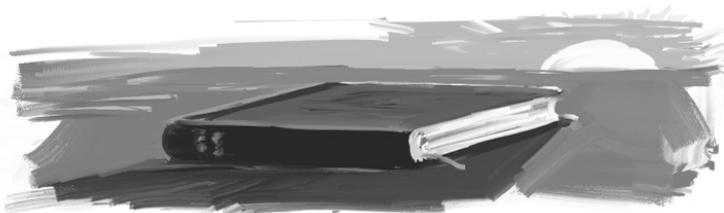


The Word of God Endures



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Mic. 6:8, John 3:14-17, 10:10, Rom. 4:21, Eph. 2:8, Phil. 4:7, 2 Pet. 3:9.*

Memory Text: “All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever” (*1 Peter 1:24, 25, NIV*).

Key Thought: The relevance of the Bible is for us today.

Many ancient texts are still in existence, everything from the Egyptian Book of the Dead to the Ugaritic legend of Keret to the writings of Aristotle, Epictetus, and Julius Caesar. But none of these command the kind of influence, power, and authority that the Bible has had and still continues to have today.

Yes, the Word of God endures, even in a world of space shuttles, high-definition television, cell phones, and laptops. And that's because, regardless of the many advances in science and technology, and art and culture, we are still human beings struggling with the same issues that humans have struggled with from the beginning. Issues about life, death, happiness, health, morals, family—these remain essentially unchanged across time. And the Bible's answers to them remains essentially unchanged, as well.

This week, our final week in this quarter, we'll look more at why the Word of God endures.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 30.*

The Word of God Today

For many people, the Bible has no relevance now. Their reasons, though varied, can be boiled down to (1) the Book is so old; (2) the Book came from a relatively small group of people, the Jews; (3) the world is so different today than in the days that the Book was written that it can't possibly be relevant anymore.

How would you answer those objections?

The problem with those arguments can be boiled down to one thing: the premise upon which they are founded. If one believes that the Bible is merely a human book, a book composed only by humans expressing their own cultural ideas, then the argument would be valid.

However, as Christians, we reject that premise. We believe that the Bible is the Word of God; we believe that God, the Creator, has spoken to us through the Bible. We believe that He has revealed His will to all humanity through the Book. That it was written long ago or written by a small group of people or written in a world vastly different from today—all these things make no difference if we believe that God has spoken to us through the Bible.

Below are some texts that address issues found in the Bible. As you read these texts, ask yourself: (1) What issues are being addressed? (2) How relevant are those issues to us today?

Mic. 6:8

John 10:10

John 17:3

Acts 17:31

Phil. 4:7

Think about each of the topics listed above; if we didn't have the Bible, what answers would we have to these issues? Think how different your life would be were you left without the guidance, hope, and promises offered us in the Bible. Meanwhile, what can you do to help make what the Bible offers you more real for yourself?

God's Everlasting Plan

“But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations” (*Psa. 33:11, NIV*).

What important principle found in that text helps us understand the relevancy of the Bible today?

What are the purposes of God's heart? See *John 3:14-17, 1 Tim. 2:4, 2 Pet. 3:9*.

The Bible is relevant today because the plans of God are revealed in it; the plan of salvation has been made known to us through the Word, and that salvation is to be for all people in every generation. “Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails” (*Prov. 19:21, NIV*).

God is an eternal God (*Deut. 33:27*); He has an eternal kingdom (*Dan. 2:44*); His will for us as expressed in the Bible has not changed with the passing of time, for He never changes: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (*Heb. 13:8, NIV*). “ ‘You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end’ ” (*Heb. 1:12, NIV*).

Sure, times change, cultures change, attitudes change, and people change. Change is a fact of life; we see it all around us. But God Himself and His purposes for us remain the same.

Hence, it makes no difference that the Bible was written many centuries ago, or in a different culture; what matters is that God's love for us, and His desire for our salvation, remains the same, all through the ages.

This, then, is the secret of the Bible: It's relevant today because the God revealed in its pages is relevant today.

Think about all the changes that take place, either in your own life or in the world around you or both. Look at how much instability there is everywhere. Amid all this, what does it mean to you that the Lord's love for us and plan for our salvation never changes? What hope and assurance can you draw from this important truth?

The Eternal Cross

Perhaps the most significant reason the Bible is so relevant today is that it is God's chosen means of revealing to us the most important truth we can ever know: Jesus dying on the cross and rising from the grave. As long as this great truth is taught to us, what does it matter how old the Bible is or who wrote it or under what circumstances? What matters is that through it God has revealed to us the great truth of salvation through Jesus, a truth that will endure through all eternity, long after this old earth has vanished and a new one created. Thus, as long as the Word of God reveals to us Christ and Him crucified, its relevance for our fallen world will never end.

Look up the following texts. What messages do they have for us? As you read them, ask yourself, "Were it not for the Bible, where else could I have learned the truths taught here?"

Isa. 65:17

Matt. 24:30

1 Cor. 6:3

2 Cor. 5:21

Eph. 2:8

1 Thess. 4:16

1 Tim. 1:15

Titus 1:2

Heb. 2:14

Rev. 20:14

Rev. 21:4

Going over the texts listed above, write out the scenario presented to us here. Look at what has been revealed to us in the Bible. These are the promises we have been given. Why should this mean so much to each of us? Share your response with your class on Sabbath.

Unbroken Promises

“ ‘Praise be to the Lord, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses.’ ” (*1 Kings 8:56, NIV*).

The Word of God exists forever because His promises never fail. Unlike human promises that are frequently broken, God always keeps His.

Read Romans 4:21. What hope is found in there for us? How have you experienced the reality of this text?

Read John 16:33. What special promise is here for all of us? How have you experienced the reality of that promise in your own life?

Read Matthew 28:20. How have you experienced the reality of this promise?

God also has given us His promises for everlasting life (*John 3:15*), answers to prayer (*Matt. 7:7*), unlimited blessings (*Mark 9:23*), removal of obstacles (*Luke 17:6*), spiritual fullness (*John 6:35*), salvation (*Rom. 1:16*), help with temptation (*Heb. 2:18*), and victory (*James 4:7*). “It is in these promises that Christ communicates to us His grace and power. They are leaves from the tree that is ‘for the healing of the nations.’ Rev. 22:2. Received, assimilated, they are to be the strength of the character, the inspiration and sustenance of the life. Nothing else can have such healing power.”—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 122.

What promises are you still waiting for to see fulfilled? How can you cling to the Lord in hope and trust in the meantime?

The Bible Endures . . .

Throughout history people have made predictions about the inevitable demise of the Bible, that it would soon fade into obscurity and be seen as nothing but an interesting historical relic of a bygone era, and on and on . . .

How wrong those predictions have been!

Read Matthew 24:35. How, in a sense, did these words of Jesus predict, many centuries ago, that the Bible would be around even to the last days?

Besides all the attempts to destroy the Bible through violence, the enemy of souls has tried to use science, philosophy, and higher criticism to eradicate the influence of the Bible. And yet, today, millions and millions of people believe in the Bible as God's Word and seek to claim its promises and live by its commands. Should this be a surprise? Of course not! After all, as we have been told: "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever" (*Isa. 40:8*).

Meanwhile, according to the United Bible Societies: "At the start of the nineteenth century, Scriptures were available in just 68 languages. Today, Scriptures are available in no less than 2,303 languages, with the complete Bible having been translated into at least 405 languages, and the New Testament into some 1,034. In addition, portions of the Bible have been made available in some 864 languages." (*See www.biblesociety.org.*)

Read 1 Peter 1:24, 25. Consider that these words were written about nearly two thousand years ago. What message is here for us, today? How should these words help us trust in the Bible, in its promises and in its warnings?

The Bible endures, now and forever. The question is, What has it done in our lives? The Word can be on our shelves, on our desks, and even in our minds, but unless we allow it into our hearts, what good does it do? Look at your life. What does it say about how you relate to the enduring Word?

Further Study: Ellen G. White, “The Scriptures a Safeguard,” pp. 593–602, *The Great Controversy*.

“God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain ‘Thus saith the Lord’ in its support.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 595.

“The cross of Christ will be the science and the song of the redeemed through all eternity. In Christ glorified they will behold Christ crucified. Never will it be forgotten that He whose power created and upheld the unnumbered worlds through the vast realms of space, the Beloved of God, the Majesty of heaven, He whom cherub and shining seraph delighted to adore—humbled Himself to uplift fallen man; that He bore the guilt and shame of sin, and the hiding of His Father’s face, till the woes of a lost world broke His heart and crushed out His life on Calvary’s cross. That the Maker of all worlds, the Arbiter of all destinies, should lay aside His glory and humiliate Himself from love to man will ever excite the wonder and adoration of the universe.”—Page 651.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ As a class, go over your responses to Tuesday’s final question. What can you learn from each other?
- ❷ As a church family, what areas do you need to apply with more rigor the principles found in the Bible? How can you as a class help the church realize where it’s falling short and then help it reach a higher standard?
- ❸ Talk about the question of Bible promises that have yet to be fulfilled, or that look as if they can’t be fulfilled, at least as we would like. For example: Someone prayed for a sick friend or spouse or child who didn’t recover. How do we help each other grapple with these situations in light of the Word of God and the promises that we have in it?

“I Don’t Want to Go”

by ELSA VELASCO

Inday is a natural leader among the students in our little school in the mountains of the southern Philippines. She loved the Sabbath and loved worshipping with us. Then one day she seemed sad. I could tell something troubled her. Then she confided her problem to me. “My father does not want me to waste an entire day in church on Sabbath,” she said, hanging her head. “I do not dare disobey, or his fury will come down on me.” On Sabbath morning Inday did not come to help me carry Sabbath School materials to the church. I missed her sweet voice singing along the trails. As my teammate and I walked toward the church carrying our materials, we saw Inday walking quickly down the path behind her mother. She was not dressed for church. We waved at her, but she ducked her head and hurried on.

I asked a neighbor child about Inday, and she said Inday’s father had scolded her that morning. “Inday wanted to come to Sabbath School, but her father said she had to go with her mother to the big town down the mountain.” We all prayed that God would be with Inday that day.

Later that evening Inday came to my hut. She told me that she and her mother had planned to go to the city. They reached the next village where they would catch a ride down the mountain. “But I was praying that God would not send a jeep, so I would not dishonor the Sabbath,” Inday said shyly. Normally several jeeps make the trip every day. But Inday and her mother had waited all day, and no jeep came. Finally they gave up and returned to the village empty-handed.

“Father was angry because the whole day had been wasted,” Inday said. “But I was glad. God answered my prayer, and I did not violate the Sabbath.”

God answered my young friend’s prayer. And He answered our prayers for her, too. Pray that Inday’s parents will learn the importance of following Jesus, just as their daughter has.

Your mission offerings support Mountain View College, an Adventist college, which sends young people such as me into the mountain villages of southern Philippines to teach the people to read and write and give them the good news that Jesus is their Savior.

When she wrote this, Elsa Velasco was a student missionary from Mountain View College teaching in Bugahon Mission School in the southern Philippines.

This quarter's study, *For Better or Worse: Lessons From Old Testament Couples* by Gordon and Rosenita Christo, will explore the relationships of various married couples in the Old Testament just as its title states. The consequences of sin cause more harm than imaginable. This is nowhere more evident than when it occurs in a marriage. God clearly intended marriage to be a great blessing to us. This quarter we will examine the lessons of faith, hope, trust, and love along with what it means to be a follower of Christ in this fallen world.

Lesson 1—Adam and Eve: The Intended Ideal

The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: The Image of God (*Gen. 1:27, Deut. 32:11, Hos. 13:8*)

MONDAY: A Suitable Helper (*Gen. 2:18*)

TUESDAY: Husband and Wife (*1 Cor. 11:11, 12*)

WEDNESDAY: Two Are Better Than One (*Gen. 39:15, 18*)

THURSDAY: The Curse on the Relationship (*Gen. 3:16*)

Memory Text—*Genesis 2:24*

Sabbath Gem: The marriage of Adam and Eve began better than any fairy tale. God provided them with everything they needed. After sin entered into their lives, the fairy tale became far from perfect. It is a powerful reminder of the detrimental cost of sin. A lesson that clearly demonstrates how deviation from God's will can cause us great pain, and how our heavenly Father indeed knows how best to supply all of our needs if we trust completely in Him.

Lesson 2—Abraham and Sarah: Faith Tested and Tried

The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: Human Solutions for God's Promise (*Gen. 15:6, Rom. 4:3*)

MONDAY: Telling Lies (*Gen. 12:11-13*)

TUESDAY: Laughing at God (*Gen. 17:15-17*)

WEDNESDAY: Trouble Because of Unbelief (*Gen. 16:1-6*)

THURSDAY: Ultimate Demonstration of Faith (*Gen. 22:5*)

Memory Text—*Hebrews 11:11*

Sabbath Gem: By delaying the birth of their promised child, God tested Abraham and Sarah's faith. When the pair deviate from God's plan for their family, serious consequences occur. Even though this couple was faithful, they too were flawed, providing us all hope for our relationships.

Lessons for the Visually Impaired The regular *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* is available free each month in braille and on audiocassette to sight-impaired and physically handicapped persons who cannot read normal ink print. This includes individuals who, because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accident, old age, and so forth, cannot hold or focus on normal ink-print publications. Contact Christian Record Services, Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506-0097.