirit of God for any man to choose a life of self-serving." --The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 1159**

# The Budding

# Horn

**"In that day will I cause the horn of the house of Israel to bud forth, and I will give thee the opening of the mouth in the midst of them; and they shall know that I am the LORD." Ezekiel 29:21**

## THE OX AND ITS HORN

Most animals, especially herbivores, wild or tamed, have horns. Because they cannot bite to protect themselves as do the carnivores, their strength to fight lies in their horns.

Anciently, if an ox gored a person to death, it was killed as well as its owner if he had previous knowledge of the animal's aggressive behaviour but did nothing to keep it enclosed, as we read in the following verses. "If an ox gore a man or a woman, that they die: then the ox shall be surely stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be quit. But if the ox were wont to push with his horn in time past, and it hath been testified to his owner, and he hath not kept him in, but that he hath killed a man or a woman; the ox shall be stoned, and his owner also shall be put to death." Exodus 21:28-29

## THE HORN AS A SYMBOL

When you hear of a horn, biblically, perhaps what comes to the mind of most of you is the "little horn" or the other horns of the prophetic beasts in Daniel 7 and 8 and Revelation 13.

In the biblical context, a horn (*live*) symbolizes or means rejuvenation, ability, enabled, strength, might, control, power or rule. By the horn, an enemy is pushed away, stabbed and heavily wounded or killed. If by some reason, a horn(s) is broken, or cut off (Jeremiah 48:25; Lamentations 2:3), it means withdrawal of support, stripping off of power from the subject thus leading to a hopeless condition, falling easy prey to predators, ripe for easy destruction.

These figures have been widely applied spiritually in a biblical context in relation to the physical and spiritual welfare of God's people in wrestling with the powers of good and evil.

As you are aware, we were created perfect, with a pure, clean mind, endowed with high moral powers, so elevated and sublime. "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright ..." Ecclesiastes 7:9. In the image and after the likeness of God created He them (Genesis 1:26). But after the fall, all changed! Man's faculties of mind became so weak that by himself alone he became powerless to resist sin.

"After their sin, Adam and Eve were no longer to dwell in Eden. They earnestly entreated that they might remain in the home of their innocence and joy. They confessed that they had forfeited all right to that happy abode, but pledged themselves for the future to yield strict obedience to God. But they were told that their nature had become depraved by sin; they had lessened their strength to resist evil and had opened the way for Satan to gain more ready access to them. In their innocence they had yielded to temptation; and now, in a state of conscious guilt, they would have less power to maintain their integrity." *—Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 61

"From Adam's day to ours there has been a succession of falls, each greater than the last, in every species of crime." *—Temperance*, p. 227

The devil plants and instigates in man unfaithfulness and rebellion. Every sin indulged, or recklessly left unchecked has led to a more desperate condition. The whole head is filled with impure thoughts, desires, and evil images (imaginary or introduced), that make it al-

most impossible for a ray of light to penetrate and assert its power over the unholy imaginations and the dirt accumulated. It makes the brain feel cloudy, confused, anxious and heavy. Even if the victim wishes to be free, every resolution to stand firm against evil is floored by the power of lustful flesh falling hopeless to the ground.

### THE FOUR CARPENTERS

Countless times, the Israelites, God's chosen people, had fallen into sins of idolatry, adultery and fornication, injustice and defilement and general degradation. The Lord would then leave them to the horn(s) of their enemies to be tormented so that they come back to their senses and seek after their Creator in sincere repentance. In one instance, after being in captivity for seventy years, an angel pleaded before the Lord [for His sake] on behalf of Jerusalem. In response, the Lord sent four carpenters to cut off the horns of the enemies of His people.

"Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and behold four horns. And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What be these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. And the LORD showed me four carpenters. Then said I, What come these to do? And he spake, saying, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it." Zechariah 1:18–21

What do carpenters have? –Saws for cutting timber. By these, they cut the horns of the enemies. Just as the enemies are four, (verse 18) so are the carpenters, (verse 20) to deal squarely with the enemies.

How many spiritual enemies (horns) do you personally confront? Is it a struggle against ungratefulness, greed, lasciviousness, being a busybody, lies, unfaithfulness, profanity, no fearful regard for spiritual matters? You are entangled and hurt with a horn of doubt, despair, feeling God has not been kind, falling now and again in the same addiction, a feeling that since God has not given it, I will find it by myself, i.e. trying to help God bring about what you want? These are problems within yourself. Sins that may be so attached to you that the enemy has a stronghold on you and laughs at any efforts you make to free yourself.

Are the horns in the form of obstacles in preventing us from making progress, somehow external in nature? No family unity, no child in the home, or a broken mar-

riage? You struggle with a fruitless life, i.e. only your age has been changing and nothing else for the better? Is it abject poverty, or lack of good health? Spiritual life seems not to yield results? Or you just feel stuck in the same position for a long time? You long to break out and revamp yourself in physical terms and in a spiritual sense, but there is no advancement, and you are sure the backward way is certain?

Regardless of the sin or obstacle, as seen before in Zechariah 1:20–21, God has a carpenter ready for each one of us. Isaiah 49:24–25 is clear. The Lord can, and does, free someone even from what appears to be a hopeless case; hands raised in a token of surrender. "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? But thus saith the LORD, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children." So powerful!

### JESUS OUR HORN

The altar in the holy sanctuary had four horns. The priest took some blood from the sacrifice and with his finger, put it on the horns. (Leviticus 4:25).

One beautiful picture is found in the last part of the book of Luke's first chapter. The occasion was the birth of John the Baptist, but the prophecy here given was first about Jesus. Filled with the Holy Ghost, Zachariah declared:

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David. That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant!" verse 68–69, 71–72

Jesus is our horn. He is our power. He also is our present day carpenter as written in Zechariah 1:20, who is ready to cut the horn of our strongest enemy. We are talking about Jesus' solutions that are tailored to your situation and are very successful. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations..." 2 Peter 2:9. To qualify for this, you must have a trembling heart, crying to be helped and Christ will do it.

### THE BUDDING HORN AND ITS RESULTS

Before the opening verse, (Ezekiel 29:31) God gave Egypt [our enemy, symbol of bondage] to Nebuchadnezzar as his wages. In his great service for God against

Tyrus, he had made “every head bald, and every shoulder peeled,” but had not been paid yet for this service; him or his army (verse 18). God always pays for serving Him! After the enemy had been given as wages to Nebuchadnezzar, God said: “*In that day will I cause the horn of the house of Israel to bud forth.*” That is, make their strength grow back, giving them the needed ability to fight their enemies, and have words to speak in their midst.

This is a wonderful horn for us. When we let Jesus live in us by His Spirit, we *now* have power to forcefully resist evil. It imparts spiritual strength in areas where one is weak, giving spiritual and physical growth of one’s talents, resulting in a fully sanctified fruitful life. Is this not a beautiful picture of a *new life* that you have *longed* for? It will be that “there shall be no more a pricking brier unto the house of Israel” (Ezekiel 28:24)—the ultimate *result* of allowing this horn to grow in us. “That He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life. Luke 1:74–75. Thus will the enemy and the people know that the Lord, He is God (Ezekiel 29:21).

## OUR DUTY

Studies that have been done have proven that any achievement is a combination of a mentor’s major role, and active action on the part of the mentee. Our duty is to work with the horn as it grows in us, watching that the process does not halt and fail. The spiritual healing and restoration process must be enhanced. What exercises help the horn to grow? Here are seven points to be faithfully mastered by God’s grace.

1. Always keep in mind how unfruitful are the works of darkness (Ephesians 5:11), Satan’s false promise (s) of seeming enjoyment but hiding the consequences of a sinful act. The dejection that comes to a person who moved up high in all aspects and then was brought so low by one seemingly little act, plunging deep into the miry clay! Not to mention that Satan can kill his subject in the short time he is at his service.
2. Look to the goal of following Jesus and you will receive greater riches (Hebrews 11:26–27), joy, protection, abundance provisions and, in the end, eternal life.
3. Flee all spiritually and physically contaminated places (1 Corinthians 6:18). Take

your eyes away from such scenes. They are the soul’s greatest avenue for sin to enter. Job made a covenant with his eyes, and thus could not think upon a maid (Job 31:1). “Having eyes full of adultery.” 2 Peter 2:14. When your eyes are pure, you are pure.

4. Control your tongue (James 3:5–13).
5. Pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17) and read the word of God for spiritual food, joy and gladness (Jeremiah 15:16). Prayer and reading God’s word go along with meditation (Genesis 24:63) and attending the prayer meeting (Hebrews 10:25).
6. Fasting will enable you (Matthew 17:21) to conquer the power of the flesh, and exalt the moral powers. Thus, instead of the body controlling the will, and the mind, the mind controls the will and the body.
7. Share the word with others (Proverbs 11:25).

These are some of the powerful ways the Bible has stated that Christ uses to make one rise above sinful living. As the horn grows little by little, the power to resist evil and do good will be strengthened. From the beginning the Lord will provide grace so you can grow spiritually. Strength will be imparted (sometimes coming as “a little help” Daniel 11:34) to overcome small temptations, then bigger ones, until the mind is completely healed and sin appears unattractive and loathsome, as the trash in the rubbish bin. The discovery will come that, unlike what Satan claims as happiness, one sees instead that the journey with Christ is true happiness, full of fragrance, and advanced achievement in this life. Thus, life eternal is *assured*.

May the Lord help us as we cooperate with the budding horn. Amen.

*Joel Msiska, Malawi*





## Quest for intelligence

Adam, it has been estimated, had an IQ between 165 and 300. He would be considered a genius today. There is, however, no record of Adam's or King Solomon's IQ, so it would be challenging to compare them to men today. We do know that the Lord blessed Adam and Eve with intelligence such as He had not given to any other creature at creation. He made Adam the rightful sovereign over all the works of His hands. Man, made in the divine image, could contemplate and appreciate the glorious works of God in nature. Such a wonderful masterpiece that our Creator made.

### WHO WAS THE MOST INTELLIGENT KING IN THE BIBLE?

In the Bible we read that Solomon was the king who was most famous for his wisdom. In 1 Kings it is recorded that he sacrificed to God, and later we read how the Lord appeared to him in a dream, asking him what he wanted. Solomon asked for wisdom in order to be a better ruler and guide for his people. "Above every earthly good, the king desired wisdom and understanding for the accomplishment of the work God had given him to do. He longed for quickness of mind, for largeness of heart, for tenderness of spirit." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 28. Solomon's intelligence was the greatest among the wise. God answered his request and granted him great wisdom. He was bestowed with exceedingly deep insights, and had understanding beyond measure.

"But while the knowledge of science is power, the knowledge that Jesus came in person to impart is still greater power. The science of salvation is the most important science to be learned in the preparatory school of earth. The wisdom of Solomon is desirable, but the wisdom of Christ is far more desirable and more essential. We cannot reach Christ through mere intellectual training, but through Him, we can reach the highest round of the ladder of intellectual greatness. While the pursuit of knowledge in art, literature, and trades should not be discouraged, the student should first secure an experimental knowledge of God and His will." —*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 19. Solomon declares that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Proverbs 9:10. Concerning the value and importance of this wisdom, he writes: "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore, get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding." Proverbs 4:7



There are so many things to learn, so much to know in the search for intelligence. Modern technology although it seems intriguing, in reality it has created an irreversible mess. Globalization, artificial light, and large urban cities are causing a change in the atmospheric gases with rising concentrations of carbon dioxide and methane as well as industrial byproducts. Sometimes there are also radiation leaks. And not to mention the billions of electronic devices and antennas giving off large amounts of electromagnetic transmissions.

Would other planets' civilizations be like ours, with the same chemical and electromagnetic issues? We know that in the Spirit of Prophecy we can read about Sister White visiting another planet in vision, and clearly this was not an issue there. Today, though scientists have been searching for intelligent life beyond this earth. The search has been changing with time. They are now searching the skies for electronic signals similar to those we have on earth, which would indicate intelligent life forms in other parts of the heavens.

Worldly intelligence though is not always in line with the intellect that God desires His children to have. "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." 1 Corinthians 3:19. However, the Lord still does expect each person to develop their intellect to its maximum, "God requires the training of the mental faculties. He designs that His servants shall possess more intelligence and clearer discernment than the worldling, and He is displeased with those who are too careless or too indolent to become efficient, well-informed workers. The Lord bids us to love Him with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and with all the mind. This lays upon us the obligation of developing the intellect to its fullest capacity, that with all the mind we may know and love our Creator." *—Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 333

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding' (Proverbs 9:10). The great work of life is character building, and a knowledge of God is the foundation of all true education. To impart this knowledge and to mould the character in harmony with it, should be the object of the teacher's work. The law of God is a reflection of His character. . . . God has revealed Himself to us in His word and in the works of creation. Through the volume of inspiration and the book of nature, we are to obtain a knowledge of God." *—Christian Education*, p. 64

"The science of redemption is the science of all sciences; the science that is the study of the angels and of all the

intelligences of the unfallen worlds; the science that engages the attention of our Lord and Saviour; the science that enters into the purpose brooded in the mind of the Infinite—'kept in silence through times eternal;' the science that will be the study of God's redeemed throughout endless ages. This is the highest study in which it is possible for a man to engage. As no other study can, it will quicken the mind and uplift the soul." *—Education*, p. 325

"What we need is knowledge that will strengthen our minds and soul, that will make us better men and women. Heart education is of far more importance than mere book learning. It is well, even essential, to have a knowledge of the world in which we live; but if we leave eternity out of our reckoning, we shall make a failure from which we can never recover." *—Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene*, p. 388. Our hearts must be educated to become steadfast in God. We are to form habits of thought that will enable us to resist temptation. We must learn to look upward. The principles of the Word of God—principles that are as high as heaven, and that compass eternity—we are to understand in their bearing upon our daily life." *—Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 314

"The Lord is a God of knowledge. In His Word, He is represented as weighing men, their development of character, and all their motives, whether they be good or evil. Hannah, the mother of Samuel, the child granted her by God in answer to her earnest entreaty, said, 'The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by Him, actions are weighed' (1 Samuel 2:3). David declared, 'Men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity' (Psalm 62:9). Isaiah says, 'Thou, most upright, dost weigh the path of the just' (Isaiah 26:7). Solomon writes, 'All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes, but the Lord weigheth the spirits' (Proverbs 16:2). It is for the eternal interest of everyone to search his own heart and to improve every God-given faculty." *—The Upward Look*, p. 53

"'Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law.' Psalm 119:18. Could your eyes be opened, you would see not only good angels who are trying to impress hearts, but you would see also evil angels who are seeking to make of none effect the message of truth God has in mercy sent." *—Christ Triumphant*, p. 43

## HIGHER LEARNING

"He who is seeking with diligence to acquire the wis-

dom of human schools should remember that another school also claims him as a student. Christ was the greatest teacher the world ever saw. He brought to man knowledge direct from heaven. The lessons which He has given us are what we need for both the present and the future state. He sets before us the true aims of life, and how we may secure them.

"In the school of Christ, students are never graduated. Among the pupils are both old and young. Those who give heed to the instructions of the divine Teacher constantly advance in wisdom, refinement, and nobility of soul, and thus they are prepared to enter that higher school where advancement will continue throughout eternity.

"Infinite wisdom sets before us the great lessons of life—lessons of duty and happiness. These are often hard to learn, but without them, we can make no real progress." —*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 50–51

"Human knowledge of both material and spiritual things is partial and imperfect; therefore many are unable to harmonize their views of science with Scripture statements. Many accept mere theories and speculations as scientific facts, and they think that God's Word is to be tested by the teachings of 'science falsely so called.' . . . Men have endeavored to be wiser than their Creator; human philosophy has attempted to search out and explain mysteries which will never be revealed, through the eternal ages. . . . To many, scientific research has become a curse. God has permitted a flood of light to be

poured upon the world in discoveries in science and art; but even the greatest minds, if not guided by the Word of God in their research, become bewildered in their attempts to investigate the relations of science and revelation." —*Darkness Before Dawn*, p. 9, 8

God is the foundation of all true intelligence. He is the author of true science. "Rightly understood, science and the Written Word agree, and each sheds light on the other. Together they lead us to God, by teaching us something of the wise and beneficent laws through which He works." —*Christ Triumphant*, p. 426. "Knowledge of true science is power, but while the knowledge of science is power, the knowledge that Jesus came in person to impart is still greater power. The science of salvation is the most important science to be learned in the preparatory school of earth. The wisdom of Solomon is desirable, but the wisdom of Christ is far more desirable and more essential." —*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 19

"Learning is good. The wisdom of Solomon is desirable, but the wisdom of a greater than Solomon is far more desirable and essential. Through the learning in our schools, we cannot reach Christ, but we can through Christ reach the highest end of the ladder in science; for the word of inspiration says, 'Ye are complete in Him' (Colossians 2:10). Our first business is to see and acknowledge God, and then He will direct our path." —*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 6, p. 262. Amen.

Daniel Kimeu

**"Enoch Saw God Only by Faith.—Did he [Enoch] see God by his side? Only by faith. He knew that the Lord was there, and he adhered steadfastly to the principles of truth. We, too, are to walk with God. When we do this, our faces will be lighted up by the brightness of His presence, and when we meet one another, we shall speak of His power, saying, Praise God. Good is the Lord, and good is the word of the Lord.**

**"Christ a Constant Companion.—We can have what Enoch had. We can have Christ as our constant companion. Enoch walked with God, and when assailed by the tempter, he could talk with God about it. He had no 'It is written' as we have, but he had a knowledge of his heavenly Companion. He made God his Counsellor, and was closely bound up with Jesus. And Enoch was honored in this course. He was translated to heaven without seeing death. And those who will be translated at the close of time, will be those who commune with God on earth. Those who make manifest that their life is hid with Christ in God will ever be representing Him in all their life-practices. Selfishness will be cut out by the roots." —*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p.1087**



# What Doest Thou Here?

Have you ever felt lonely? Have you ever wondered if your life, passion, love, and work were in vain? Have you ever felt as if what you have believed was merely a lie and God has forsaken you? There was someone who felt exactly like you, and that is Elijah.

## THE TIME OF ELIJAH

Elijah is a representative figure of the 144,000 in different ways. He was the only one besides Enoch who went to heaven without seeing death. Hence, he appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration to represent those who would go to heaven without seeing death, along with Moses who represented those who would go to heaven after seeing death (Matthew 17:1-8).

He is also a representation of the remnant church in perspective of his mission. He was a reformer in his time. The condition of the world that he lived in, and had to reform, was very similar to ours. Let us see what was going on in his time.

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

The king of Israel in Elijah’s time was named Ahab. By the significant influence of his heathen wife, Jezebel, he made the whole kingdom worship Baal. Idols of Baal were everywhere. The time we live in is not different from Elijah’s at all.

“The apostasy prevailing today is similar to that which

in the prophet’s day overspread Israel. In the exaltation of the human above the divine, in the praise of popular leaders, in the worship of mammon, and in the placing of the teachings of science above the truths of revelation, multitudes today are following after Baal. Doubt and unbelief are exercising their baleful influence over mind and heart, and many are substituting for the oracles of God the theories of men. It is publicly taught that we have reached a time when human reason should be exalted above the teachings of the Word. The law of God, the divine standard of righteousness, is declared to be of no effect. The enemy of all truth is working with deceptive power to cause men and women to place human institutions where God should be, and to forget that which was ordained for the happiness and salvation of mankind.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 170

It is a sad reality that Baal worship is prevailing even in our times. Apostasy, popular leaders, science of humans, doubt, unbelief, skepticism, pleasure-seeking, money, and Sunday worship are all over the world and even stepping into the church.

## THE DREAM OF ELIJAH

Seeing this spiritual backsliding, Elijah’s heart was filled with sorrow, just as many faithful Christians in our times feel sorrow as they see evil prevailing in the world and even in the church. He prayed very hard for God to bring about a reformation and save the people.

“As Elijah saw Israel going deeper and deeper into idolatry, his soul was distressed and his indignation aroused. God had done great things for His people. He had delivered them from bondage and given them ‘the lands of the heathen, . . . that they might observe His statutes, and keep His laws.’ Psalm 105:44, 45. But the beneficent designs of Jehovah were now well-nigh for-

gotten. Unbelief was fast separating the chosen nation from the Source of their strength. Viewing this apostasy from his mountain retreat, Elijah was overwhelmed with sorrow. In anguish of soul he besought God to arrest the once-favored people in their wicked course, to visit them with judgments, if need be, that they might be led to see in its true light their departure from Heaven. He longed to see them brought to repentance before they should go to such lengths in evil-doing as to provoke the Lord to destroy them utterly." *-Ibid.*, p. 119

Elijah eagerly prayed. The reformation of the Israelites was not only his wish but also his hope, dream, passion, and purpose in life. God soon answered his prayer and sent him to start this work.

### THE SPIRIT OF ELIJAH

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

"Prophets" of Baal laughed at Elijah. Baal is the one who gives rain. What can the God of Elijah do about it? Do not worry—the rain will not stop. Days had passed, weeks had passed, and for 3 years, there was no rain. In this way, the power of the true God was shown.

Meanwhile, Elijah was protected by divine power. Even though Ahab looked for Elijah all over the country, he could never be found. Ravens brought bread to Elijah. When God had sent Elijah to a widow of Zarephath, who offered her last piece of food to God's servant, their flour and oil never dried up. One day, her son died, but God brought him back to life through Elijah.

Soon the time had come for Elijah to see Ahab again. As soon as Ahab saw Elijah, he blamed the prophet for all the suffering that came to Israel. "And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" 1 Kings 18:17. Throughout the ages, the faithful servants of God have received the same false accusation.

"It is natural for the wrongdoer to hold the messengers of God responsible for the calamities that come as the sure result of a departure from the way of righteousness. Those who place themselves in Satan's power are unable to see things as God sees them. When the mirror of truth is held up before them, they become indignant at the thought of receiving reproof. Blinded by sin, they refuse to repent; they feel that God's servants have turned against them and are worthy of severest censure." *-Ibid.*, p.139

We are also destined to face these false accusations. Evil people will create false rumours and false accusations to call God's faithful ones sinners. It is their attempt to calm

the trouble in their hearts that is caused by the Holy Spirit. They think that if they can prove their ideas that God's messengers are evil, their hearts will be freed from the trouble.

Elijah might have been able to make excuses. He had many options to make the king happy. However, he never hesitated in stating the truth. "And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim." 1 Kings 18:18

"Standing in conscious innocence before Ahab, Elijah makes no attempt to excuse himself or to flatter the king. Nor does he seek to evade the king's wrath by the good news that the drought is almost over. He has no apology to offer. Indignant, and jealous for the honor of God, he casts back the imputation of Ahab, fearlessly declaring to the king that it is his sins, and the sins of his fathers, that have brought upon Israel this terrible calamity. 'I have not troubled Israel,' Elijah boldly asserts, 'but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim.'

"Today there is need of the voice of stern rebuke; for grievous sins have separated the people from God. Infidelity is fast becoming fashionable. 'We will not have this man to reign over us,' is the language of thousands. Luke 19:14. The smooth sermons so often preached make no lasting impression; the trumpet does not give a certain sound. Men are not cut to the heart by the plain, sharp truths of God's word. . . .

"Those ministers who are men pleasers, who cry, Peace, peace, when God has not spoken peace, might well humble their hearts before God, asking pardon for their insincerity and their lack of moral courage. It is not from love for their neighbor that they smooth down the message entrusted to them, but because they are self-indulgent and ease-loving. True love seeks first the honor of God and the salvation of souls. Those who have this love will not evade the truth to save themselves from the unpleasant results of plain speaking. When souls are in peril, God's ministers will not consider self, but will speak the word given them to speak, refusing to excuse or palliate evil." *-Ibid.*, p. 140-141

In the nominal Adventist church, pastors avoid using the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy, (Sister White) in their sermons. The Three Angels' Messages are not sounded anymore, and the present truth is not studied. Why? It is because the clearer they state the truth, the harder it is for them to increase the number of members. And if the number of members does not increase, the tithe and offering income do not increase, hence being an obstacle for the "promotion" of position. In this context, many pastors in Christian churches provide baptism to increase quantity,

overlooking the quality of candidates' understanding and acceptance.

Truth is a narrow way (Matthew 7:14). Truth has never been popular, and God's true church has always been a little flock (Luke 12:32). God sees totally differently from humans; thus, the work should never be evaluated by human standards. In the eyes of humans, the work of John the Baptist seemed to be a failure, but how many things did God achieve through him? In human eyes, a widow's two coins seemed to be valueless. However, God made her a lesson and encouragement for thousands and millions of Christians throughout the ages.

### THE POWER OF ELIJAH

The king and the prophet went to Mount Carmel. On the mountain, two altars were made, one for Baal and one for God. "Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let Him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken." 1 Kings 18:22-24

Baal's prophets went first. They spent hours and hours praying, screaming, and even hurting themselves to ask for fire. However, they failed. Now, it was Elijah's turn. He built an altar with 12 stones as a representation of the 12 tribes of Israel and even poured water upon it. And then he prayed.



"Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, He is the God;

the LORD, He is the God. And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there." 1 Kings 18:38-40

This day was one of the greatest victories ever. Indeed, this miracle is repeatedly studied and preached among Christians up to this day as one of the greatest biblical stories.

Elijah's heart was full of excitement and expectation. Will Israel finally come back to God? Will there be a revival and reformation? Will Elijah's lifetime longing come true? He had been waiting for this day for so long. He prayed and dreamed for this day.

"Elijah had expected much from the miracle wrought on Carmel. He had hoped that after this display of God's power, Jezebel would no longer have influence over the mind of Ahab, and that there would be a speedy reform throughout Israel. All day on Carmel's height he had toiled without food. Yet when he guided the chariot of Ahab to the gate of Jezreel, his courage was strong, despite the physical strain under which he had labored." *-Ibid.*, p. 160

### THE DESPAIR OF ELIJAH

However, the next part of the story is very unexpected and surprising for us. "And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time. And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." 1 Kings 19:1-4

Why did Elijah run away? Why did Elijah even ask to die after such a great day of victory? Even though God knows the heart, for our sake, God asked him the same question. "And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and He said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?" 1 Kings 19:9

Elijah should not have run away. God did not send Elijah to the cave but to the king and the queen. Hence, God asked Elijah, "What doest thou here?" "Elijah should not have fled from his post of duty. He should have met the threat of Jezebel with an appeal for protection to the One who had commissioned him to vindicate the honor of Jehovah. He should have told the messenger that the God in whom he trusted would protect him against the hatred of the queen. Only a few hours had passed since he had witnessed a wonderful manifestation of divine power, and this should have given him assurance that he would not now be forsaken. Had he remained where he was, had he made God his refuge and strength, standing steadfast for the truth, he would have been shielded from harm. The Lord would have given him another signal victory by sending His judgments on Jezebel; and the impression made on the king and the people would have wrought a great reformation." *-Ibid.*, p. 160

Elijah answered the question of God. “And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.” 1 Kings 19:10. In his answer, we can see the reason why Elijah ran away and even asked for death.

Elijah had longed with all his life to see the revival of Israel. Reformation was his dream, passion, and the purpose in his life. And with the great day of victory, he expected to see this. However, he saw that even the manifestation of God’s power could not change the heart of Jezebel. She rather hated Elijah more with a more stubborn heart. Elijah knew that she would not stop. She would continue her evil work. Elijah’s purpose in life seemed to have failed. His work, effort, love, and passion seemed to have been in vain. Hence, he asked for death.

In our lives, there are moments when we wonder if our lives are in vain. Was my faith in vain? Was my dedication to God’s business in vain? Will evil powers continue prevailing, even with all the times, efforts and sacrifices I made for God? Was my love for these souls in vain? Was my love for my family in vain?

“Into the experience of all there come times of keen disappointment and utter discouragement—days when sorrow is the portion, and it is hard to believe that God is still the kind benefactor of His earthborn children; days when troubles harass the soul, till death seems preferable to life. It is then that many lose their hold on God and are brought into the slavery of doubt, the bondage of unbelief. Could we at such times discern with spiritual insight the meaning of God’s providences we should see angels seeking to save us from ourselves, striving to plant our feet upon a foundation more firm than the everlasting hills, and new faith, new life, would spring into being.” *–Ibid.*, p. 162

There are definitely these moments in our lives. There are times when we can see nothing but failure and emptiness. There are times when loneliness swallows our souls. Especially in the time of Jacob’s trouble, Satan will tempt us to think that our repentance and belief were in vain.

### A STILL SMALL VOICE

In His mercy, God came to Elijah to give him new strength and power.

“And He said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.” 1 Kings 19:11–12

When we feel lonely, empty, and weak, we try to fill our hearts in different ways. We might go meet people and spend time with them. We might enjoy our hobbies. People in the world try to find solutions for this emptiness from alcohol, drugs, parties, etc. In this way, they try to find answers in a great and strong wind, earthquake, and fire. However, none of them fill their hearts. Rather, it made them feel even more empty.

Then where can we find true satisfaction? “A still small voice.” To be able to hear a still small voice, we need to turn off all the other sounds. We should turn off the sound of excitement. We should remove the sound of disappointment. We should silence our hearts and listen to a still small voice through the Bible and a prayer. There, we can find true satisfaction. “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Isaiah 55:1; Matthew 11:28

Now as Elijah’s heart was silenced and was able to listen to a still small voice, God spoke to him. And God told Elijah exactly what he needed to know.

### GOD’S INVISIBLE HANDS

It seemed Elijah was the only one who believed in God despite the manifestation of God’s power. That made Elijah feel disappointed. He felt terribly lonely. However, God had never failed. His work was still going on. “Yet I have left Me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.” 1 Kings 19:18

Let us remember that God’s providence—His hands and work—is greater than our situations even if it is invisible to our eyes.



“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 tests and trials. 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.” *–Ibid.*, p. 164

Our lives may seem to be in vain. Our work may seem to be in vain. Evil might seem to still prevail. However, let us remember, no matter how great and firm our enemy’s power might be, God can overthrow it.

When the Israelites faced nothing but darkness and death at the Red Sea, God's providence was hidden under the sea. When the life of John the Baptist seemed to be in vain, God prepared a path for the Messiah through him. When Jesus seemed to be defeated on the cross, He conquered the world. When the great disappointment came and all the time, efforts, prayers and money that Adventist pioneers poured out seemed to be in vain, the present truth was given, preparing them to be part of the 144,000. When Elijah seemed to be the only one who worshiped the true God, and he felt terrible loneliness, God had 7000 men who never yielded to Baal.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us remember. No matter when and what, we are never alone. Even if things look hopeless and we are the only one who has the truth, we are never alone. Even if we cannot see these 7000 in Israel, God can see them.

We should never feel discouraged and stop His work. His greatest victory and glories are won when there is the thickest darkness.

#### WHAT DOEST THOU HERE?

"Much depends on the unceasing activity of those who are true and loyal, and for this reason Satan puts forth every possible effort to thwart the divine purpose to be wrought out through the obedient. He causes some to lose sight of their high and holy mission, and to become satisfied with the pleasures of this life. He leads them to settle down at ease, or, for the sake of greater worldly advantages, to remove from places where they might be a power for good. Others, he causes to flee in discouragement from duty, because of opposition or persecution. But all such are regarded by Heaven with tenderest pity. To every child of God whose voice the enemy of souls had succeeded in silencing, the question is addressed, 'What doest thou here?' I commissioned you to go into all the world and preach the gospel, to prepare a people for the day of God. Why are you here? Who sent you?" *-Ibid.*, p. 171

Satan knows what God can do through His servants. Thus, Satan does everything to stop them. Sometimes he uses comfort. He provides a comfortable and pleasant life. Just as some compromised ministers and missionaries have done, Satan tempts us to have peace with people who will take us away from our duty so that he can steal our peace with God.

Other times, he uses persecution. He causes jealousy and hatred among people against God's servants. Just like Jezebel, they try to kill the faithful ones. Sometimes they try to kill physically. Sometimes, they try to kill socially by spreading rumours and making false accusations so that there will be no one listening to their voice—just as how Ahab accused Elijah. Sometimes, they try to kill mentally,

by hurting God's servants' hearts through aggressive and abusive words. Many times, this hatred never stops.

He also uses discouragement. He tempts God's servants to wonder if their work, love, passion, and lives were in vain. Through all these methods, Satan tries to stop the voice of God's faithful ones.

To those who have stopped their voices, God asks: "Why are you here? Here is not where I have sent you. I did not send you to find ease. I did not send you to run away. My work is not done. Then why would you say it is done?"

This story finishes as God finally commanded Elijah: "And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way." 1 Kings 19:15

"Fellow Christian, Satan knows your weakness; therefore cling to Jesus. Abiding in God's love, you may stand every test. The righteousness of Christ alone can give you power to stem the tide of evil that is sweeping over the world. Bring faith into your experience. Faith lightens every burden, relieves every weariness. Providences that are now mysterious you may solve by continuing to trust in God. Walk by faith in the path He marks out. Trials will come, but go forward. This will strengthen your faith and fit you for service." *-Ibid.*, p. 175

My dear brothers and sisters, there are times when tides of discouragement and persecution come towards us. However, God asks us, "What Doest Thou Here?" Let us never leave our place. Let us stand firmly where we are called to go, even if Jezebel tries to kill us. Let us speak the truth even if Ahab falsely accuses us. Let us go forward even if it looks like evil prevails and the truth is defeated and is disappearing. Things might look dark. Providences might be mysterious. However, we do not need to know what God sees. We do not need to know how God will work. We do not need to know what His plan is. All we need to know is that He has a plan: and that is enough for us to hold onto our faith. Our God is powerful. He always shows us solutions in ways we could not even imagine. Therefore, dear readers, "Go, return on thy way." 1 Kings 19:15

It is my wish and prayer that all of us "shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Luke 1:17. Amen

**Makoto Matsumoto**



# The “holy/sacred books”

## and the Bible

### *Part One*



“This is a sacred book”, a “Holy one”, a woman rebuked her twelve year old son for having touched the Quran without washing his hands.

I would like to ask some questions.

- How many books have you ever seen, handled, or read, or heard it said that they are “sacred books” “holy books”?
- Do all your relatives, friends, family members, and workmates share the same religion as you?
- Suppose that you have a home library, how many holy books would you buy for your own spiritual instruction and for your family?

Many religions have books that claim to contain truth about their god (or gods). What makes the Bible different from other religious books? “Many books state who wrote them. Unless we have good reason to think otherwise, we accept their claim of authorship. The Bible claims to be written by God who moved men to pen His Word. We have seen that we have every reason to accept this claim. (But why? Why not for other religious books?). We must eventually ask about other so-called holy books: non-biblical books that also claim to be inspired by God. In particular, what about the Quran or the book of Mormon? Are these also the Word of God?” said Dr Lisle. <https://biblicalscienceinstitute.com/apologetics/the-bible-vs-other-holy-books/>

How can non-religious people find the way to salvation? How can they identify the true path? Is the Bible different from the Quran and other religious books?

This is a key question, since the major world religions (Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc...) each hold to the teachings of sacred writings.

#### **MANY SIMILARITIES BUT ALSO GREAT DIFFERENCES**

When you compare the teachings from the different sacred books you will likely find many similar teachings because we are all part of humanity. However, religions will differ greatly in their teachings. In the case of monotheistic religions (Islam, Christianity, Judaism), God is the one who sets the standard for what is right or wrong. In polytheistic religions you will have a multitude of gods who may or may not set a standard for the realms that they reside over. In religions such as Buddhism, where no God exists, the standard is set by rule of nature.

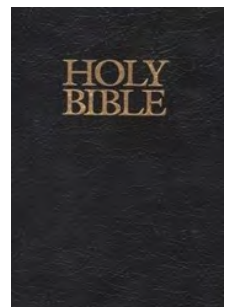
(See <https://www.biblword.net>). Who is one to believe is true?

From the mid-1970's through 1984, close to 40% of Americans considered the Bible the literal word of God, but this has been declining ever since, as we see the decline also of citizens who proclaim to be Christian. Meanwhile, the percentage defining the Bible as mere stories has doubled. Still, while biblical literalism has waned, the vast majority of Americans (71%) continue to view the Bible as a holy document, believing it is at least inspired by God, if not His own words.

What about you?

#### **HOLY / SACRED RELIGIOUS BOOKS AROUND THE WORLD**

There are different religions and many have books that they consider sacred, such as: Christians, Baháí, Mus-



lims, Hindus, Chinese Universists, Buddhists, Ethnoreligionists, Atheists, New-religionists, Sikhs, Jews, Spiritists, Confucianists, Jains, Shintoists, Taoists, Zoroastrians, etc. We will look at a few of the main ones.

**Hinduism** has a vast collection of sacred texts and written collections, including the Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, and more. They contain hymns, mantras, rituals, and philosophical discussions. Their holiest text is the Bhagwat Gita. It is considered the best holy book in India. It does not talk about religion or God but about how to live a successful, and satisfied life. Gita claims to have an answer to all the problems and miseries of life. Also, The Rāmāyana of Vālmiki (holy book in India) is considered by many contemporary Hindus to be a foundational religious text. Hindu scriptures deal with every aspect of human life including music, dance, war, sex, economics, philosophy, logic and grammar.

**Buddhism** has various sacred texts, the most important of which are the Tripitaka and the Mahayana Sutras. The Tripitaka is the primary holy text for Theravada Buddhists, while Mahayana Buddhists revere the Mahayana Sutras. There are many major Buddhist sects and they generally respect and study each other's sacred texts.

**Judaism.** The sacred texts of Judaism primarily include the Hebrew Bible, also known as the Tanakh, and the Talmud. The Tanakh consists of three parts: the Torah Pentateuch), the Nevi'im (Prophets), and the Ketuvim (Writings). There are two main versions: the Babylonian Talmud and the Jerusalem Talmud.

Different Jewish sects, such as Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist, generally accept the same sacred texts, although they may interpret them differently. All sects recognize the importance of the Tanakh, while the Talmud is primarily a central text in Orthodox and Conservative Judaism.

**Bahá'í Faith:** *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (Arabic: The Most Holy Book) is the central religious text of the Bahá'í Faith, written in Arabic by Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the religion, in 1873 while He was still imprisoned. It is "the

Mother-Book" of the Bahá'í teachings, and the "Charter of the future world civilization".

**The Quran, Hadith, and The Tafsir –**

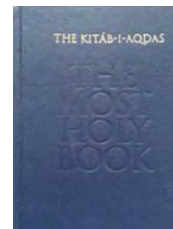
**Islam:** The Quran, also spelled as Koran, is the sacred religious text of Islam, considered by Muslims to be a revelation from God. The Scripture is widely regarded as the finest work of classical Arabic literature. The Quran is organized into 114 chapters as units called "sūrah". According to Islamic belief, the Quran was revealed by the Archangel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad in the western Arabian cities of Mecca and Medina. Many passages in the Quran are devoted to explaining the eschatological judgment by which God will lead every human being to heaven or hell and to describing the rewards for the saved and the torments of the damned. The Quran also includes accounts of some biblical people, such as Adam, Moses, Jesus, and Mary.

**The Book of Mormon:** "Another Testament of Jesus Christ" is a religious text of the Latter Day Saints movement, which, accord-

ing to Latter Day Saint theology, contains writings of ancient prophets who lived on the American continent from 600 BC to AD 421. It was first published in March 1830 by Joseph Smith as *The Book of Mormon: An Account Written by the Hand of Mormon upon Plates Taken from the Plates of Nephi*.

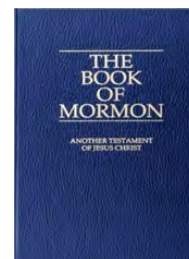
This book is accepted as holy scripture, in addition to the Bible. They also have *Doctrines and Covenants* (A compilation of revelations and writings given since the restoration of the Church). Many archaeologists, historians, and mainstream scientists do not consider *The Book of Mormon* to be an ancient record of actual historical events. Followers believe it to be a divinely inspired work revealed and translated by the founder of their religion, Joseph Smith. The other books considered holy by Mormons are the Bible, and *The Pearl of Great Price* which was also written by Joseph Smith.

**The Tao Te Ching of the Taoism:** (Taoism or Daoism) The Tao Te Ching is the primary text of Taoism. It is an ancient Chinese philosophy and religious tradition that

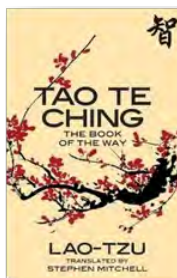


**Unless you search...**

**"None will be condemned for not heeding light and knowledge that they never had, and they could not obtain. . . . There will be no excuse for those who choose to go in error when they might understand what is truth. In His sufferings and death Jesus has made atonement for all sins of ignorance, but there is no provision made for willful blindness." –Last Day Events, p. 218–219**



emphasizes living in harmony with the Tao, the natural flow of the universe. Its sacred texts and collections of writings are numerous and varied, reflecting the diversity of Taoist thought and practice. Significant texts include the Tao Te Ching, the Zhuangzi, and the Daozang.



**Shintō religion:** The holy books of Shinto are the *Kojiki* or 'Records of Ancient Matters' (712CE) and the *Nihon-gi* or 'Chronicles of Japan' (720 AD). These books are compilations of ancient myths and traditional teachings that had previously been passed down orally.



## SUMMARIZING IDEAS ON THE OTHER HOLY BOOKS

The above lines show some of the holy books in the world. There are many more.

I ask, how many Gods are there? Are all these religions writing about the same god? It is very clear that all these books differ and are not in harmony. Some even have internal discrepancies in the same book. Is it possible that these books come from the same source, from one god?

You may not have read any of these books, but if you have had a chance to look through one, you should ask,

- How does it compare to the Bible?
- Do you consider it a “holy book”?
- What is your holy book?
- What are logic, scientific, spiritual proofs that one is really a “holy or sacred book”?
- What can you say to a non-religious person who asks, “I am confused, there many religions that differ from each other, and many holy books. What is the true one?”
- Are there many true sacred books and many good true religions?

All the above questions you should answer for yourself. Read and search, with an open heart and no preconceived ideas. How do we know if other religious writings are from God or not?

## CONCLUSION

Religion has been around for as long as humans have existed. Many different questions have been raised

about the Bible, however, the proof is within its pages and it has been discovered by experts and scholars.

We need to be sure of which one of all these is really true, and from the true God. This can be a big challenge for those who have not yet read, seen, handled or studied the different holy books of the major religions or the Bible. “Those who are engaged in the worship of demi-gods enter into the darkest region of ignorance, and still more so do the worshipers of the impersonal Absolute. The god is Śrī Kṛṣṇa...” wrote Abhay Charanaravinda Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness IS-KCON.

Then what is the true religion? What is the true holy and sacred book among all those that we know and those that we do not know yet? Do we accept the claim made regarding these books? We have good reasons to believe otherwise. All the so-called holy books are strikingly different from those that God inspired. For example, consider the way in which these books were written. Remember that God used primarily eye-witnesses to historical events recorded in Scripture, and He used multiple authors, and their writings agree with each other. Whereas, the information in the Quran is the work of one man, Mohammad, who did not witness the events the book describes. Likewise, the book of Mormon is apparently the work of one man, Joseph Smith, who did not witness the events described therein.

## THE BIBLE IS THE BOOK OF THE GOD

The Bible has not always been accepted as divinely inspired. In the past, “It required a desperate struggle for those who would be faithful to stand firm against the deceptions and abominations which were disguised in sacerdotal garments and introduced into the church. The Bible was not accepted as the standard of faith. The doctrine of religious freedom was termed heresy, and its upholders were hated and proscribed.” –*The Great Controversy*, p. 45

However, anyone who does diligent study with prayer will find that the Bible is true to its claim to be God’s inspired revelation to man. This is not true for all other so-called holy and sacred books.

The Bible was written by multiple authors who were eye-witnesses to the events they recorded. Two examples are: 1) Jeremiah asserted twenty times that “the word of the Lord came unto me.” 2) Ezekiel did so forty-six times. Human intelligence and skill alone could not possibly have produced the Bible. This is evident by the

fact that men have not been able to produce a book that comes near to the perfection, unity and continuity of the Bible.

Consider the marvelous unity of the Bible. Its 66 books were written by some 40 writers over a period of about 1600 years. These men lived at different periods of time and they were from different backgrounds, even speaking different languages. Among the writers of the Bible we find: kings, shepherds, prophets, and priests. They were not together nor lived in the same period. But the Bible is shown as: The "Word of God." Ephesians 6:17. "The oracles of God." 1 Peter 4:11 "The writing of God." Exodus 32:16. These books complement each other and there is one common thread that runs throughout. There is no contradictions found because it was inspired by God.

There are many proofs that it is really the Word of God. The Bible is even the basis of all good governments as is testified by the following great men:

**George Washington** – "It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible."

**Queen Victoria** – "That book accounts for the supremacy of England."

**Andrew Jackson** (Old Hickory) – "That book, sir, is the rock on which our republic stands."

**Horace Greeley** – "It is impossible to enslave mentally or socially a Bible reading people. The principles of the Bible are ground work of human wisdom."

**Thomas Huxley** – "The Bible is the Magna Charta of the poor and oppressed. The human race is not in a position to dispense with it."

Every President of the United States takes his oath of office with his hand placed on the Bible. When a king of England is crowned, the Archbishop takes a Bible from the altar and places it in his hands with these words: "Our gracious king, we present you with this Book, the most valuable thing the world affords. Here is the wisdom. This is the royal law. These are the lively oracles of God."

"Scriptures have treasures of truth that are revealed only to the earnest, humble, prayerful seeker. God designed the Bible to be a lessonbook to all mankind, in childhood, youth, and manhood, and to be studied through all time. It is the medium of communication

between God and man." –*Ibid.*, p. 69

"It is the first and highest duty of every rational being to learn from the Scriptures what is truth, and then to walk in the light and encourage others to follow his example. We should day by day study the Bible diligently, weighing every thought and comparing scripture with scripture. With divine help we are to form our opinions for ourselves as we are to answer for ourselves before God...The truths most plainly revealed in the Bible have been involved in doubt and darkness by learned men, who, with a pretense of great wisdom, teach that the Scriptures have a mystical, a secret, spiritual meaning not apparent in the language employed. These men are false teachers. It was to such a class that Jesus declared: 'Ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God.' Mark 12:24." –*Ibid.*, p. 598–599

#### ACCOUNTABILITY IN NOT SEARCHING FOR TRUTH

"None will be condemned for not heeding light and knowledge that they never had, and they could not obtain. . . .

"Those who have an opportunity to hear the truth and yet take no pains to hear or understand it, thinking that if they do not hear they will not be accountable, will be judged guilty before God the same as if they had heard and rejected. There will be no excuse for those who choose to go in error when they might understand what is truth. In His sufferings and death Jesus has made atonement for

all sins of ignorance, but there is no provision made for willful blindness." –*Last Day Events*, p. 218–219 (also read: *The Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary* vol. 5, p. 1145)

Dear reader, the Bible truly is the Mind of God in print and it represents the strongest appeal of any book ever written. It is the best source of faith, strength, comfort, and courage for all mankind. It imparts guidance and consolation to all people, regardless of their station in life. It exerts a very appealing influence which draws every earnest sincere seeker to read its pages. It is indeed the Word of God and the one and only true sacred, holy book. Amen.

**Victor Shumbusho, DR Congo**

( To be continued....part two, next issue)

***"There are not many ways to heaven. Each one may not choose his own way."  
–The Desire of Ages, p. 574***



# *She had no Name*



*Based on 2 Kings 5:1-4*

*In Scripture she had no name – yet she got fame.  
Was just a young, but godly girl, whom God did use to honour His great name.  
She was taken violently in a riot's rave,  
To nevermore enjoy her mother's, father's love...  
A company of Syrian soldiers raided Israel some years ago,  
By robbing, stealing, taking captives, it was so  
Among the captives was a faithful, very young native,  
Who is mentioned in this narrative.*

*Because of her good manners, humble disposition, she was chosen to be a maid  
to the wife of the renown, great captain of the host of Syria's king – Naaman.*

*But Naaman was smitten hard with leprosy,  
The disease destroying flesh and body.*

*The very thought of it, evokes terror, and great fear to anybody.*

*As the disease progressed it became more obvious,  
The skin becoming white, there was no way to hide,*

*And soon Naaman would no longer be the man,  
To lead the army to the battlefield as victorious captain.*

*On his limbs and body open sores will soon appear,  
Not be able putting on his armour,  
He will be disfigured before all.*

*And without Naaman's wise, courageous strategy,  
The army would not gain a victory.*

.....

*These were hard times to face Naaman and his army,*

*A true serious concern also for the king,*

*Because of leprosy, that awful, dreadful thing.*

*At home the godly Hebrew maid, did see her master's worsening condition,*

*The sadness in her mistress' and her husband's eyes,*

*As they envisioned the tragic outcome leprosy will cause,*

*That all hope and happiness come soon to nothing with great loss.*

*Then the maid took courage, she had compassion on Naaman, his severe disease,*

*To enter to her mistress' quarter, yet not with ease,*

*For she was not called, but urged in spirit, with a great sigh in her heart did say:*

*"Would God my Lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria!*

*He would recover him of his leprosy!"...*

*Then one man went to Naaman, to tell him what the maid did say.*

.....

*And the king of Syria sent Naaman to the king of Israel with a letter,*

*He went with change of raiments, gold and silver.*

*But it turned out to be an error, Israel's king was found in terror,*

*Fearing this whole thing was a scheme and threat for war ...*

*He rent his clothes, and when Elisha, the man of God heard of the cause,*

*He called Naaman to his house, to know there is a prophet in the land of Israel.*

*Standing with his entourage before the prophet's home.*

*Expecting eagerly the prophet out will come,*



*With a great gesture lay his hand on him,  
Calling on to God to make Naaman clean.  
But nothing of this sort was done, the prophet's servant just did come,  
To tell him "Go to Jordan, dip thyself there in the river seven times  
And you shall be clean..."*

*What is this? The man of God disdaining my presence?  
Does refuse to meet me with all my presents?  
This is a mockery to my position, this is not the way I did envision,  
To be so ignored - just a servant talking so to me, is an insult!  
I, the captain of the host - this makes me angry to the uttermost!  
And this Jordan? Are not the rivers of Damascus better,  
Can I not bathe and be clean there in the latter?"*  
*The anger in his face was clearly seen, he turned, went off in a hurry, with great fury...  
But his servants did entreat Naaman not to be so rash, rather considering  
If the prophet would have bid him to do some great thing,  
Would he not do it? But only said 'wash and be clean?'  
Then his anger was abased, his wounded pride erased,  
But humbly did submit and dipped as he was bidden,  
Seven times in the Jordan river, and then arose with a God-praising quiver,  
Shouting up to Heaven words of deepest gratitude,  
Thanksgiving, for his so miraculous great healing!  
Not only with a flesh anew, but heart and soul and mind did God renew.  
He was indeed reborn in every sense,  
The God of Israel he from now on will worship and give thanks.*



*.....*  
*With joy the entourage and a very happy Naaman,  
To Elisha did return then,  
With overflowing gratefulness bowed before the man of God,  
To shower him with silver, gold, but Elisha would receive it not,  
The gifts of God are free, without a fee,  
What God desires is the heart and will be given Him,  
That His Holy Spirit could freely move within,  
To mold the mind and souls to His own likeness,  
And stamp God's law upon the heart for righteousness and holiness...  
The now God-worshipping, God-fearing Naaman went on his way  
Back to Syria.  
And all who saw him - with an astonishing glance  
Noticed his healthy, vigorous appearance.  
For this dreadful leprosy was gone...*



*.....*  
*In great triumph, Naaman, with joy and gladness with his troop went home....  
The name of God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, through Naaman was glorified,  
As a living miracle he testified,  
What God can do to anyone, His grace and power is not specified,  
To any race or color, nation.  
He is a God of love, compassion, all He requires is submission,  
To His will and holy law supreme.  
He is the living God, the Holy One serene.  
But what this great change and wonder sparked alone,  
Was the faith, compassion of a little maid, who in Scripture did not have a name....  
Amen.*

*Edda Tedford, Canada*



From August 2–5, 2023, approximately 6000 believers from about 86 countries met in Cajamarca, Peru, to praise the Lord together. The coliseum was nearly full and the music resounded to all corners. You could sense the presence of the holy angels. It was a very small foretaste of heaven.

The Theme of the Conference was, “Prepare to Meet Thy God.” Amos 4:12. Brother Tzvetan Petkov, the new General Conference president gave the opening presentation for the conference. Today, we are preparing for Christ’s Second Coming. “At every meeting we attend, our prayers should ascend that at this very time, God will impart warmth and moisture to our souls. As we seek God for the Holy Spirit, it will work in us meekness, humbleness of mind, a conscious dependence upon God for the perfecting latter rain. If we pray for the blessing in faith, we shall receive it as God has promised.” –*The Review and Herald*, March 2, 1897

As we worshipped together for four days, many inspirational meetings were held to inspire both young and old to make earnest preparation for heaven while still having to live in this world. There are many different ways to prepare.

*There were subjects to encourage families and the youth:*

*Spiritual achievements of the youth*, was presented by

Brother Jose Giner. All youth want to be successful and victorious. Success or failure is not the same for the world as for God. For the world a person may be a failure, but they might be a success with God. In the Bible there are examples of such people. Joseph was a failure in his early life according to the world’s standards. His brothers sold him as a slave and then he ended up in prison without a cause. But in the eyes of God he was a success because he decided to be faithful regardless of his circumstances. He was just as faithful to God when he was a leader in Egypt. Circumstances should not mould a son or daughter of God. Circumstances may change, but the heart that is in submission to God never changes. There are many other examples, such as the Apostle Paul and John the Baptist.

*Professional Success for youth* by Brother Douglas Francis. “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” Matthew 6:33. When we seek the kingdom of God first, then we have success in everything. The Lord has given His children talents, and they are to be used. Success is not a result of chance or luck. It is a reward of hard work in combination with the blessings of the Lord. Parents should not force their children into a pathway they feel they should go. Rather, they should seek the Lord’s guidance together with the youth, recognizing the unique talents and interests of each indi-

vidual youth and thus encourage and assist them to develop their talents.

**Participation of the youth in the Church**, by Roland De La Paz. There are many exemplary youth in the Bible, such as Joseph, Daniel, and Timothy. Each faced their various challenges, but they remained faithful. The youth are the future of the church and should be given duties and taught to work for the Lord. From a young age they should be given duties in the church, according to their abilities. Thus they will grow into pillars in the church of God and be prepared to take over when the elders retire.

**Family communication.** Brother Adalicio Fontes spoke of the importance of communication in the family. Society is made up of families and the church is very dependent on strong families. There is a crisis in families when they are afraid to talk to each other. Silence has killed many marriages. Husbands and wives should speak sweet words to each other. They should listen to each other. This will bring happiness in the family. He also mentioned the importance of forgiveness and unity. Children also should be encouraged to communicate with their parents. We need to learn the art of listening also. The family should be a safe place. Jesus knows the necessities of each family, and as we keep the lines of communication open, the Lord will bless our families.

**Saving our Children.** Sister Margie Seely mentioned that as parents we do not want our children be lost, but sometimes we hold them back. "But Jesus called them unto Him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." Luke 18:16. She shared the story of the Titanic, and when it sank, only half of the children on the boat were saved. Some were held back by their parents. As a teacher, if your student only gets half of the answers correct, do they pass? Think about the children in your church? Do you want only half of them to be saved? Will that be a passing grade for the church? Ask yourself if you are doing something to hold your children back from salvation. Children will see your light and your example. Are you doing the right thing? Do not let your children be lost.

**There were prophetic subjects:**

**The Sunday Law**, by Brother Pablo Hunger. All countries have laws. If we ignore them, we are penalized. Soon there will come Sunday laws, and those we cannot keep, but we do not need to fear the Sunday Law. It will come. Throughout history there have been various degrees of Sunday laws. Although today, USA has a law

that protects religious freedom, this will change one day. We need to prepare today for tomorrow's trials. If injustice is done to you, do not worry, we have a judge in heaven.

**The Seal of God**, by Morris Lowe. Not one of us will receive the seal of God if our characters have a spot on them. Not all who accept our message will be sealed. Not everyone whose name is registered in our church books will be sealed. The seal will never be placed on the forehead of an unconverted, world loving person. Only a remnant will be saved, yet Jesus wants all to be saved. All who accept Him as their personal Saviour will be saved. In the end of time, the special seal that the 144,000 will receive (Sabbath) is a sign between God and His people. May we seek Him today in order to be sealed by the Holy Spirit.

**The Close of Probation**, by Brother Francesco Caputo. We cannot change the past, only the present and future. Our probation is coming to an end and we need to think very carefully about what we are doing. King Belshazzar did wickedly, with no thought about the future, and he died in disgrace. Every day we make decisions that determine our destiny. Jesus wants you to be saved, not lost. What are you willing to give to Him for all His goodness that He has shown you?

**The Early and Latter Rain**, by Alfred Nguena. We know that Jesus is coming and thus we cannot be careless. The Early and Latter Rain is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We cannot be saved without the Holy Spirit. We need the Holy Spirit to please God, to reach others, to finish the work of the Lord, to grow and to reach perfection. If we ask, the Lord will give.

**Pending prophecies**, by Danilo Monterroso. In the year 1798, the book of Daniel started to be unsealed. The time of the end had begun. Many prophecies have come to pass, and there are few left such as the Sunday Laws, the Latter Rain, and the Mark of the Beast. The end *will* come, and if you are not faithful, someone will take your place. When the last person is sealed, the end will come and the earth will be destroyed. We are living in a time of crisis and may we be prepared for the final events to come.

**Michael will stand up**, by Humberto Avellaneda. "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." Daniel 12:1. One day soon,

Michael (Jesus) will stand up and vindicate the name of God. He has overcome the devil and death. It will be at that time when God's people will be delivered. Today we must make sure our names are written in the book of life. We must put Jesus first in our lives. Very soon He will stand up and deliver His faithful people from this world.

*There were subjects to encourage us in our indivual spiritual walk:*

*The Testimony of Jesus Christ.* Brother Idel Suarez Jr. "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." John 1:9. The word "testimony" here comes from the same Greek word as does "martyr". Jesus was more than a martyr. He came to save us. He offered His own blood on the cross to rescue us. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." 1 Peter 1:18-19. We will have trouble in this world but if we hold on to the Rock, Jesus Christ, He will rescue us.

*The Victory of Jacob,* by Humberto Avellaneda. Jacob had to leave his father's house, due to his sin. Although he had received the blessing, he was lonely and afraid. But God did not forsake him. He appeared to Jacob in a dream. God did a wonderful work for Jacob. Jacob overcame and his name was changed to Israel. God is willing to transform your life also. It does not matter where you are. After 20 years Jacob returned home. This story can be repeated in our lives. We also can be led back home. On his homeward journey Jacob heard that Esau was coming to meet him to destroy him. Satan also wants to destroy you to prevent you from returning home. It was then that Jacob wrestled with the angel and gained the victory. God was his protector. You also can gain the victory and God will transform your life. The experience of Jacob can be yours.

*The Religion of Christ,* by Anton Salaviov. The religion of Christ is more than forgiveness of sin. When Christ comes to receive His children, they will have been freed from sin. We must renounce our sin. Brother Salaviov shared some of the parables of Jesus to illustrate what the religion of Christ is. He spoke of the sower. The ground had to be properly prepared for the seed to grow. Also, the merchantman seeking goodly pearls, sold all he had to obtain that pearl. We need to be con-

stantly growing, step-by-step making progress. We will be given power to overcome all sin. This is the religion of Christ—freedom from sin.

*The Love of God,* by Joel Barnedo. No conference would be complete without dwelling on the love of God. God wants you to be His friend. He wants to fellowship with each of you. He loves your family and your children. God is happy and never rejects anyone who wants to come to Jesus. What a joy it will be to one day be in heaven with Jesus and all of His wonderful children.

*Ye are the Salt of the Earth,* by Yoni Delgado. Jesus used salt to describe the work of His people. Without flavour salt is useless. Also without the Holy Spirit (flavour), one is useless in working for the Lord. It does not matter if we are a leader, if we lose grace, we lose it all. When the love of God takes hold of the heart, then it will be complete sweetness. This and only this makes us the salt of the earth.

For the divine service on Sabbath, Brother Tzvetan Petkov focused on the theme: preparing to meet our God. The context of this verse was announcing apostasy in Israel. The Lord is announcing His judgment. The people of God will be put into balances. We are no different. We will be put into balances. Will we be ready to meet our God? This message to Amos is a personal message to us, to make preparation. On the road to Damascus, after Paul met Jesus, he asked the Lord, what he should do. The Lord wants us to ask the same. Every day we need to be prepared to meet Him and ask the same. Every day we are to meet our God and He will reveal Himself to us and direct us. We are then to willingly follow and do as He directs.

For the farewell service, Brother Tzvetan Petkov reminded us that one day we will be together forever. We are soon expecting the Latter Rain, the power of the Third Angel's message, so that we may enlighten the world as the angel of Revelation 18. We now need to return to our own countries and share some of the encouragement we have received and pick up the work of the Lord with new zeal. We need the help of the Holy Spirit and we need to work in unity with each other.

Let us pray for our new leaders that the Lord will continue to bless them with wisdom in directing His work for the next five years. It is time now to unite and work together as Jesus is coming soon. We must now, prepare to meet our God.

*Wendy Eaton*

**Friday we witnessed a blessed event. All heaven rejoiced with us as 29 souls dedicated their lives to the Lord. They made a solemn vow to leave the world behind and go on with the Lord and followed His example of being baptized. Let us pray for the new souls in their heavenward journey.**



**International choir, composed of over 200 singers from countries around the world.**



**On the left: Brother Tzvetan Petkov, the new General Conference President, giving his service with Paula Fulop translating**

***The photos and videos of the conference are available from the General Conference web site:***

***sda1844.org.***

**“We were greatly blessed during our camp meeting . . . . The camp meeting was carried through with success, and no accidents occurred. The attendance at the meeting was large.”**

**–*The Paulson Collection*, p. 91**

**“We had a good attendance, . . . The spirit of the Lord has been in our midst.” –*The Signs of the Times*, September 12, 1878**

**“This was a remarkable meeting. The Spirit of God was present from the beginning to the close. . . . We were rejoiced to see the salvation of God in this meeting.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 283**