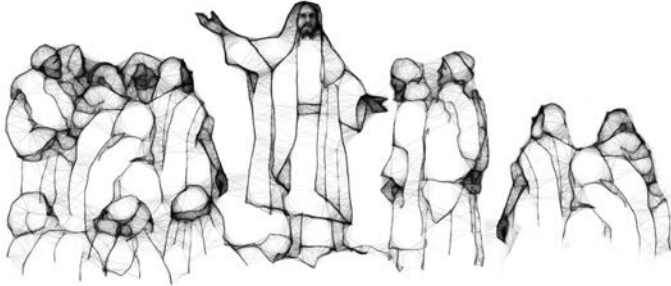


# Jesus: The Master of Missions



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *2 Tim. 1:8, 9; Dan. 9:24–27; Isa. 42:1–9; Luke 2:8–14; Matt. 10:5, 6; Acts 1:1–14.*

**Memory Text:** “Again Jesus said, ‘Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you’ ” (*John 20:21, NIV*).

According to Scripture, a core activity of the Trinity is mission. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are involved in saving humanity. Their Word began at the Fall and continues through until the end. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit will then restore this redeemed world to full unity with the divine will.

According to the Gospels, Jesus underwent the radical change into human form necessary for His mission to succeed. In Jesus Christ, the meaning of history comes into focus, the total mission activity of God becomes coherent, and the deepest needs of humans for meaningful existence are fulfilled.

In the New Testament, we are made acquainted with the purposes of the incarnation of Jesus Christ. We find here how He outlines the program for mission, and we get glimpses of how Jesus met people from other nations, people of other faiths. In the Word of God, we can see the incredible saving activity of God on behalf of fallen humanity.

\* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, August 15.

## Jesus in the Old Testament

“Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began” (2 Tim. 1:8, 9, NKJV).

Besides being great verses about the futility of salvation by works, these verses reveal the eternal nature of salvation; they show that the plan for our redemption had been formulated long, long ago.

So, it is no wonder that all through the Old Testament, Jesus Christ is revealed in one way or another. Especially powerful are the prophecies, which clearly show that Jesus is indeed the Messiah.

**Read** the following Old Testament texts, all applied to Jesus. What do they say about Him and His role as Messiah? *Isa. 61:1, Dan. 9:24–27, Isa. 7:14, 9:6, 42:1–9.*

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The prophet Isaiah describes the mission of Jesus with these words: “ ‘Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations. . . . I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness’ ” (*Isa. 42:1, 6, 7, NIV*).

**Dwell on the incredible idea that Jesus, the Creator, took upon Himself our humanity and in that humanity lived and died as He did. What great hope does this offer you in a world that, in and of itself, offers no hope at all?**

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## The Desire of Ages

Jesus Christ is Lord of both the church and the world. His coming is a fulfillment of the Old Testament expectations of a saved community that would extend far beyond the Jewish people. The coming of Jesus, especially His suffering and resurrection, ushered in a new age in which the distinction between Jew and Gentile, as far as the gospel is concerned, disappears. Jerusalem would remain the center, at least for a while. However, the point of departure was no longer Herod's temple in Jerusalem but the Jews converted to Christ; they had become the living temple. These Christian Jews would then be the "remnant" of Israel at that time in the early church, the ones called to bring the gospel to the world.

This announcement of the worldwide, universal mission of Christ as Savior of all nations was repeated at His birth, during His childhood, and at His baptism.

**What** do the following texts teach about the universal mission of Jesus to the world?

Luke 2:8–14 \_\_\_\_\_

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Luke 2:25–33 \_\_\_\_\_

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Luke 3:3–6 \_\_\_\_\_

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John 1:29 \_\_\_\_\_

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No question, Jesus came as the Savior for all humanity. What does this truth mean for us in the context of mission?

"The missionary spirit needs to be revived in our churches. Every member of the church should study how to help forward the work of God, both in home missions and in foreign countries. Scarcely a thousandth part of the work is being done that ought to be done in missionary fields. God calls upon His workers to annex new territory for Him. There are rich fields of toil waiting for the faithful worker."—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 29.

## Mission to the Jews

“I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel” (*Matt. 15:24, NIV*).

Between His first public appearance and His crucifixion, Jesus focused His ministry almost solely on the Jewish people, particularly in Galilee. The Lord addressed Himself first to Israel. Before the Cross, there are very few messages of good news to the Gentiles. Apparently, Jesus wanted to awaken the Jewish people to their place, purpose, and role in God’s overall mission for lost humanity. Israel was to have the opportunity to be the witness of God’s message to the world.

**Read** Matthew 10:5, 6. Why would Jesus say here what He did? How do we understand these words in the context of the universal scope of what Christ came to do and in the context of missions as a whole? Contrast this text with *Matt. 28:19*.

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When we consider the life and ministry of Jesus, we must observe a clear distinction between His thinking, ideals, principles, and planning on one side and the way He accomplished these purposes on the other. In His day-to-day life and ministry, He identified Himself with Jewish culture, just as the Old Testament predicted of the Messiah. But the impact of His incarnation was universally applicable. Through His death and resurrection, He would bear the sins of the world (*John 1:29*).

We detect here an important biblical principle for establishing mission. The first move is directed to creating a center in order to establish a strong and stable geographical and cultural base: Israel and the Jewish people. When that has been accomplished, mission should next develop outward from the center into ever-widening expanses.

**Think about your home church. How well does it model the ideas expressed above—that is, a strong and stable base that eventually is able to reach out to others? How can you avoid the danger, which many churches face, of being self-oriented, worrying about your own needs to the neglect of witness and mission?**

## Mission to the Gentiles

Although Jesus spent the major part of His time among the Jews, serving them in their cultural context, He made clear in His teaching and ministry that His mission was universal. The gospel should be preached to the nations, with Israel as the initial base. The salvation of the Gentiles is part of God's plan. It was embodied in Jesus' teaching.

**How** do the following teachings of Jesus indicate mission to non-Jewish people?

*Matt. 5:13, 14* \_\_\_\_\_

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*Mark 14:9* \_\_\_\_\_

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*Luke 14:10–24* \_\_\_\_\_

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*Matt. 13:36–43* \_\_\_\_\_

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Despite the fact that Jesus ministered mainly among the Jews, there's no question that from the very start His mission was for the whole world. Right at His baptism, John the Baptist said it clearly: "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!' " (*John 1:29, NKJV*). The word *world* (Greek *kosmos*) occurs about one hundred times in the Gospels. About half of these refer to the worldwide scope of Jesus as the Redeemer.

**In the parable Jesus told in Luke 14:16–24, those invited made all sorts of excuses for not coming. Read those excuses again. On one level, none appeared unreasonable, did they? What important lesson should we take from this for ourselves?**

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## The Great Commission

Jesus spent the 40 days between His resurrection and ascension primarily in preparing the disciples and His church for worldwide evangelism. The best-known and most quoted resurrection account is Matthew’s. However, during this period there were other occasions during which the risen Christ could have given further details on the gospel commission. There were two appearances in Jerusalem, two in Galilee (one by the Sea of Tiberias, one on the hilltop), and the meeting reported in Acts 1:1–14.

**There** are five structured occasions in the Gospels in which the Great Commission narrative is dealt with from various angles: on a mountain in Galilee (*Matt. 28:16–20*); at a table (*Mark 16:14–16*); in the upper room (*John 20:19–23*); on the beach (*John 21:15–17*); and just as Jesus was taken up into heaven (*Acts 1:6–9*). What key points do all these incidents have in common?

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Under the power of the Holy Spirit and obeying the words of Jesus, the apostles quickly spread across the ancient world. Paul preached on the northern shore of the Mediterranean; Philip worked in Samaria. According to early Christian tradition, Matthew traveled to Ethiopia and Thomas to India.

Though starting out small, and with so much opposition, through the grace of the Lord these faithful followers were able to spread the gospel message to the world. Whatever their faults, weaknesses, fears, doubts, and struggles, they accepted the call and worked for the salvation of the world. That is, what they learned about Jesus, what they got from Jesus, they sought to share with others. Isn’t that what being a Christian is all about?

**What have you been given in Christ? How should God’s gift to you through Christ influence your attitude toward witness and mission to others?**

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**Further Study:** According to Matthew, Jesus foretold that “ ‘this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come’ ” (*Matt. 24:14, NIV*). At the same time, the Scriptures make another point clear: “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only” (*Matt. 24:36*). Note also Jesus’ words: “ ‘It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority’ ” (*Acts 1:7, NIV*).

Thus, while the good news of the gospel has been preached and is being preached as never before, and while we believe that Christ’s coming is soon, we must not get caught up in dates and speculating about dates. “We are not to be engrossed with speculations in regard to the times and the seasons which God has not revealed. Jesus has told his disciples to ‘watch,’ but not for a definite time. His followers are to be in the position of those who are listening for the orders of their Captain; they are to watch, wait, pray, and work, as they approach the time for the coming of the Lord.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 189.

### Discussion Questions:

- 1 Despite the clear teaching on not setting dates for Christ’s return, hardly a year goes by before we hear something in the news about some group of Christians setting a date for Christ’s return. Why do you think people insist on doing this, other than as a good fund-raising technique? (After all, if Jesus is coming on June 19 of next year [or fill in any date you want], then what good is your money now?) Why is it bad for the Christian witness in the world when these dates, year after year, are shown to be false?
- 2 Think of the obstacles the early believers faced in the first few years of mission, especially considering that they were so small in number. What are some of the obstacles we face in mission today? What can we learn from the success of the early church that can help us to do what we have been so clearly called to do?

# Faithful Bride: Part 1

by REENA MURMU, BANGLADESH

Shanti was raised in a Christian home in Bangladesh. She was still quite young when her father died. Her mother struggled to feed her family. When Shanti was 13 years old, her mother gave her in marriage to a Hindu man.

According to custom, when Shanti went to live with her husband's family, she was expected to take his religion. But Shanti refused. Her husband's family treated her badly, and everyone worked to separate Shanti from her Christian faith. But Shanti clung to her God.

Shanti was expected to serve her mother-in-law, who treated her as a slave, shouting at her and denouncing her. Because Shanti refused to give up her faith in God, she was considered unclean and not allowed to work with food or utensils in the kitchen. But her mother-in-law made sure there was plenty of other work for the girl to do.

Shanti's husband, Bhudroy, was much older than Shanti and treated her kindly, but he was powerless to help his young bride, for he didn't dare defy his mother's orders.

There was no escape for the young bride because the couple was expected to remain with the family until after the first child was born. Three years after they married, their first daughter, Reena, was born.

Shanti tried to share her faith with her husband whenever she could, and over time he began to believe that Shanti was following the right religion. A Seventh-day Adventist pastor lived in the same village as Shanti. He visited the family and explained the church's beliefs, hoping to make Shanti's life a bit easier. Shanti's mother-in-law refused to listen to the pastor, but her father-in-law listened. The pastor returned to visit the family often, sharing his faith and Bible promises with the family members who were open to hearing them.

As he worked in the village, the pastor found a number of people who were interested in learning about the Bible. The pastor arranged to hold evangelistic meetings. Without Shanti's knowledge, her husband asked the pastor to study the Bible with him. Then he was secretly baptized. Shanti didn't know about her husband's interest until after he was baptized, but she was thrilled.

Shanti's mother-in-law, however, was very unhappy to learn that her son had abandoned his gods to worship his wife's God. She growled under her breath when she saw Shanti and Bhudroy going to church together. She often tried to prevent them from attending church. She would hide some household valuable and demand that the couple find it before they went to church. These searches often made the couple late.

When her pranks no longer worked, Shanti's mother-in-law turned to her other daughter-in-law for help in breaking the spirits of Shanti and Bhudroy. This daughter-in-law was selfish and often bickered and fought. She made life bitter for everyone.

*To be continued in next week's Inside Story.*



## *The Lesson in Brief*

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▶ **Key Text:** *John 20:21*

▶ **The Student Will:**

**Know:** Realize the vital importance of a wholistic approach to the mission God has given him or her.

**Feel:** Sense the responsibility of being sent as Christ's ambassadors for mission here on earth.

**Do:** Demonstrate Jesus' care for people that embraces the physical, spiritual, and emotional.

▶ **Learning Outline:**

**I. Know: Sent as Ambassadors**

**A** What compels us to be God's ambassadors for mission (*2 Cor. 5:14*)?

**B** Our mission is to continue Jesus' work on earth (*John 20:21*). How does Paul describe Jesus' mission (*2 Cor. 5:18*)?

**C** True wholistic mission must balance physical and spiritual dimensions. Matthew tells us that Jesus looked on the crowds with compassion. How else does he describe Jesus' ministry (*Matt. 9:35, 36*)?

**II. Feel: Compassionate Mission**

**A** True mission is motivated by love, not a feeling of obligation. Why did Jesus have compassion on the crowds (*Matt. 9:36*)?

**III. Do: Becoming Involved**

**A** How can you demonstrate Jesus' love in your workplace or where you go to school?

**B** How can we make our churches community-focused, where every member is engaged in some form of wholistic ministry?

▶ **Summary:** As Christ's ambassadors, we're called to a comprehensive mission that touches people's lives here and now but also leads them to eternity.

## Learning Cycle

### ►STEP 1—Motivate

**Spotlight on Scripture:** *Mark 16:15–20*

**Key Concept for Spiritual Growth:** In Jesus’ ministry of reconciliation on earth, He modeled a loving, wholistic approach that should guide the way we do mission today.

**Just for Teachers:** It’s been said that Jesus is “God spelled out in language human beings can understand.” Perhaps we could also say Jesus is “mission spelled out in language human beings can understand.” The apostle Paul tells us that Jesus has given us “the ministry of reconciliation” (*2 Cor. 5:18*) and that we are “Christ’s ambassadors” (*vs. 20*). Explore this week with your class what it means to be Christ’s ambassadors on earth, promoting His ministry of reconciliation and following His wholistic approach.

**Opening Discussion:** As a famous author and scholar, C. S. Lewis had an extremely busy schedule. But despite the heavy demands on his time, he personally responded—mostly by hand—to the thousands of letters he received from all over the world. He prayed for people who wrote to him, many of whom he had never met, and even sent money to those in need. People would sometimes just walk up to his home, and he would invite them inside and give them refreshments. He helped support students who couldn’t pay for their studies and opened up his home to needy children. For three months, a mentally disabled teenager stayed in his home—and Lewis personally taught him how to read. Here was a man who taught the world’s best students at Oxford and Cambridge universities and who wrote powerful apologetic works for Christianity—but who knew that in following Jesus, he must not only love in word but also in deed (*1 John 3:18*).

Discuss with the class practical ways that we can be witnesses in word and in deed.

### ►STEP 2—Explore

**Just for Teachers:** The biblical concept of the good news is rich and multilayered—with implications for what God is doing now with His kingdom here on earth and what He plans to do in the future in the new earth. It includes the promise of eternal salvation to come and God’s liberating action in all dimensions of life

now. N. T. Wright talks about the “transformative news of God’s rescuing justice to the whole creation.” He adds, “That’s a tightly packed definition, and every bit of it matters.”—*Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), p. 200. This week, discuss with your class the broad scope of God’s mission in the world. What does it involve, and what is included? In what ways is the message of the Bible good news for all aspects of our lives?

## Bible Commentary

### I. Jesus’ Wholistic Mission: Part 1 (Review Isaiah 42:1–9 with your class.)

This Messianic prophecy outlines Jesus’ wholistic mission. It’s a mission to several categories of people: the Gentiles, the blind, those in prison, and “those who sit in darkness.” And it’s a mission of liberation—to bring justice, share light, open eyes, and release captives.

This passage closely parallels the mission statement Jesus Himself gives in Luke 4:18–21, in which He quotes from another Messianic passage in Isaiah (*chapter 61*). Here, again, Jesus is involved in a wholistic ministry to the poor, the prisoners, the blind, and the oppressed. It’s a ministry that proclaims “good news,” “freedom,” and “recovery of sight.”

It’s a mistake to read Jesus’ mission only in physical terms—a social gospel of helping the poor, the imprisoned, the disabled, the politically oppressed. It’s also a mistake to spiritualize the mission—seeing these categories as representing only those who are spiritually blind, imprisoned, impoverished, or oppressed. Jesus is here talking about liberation that is both spiritual and physical. He brings good news to all dimensions of life.

Commenting on the passage in Luke, Ellen G. White says, “Our Lord Jesus Christ was the majesty of heaven, yet he came to our world as a physician, a healer of physical and spiritual maladies.”—“The Work for Today,” *The Gospel of Health*, Sept. 1, 1898.

**Consider This:** In what ways can we make sure our mission to make disciples includes both physical and spiritual care? How do we avoid the dangers of ending up, on the one hand, preaching only a “social gospel” or, on the other hand, focusing only on individual salvation?

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### II. Jesus’ Wholistic Mission: Part 2 (Review Matthew 10:5–8 and Mark 16:15–20 with your class.)

In these verses, we read part of Jesus' last few words of advice to His 12 disciples before He sends them out to minister. For many months now, they've been under His tutelage. He has taught them, mentored them, and personally modeled ministry. Now it's time to practice what they've learned.

Jesus tells them to preach, heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, and drive out demons (*Matt. 10:7, 8*). Notice that the disciples are "sent out" (*vs. 5*) and told to "go" (*vs. 7*). They're not instructed to try to attract people to some big event. Rather, they follow Jesus' incarnational mission method of personally going to the people where they are.

Later, after His resurrection, Jesus instructs the remaining 11 disciples. He tells them to go into all the world to preach the good news, but, in conjunction with that, various signs and wonders will be performed, including demons being cast out and the sick being healed (*Mark 16:15-18*).

Ellen G. White beautifully summarizes, in five steps, Jesus' method of ministry. First, the Savior "mingled" with people in a loving, caring way. Second, He showed "sympathy" for them. He then "ministered to needs," "won their confidence," and told them to "follow" Him. Mrs. White goes so far as to say that this method is the only ministry method that will bring "true success."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 143.

Jesus didn't just preach to people. In fact, He spent more time caring for their physical needs. For Him, ministry was wholistic—a balance between the physical and spiritual.

Today some people make a distinction between social and humanitarian care, on the one hand, and evangelism on the other. Jesus made no such separation. As followers of Jesus, we will hand people a cup of water, but we also long for them to accept the Water of Life. Of course, we must be careful to ensure that our care for people is not conditional on their becoming Christians. We pray and work to lead them to Jesus, but we will keep loving and caring for them irrespective of the path they choose.

**Consider This:** Reflect on each of the steps of Jesus' model for ministry: mingling, showing sympathy, meeting needs, winning confidence, and inviting people to follow Him. Can any of these steps be safely discarded? Why, or why not? Consider a recent outreach effort by your church and whether or not all these elements of Jesus' method were in place. If not, which steps were neglected?

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### ►STEP 3—Apply

**Just for Teachers:** Emphasize to your class that, in our witness, an intellectual approach to the good news isn't enough. It has to connect with life—to what is vital, meaningful, urgent to people. If it doesn't, it will have no power, and something else will take its place. Peter writes, “Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober . . .” (*1 Pet. 1:13, NIV*). Beliefs must connect with lives. We must enact what we believe. Peter spent much of his life acting with an unprepared mind. But the Holy Spirit changed his life and prepared him for action. He now dedicated his life to sharing the good news of his wonderful Savior.

**Thought Question:** What practical steps can we take to prepare our minds for action?

**Activity:** Select a few Seventh-day Adventist fundamental beliefs for class discussion. Depending on the size of the class, you can break into small groups for discussion or stay together to discuss in a larger group. Invite each group to consider a fundamental belief and to discuss how it could be applied in a meaningful way to a current event or issue. Invite each group to share their thoughts with the rest of the class.

### ►STEP 4—Create

**Just for Teachers:** The Latin counterpart for the word that Paul uses for ambassador is *legatus*—a word very familiar in the ancient Roman world (*2 Cor. 5:20*). Diplomatic legates, commissioned by the emperor, personally represented him in foreign lands. Whenever Rome conquered another territory, the legate went with the victorious general to arrange peace terms, determine boundaries, and draw up constitutional provisions. His task was to oversee the process of bringing this new territory and its peoples within the family of the Roman Empire. Discuss with your class how we, as ambassadors of God, have the wonderful privilege of leading people to become citizens of His kingdom and members of His family.

**Activity:** Invite class members to imagine that they are “drawing up the terms” for someone to become a Christian—a member of the family of God. What would the list look like? Discuss one another's ideas.

Conclude the class today with a period of prayer. Encourage each person to pray for the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in our church as we represent Christ in our community.