

Contents

1	Who Was Jesus? — <i>March 29–April 4</i> —————	6
2	The Mystery of His Deity — <i>April 5–11</i> —————	14
3	The Reality of His Humanity — <i>April 12–18</i> —————	22
4	The Wisdom of His Teachings — <i>April 19–25</i> —————	30
5	The Wonder of His Works — <i>April 26–May 2</i> —————	38
6	The Challenge of His Sayings — <i>May 3–9</i> —————	46
7	The Puzzle of His Conduct — <i>May 10–16</i> —————	56
8	The Intensity of His Walk — <i>May 17–23</i> —————	64
9	The Tenderness of His Love — <i>May 24–30</i> —————	72
10	The Meaning of His Death — <i>May 31–June 6</i> —————	80
11	The Power of His Resurrection — <i>June 7–13</i> —————	88
12	The Efficacy of His Priestly Ministry — <i>June 14–20</i> —————	96
13	His Return as King and Friend — <i>June 21–27</i> —————	104

Editorial Office 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904
Come visit us at our Web site: <http://www.absg.adventist.org>

Principal Contributor
Roy Adams

Editor
Clifford R. Goldstein

Associate Editor
Soraya Homayouni Parish

Publication Manager
Lea Alexander Greve

Editorial Assistants

Tresa Beard
Larie S. Gray
Jean Kellner

Pacific Press® Coordinator
Paul A. Hey

Art Director and Illustrator
Lars Justinen

Concept Design
Dever Design

The *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* is prepared by the Office of the Adult Bible Study Guide of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The preparation of the guides is under the general direction of a worldwide Sabbath School Manuscript Evaluation Committee, whose members serve as consulting editors. The published guide reflects the input of the committee and thus does not solely or necessarily represent the intent of the author(s).

A Hope Big With

Of all the people immortalized over millennia upon the pages of history, Jesus of Nazareth had the shortest period of public labor. Only three and a half years.

But what a three and a half years they were!

Socrates taught for 40, Plato for 50, Aristotle for 40, Jesus for not even 4. Yet the impact of Christ's short ministry infinitely exceeds that of the combined 130 years of those three Greek giants.

Someone once wrote that "the grandest paintings of Raphael, Michelangelo, and Leonardo da Vinci are but a reflection of Jesus, the Light of the world. Haydn, Handel, Bach, and Mendelssohn gave to the world their best melodies in the symphonies and oratorios they

*Christ's appeal . . .
is universal,
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and cultural
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wrote to glorify Jesus Christ. Art, culture, music, philosophy—all have been enriched by His teachings. But Christ offers far more than philosophy, art, and music. These cannot save. Jesus offers light and life and salvation to sinful men."

That statement, however eloquent, falls short of doing justice to the richness of Jesus, for that quote is in the context of the West only; Christ's appeal, in contrast, is universal, transcending all political, ethnic, and cultural borders.

"You should search the Bible," Ellen G. White writes, "for it tells you of Jesus. As you read the Bible, you will see the matchless charms of Jesus. You will fall in love with the Man of Calvary, and at every step you can say to the world, 'His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all His paths are peace.' You are to represent Christ to the world. You may show to the world that you have a hope big with immortality"—*Life Sketches*, p. 293.

With Jesus at its center, Christianity is also a historical religion, meaning that it revolves around a person whose life and work are amenable to historical study and analysis. Yet, at the same time, we

Immortality

cannot circumscribe Jesus Christ within the confines of history. For the reality of His person is suprahistorical (above history)—there’s a point beyond which historical analysis cannot probe. History cannot take us into the mysteries of salvation, or into the wonders of what Christ’s death offers the world. For all that history offers, it cannot begin to fathom what Ellen G. White called “a hope big with immortality.”

This quarter centers on Jesus, on who He was, on what He taught, on what He did—and on what He *is doing* now. That last clause, “on what He is doing now,” makes all the difference in the world. It is what might be called “the mystery of the present tense,” a crucial element that distinguishes Jesus from every other historical figure, for what other historical figure, no matter how great, is doing anything for us now?

Who was this amazing Jesus? What was He like? What did He do while here? What is He, indeed, doing for us now? And finally, why should He be a concern for people in the twenty-first century?

The answers, as we will see, are far from academic. On the contrary, they affect the destiny of every human being.

Roy Adams, a native of the Caribbean, the author of this quarter’s Bible study guide, is an associate editor of the Adventist Review, the international magazine of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He is married to Celia (nee Wilson), and they have two adult children, Dwayne and Kimberly.

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Growing Pains

The Adventist Church in Central America is large—3 million—and still growing, thanks in large part to faithful lay workers. Pastors often shepherd dozens of churches, making it necessary to leave the week-to-week church work to the members. Properly trained lay workers have taken over much of the evangelism efforts throughout the region.

The program works so well that many areas, such as Mexico, are suffering growing pains. Many congregations meet in homes and rented halls because they don't have a church.

They are part of a winning team, and I want to help these believers have the training and tools they need to continue their good work. I'm glad that part of our Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help equip even more lay workers to become successful lay leaders in their churches and small groups. For me, it's personal.

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