

The Promised Revival: God’s Mission Completed



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: *Matt. 28:18–20; James 5:7, 8; Zech. 10:1; Matt. 3:11; Rev. 18:1; 19:11–16.*

Memory Text: “Be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand” (*James 5:7, 8, NKJV*).

The challenge of preaching the gospel in the context of the three angels’ messages to the entire world may seem impossible. Although the Seventh-day Adventist Church is growing rapidly, it is not keeping up with the population. There are multiple areas of the world where the name “Seventh-day Adventist” (much less our message) is not known.

The reality of this harsh 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 breakthrough that will dramatically speed up the proclamation of the three angels’ messages? There is always one thing to keep in mind when we discuss this topic: the mission is God’s, and He will accomplish it. At the same time, however, we must remember that we have been called to a crucial role in that final work, as well.

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 28.*

The Promised Power

Christ's Great Commission in Matthew 28:18–20 is accompanied by His great promise. What is that promise, what does it mean in a practical sense, and how can we draw 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, in fact, the gospel was preached to every creature under heaven in just a few short years (*Col. 1:23*). Although some might question the precise meaning of Paul's words, it is undeniable that the gospel made a powerful impact on first-century society. It changed the world. Christ promised His disciples that He would " 'send the Promise of My Father' " and they would receive " 'power from on high' " (*Luke 24:49, NKJV*). The Savior added, " 'You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth' " (*Acts 1:8, NKJV*).

No matter how challenging the task, the promises of God are sure. Jesus' statement that " 'this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come' " (*Matt. 24:14, NKJV*) is a promise. The proclamation of the gospel to the entire world may seem impossible, but God's power will overcome every obstacle. Every person on planet Earth will have a reasonable opportunity to hear and understand God's message of love and truth before the return of our Lord (*see Rev. 18:1*).

"I saw angels hurrying to and fro in heaven, descending to the earth, and again ascending to heaven, preparing for the fulfillment of some important event. Then I saw another mighty angel commissioned to descend to the earth, to unite his voice with the third angel, and give power and force to his message. Great power and glory were imparted to the angel, and as he descended, the earth was lightened with his glory. The light which attended this angel penetrated everywhere." —Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 277.

God will finish His work. He will pour out His Spirit in mighty power and accomplish what seems impossible according to all human planning.

What are ways that you can, in your immediate sphere, be a more effective witness for the Lord? That is, what can you do to help to see the fulfillment of Matthew 24:14?

The Early and Latter Rain

Both the Old and New Testaments use the symbolism of water to represent the Holy Spirit. The prophet Isaiah quotes the words of our Lord, “ ‘I will pour water on him who is thirsty. . . . I will pour My Spirit on your descendants’ ” (Isa. 44:3, NKJV). Isaiah uses a common Hebrew literary device called parallelism. The second phrase in the passage explains the first. The prophet Joel also discusses the symbolism of water. God promises to water Israel’s fields, then declares, “ ‘And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh’ ” (Joel 2:28, NKJV). Jesus uses the symbolism of water to represent the Holy Spirit (John 7:37–39).

What are the two symbols that each of the following texts use regarding the outpouring of the Holy Spirit? Joel 2:21–24; 28–32; James 5:7, 8. **How** are we to understand what they mean?

In Bible times, sowing and plowing took place from the middle of October, shortly after the falling of the early rains. These early rains brought the seed to germination and nurtured its early growth. The latter rain came in the late spring to bring the ripening fruit to harvest. The barley harvest and other grain harvests were spring events, 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 Pentecost in order to launch the Christian mission. The latter rain will be poured out on God’s church at the end of time in order to complete His mission on earth. The term *early rain* also refers to the daily work of God’s Spirit convicting, instructing, guiding, and empowering each believer. The *latter rain* is a term used to describe a special endowment of God’s Holy Spirit on Christ’s church just before the coming of Jesus.

“Under the figure of the early and the latter rain, that falls in Eastern lands at seedtime and harvest, the Hebrew prophets foretold the bestowal of spiritual grace in extraordinary measure upon God’s church. The outpouring of the Spirit in the days of the apostles was the beginning of the early, or former, rain, and glorious was the result. . . .

“But near the close of earth’s harvest, a special bestowal of spiritual grace is promised to prepare the church for the coming of the Son of man. This outpouring of the Spirit is likened to the falling of the latter rain; and it is for this added power that Christians are to send their petitions to the Lord of the harvest ‘in the time of the latter rain.’ ”
—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 54, 55.

Prerequisites for the Latter Rain

What do the following texts tell us about the preparation needed in order to receive the Holy Spirit's power in its fullness? *Acts 1:14, Zech. 10:1, Acts 3:18–20, 4:31, Ps. 119:25, John 6:63.*

The Scriptures invite us to ask God for the Holy Spirit (*Luke 11:13*). The disciples believed Christ's promise, waited in unity, and prayed for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (*Acts 1:8, 14*). The reason that God asks us to pray for the Holy Spirit is not that He is unwilling to give us the Spirit but 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. Praying in small groups with other church members draws us into a closer bond of unity and fellowship. Both prayer and Bible study prepare our minds to be sensitive to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

What is the natural result of spiritual renewal in our lives? Where does all spiritual revival and reformation lead? *Ps. 51:10–13; Acts 4:13, 20; 5:33; 8:4.*

All spiritual revival and genuine reformation lead to a passionate desire to witness. When our hearts are filled with a deep appreciation for everything that Jesus has done for us, then, like Peter and John, “we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (*Acts 4:20, NKJV*). The outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the early rain on the day of Pentecost empowered the disciples to effectively witness. Their witness was so powerful that a rebellious mob in Thessalonica screamed in fear that “these who have turned the world upside down have come here too” (*Acts 17:6, NKJV*).

Just as the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost enabled the disciples to be a formidable witness to their generation, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in latter-rain power will empower God's church to reach the world in the final generation. It will take nothing less than latter-rain power to complete God's mission on earth, and God offers nothing less. Heaven's most precious gift is offered in infinite supply in order to accomplish the most urgent and important task ever entrusted to His church.

The early disciples turned the world “upside down” with their preaching and witness. Why isn't that said of us?

The Baptism of Fire

Both the Old and New Testaments use a variety of symbols, such as water, wind, and oil, to describe the work of the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist links another image, that of fire, to the work of the Holy Spirit (*Matt. 3:11, Luke 3:16*).

There are many who have misunderstood John's statement. The passage does not say, "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit or with fire" (*NKJV*). It says, "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." The second expression, "and with fire," explains the first expression, "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 refers to total immersion.

Read the following passages and describe what the symbolism of fire represents in the Bible. *Exod. 3:2-4; 24:17; 1 Kings 18:24; Mal. 3:2, 3; Acts 2:1-4; Heb. 12:29.*

The symbolism of fire is a symbol of the glory, presence, and power of God manifest in the ministry of the Holy Spirit. To be baptized with fire is to be immersed in the glory of God's presence through the Holy Spirit in order to witness in His power. Moses met God at the burning bush and then left the glory of His presence in order to witness to Pharaoh. Elijah witnessed to Israel in the glory of God's fiery presence on Mount Carmel. When tongues of fire fell on Pentecost, the disciples witnessed in languages that they had never before known. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is immersion in the presence and power of God in order that we can effectively witness of His glory. Once again, in the last days of earth's history, God's people will be immersed in His presence, filled with His power, and sent out to witness of His glory to the world.

The earth will be filled with the glory of God. "The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (*Hab. 2:14, NKJV*). In prophetic vision, John saw an angel messenger descend from heaven and "the earth was illuminated with his glory" (*Rev. 18:1, NKJV*).

God's glory, His loving character, will be revealed through the power of the Holy Spirit to a waiting world and a watching universe. Every person on planet Earth will have the opportunity to both hear and understand God's last-day message.

God's glory, His loving character, will be revealed to the world. How can you, right now, in your own sphere, reveal that glory in your life? What will that require on your part?

The Great Controversy Ended

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

Read Revelation 12:17; 17:13, 14; 19:11–16. What is the central message of these passages?

Here is good news: the same Jesus who defeated Satan on the cross will come again and triumph over the powers of hell and put a full end to evil (*Rev. 19:19–21; Ezek. 28:18, 19*). Evil will not have the last word. Poverty and pestilence will not have the last word. Sickness and suffering will not have the last word. Chaos and crime will not have the last word. Disease and death will not have the last word.

Instead, God will.

Until then, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are doing everything possible to reach every person. God’s heart aches over a lost world. Soon His people will reveal to the world, in both the witness of their words and their works, Jesus’ amazing grace and truth.

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

“Servants of God, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given. Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 612.

The work of God on earth will be finished. Jesus will come. All heaven and earth will rejoice. There is no more important priority in our lives than experiencing a revival of God’s grace in our hearts daily and inviting His Holy Spirit to make us into His image (*1 John 3:1–3*).

Our world is falling apart. Who can’t see that? Is there anything that matters more than opening our hearts to Jesus and pleading for the revival and reformation so needed, not just by each one of us individually but by our church as a whole? What would happen if our own hearts were totally surrendered to Him and we were completely devoted to spreading this message to the world?

Further Study: “The message will be carried not so much by argument as by the deep conviction of the Spirit of God. The arguments have been presented. The seed has been sown, and now it will spring up and bear fruit. The publications distributed by missionary workers have exerted their influence, yet many whose minds were impressed have been prevented from fully comprehending the truth or from yielding obedience. Now the rays of light penetrate everywhere, the truth is seen in its clearness, and the honest children of God sever the bands which have held them. Family connections, church relations, are powerless to stay them now. Truth is more precious than all besides. Notwithstanding the agencies combined against the truth, a large number take their stand upon the Lord’s side.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 612.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ In the statement above, Ellen G. White wrote: “The message will be carried not so much by argument as by the deep conviction of the Spirit of God.” In class, discuss what you think that means. What does it not mean? After all, our message is very logical, very reasonable, and it comes with some very powerful arguments in its favor. How are we to understand, then, what she is telling us?
- ❷ What spiritual application do the promises God gave to His people in the Old Testament have for His church today? *Deut. 11:13–18, Hos. 6:1–3, 10:12.*
- ❸ Dr. Stephen Hawking, one of the world’s greatest scientists, called the concept of an afterlife a “fairy story for people afraid of the dark.” Why does a statement like that show just how crucial and hopeful our message is for a world that knows neither God nor His love?
- ❹ Though we don’t know when Jesus is going to come back, we do know that we want Him to and that we want this sin-sick world to end and a new sinless world to begin. That’s why we believe revival and reformation are so crucial to us as a people, and it’s why our leaders are calling us to it. In the end, though, it will not come by anything other than the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, and that will not happen until we, as individuals, make a conscious choice to surrender ourselves with all our hearts and souls and minds to the Lord. How can we, without judging others, without making comparisons among ourselves, do our part to encourage one another to be prepared for the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives?

I Want to Serve!

Marquan loves Jesus and wants everyone to know about Him. When he was five, he wanted to learn to read so he could read the Bible for himself. One day he asked his pastor for a job at church. The pastor invited him to tell the children's story. Marquan did a good job and was invited to speak more often. Then one day the pastor asked him to preach.

"Me? I'm only eight years old," Marquan said, surprised.

"It doesn't matter how old you are." The pastor smiled. "God can use anyone who is willing."

I'm just a kid, Marquan thought. *What would I preach about? Would people even listen to a child?* Marquan promised to pray about it.

Marquan's grandmother told him that the prophet Jeremiah had thought he was too young to preach, too, but God had told him that he must share the love of God with everyone God sent him to. Marquan decided that God was asking him to preach. His father helped him to write his first sermon, and then Marquan memorized it.

Marquan felt a little nervous on the day he was to preach. But he remembered God's words to the prophet Isaiah, "I have put my words in your mouth" (*Isaiah 51:16, NIV*). Marquan knew that God was with him, and his nervousness went away.

People at other churches in his town heard about the boy's sermon, and they invited him to speak at their churches. Marquan accepted the invitations, for he had promised God that he would do whatever God asked him to do. He prayed that his sermons would be a blessing to everyone who heard them.

When Marquan was 12, his pastor offered him a new challenge. "The church is planning a three-week Revelation Seminar, and we would like you to lead it," the pastor said. Preparing and preaching 21 sermons was a huge commitment for a young boy. But Marquan prayed about it and felt sure that God wanted him to do it.

The church held the meetings in a rented hall. On opening night some 250 people came. Many returned each night to hear a young boy preach God's Word.

"I've learned that if we're willing, God can use anyone to tell others about Jesus," Marquan said. "It doesn't matter how old you are; Jesus just wants you to be willing to tell others about Him."

God has blessed us with truths that millions don't know. It's our duty to share these truths. We can tell others, we can pray for them, and we can give mission offerings so that those whom we may never meet will have a chance to hear that Jesus loves us.

MARQUAN BUCHANAN *shares his faith in his hometown in Arkansas, United States.*

Ellen G. White recommended focusing our highest attention on the sanctuary because “the sanctuary in heaven is the very center of Christ’s work in behalf of men.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 488, 489.

The sanctuary discloses the heart of God. The greatest revelation of the love and character of God was at the cross. To help us to understand better what this great sacrifice meant, God devised the earthly sanctuary, a pictorial representation of the plan of salvation. This earthly sanctuary, however, only modeled the heavenly one, which is the true center of God’s presence and of His activity in the universe. The sanctuary formed the template to help us to understand Jesus as our Sacrifice and High Priest.

Our study of *The Sanctuary*, the fourth quarter 2013 guide by Martin Pröbstle, will explore God’s sanctuary, both His earthly model and the heavenly original, and bring us close to the presence of God.

Lesson 1—The Heavenly Sanctuary

The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **God’s Residence** (*Psalms 102:19*)

MONDAY: **Throne Room** (*Psalms 47:6–9; 93:1, 2*)

TUESDAY: **Worship in Heaven** (*Revelation 4 and 5*)

WEDNESDAY: **Courtroom** (*Psalms 11:4–7*)

THURSDAY: **Place of Salvation** (*Hebrews 2:17*)

Memory Text—*1 Kings 8:49, NKJV*

Sabbath Gem: We know that God is actively working on our behalf in the heavenly sanctuary.

Lesson 2—“Heaven” on Earth

The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **The First “Sanctuary” on Earth** (*Genesis 3:8*)

MONDAY: **Copy of the Pattern** (*Exodus 25:9, 40; Hebrews 8:5; 9:23, 24*)

TUESDAY: **Jesus as the Sanctuary** (*John 2:19–21*)

WEDNESDAY: **The Church as the Sanctuary** (*1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16*)

THURSDAY: **New Creation** (*Revelation 7:15–17*)

Memory Text—*Hebrews 8:5, NKJV*

Sabbath Gem: God has used concepts relating to the heavenly sanctuary to reveal truth.

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, and so forth, cannot hold or focus on normal ink-print publications. Contact Christian Record Services, Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506-0097.