

The Promised Revival:¹ God's Mission (Purpose) Completed



SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 21

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Matthew 28:18–20; James 5:7, 8; Zechariah 10:1; Matthew 3:11; Revelation 18:1; Revelation 19:11–16.

MEMORY VERSE: “Brothers and sisters, be patient until the Lord comes. See how the farmer waits for the land to produce its rich crop. See how patient he is for the fall and spring rains. You too must be patient. You must stand firm. The Lord will soon come back” (James 5:7, 8, NIV).

IT MAY NOT SEEM POSSIBLE TO PREACH THE GOSPEL OF THE THREE ANGELS' MESSAGES² TO THE ENTIRE WORLD. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is growing fast. But it is not keeping up with the growth of people in the world. There are many areas of the world where the name “Seventh-day Adventist” is not known.

This serious fact leads to serious questions. Is it possible for the gospel to be preached to the entire world in this generation? Will there be some unusual method that will speed up the preaching of the three angels' messages? There is always one thing we need to remember: the mission is God's, and He will finish it. But we also must remember that we have been called to do a very special work in these final days of earth's history.

¹ revival—renewed interest in God and the desire to improve one's spiritual life.

² three angels' messages—Adventists believe that they have been given a special end-time message of truth from the Bible to preach to the world. They call it the three angels' messages, based on Revelation 14:6–12.

SUNDAY—SEPTEMBER 22

**THE PROMISED POWER
(Matthew 28:18–20)**

Christ's great command in Matthew 28:18–20 comes with His great promise. What is that promise? What does it mean? How can we get comfort from it? Why is that promise so important to us?

The disciples preached not in their strength but in Christ's. According to Paul, the gospel was preached to every person under heaven in just a few short years (Colossians 1:23). Some might argue about the right meaning of Paul's words. But there is no doubt that the gospel had a powerful influence on first-century society. It changed the world. This change came because Christ promised His disciples that He would " 'send the Promise of My Father' " and they would receive " 'power from on high [God]' " (Luke 24:49, NKJV). The Savior added, " 'But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you. Then you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem. You will be my witnesses in all Judea and Samaria. And you will be my witnesses from one end of the earth to the other' " (Acts 1:8, NIV).

The work seems challenging and not possible. But the promises of God are sure. Jesus prom-

ises: " 'This good news of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world. It will be a witness to all nations. Then the end will come' " (Matthew 24:14, NIV). The preaching of the gospel to all the world may not seem possible. But God's power will overcome every problem. Every person on planet Earth will have a reasonable opportunity to hear and understand God's message of love and truth before the Lord comes. (Read Revelation 18:1.)

"I saw angels hurrying to and fro [here and there] in heaven. They were busy coming down to the earth, and then going up to heaven. They were preparing for the fulfillment of some important event. I also saw another mighty angel come down to the earth. He was to unite [join] his voice with the third angel, and give power to his message. Great power and glory [honor] were given to the angel. And as he came down, the earth was lightened with his glory. The light which came with this angel spread everywhere." —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, page 277.

God will finish His work. He will pour out His Spirit in mighty power and do what seems impossible to humans.

What are ways that you can be a better witness for the Lord? And, what can you do to help see the fulfillment of Matthew 24:14?

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The light that came with this angel spread everywhere.

MONDAY—SEPTEMBER 23

THE EARLY AND LATTER (LATER) RAIN (Joel 2:21–24)

Both the Old and New Testaments use the symbolism (word-picture; example) of water to represent the Holy Spirit. The prophet (special messenger) Isaiah uses the words of our Lord, “ ‘I will pour water on him who is thirsty. . . . I will pour My Spirit on your descendants [future children]’ ” (Isaiah 44:3, NKJV). Isaiah uses a common Hebrew tool for poetry called parallelism. Parallelism is used when the second phrase (group of words) in a verse or verses explains the first phrase. The prophet Joel also discusses the symbolism of water. He writes that God promises to water Israel's fields. God announces, “ ‘And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh [people]’ ” (Joel 2:28, NKJV). And Jesus uses the

symbolism of water as an example of the Holy Spirit (John 7:37–39).



“I will pour water on him who is thirsty.”

What are the two symbols used in Joel 2:21–24; 28–32; and James 5:7, 8 that tell about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit? How are we to understand what they mean?

In Bible times, sowing and plowing took place beginning in the middle of October. This was shortly after the falling of the early rains. These early rains helped the seed to sprout and grow. The latter rain came in the late spring to help the fruit to become ripe and be ready for harvest. The barley harvest and other grain harvests were spring events. They were followed by the fruit harvest in the summer and fall.

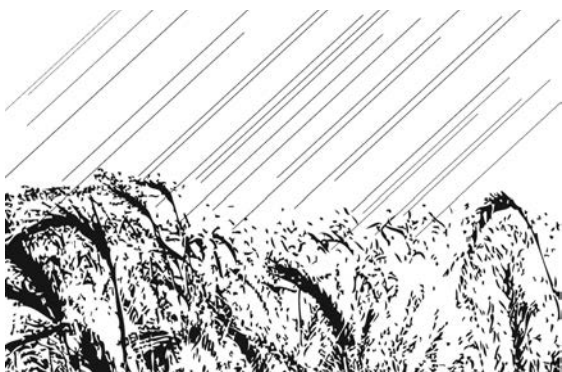
God uses the symbolism of the early and latter rain in two ways. The early rain of the Spirit fell upon the disciples at Pentecost³ to start the Christian mission. The latter rain will be poured out on God's church at the end of time to complete His mission on earth. The “early rain” also means

3. Pentecost—the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples (followers of Jesus) in the upper room after Jesus returned to heaven.

the daily work of God's Spirit to reach, instruct, guide, and empower (to give power to) each believer. The "latter rain" describes a special outpouring of God's Holy Spirit on Christ's church just before the coming of Jesus.

"The early and the latter rain that falls in Eastern lands at seedtime and harvest is a symbol. The Hebrew prophets [special messengers for God] used it to foretell the special outpouring of spiritual grace⁴ upon God's church. The outpouring of the Spirit upon the apostles [leaders and teachers] was the beginning of the early rain. And the result was glorious. . . .

"But near the close of earth's harvest, a special outpouring of spiritual grace is promised to prepare the church for the coming of the Son of man. This outpouring of the Spirit is compared to (shown to be the same as) the falling of the latter rain. And Christians are to pray to the Lord of the harvest for this added power 'in the time of the latter rain.' "—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles [Teachers and Leaders]*, pages 54, 55.



The rain that fell on the harvests was a symbol of God's pouring out His Spirit on all flesh.

TUESDAY—SEPTEMBER 24

**NECESSARY PREPARATIONS
FOR THE LATTER RAIN
(Acts 3:18–20)**

What do Acts 1:14; Zechariah 10:1; Acts 3:18–20; Acts 4:31; Psalm 119:25; and John 6:63 tell us about the preparation that is needed to receive the Holy Spirit's power in its fullness?

The Bible invites us to ask God for the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13). The disciples believed Christ's promise. They waited in unity (oneness). And they prayed for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8, 14). Why does God ask us to pray for the Holy Spirit? The reason is not because He is not willing to give us the Spirit. Instead, the real reason is that we are not prepared to receive it. As we pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, God works on our hearts to lead us to deeper repentance.⁵ Praying in small groups with other church members brings us together into a closer bond of unity and fellowship. Both prayer and Bible study prepare our minds to be sensitive to the ministry (work) of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Read Psalm 51:10–13; Acts 4:13, 20; Acts 5:33; and Acts 8:4. What is the natural result of spiritual renewal in our lives? Where does all spiritual revival and reformation (change for the better) lead?

4. grace—God's gift of mercy and forgiveness that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

5. repentance—being sorry for past sins and turning away from sinning with the help of the Holy Spirit.

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All spiritual revival and true reformation lead to a real desire to witness. Our hearts are filled with thanksgiving for everything that Jesus has done for us. Then, we are like Peter and John, who said, “ ‘There’s [there is] nothing else we can do. We have to speak about the things we’ve [we have] seen and heard’ ” (Acts 4:20, NIV). The outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the early rain on the day of Pentecost gave power to the disciples to witness well. Their witness was so powerful that a rebellious (violent; lawbreaking) mob in Thessalonica screamed in fear, “ ‘These who have turned the world upside down have come here too’ ” (Acts 17:6, NKJV).

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost helped the disciples to give powerful witness to their generation. In the same way, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit will give power to God’s church to reach the world in the final generation. It will take latter-rain power to finish God’s mission on earth. And God offers nothing less. Heaven’s most important gift (the Holy Spirit) is offered in unlimited supply. This is done to finish the most important work ever given to His church.



Praying together in small groups brings us together in unity.

The early disciples “turned the world upside down” with their preaching and witness. Why can we not do the same?

WEDNESDAY—SEPTEMBER 25

THE BAPTISM OF FIRE (Malachi 3:2, 3)

Both the Old and New Testaments use many symbols, such as water, wind, and oil, to describe the work of the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist uses fire as a symbol for the work of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16).

There are many who have misunderstood John’s meaning. The verse does not say, “ ‘He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit [or] with fire’ ” (Luke 3:16, NKJV). It says, “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit *and* with fire” (emphasis added). The second part, “ ‘and with fire,’ ” explains the first part, “the baptism of the Holy Spirit.” The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the baptism of fire. The word *baptism* in the New Testament is used 80 times and means “total immersion” (involvement; filling).

Read Exodus 3:2–4; Exodus 24:17; 1 Kings 18:24; Malachi 3:2, 3; Acts 2:1–4; and Hebrews 12:29. Describe what the symbolism of fire means in the Bible.

The symbolism of fire is a symbol of the glory, the presence, and the power of God shown in the ministry (work) of the Holy Spirit. To be baptized with fire is to be filled with the glory (greatness) of God’s presence

through the Holy Spirit to witness in His power. Moses met God at the burning bush and then left the glory of His presence to witness to Pharaoh. Elijah witnessed to Israel in the glory of God's fiery presence on Mount Carmel. And when tongues of fire fell on Pentecost, the disciples witnessed in languages that they had never before known. So, the baptism of the Holy Spirit is immersion (being filled) in the presence and power of God. This happens so that we can witness well of His glory. Once again, in the last days of earth's history, God's people will be immersed in His presence. And they will be filled with His power, and they will be sent out to witness of His glory to the world.

The earth will be filled with the glory of God. "The oceans are full of water. In the same way, the earth will be filled with the knowledge of my glory" (Habakkuk 2:14, Nlrv). In a vision, John saw an angel messenger come down from heaven and "his [the angel's] glory filled the earth with light" (Revelation 18:1, Nlrv).

God's glory is His loving character (holy life). It will be shown through the power of the Holy Spirit to a waiting world. Every person on planet Earth will have the opportunity to both hear and understand God's last-day message.

God's glory is His loving character. It will be shown to the world. Now, how can you show that glory in your life? What will you have to do to make that happen?

THURSDAY—SEPTEMBER 26**THE GREAT CONTROVERSY (WAR) ENDED (Revelation 12:17)**

The entire book of Revelation can be explained in just a few words: *Jesus wins, Satan loses.*

Read Revelation 12:17; Revelation 17:13, 14; Revelation 19:11–16. What is the important message in these verses?

Here is good news. The same Jesus who defeated Satan on the cross will come again and have victory over the powers of hell. Jesus will put a full end to evil (Revelation 19:19–21; Ezekiel 28:18, 19). Evil will not have the last word. Sickness and suffering will not have the last word. Lawlessness and crime will not have the last word. Disease and death will not have the last word.

Instead, God will have the last word.

Until then, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are doing all they can to reach every person. God's heart aches over a lost world. Soon His people will show the world, in both the witness of their words and their works, Jesus' wonderful grace and truth.

Of course, Satan will do everything in His power to fight against this witness. The final crisis will come upon this world. Jesus will pour out His Spirit in latter-rain power. And then the work of God on earth will be finished.

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“Servants of God, with their faces shining with holiness, will hurry from place to place to preach the message from heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given to the world. Miracles will be done. The sick will be healed. And signs and wonders will follow the believers.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy [War]*, page 612.

The work of God on earth will be finished. Jesus will come. All heaven and earth will be glad. The most important thing in our lives is experiencing a daily revival of God's grace in our hearts and inviting His Holy Spirit to make us like Him (1 John 3:1–3).

Our world is falling apart. Who can fail to realize that? Is there anything that is more important than opening our hearts to Jesus and asking for the revival and reformation that the whole church needs? What would happen if our own hearts were totally surrendered to Him? What would happen if we were fully faithful in spreading this message to the world?

FRIDAY—SEPTEMBER 27

ADDITIONAL STUDY: “The message will reach more people by the leading of the Holy Spirit of God than by argument. The arguments have been given. The seed has been sown. And now it will grow and bear fruit. The papers spread out by missionary workers have made their

influence. But there are many whose minds have not fully understood the truth or have not been ready to obey. Now, with the Holy Spirit's help, the rays of light spread everywhere. The truth is seen more clearly. And the honest children of God decide to separate themselves from the world. Family connections and church relations have no power over them now. Truth is more important to them than everything else in the world. The enemies join together against the truth. But many believers decide to take their stand upon the Lord's side.” —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 612.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 Ellen G. White wrote: “The message will reach more people by the leading of the Holy Spirit than by argument” (adapted). In class, discuss what you think that means. What does it not mean? After all, our message is very well-planned and reasonable. And it comes with some very powerful arguments in its favor. How, then, are we to understand what this quote is telling us?
- 2 Read Deuteronomy 11:13–18; Hosea 6:1–3; and Hosea 10:12. What spiritual lessons do the promises God gave to His people in the Old Testament have for His church today?
- 3 Dr. Stephen Hawking, one of the world's greatest scientists, called the understanding of life after death a “fairy story for people afraid of the dark.” Why

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does this show just how important and hopeful our message is for a world that does not know God or His love?

④ We do not know when Jesus is going to come back. But we do know that we want Him to come. We want this sin-sick world to end and a new one without sin to begin. That is why we believe revival and reformation are so important to us as a people.

And that is why our leaders are calling us to it. But, in the end, it will come only by the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. And that work will not happen until we make a knowing choice to surrender ourselves with all our hearts and souls and minds to the Lord. Without judging others, how can we do our part to encourage one another to be prepared for the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives?

Revive

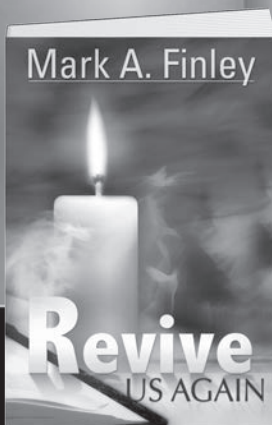
US AGAIN

MARK A. FINLEY

“A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs”

(Selected Messages, bk. 1, p. 121).

Revival always begins with one man, one woman, one boy, or one girl on his or her knees, seeking God. You can be that one person who is used of God to bring the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on your home, your church, and your world.



US\$7.99 (Hardcover)
ISBN 10: 0-8163-2450-6

 Pacific Press®

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