

Adult
Sabbath School
Bible Study Guide
Oct | Nov | Dec 2021

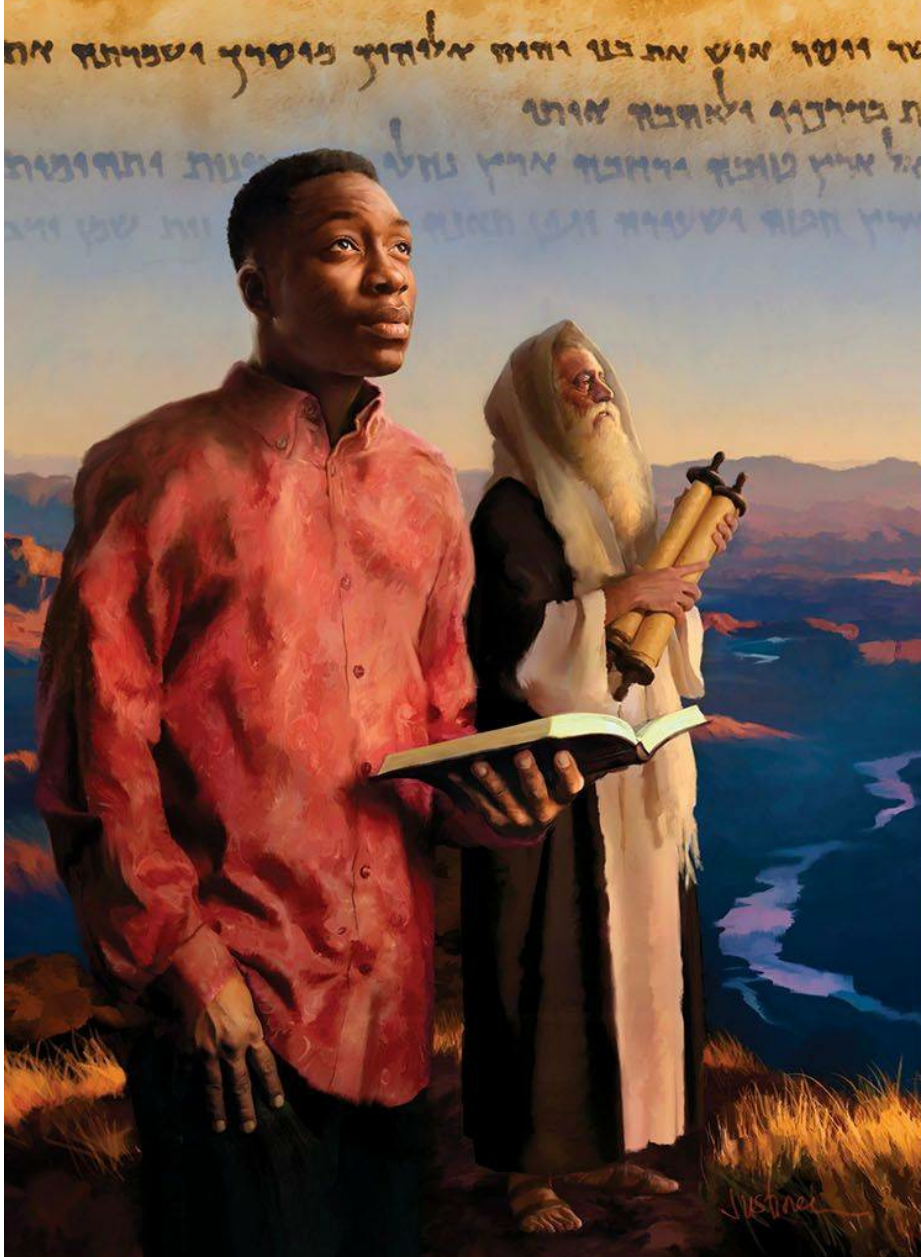
PRESENT TRUTH IN Deuteronomy



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The Book of the Covenant: Deuteronomy



The story goes like this: during the reign of King Josiah in Jerusalem (640–609 B.C.), someone, probably working in the temple, found a copy of a book, and the book was read before King Josiah. “Now it happened, when the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, that he tore his clothes” (*2 Kings 22:11, NKJV*). Why? Because he realized that he and his people were not obeying what was written in the book.

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Then, on the basis of that book, called the “Book of the Covenant” (2 Kings 23:2, NKJV), Josiah began a great reformation. We can read about that reformation in 2 Kings 23.

What was the book that had such an impact on the king and his nation? It is believed to be Deuteronomy, our study for this quarter.

The fifth, and last, of the five books of Moses, Deuteronomy—a name that comes from the Latin word *deuteronomium* (which means “second law”)—could be summarized as follows:

Having left Egypt, and having entered into the covenant at Sinai with the Lord, the children of Israel—instead of going directly to Canaan—wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. When the 40 years were finished and the Hebrews were finally about to cross over to the Promised Land, Moses spoke to them in a series of speeches. The essence of those speeches was: *You’re now about to enter the Promised Land. Finally! Don’t forget what the Lord has done for you, and don’t forget what He asks of you now, which is to love Him with all your heart and soul and to reveal that love by obedience to all His commandments, all according to the covenant.*

And, to stress the importance of the covenant, Moses repeated to the people the Ten Commandments, the legal foundation of their obligations in the covenant that the Lord had first cut with their fathers, and, again, was doing so—but now with them, right on the borders of Canaan.

Hence, we ask: Might there be parallels with what the children of Israel, on the borders of the Promised Land, faced—and what we, today, right on the border of the Promised Land (only a much better one), face, as well?

The book of Deuteronomy reveals to us the love of God, which was most powerfully made manifest in the death of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection.

Thus, the topic for this quarter, which is called “Present Truth in the Book of Deuteronomy.” And that’s what we’re going to look at: present-truth messages that we can take from God’s words to His covenant people.

In this quarter, we will look at Deuteronomy topically, covering such themes as the everlasting covenant, law and grace, what it means to love God and your neighbor, and—most important of all—how the book of Deuteronomy reveals to us the love of God, which was most powerfully

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made manifest in the death of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection.

Sure, a vast time and cultural divide separates our church today from the church in the wilderness. But, perhaps, what we have in common *with them* might be more than what divides us *from them*. For example, could not the following words be spoken to us, as well, today?

“ ‘Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess.

“ ‘Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people” ’ ” (*Deut. 4:5, 6, NKJV*).

Notice, it wasn't the laws themselves that were their “wisdom and understanding” before the nations, but their *obedience* to those laws. Certainly there's a message for us here—just one of many, as we will see, in the book of Deuteronomy.

Clifford R. Goldstein is editor of the Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide and author of Baptizing the Devil: Evolution and the Seduction of Christianity.

LESSON 1

*September 25–October 1

Preamble *to* Deuteronomy



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Isa. 14:12–14, Ezek. 28:12–17, Gen. 3:1–7, Gen. 12:1–3, Acts 7:20–36, Exod. 19:4–8.*

Memory Text: “He who does not love does not know God, for God is love” (*1 John 4:8, NKJV*).

The book of Deuteronomy, of course, did not arise in a vacuum. As with everything in life, Deuteronomy exists in a context; and, as with everything in life, that context plays an important role in understanding what the book means and what its purpose is.

A lot of history came before it—a history that explained the circumstances, not only of the book itself but also of the world and

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environment that created its context. Just as it would be hard to understand the purpose and function of a windshield wiper outside the context of a car, it would be hard to understand Deuteronomy, especially in light of our theme (Deuteronomy and present truth), outside the context in which it arose.

Someone had read Russian Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*—about 1,500 pages—in just three days. When asked what the book was about, the reader replied: “It’s about Russia.”

To cover in one week’s lesson the thousands of years of history before we come to Deuteronomy is to do somewhat the same thing. But by focusing on the highlights, we can see the context needed to best understand this book, so rich with “present truth.”

** Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 2.*

SUNDAY *September 26*

Love, to Be Loved

First John 4:8 says, “God is love.” However simple those three words (four in Greek), the idea behind them is so deep, so profound, that we can barely grasp their implications. They don’t say that God loves, or that God reveals love, or that God is a manifestation of love, but that God *is* love. *Is* love—as if love is the essence of God’s identity, Himself. As fallen human beings, with only a few pounds of tissue and chemicals in our heads with which to grasp reality, we just aren’t able to comprehend fully what “God is love” means.

But we can, certainly, understand enough to know that it’s very good news. If, instead of “God is love,” the verse said “God is hate” or “God is vindictive” or “God is indifferent,” this revelation about Him could have been something to worry about.

And the truth that “God is love” helps us better understand the idea that God’s government, how He rules all of creation, is reflective of that love. Love permeates the cosmos, perhaps even more than gravity does. God loves us, and we, too, are to love God back, in return (*see Deut. 6:5, Mark 12:30*).

Love, though, to be love, must be freely given. God cannot force love; the moment He does it’s no longer love. Hence, when God created intelligent and rational beings in heaven and on earth with the ability to love, the risk always existed that they might not love Him back. Some didn’t—and, hence there exist the origins of what we know as the great controversy.

Why do the following texts make sense only in the context of the freedom, and the risk, involved in love? *Isa. 14:12–14,*

Ezek. 28:12–17, Rev. 12:7.

Especially insightful is Ezekiel 28:15, which shows that though this angel, Lucifer, was a perfect being created by a perfect God, iniquity was found in him. It was not because he had been created with that iniquity to begin with. Instead, created with the ability to love, Lucifer had true moral freedom, and despite all that he had been given (“Every precious stone was your covering”), this angel wanted more. One thing led to another until, well, there was “war in heaven.”

In some places you can buy robot dogs, which will obey your commands, never soil the carpet, or chew the furniture. Would you, however, have any kind of meaningful relationship with this “dog”? How does your answer help in understanding why God wanted beings who truly could love Him back?

MONDAY *September 27*

The Fall and the Flood

Almost every school child has heard the story about an apple falling on Isaac Newton's head, and voilà! Newton discovered gravity. Whether or not an apple really fell on his head isn't the crucial point; instead, the point is that Newton's great insight (he didn't discover gravity, either; anyone who fell down already knew about gravity) was to understand that the same force that dropped the apple (gravity) also kept the moon in orbit around the earth, the earth in orbit around the sun, and so forth.

This was important because for millennia many people believed that the laws that governed the heavens were different from the laws that governed the earth. Newton showed that this belief was wrong.

And though Newton's contribution was in the area of natural law, the same principle holds true with moral law. The same freedom, the freedom inherent in love, that led to Lucifer's fall in heaven led to humanity's fall on earth, as well.

Read Genesis 2:16, 17 and Genesis 3:1–7. How do these verses about perfect people, in a perfect environment, created by a perfect God, also reveal the powerful truth of the freedom inherent in love?

After the Fall, things went from bad to worse, even to the point where the Lord said about humanity “that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (*Gen. 6:5, NKJV*). And if their thoughts were bad, their actions surely were, as well, until things got so evil that the Lord destroyed the entire world with the Flood—in a sense giving humanity a chance to start over, a kind of second creation. However, as the story of the Tower of Babel shows (*Gen. 11:1–9*), humanity still seemed intent on defying God. “When the tower had been partially completed, a portion of it was occupied as a dwelling place for the builders; other apartments, splendidly furnished and adorned, were devoted to their idols. The people rejoiced in their success, and praised the gods of silver and gold, and set themselves against the Ruler of heaven and earth.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 119. Thus, besides confusing their language, God scattered the fallen race across the face of the earth.

**Take a mental note of your thoughts throughout the day.
What does this teach you about the state of your own heart?**

TUESDAY *September 28*

The Call of Abram

Abram (later called Abraham) first appears in the genealogy of Genesis 11, which comes right after mention of the scattering from Babel.

Read Genesis 12:1–3, the call of God to Abram. Today, looking back after the cross, after the death of Jesus and the spreading of the gospel, how do we understand what God was promising to do through Abram?

Many centuries later, the apostle Paul, in seeking to deal with the heresy of the Galatians, pointed back to Abraham's call, showing it to be an early expression of what God's intentions had always been: the gospel to the world. "Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed.' So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham" (*Gal. 3:7–9, NKJV*).

Abraham's call was first expressed in Genesis 12; much of the rest of Genesis is the story of his blood descendants, one dysfunctional seed after another, creating one messed-up family after another, and yet, through them the promise eventually was to be fulfilled, reaching a crucial milestone with the call of Moses.

Read Acts 7:20–36, the martyr Stephen’s depiction of Moses and the Exodus. How does this fit in with God’s initial promise to Abraham?

In a world steeped in ignorance, error, and a general lack of the knowledge of truth (things have not changed much in more than three thousand years, have they?), the Lord called out a people, His people, Abraham’s seed, from Egypt. In them He sought not only to preserve knowledge of the truth, that is, knowledge of Him, Yahweh, and the plan of salvation, but also to spread that knowledge to the rest of the world.

Today, how do we as Seventh-day Adventists see ourselves in relation to the rest of the world? That is, what parallels exist between us and ancient Israel? More important, what responsibility does this parallel place on each of us individually?

WEDNESDAY *September 29*

The Covenant at Sinai

The Exodus and all that it entailed, from the blood on the doorpost in Egypt to the drama at the Red Sea—what an experience! No doubt it made an impression on those who lived through it. (And those who died, from the firstborn children in Egypt to the soldiers at the bottom of the sea, God will judge them fairly.) As the Lord said: “ ‘ “You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself” ’ ” (*Exod. 19:4, NKJV*).

Why did the Lord do this stunning and dramatic rescue, actually taking one nation out of another nation, or, as Moses himself said to them: “ ‘ “Or did God ever try to go and take for Himself a nation from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?” ’ ” (*Deut. 4:34, NKJV*).

Read Exodus 19:4–8. Why did the Lord call the people out from Egypt?

It was as simple as that. God called them out, the seed, the descendants of the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And with these descendants the Lord established His covenant, and they would be, indeed, “ ‘ “a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine” ’ ” (*Exod. 19:5, NKJV*). This relationship was central to the covenant.

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This idea of a “special treasure” (*segullah*), however, could be (and it was, in fact) easily misunderstood. Their specialness came not from anything inherently holy and righteous in and of themselves. Instead, it was because of God’s grace given to them and because of the wonderful truths that He had bestowed upon them—truths that they were to follow and, as a “kingdom of priests,” eventually spread to the world.

God then gave them some of the stipulations of the covenant, too (their end of the deal, so to speak), the Ten Commandments (*Exodus 20*), and then this covenant was ratified. Having sprinkled a newly constructed altar with the blood of the offerings, Moses “took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people” (*Exod. 24:7*). The people again declared that they would obey.

“When Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood ... and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, ‘This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you’ ” (*Heb. 9:19, 20, NKJV*). What does the blood signify, and why is it so important, even to us today?

THURSDAY *September 30*

Apostasy and Punishment

“ ‘All that the LORD has spoken we will do’ ” (*Exod. 19:8, NKJV; see also Exod. 24:3, Exod. 24:7*). Though, no doubt, the people had meant those words each time they said them, sacred history shows that, unfortunately, their actions time and again contradicted their words. Though they were the chosen people, though they had entered freely into the covenant with the Lord, they didn't keep up their end of the deal, which really came down to one thing.

What was the crucial component for Israel in regard to the covenant? *Exod. 19:4, 5*.

The call to obey God, to keep His law, was no more legalism than than it is now (*see Matt. 7:24–27; John 14:15; James 2:20; Rom 6:11, 12*), and yet, again and again the children of Israel failed to keep up their end of the deal.

Indeed, early on, even in the very sight of Mount Sinai itself, they fell into rank apostasy (*see Exod. 32:1–6*). Unfortunately, unfaithfulness seemed to be more the norm than the exception, and, thus, instead of quickly entering into the Promised Land, they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years.

Read Numbers 14:28–35. What was the punishment meted out to
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the nation because of the people's refusal to trust what the Lord had told them to do?

Then, as now, so often disobedience occurs as a result, not just of outright rebellion (though that does happen), but from a failure to trust in what God tells us. What made this sin even more heinous for Israel was the fact that, as God Himself said, all these men had “ ‘seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times’ ” (*Num. 14:22, NKJV*). Despite all that they had seen and experienced, they still refused to obey the Lord and to take the land, despite God's promises that they would succeed (*Numbers 13, Numbers 14*).

Think about what was said above: that so often disobedience comes from a lack of trusting in God's Word to us. Why is this true, and how can we, indeed, learn to trust in God more?

FRIDAY *October 1*

Further Thought: For a deeper and well-thought-out study on the great controversy theme, based on the idea of God as love, and written by a Seventh-day Adventist, see John Peckham's *Theodicy of Love: Cosmic Conflict and the Problem of Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018). The fact that this work has been published by a non-Adventist press shows how good biblical scholarship can reveal the reality of the great controversy as depicted in Scripture.

“In brief, I argue that God’s love (properly understood) is at the center of a cosmic dispute and that God’s commitment to love provides a morally sufficient reason for God’s allowance of evil, with significant ramifications for understanding divine providence as operating within what I call covenantal rules of engagement.”—John C. Peckham, *Theodicy of Love: Cosmic Conflict and the Problem of Evil*, p. 4.

“The decree that Israel was not to enter Canaan for forty years was a bitter disappointment to Moses and Aaron, Caleb and Joshua; yet without a murmur they accepted the divine decision. But those who had been complaining of God’s dealings with them, and declaring that they would return to Egypt, wept and mourned greatly when the blessings which they had despised were taken from them. They had complained at nothing, and now God gave them cause to weep. Had they mourned for their sin when it was faithfully laid before them, this sentence would not have been pronounced; but they mourned for the judgment; their sorrow was not repentance, and could not secure a reversing of their sentence.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 392.

Discussion Questions:

- 1** Discuss the question of free will and love. Why must love,

to be love, be freely given? Given all the suffering in the world, some would argue that love was not worth it. How would you answer that challenge?

2 With obedience so central to the whole Bible, what then is legalism? What factors can turn an attempt to be faithful to God and to His Word and commandments into the trap of legalism?

3 In class, discuss the question asked at the end of Tuesday's study regarding the parallels between ancient Israel and the Seventh-day Adventist Church. What are those parallels, and why should we be concerned about them?

INSIDE *Story*

I Met Jesus at the Shop

By HONG SOON-MI

It didn't seem that life could get much worse. My husband was stricken with bone-marrow cancer. Then his parents died. I had to pay for my mother-in-law's funeral on my own and then take on responsibility for my family's livelihood. Sometimes I didn't even have 1,000 Korean won (US\$1) to pay for my son's school supplies. My salary wasn't enough to cover my husband's hospital bills. Every day, I worried that I wouldn't have enough rice to feed my family. I wept. I felt so alone.

Then I met Park Yeon-sook. She wasn't a relative or even a friend, but she tried to cheer me up. She saw that I was struggling financially, and she gave me additional work at her shop in Hanam, a suburb of South Korea's capital, Seoul. The extra money helped pay for living expenses and hospital bills.

I was so grateful for the work. But I noticed something unusual about Yeon-sook. She seemed happier than other people. I thought this was strange, but I was greatly moved by her joy.

As I got to know her, I saw that she went to church on Saturdays. She didn't worry about the income that she lost by closing her shop once a week. I was an atheist, but I wanted to go to church with her and find out why she had such joy and peace.

Yeon-sook never invited me to her Seventh-day Adventist church, but I resolved in my heart to go. So I started studying the Bible on my own. As I learned about God, the peace of heaven came into my life. I gave my heart to Jesus and joined West Hanam Seventh-day Adventist Church, where I now serve as a deaconess together with Yeon-sook.

There are many things that I don't know, but I believe in God from the bottom of my heart. Yeon-sook never spoke to me much about Jesus, but I

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saw Jesus in her life. The same Jesus whom I met through her life is living in my heart today.

This year, my husband and son also were baptized and joined the Adventist family. It doesn't seem that life can get much better. Thanks be to God for reaching my family through Yeon-sook and her shop.

This mission story illustrates Mission Objective No. 1 of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's "I Will Go" strategic plan: "To revive the concept of worldwide mission and sacrifice for mission as a way of life involving not only pastors but every church member." Learn more at IWillGo2020.org. This quarter, your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will support two mission projects in South Korea. Read more about YEON-SOOK next week.



Provided by the General Conference Office of Adventist Mission, which uses Sabbath School mission offerings to spread the gospel worldwide. Read new stories daily at AdventistMission.org.

LESSON 2

*October 2–8

Moses' History Lesson



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Deuteronomy 1–3, Exod. 32:29–32, Numbers 14, Eph. 3:10, Gen. 15:1–16, John 14:9.*

Memory Text: And they “all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ” (*1 Corinthians 10:3, 4, NKJV*).

These are the words which Moses spoke” (*Deut. 1:1, NKJV*). Thus begins the book of Deuteronomy. And though, yes, Moses and the presence of Moses dominate the book, from these opening words to his death in the land of Moab (*Deut. 34:5*), Deuteronomy (as the whole Bible) is really about the Lord Jesus. For He is the One who created us (*Genesis 1, *****ebook converter DEMO Watermarks******

Genesis 2, John 1:1–3), sustains us (*Col. 1:15–17, Heb. 1:3*) and redeems us (*Isa. 41:14, Titus 2:14*). And, in a looser sense of those words, Deuteronomy reveals how the Lord continued to create, sustain, and redeem His people at this crucial time in salvation history.

Basically, just as the children of Israel are finally to enter Canaan, Moses gives them a history lesson, a theme that is repeated all through the Bible: *remember what the Lord has done for you in the past*.

This admonition should mean something to us, we who are on the borders of a better Promised Land: “In reviewing our past history, having traveled over every step of advance to our present standing, ... I am filled with astonishment, and with confidence in Christ as leader. We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.”—Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches*, p. 196.

** Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 9. 14*

SUNDAY *October 3*

The Ministry of Moses

All through the Bible, the presence of Moses is felt. And though he's not mentioned until Exodus 2:2, he had written the book of Genesis, God's authoritative and foundational story of who we are, how we got here, why things are as bad as they are and, yet, why we can hope anyway. Creation, the Fall, the promise of Redemption, the Flood, Abraham, the gospel—all have their roots in Genesis, and its author was the prophet Moses. It's hard to gauge adequately the influence that this one man, hardly flawless, was nevertheless able to exert for God because he loved the Lord and wanted to serve Him.

Read Exodus 32:29–32, which records the conversation between the Lord and Moses after the terrible sin of the golden calf. What insight does this story give us about the character of Moses and why, despite whatever flaws he had, the Lord was able to use him in such a mighty way?

Even though Moses had nothing to do with the sin, he sought to intercede for this sinful people, even being willing to lose his own soul on their behalf. Fascinatingly enough, in Exodus 32:32, when Moses asks God to “forgive their sin,” the verb actually means “to bear.” Thus, Moses—understanding the gravity of sin and what it took to atone for it—asked God

indeed to “bear” their sin. And that is because this is the only way, ultimately, that their sin, any sin, could be forgiven.

Thus, here we have, early in the Bible, a powerful expression of substitution, in which God Himself, in the person of Jesus, will bear in Himself the full brunt and penalty of our sin—God’s preordained way of salvation for humanity while remaining true to the principles of His government and law.

Indeed, many centuries later Peter would write about Jesus: “who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed” (*1 Pet. 2:24, NKJV*).

Meanwhile, what we see in this story of Moses and his reaction to their sin is Moses in the role of intercessor on behalf of a fallen, sinful people, a precursor to what Jesus also will do for us (*see Heb. 7:25*).

Willing to lose his own soul for his people? Think more about the implications of those words. What can we learn from them for ourselves about what it means truly to love others?

MONDAY *October 4*

Fulfilled Prophecy

Despite some of the error that modern science tries to promulgate as truth (such as that our universe by itself arose from “absolutely nothing” or that all life on earth arose by chance from simple chemicals), science has nonetheless given us some astonishing insights into God’s creative power. The harmony, the balance, the precision of many aspects of the natural world, even in its fallen state, continue to astound those who study them.

And if God can be so precise with physical things, He certainly will be precise with spiritual things, as well. Hence, in the opening verses of Deuteronomy, we can see more of God’s incredible precision.

Read Deuteronomy 1:1–6. What is the prophetic significance of the fact that Deuteronomy 1:3 talks about the “fortieth year”?

After the fiasco, when Moses sent spies from Kadesh Barnea to check out the land, and the people rejected the call to take the land—what happened? They were told that they would not enter into the Promised Land as they had hoped. And for how long would they wait before entering? “ ‘ According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, namely forty years, and you shall know My rejection” ’ ” (*Num. 14:34, NKJV*).

Hence, Deuteronomy takes up the story of God’s people in the fortieth year, exactly as God had told them. In other words, God’s prophetic Word is

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as trustworthy as God Himself, and what we see here in the opening verses of Deuteronomy is more evidence of that trustworthiness; that is, God will do what He says and will do it *when* He says that He will do it.

Of course, this isn't the only prophetic time period that was fulfilled as God had said. Looking back from our vantage point today, we can find in Daniel 9:24–27, for instance, the time period for Jesus, fulfilled just as the Lord had said. We can see that the “time and times and half a time” (*Dan. 7:25, NKJV; see also Rev. 12:6, 14; Rev. 13:5*) has been fulfilled in history, as well as in the 2,300 days of Daniel 8:14.

And besides the precise time elements, the prophecies of Daniel 2, 7, and 8, which so precisely and accurately predicted world history, have given us overwhelming evidence of God's foreknowledge, control, and trustworthiness.

We can see that the Lord faithfully fulfilled these past prophecies just as predicted. Why should this give us confidence that we can trust Him on the things He said would come that are yet in the future?

TUESDAY *October 5*

A Thousand Times More Numerous

After the long trek in the wilderness, Moses, speaking for the Lord (he was a prophet, though, indeed, more than a prophet), said: “See, I have set the land before you; go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to your fathers—to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—to give to them and their descendants after them” (*Deut. 1:8, NKJV*).

Notice, however, what comes next.

Read Deuteronomy 1:9–11. What is the significance of these words, especially in light of the fact that, in a real sense, they were being punished by God for the rebellion at Kadesh Barnea?

Here we see another example of the graciousness of God. Even amid the wilderness wanderings, they were blessed: “ ‘Forty years You sustained them in the wilderness. ... They lacked nothing; their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell’ ” (*Neh. 9:21, NKJV*).

And Moses, again showing his love for his people, asked God to multiply them a thousand more times than God already had done!

Read Deuteronomy 1:12–17. As a direct result of God’s blessing upon the people, what happened, and what steps did Moses take to

deal with the situation?

Thus, even when the Lord was so powerfully present among them, there was the need for organization, for structure, for a system of accountability. Israel was a *qahal*, an organized assembly (see *Deut. 31:30*), a precursor to the New Testament *ekklesia*, Greek for “church” (see *Matt. 16:18*). And though working in a different context, Paul was never far from his Jewish roots, and in 1 Corinthians 12 we see him clearly delineating the need for qualified people to assume various roles for the proper functioning of the body, just as we see here in Deuteronomy and the *qahal* in the wilderness. The church today, as the *qahal* back then, needs to be a unified body with people fulfilling various roles according to their gifts.

Though we sometimes hear people rail against “organized” religion (what would they prefer, “disorganized” religion instead?), the Word of God, especially the New Testament, acknowledges no other kind but an organized one.

WEDNESDAY *October 6*

Kadesh Barnea

A specter has been haunting the early parts of the book of Deuteronomy, the specter of Kadesh Barnea. This unfortunate story, as we have seen, set the immediate background for the book of Deuteronomy, and it's worth taking a closer look at it.

Read Numbers 14. **How did the people react to the report of the spies, and what were the results of their reaction?** (*See also Deut. 1:20–46.*)

We can derive many important lessons from this story, but one important lesson, which will appear again in the book, can be found in Numbers 14, as well.

Read Numbers 14:11–20. **Though we see Moses again in the role of intercessor, what is significant about his line of reasoning with the Lord regarding why the Lord should not destroy them?**

Think about what Moses was saying to God. *If You do this, look at how*

You will appear in the eyes of the Egyptians and the other nations in the area. This point is important because, ultimately, everything that God had wanted to do with Israel wasn't just for the sake of Israel; it also was for humanity as a whole. The nation of Israel was to be a light to the world, a witness to the ancients about the love and power and salvation found in the true God and not in the worthless idols that these people had worshiped.

However, as Moses said, *If You wipe this people out, then what?* The nations will say: "Because the LORD was not able to bring this people to the land which He swore to give them, therefore He killed them in the wilderness" (*Num. 14:16, NKJV*).

In other words, what we see here is a theme found all through the Bible: the idea that God is to be glorified in His people—that the glory and goodness and love and power of God are to be revealed in His church, through what He does through His people. Of course, His people don't always make it easy for Him to do this, but ultimately God will be glorified through His people's actions on earth.

Read Ephesians 3:10. What is Paul saying here, and how does this happen? How is the "manifold wisdom" of God made manifest to the cosmos? What role, if any, do we have as individuals in bringing this about?

THURSDAY *October 7*

The Iniquity of the Amorite

In Deuteronomy 2 and 3, Moses continues to recount Israelite history and how, with God's blessing, they routed their enemies; when they were faithful, God gave them the victory, even over "giants" (*Deut. 2:11, 20; Deut. 3:13*).

Of course, this brings up the difficult topic, which we must at least touch on, regarding the destruction of these people. Though the children of Israel would often speak peace first to a nation (*Deut. 20:10, 11*), yet if the people didn't accept that offer, sometimes the Israelites would go in and destroy them, including women and children. " 'And the LORD our God delivered him over to us; so we defeated him, his sons, and all his people. We took all his cities at that time, and we utterly destroyed the men, women, and little ones of every city; we left none remaining' " (*Deut. 2:33, 34, NKJV*).

Some try to get around this simply by saying that these stories are not true. However, because we believe that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (*2 Tim. 3:16, NKJV*), that's not a viable option for Seventh-day Adventists. Thus, we are left with a difficult question regarding these incidents.

Read Genesis 15:1–16. What did God say to Abram in Genesis 15:16, and how does it shed some light on this difficult topic?

There's no question that many of these pagan nations were exceedingly brutal and cruel people who justifiably could have faced the wrath and punishment of God long before then. That's true, and even if God waited patiently for them to change their ways, and they didn't change—this still doesn't alter the hard reality about the killing of everyone, including children. (Of course, probably many more children were killed in the Flood than were killed by the Israelites.)

The fact is that, for now, given the limited information we have about the full context of the events, we just need to accept this hard reality and trust in the goodness of God, which has been revealed in so many other ways. Faith isn't just about loving God on a beautiful day in a pretty forest full of wonderful sights and sounds. It's also about trusting in Him despite what we don't fully understand.

Read 1 Corinthians 10:1–4 and John 14:9. How do these verses, and many others like them, help us learn to trust in the love, justice, and goodness of God, even when we see things that seem hard to square with this understanding of God?

FRIDAY *October 8*

Further Thought: Here's how one scholar seeks to answer the hard questions about what the Israelites did to some of these nations:

“As Creator of all things and all human beings and as sovereign over all, God can do anything [He] wants with anyone and be right in doing so. ...

“The ways of God are a mystery. Since we will never completely understand [Him], we might as well relax with the questions in our minds. Isaiah 55:8–9 offers some consolation.

“According to the biblical picture of the Canaanites, these peoples were extremely wicked, and their annihilation represented God's judgment for their sin. The destruction of the Canaanites was neither the first nor the last time God would do this. The differences between the Canaanites' fate and the fate of humanity (except for Noah's family) as described in Genesis 6–9 involve scale and agency. ...

“God never intended for the Israelites to make the policy of *herem* [the total destruction] as a general policy toward outsiders. Deuteronomy 7:1 expressly identifies and thereby delimits the target peoples. The Israelites were not to follow these policies against Aramaeans or Edomites or Egyptians, or anyone else (cf. Deut. 20:10–18). ...

“The Canaanites suffered a fate that ultimately all sinners will face: the judgment of God. ...

“God's elimination of the Canaanites was a necessary step in the history of salvation. ...

“Although the Canaanites as a whole were targets of God's judgment, they had at least forty years of advance warning (see Rahab's confession in Josh. 2:8–11).”—Daniel I. Block, *The NIV Application Commentary: Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), pp. 98, 99.

Discussion Questions:

- 1** Think about our understanding of the millennium, in which we will have a thousand years to have all our questions answered. How can this understanding help us to learn to trust in God despite whatever hard questions we have now?
- 2** What are some of the ways that God led you in the past that can help you learn to trust Him for the future? Why is it important not to forget how God has worked in our lives?
- 3** In class, go over the question at the end of Sunday's study, about Moses' willingness to lose his own soul for the sake of his people. Is that a right attitude to have? What, if anything, is worth losing one's soul over, especially considering what it cost to redeem it?

My Mother's Heritage

By PARK YEON-SOOK

My mother turned to me as she was dying from gallbladder cancer.

"You must go to church," she said.

Mother had taken me to church every Sabbath since I was a young girl, but I had stopped attending as I got busy with my shop in Hanam, a suburb of South Korea's capital, Seoul. Mother's words troubled me as I struggled both to work and raise my son, daughter, and three nephews. I realized that I could not succeed on my own, and I returned to Jesus.

As my love for Jesus grew, He gave me a heart to care for needy neighbors. A relative introduced me to Hong Soon-mi. A year after we met, Soon-mi's husband was diagnosed with bone-marrow cancer. When I learned that he couldn't afford surgery, I set up a donation box on the street outside my shop. Many people ridiculed me, saying, "Why are you raising money for someone who isn't a relative?" But I kept the donation box in place.

On Soon-mi's birthday, I presented her with a 45-pound (20-kilogram) bag of rice. "Take this gift from my shop," I said. She later told me that her whole family cried when they saw the gift.

Soon-mi didn't come to church right away. But she read the Adventist magazines that I gave her and learned that Seventh-day Adventists love Jesus and people. I put Soon-mi in charge of my shop and provided her with a salary and daily necessities, such as fruit and rice, for about two years. After that, I made her the manager of a small restaurant that I ran. A year after beginning to manage the restaurant, she asked, "Why don't you invite me to church?"

"Why?" I said. "You know that you are welcome."

"Then I'll go," she said.

After six years of friendship, Soon-mi visited West Hanam Seventh-day Adventist Church for the first time. Three years later, she became a deaconess, and later her husband and son were baptized.

When I first opened my shop, I was the only Adventist in the neighborhood. Now seven merchants are Adventist. The church has a good reputation in the area. I thank my mother for giving me a heritage of faith, and I give all glory to God for using Adventist merchants like me for good.

This mission story illustrates Mission Objective No. 1 of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's "I Will Go" strategic plan: "To revive the concept of worldwide mission and sacrifice for mission as a way of life involving not only pastors but every church member." Learn more at IWillGo2020.org. This quarter, your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will support two mission projects in South Korea. Read more about SOON-MI last week.



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LESSON 3

*October 9–15

The Everlasting Covenant



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Gen. 12:1–3, Rom. 4:1–5, Exod. 2:24, Deut. 5:1–21, Deut. 26:16–19, Deut. 8:5, Matt. 28:10.*

Memory Text: “ ‘And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you’ ” (*Genesis 17:7, NKJV*).

Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth— to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people” (*Rev. 14:6, NKJV*). Notice, “the *everlasting* gospel,” everlasting as in always existing, as in having

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always been there, as in having been promised to us in Christ Jesus “before time began” (*Titus 1:2, NKJV*).

Hence, it’s no wonder that the Bible talks at other times about the “everlasting covenant” (*Gen. 17:7, Isa. 24:5, Ezek. 16:60, Heb. 13:20*), because the essence of the gospel is covenant, and the essence of the covenant is the gospel: God out of His saving grace and love offers you a salvation that you do not deserve and cannot possibly earn; and you, in response, love Him back “with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength” (*Mark 12:30, NKJV*), a love that is made manifest by obedience to His law: “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments” (*1 John 5:3, NKJV*).

This week we will look at the idea of the covenant as expressed in the book of Deuteronomy, where the covenant and all that it entails is made manifest.

** Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 16.*

SUNDAY *October 10*

The Covenant and the Gospel

All through the Bible, the covenant and the gospel appear together. Though the idea of covenant existed before the nation of Israel (for example, the Noahic covenant), and though the covenant promise was made before the nation of Israel existed, it was expressed prominently through God's interaction with His people, starting with their fathers, the patriarchs.

And even from the start, the central truth of the covenant was the gospel: salvation by faith alone.

Read Genesis 12:1–3, Genesis 15:5–18, and Romans 4:1–5. What was the covenant promise made to Abram (later Abraham), and how is the gospel revealed in that covenant promise?

Abraham believed God, believed in God's promises to him, and thus he was justified before God. This declaration, however, was not cheap grace: Abraham sought to uphold his end of the covenant by obedience, such as seen in Genesis 22, at Mount Moriah. All this, even though "his faith is accounted for righteousness" (*Rom. 4:5, NKJV*). That's why, centuries later, Paul would use Abraham as the exemplar of what it means to live by the covenant promises God had made with His people.

This theme echoes throughout the Bible. Paul brought it up another time in Galatians 3:6, where he again quotes Genesis 15:6, about Abraham's faith being "accounted ... to him for righteousness" (*NKJV*), and he refers

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back to the promise first made to Abram about all nations being blessed in his seed (*Gal. 3:8, 9*). The covenant promises are made to all, Jew and Gentile, who “are of faith” (*Gal. 3:7*) and, thus, who are justified by faith without the deeds of the law—however much they are obligated, because of the covenant, to obey the law.

Even when Jeremiah talks about the new covenant, he does so in the context of the law: “ ‘But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people’ ” (*Jer. 31:33, NKJV*), reflecting language that goes back to the book of Leviticus: “I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people” (*Lev. 26:12, NKJV*).

How does the covenantal idea of the law and the gospel together fit so perfectly with the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14, God’s final warning message to the world?

MONDAY *October 11*

The Covenant and Israel

“ ‘It is not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you go in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD your God drives them out from before you, and that He may fulfill the word which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob’ ” (*Deut. 9:5, NKJV; see also Deut. 9:27*).

How is the reality of the covenantal promises made manifest in this verse?

Here, too, the covenant of grace appears: God worked for them— despite the constant mistakes. (This, surely, has to be how the gospel works today, as well.) And it was because of the promise made to the fathers that God’s grace was given to their future generations.

In Moses’ dealing with the people to whom the covenantal promises were given as a whole, he often referred back to the covenantal promises made to the patriarchs.

Read Exodus 2:24, Exodus 6:8, and Leviticus 26:42. What is being said here that helps show how the covenantal promises work?

The exodus from Egypt, the great symbol of God's saving grace, also was based on the covenant the Lord had made to their fathers. That is, even before the beneficiaries of the covenant were born, the promises were made in their behalf. Thus, through no merit of their own (to say the least), they received the promised deliverance, which God did for them through the miracles and events of the Exodus.

Of course, things didn't end there. They went from Egypt to—where? Yes, Sinai, where the covenant with them was “officially” established (*see Exodus 20*). And central to that covenant was gospel and the law, the Ten Commandments, which they were called upon to obey, a manifestation of their saving relationship with the Lord, who already had redeemed them (the gospel). Hence, again and again in Deuteronomy, they were called to obey that law as their part of the covenant, which had been ratified at Sinai.

What role should the law of God play in our lives today, we who have been saved by grace, and why is that law so crucial to our experience with God?

TUESDAY *October 12*

The Book of the Covenant

Though the idea of covenant (*berit* in Hebrew), to describe God's relationship with His people, is found all through the Bible, this word appears so often in Deuteronomy that Deuteronomy has been called "The Book of the Covenant."

Look at Deuteronomy 5:1–21. What is happening here that helps to show how central the idea of covenant (*berit*) is to the book of Deuteronomy?

Not long after the children of Israel were redeemed from Egypt, God established the covenant with them, at Sinai, just before they were supposed to enter the Promised Land. Then, after a 40-year detour, just before they are again to enter the Promised Land, which was a central part of the covenantal promise (*see Gen. 12:7, Exod. 12:25*), through the mouth of Moses, the Lord again gives them the Ten Commandments, a way to re-emphasize just how important it was for them to renew their covenant obligations, as well.

Yes, the Lord was going to fulfill His covenantal promises to them. Now, though, they are obligated to uphold their end of the deal: " 'So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone' " (*Deut. 4:13, NKJV*). He did it at Sinai, and now He was doing it again, in Moab, just

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before they were to take the land promised to them through the promise made to the fathers centuries earlier, a manifestation of the “everlasting covenant” that preceded even the existence of the world.

“Before the foundations of the earth were laid, the Father and the Son had united in a covenant to redeem man if he should be overcome by Satan. They had clasped Their hands in a solemn pledge that Christ should become the surety for the human race.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 834.

Read Deuteronomy 5:3. How do we make sense of this verse?

What was Moses saying to them? Most likely Moses was emphasizing the fact that their fathers were now gone, and the wonderful covenantal promises made to the fathers were now being made to them. This could have been Moses’ way of letting them know that they should not mess up, as the previous generation had done. The promises (and obligations) are now theirs.

WEDNESDAY *October 13*

His Special People

It's hard for us today to grasp much of what the ancient world was like at the time in which Israel was wandering the wilderness. If whole empires have come and gone, with only ruins (if that) remaining, what can we know of many of the smaller pagan nations that lived in the same area as Israel did?

Not a whole lot, but we do know one thing: these people were steeped in paganism, polytheism, and some utterly degrading practices, which included child sacrifice. Try to imagine just how degrading and evil a culture and a religion would be that would do that to their own children, and do so in the name of some god!

No wonder, again and again, all through the history of ancient Israel, the Lord had warned His people against following the practices of the nations around them. “ ‘When you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations’ ” (*Deut. 18:9, NKJV*).

And that's because God had called out this nation for a special purpose. By having entered into the covenant with God, they were to be a special people, a witness to the world of the God who created the heaven and the earth—the only God.

Read Deuteronomy 26:16–19. How is the covenant relationship between God and Israel summed up in these verses? How should their faithfulness to the covenant be manifested in the kind of people they were to become? What lessons can we take from there for ourselves, as well?

How fascinating that Moses begins these four verses with the words “this day,” as in *right now*, again, God commands you to do these things (Moses repeats the idea in verse 17). He had been commanding them all along to do these things. It’s as if Moses is telling them they need to commit at this very moment, again, to be the faithful, holy, and special people, which is truly the central reason for their existence as the covenant nation. They were the only nation who knew the true God and knew the truth about this God and how He wanted people to live. In a real sense, they not only had “present truth,” but they also were, in their own way, to embody that truth until Jesus, “the Truth” Himself (*John 14:6*), was to come.

Why is the idea of “this day” committing to God and to His covenant requirements relevant even to us, “this day”?

TURSDAY *October 14*

Other Images

Biblical scholarship has long recognized the similarities between Israel's covenant with God and other covenantal agreements between kingdoms. This parallel shouldn't be surprising. The Lord was simply working with His people in terms that they could understand.

At the same time, the idea of a covenant, a legal agreement between two parties, with rules and stipulations and regulations, can seem so cold and so formal. Though that element must indeed exist (God is the Lawgiver), it's not broad enough to encompass the depth and breadth of the kind of relationship God wanted with His people. Hence, other images are used in Deuteronomy to help portray the same idea as the covenant between God and Israel—but just to give it added dimensions.

Read Deuteronomy 8:5; Deuteronomy 14:1; and Deuteronomy 32:6, 18–20. What kind of imagery is used here, and how could this help reveal the relationship God wanted with His people?

Read Deuteronomy 4:20 and Deuteronomy 32:9. What imagery is used here, and how, too, does this help reveal the kind of relationship God wanted with His people?

In each case, there is the idea of family, which, ideally, should be the closest, tightest, and most loving of bonds. God has always wanted this kind of relationship with His people. Even after their shameful rejection of Jesus during the time of the cross, Jesus said to the two Marys after He had been resurrected, “ ‘Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me’ ” (*Matt. 28:10, NKJV*). Even as the resurrected Christ, He referred to the disciples as “My brethren,” an example of love and the grace that flows from love for those who certainly didn’t deserve it. That’s essentially what the relationship between God and humanity has always been: grace and love given to the undeserving.

What kind of relationship do you have with God? How can you deepen it and learn to love Him, while at the same time understanding your covenant obligation to obey His law? Why are these two ideas not contradictory but complementary?

FRIDAY *October 15*

Further Thought: “The spirit of bondage is engendered by seeking to live in accordance with legal religion, through striving to fulfill the claims of the law in our own strength. There is hope for us only as we come under the Abrahamic covenant, which is the covenant of grace by faith in Christ Jesus. The gospel preached to Abraham, through which he had hope, was the same gospel that is preached to us today, through which we have hope. Abraham looked unto Jesus, who is also the Author and the Finisher of our faith.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1077.

“Before the foundations of the earth were laid, the Father and the Son had united in a covenant to redeem man if he should be overcome by Satan. They had clasped Their hands in a solemn pledge that Christ should become the surety for the human race. This pledge Christ has fulfilled. When upon the cross He cried out, ‘It is finished,’ He addressed the Father. The compact had been fully carried out. Now He declares: Father, it is finished. I have done Thy will, O My God. I have completed the work of redemption. If Thy justice is satisfied, ‘I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am.’ John 19:30; 17:24.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 834.

Discussion Questions:

- 1** Dwell on the idea that even before the foundation of the world, the Father and Son had “united in a covenant” to redeem us if the race fell. Why should that be so encouraging to us? What should this teach us about how much God wants us to be saved into His kingdom?
- 2** As the Seventh-day Adventist Church, in what ways

should we fulfill the role that ancient Israel should have fulfilled in its time? How can we learn to avoid the mistakes that they made?

3 Why are the gospel and the promises of the gospel so central to the whole idea of the new covenant? What texts can you find in the New Testament that show how the law and obedience to the law were not abolished under the new covenant, as commonly taught by other Christians? Why do you think so many Christians say that the gospel nullifies the need to keep the Ten Commandments?

Good After Beirut Blast?

By KATHIE LICHTENWALTER

I barely noticed the first thud and shudder.

We'd had breezes all afternoon that rattled our front door. But the second, unfamiliar thud-shudder was unmistakable. In a politically fragile world, I know the possibilities well: Fireworks? A machine-gun? A car bomb? A fighter jet flying over? While nothing had ever involved me personally, I had learned that every sound has a meaning, sometimes tragic.

I thought nothing of stepping out onto the front porch to investigate. From my hilly outpost above the campus of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Middle East University, I looked across the sprawling city of Beirut below, past the port, and toward the Mediterranean Sea. I noticed clouds—a mushroom, it seemed—dispersing in high-speed flourishes across the sky overhead. Not normal. Not good.

I stepped further out onto the porch just as a massive explosion enveloped me. A wall of wind with dust and debris lifted me forcefully and threw me back into the house. I grabbed the door but couldn't get a grip to close it. The force seemed to blow straight through the walls. The window curtains twisted crazily around me. I could hardly stand.

I wanted to look out the window, but I didn't know if more was coming. I wanted to be safe, but where was safety? So I paced the hallway, my hands shaking. I started breathing again. Everything was eerily silent. Normal.

Minutes later, Osman called. I had given him an online violin lesson just before the explosion. Now he was calling back, his eyes wild, his face sweaty, his phone jerking around to show me the destruction of his family's tiny apartment. "It is all broken," he said. "All broken, Miss."

That wasn't new to him. His family had been bombed out of Syria six years earlier. For him, the August 2020 warehouse explosion that killed at

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least 200 wasn't his broken apartment. It was the familiar cycle of loss.

It's a cycle I can't break. I can't numb the pain, reclaim the losses, rebuild a country. Nobody can. But we are not helpless; we are not victims. We stand in the presence of God, interceding for what is beyond our power to change and giving Him permission to defy the evil that is flexing and fuming. Good can come of this. Let God's name be honored through my life, on our Middle East University campus, for dear Lebanon and into the uttermost parts of our reeling world.

KATHIE LICHTENWALTER works for the tentmaking initiative at the Middle East and North Africa Union. This mission story illustrates Mission Objective No. 2 of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's "I Will Go" strategic plan: "To strengthen and diversify Adventist outreach in large cities, across the 10/40 Window, among unreached and under-reached people groups, and to non-Christian religions." Learn more at IWillGo2020.org.



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LESSON 4

*October 16–22

To Love *the* Lord Your God



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Deut. 6:4, 5; Deut. 10:12; Eph. 2:1–10; Rev. 14:6, 7; Deut. 4:37; Deut. 11:1; Mark 12:28–30.*

Memory Text: “ ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength’ ” (*Deuteronomy 6:5, NKJV*).

In the Jewish religion, one of the most important prayers is taken from Deuteronomy 6. It is known as “the Shema,” based on the first Hebrew word of the prayer, from the root, *shama*, which means “to listen,” or even “to obey”—a word that appears again and again, not just in Deuteronomy but all through the Old Testament.

The first line of the Shema reads like this:

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Shema Yisrael Adonai Elohenu Adonai echad.

It means: “ ‘Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!’ ” (*Deut. 6:4, NKJV*). Many times when Jews pray it, they cover their eyes, the idea being to let nothing distract them from thinking about God. This first line of the Shema is deemed an affirmation of the monotheistic nature of *Adonai Elohenu*, “the LORD our God,” and Israel’s loyalty to Him alone and to no other “god.” In fact, it also could be read as “the LORD is our God.”

This one line is part of the first speech that Moses gave to the children of Israel as they were about to enter the Promised Land. What follows that opening line, however, is a powerful expression of truth that remains as crucial now as it was then.

** Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 23.*

SUNDAY *October 17*

To Love God

After Moses recounted to the children of Israel their history, he began giving them instructions on what they were to do in order to take the land and to thrive on it. Indeed, one could argue that the bulk of Deuteronomy was simply that: the Lord telling the people what they needed to do in order to keep up their end of the covenant, which He graciously made with them in fulfilling His promise to their fathers.

Deuteronomy 6 begins like this: “ ‘Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, that you may fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged’ ” (*Deut. 6:1, 2, NKJV*).

Read Deuteronomy 6:4, 5. What command does the Lord God give to the children of Israel in verse 5? What does that mean?

Love the Lord your God with all your heart ... ? How interesting that here, in the midst of the law, in the midst of all the warnings, rules, and provisions, the people are called to love God. And not just to love Him, but to do so “ ‘with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength,’ ” which points to the absolute nature of this love.

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Loving God with all the heart and soul and strength means that our love for Him should be supreme over our love for everything and everyone else, because He is the foundation and ground of all our being and existence and everything else. Love for Him should put our love for everything else in proper perspective.

In the Hebrew, the word “your” for *your* God, *your* heart, *your* might, is in the singular. Yes, God was speaking to the people as a whole, but the whole is only as strong as the parts. The Lord wants each one of us, though part of a larger body, to be faithful to Him individually, and the foundation of that faithfulness should be our love for Him, for who He is, and for what He has done for us.

What does it mean to you to love God with all your heart and soul and might?

MONDAY *October 18*

To Fear God

Moses told the children of Israel to love God with all that they had. That was a command. However, a few verses earlier Moses gave them another command: “ ‘That you may fear the LORD your God’ ” (*Deut. 6:2, NKJV*).

Read Deuteronomy 10:12. What does it say in this text about love and fear, and how do we understand it?

In one verse they are told to fear God, in another to love Him, and in this verse they are told to both fear and love Him at the same time. In the common understanding of the word “fear” this might seem like a contradiction, but it’s not. Instead, the fear of God—in the sense of awe and respect for who He is, His authority and power and justice and righteousness, especially in contrast to our sinfulness, weakness, and complete dependence on Him—should be a natural reaction. We are fallen beings, beings who have violated God’s law and who, but for His grace, deserve condemnation and eternal death.

Read Ephesians 2:1–10. How should these verses help us understand how we can both fear and love God at the same time?

Despite the fact that we were “children of wrath” (which is why we should fear Him), Christ died for us and thus gave us a new life in Him, which includes freedom from the sin and condemnation of the past (which is why we should love Him).

And just as this is true for us today, this same principle applied to ancient Israel: they were captives in Egypt, condemned to slavery and oppression, and it was only God’s love for them and graciousness toward them that led to their great redemption. “ ‘Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there’ ” (*Deut. 5:15, NKJV*). No wonder, then, that they both loved and feared God at the same time. And if they were to do that, how much more should we, having the great truth of Jesus dying on the cross for us?

Read Revelation 14:6, 7. How are we to understand why the command to “fear God” should be the first command of the Lord’s last-day message to the world? Given what we know about what is coming on the world, why does that command make so much sense?

TUESDAY *October 19*

He First Loved Us

Even amid rules and regulations in Deuteronomy and all the admonitions warning the Jewish nation that the people must obey “His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes,” they were first and foremost to love God with all their heart and soul and might. Of course, they had good reasons to do just that.

Read Deuteronomy 4:37; Deuteronomy 7:7, 8, 13; Deuteronomy 10:15; Deuteronomy 23:5; and Deuteronomy 33:3. What do these verses teach about God’s love for His people?

Again and again in Deuteronomy, Moses told the people about God’s love for their fathers and for them. But more than just in words, the Lord revealed this love by His actions. That is, even despite their shortcomings, their failures, their sins, God’s love for them remained steadfast—a love that was powerfully manifested in His dealing with them.

“We love Him because He first loved us” (*1 John 4:19, NKJV*).

How does this text help us understand why we should love God?

God's love for us predated our existence, in that the plan of salvation was in place way before "the foundation of the world" (*Eph. 1:4*).

As Ellen G. White said it: "The plan for our redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. It was a revelation of 'the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal.' Rom. 16:25, R.V. It was an unfolding of the principles that from eternal ages have been the foundation of God's throne."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 22.

How fortunate we all are that God is, indeed, a God of love, a love so great that He went to the cross for us, a self-sacrificing love in which "He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (*Phil. 2:8, NKJV*). Thus, we today have a revelation of God's love for us that the children of Israel probably couldn't even have imagined.

Instead of being love, what if God were hate or if God were indifferent? What kind of world would this be? Why is the revelation of God's love for us something that we, indeed, should rejoice about?

WEDNESDAY *October 20*

“If You Love Me, Keep My Commandments”

Israel—the nation as a whole—was called to love God. But this was something that only could happen individually. As a single human being given free will, each Israelite had to make the choice to love God—and they were to show that love through obedience.

What do the following texts have in common? That is, what is the common theme among them?

Deut. 5:10 _____

Deut. 7:9 _____

Deut. 10:12, 13 _____

Deut. 11:1 _____

Deut. 19:9 _____

How much clearer could the Word of God be? Just as God doesn't merely say He loves us but has revealed that love for us by what He has done and still does, God's people, too, are to show their love to God by their actions. And in these texts we see that love to God is inseparably linked to obedience to Him.

This is why, when John says such things as, “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments” (*1 John 5:3, NKJV*), or when Jesus says, “

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‘If you love Me, keep My commandments’ ” (*John 14:15, NKJV*), these verses are merely expressing this basic teaching. Love to God must always be expressed by obedience to God. That has always been the case, and it always will be. And this obedience to God means obedience to His law, the Ten Commandments, which includes the fourth commandment, the Sabbath, as well. Keeping the fourth commandment is no more legalism than is keeping any of the other nine.

Though obedience to any of the commandments *can* be legalism, that kind of obedience isn’t really done out of love for God. When we truly love God, especially because of what He has done for us in Christ Jesus, we want to obey Him, because that’s what He asks us to do.

When Moses again and again told Israel to love and obey God, he did it *after* they had been redeemed from Egypt. That is, their love and obedience was a response to the redemption that God had given them. They had been redeemed by the Lord. Now they would respond by faithfully obeying His commandments. Is it any different today?

What is your own experience in seeking to obey God? That is, what are your own motives in obeying God? Why should it be done out of love for Him? What role, if any, should fear, the biblical understanding of fear, play, as well?

THURSDAY *October 21*

The First Commandment

However much some Christians, for various reasons, seek to separate the Old Testament from the New, it can't be done, at least not without all but denuding the New Testament of its true meaning. The New Testament, in its revelation of Jesus and its theological explanations of His life, death, resurrection, and high-priestly ministry, points to the fulfillment of many of the Old Testament prophecies and types. In many ways, the Old Testament forms the background, the context, the basis for the New. Both testaments reveal the goodness and love of God.

This is one reason why the New Testament, including Jesus, again and again, quotes the Old.

Read Mark 12:28–30. What was the question asked about the “first commandment of all”? How does Jesus respond, and from where does He get His answer?

It's interesting that a scribe, someone who had dedicated his life to understanding the law and how it should be applied, would have asked this question. However many laws they might have believed that they needed to obey (later Jewish tradition said that there were 613 laws), it's not surprising that they would want it all distilled into one question.

And what does Jesus do?

He goes right to Deuteronomy 6, starting out with “ ‘Hear, O Israel: the
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LORD our God, the LORD is one!’ ” (*Deut. 6:4, NKJV*), and then quotes the next verse, as well, about loving God with all our heart, soul, and strength. He points to the key affirmation of the Lord as their God, their only God, and based on that great truth, they are called to love Him supremely.

What could be more “present truth” than this command? In the very last days, when final events unfold and everyone will be called to choose one side or the other in a very dramatic way, the commandments of God (*Rev. 14:12*) will play a crucial role.

Ultimately, the side we choose, even in the face of persecution, will be based on whether or not we truly love God. That’s the deciding issue, and we can come to love God with all our heart and soul and might only as we come to know Him for ourselves and experience for ourselves His goodness, love, and grace. If need be, that’s something to die for.

If someone were to ask you: How do people come to love a God that they have never seen personally, what would you say? In class, talk about your answer.

FRIDAY *October 22*

Further Thought: “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. As the nations of the saved look upon their Redeemer and behold the eternal glory of the Father shining in His countenance; as they behold His throne, which is from everlasting to everlasting, and know that His kingdom is to have no end, they break forth in rapturous song: ‘Worthy, worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by His own most precious blood!’ ”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 651, 652.

Discussion Questions:

- 1** Read the Ellen G. White statement above. What does it say that should help us understand why our love for God should be the greatest love that we have? Think about what it means that God, the One who “upheld the unnumbered worlds through the vast realms of space” was the One who went to the cross for us. Why should this truth be at the foundation of our relationship with God?
- 2** Dwell more on the idea of loving and fearing God at the same time. How do we do both, and why should we do both?

3 It's one thing to love God when things are going well in our lives. What about when things aren't going well, when tragedy strikes? Why, during such times, is loving God even more important than when things are going well?

4 Go over the final question in Thursday's study. What are the various approaches that you could take in explaining to someone who isn't a believer about what it means to love God? How can we human beings love someone whom we've never physically seen? Why does it not matter that we have never seen Him, at least in person?

INSIDE *Story*

Power of a Book

By KAZUHIRO HIRAGA

Nine-year-old Saki loved to read on the Japanese island of Okinawa. She especially loved to read books sold to her family by a kind stranger who had knocked on their door. Again and again, she read the set of five books, *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories*. Her favorite story was about a boy named Wilford and his Surprise Package Company. Wilford liked to surprise people with gifts. Saki felt happy imagining the joy of the people who received the gifts.

The books also introduced Saki to Jesus. Her family was not Christian. Her parents, like many people in Japan, did not worship Jesus. In the books, she read that Jesus loves children and wants to make them happy.

Saki grew up and moved to Tokyo, the capital of Japan. She got married and became the mother of two little boys. Somewhere along the way she lost the books with her favorite bedtime stories.

When her eldest son was old enough, she began to look for a school for him. Near their home, she noticed a private school called Tokyo Saniku Elementary School. Curiously, she looked up the school on the internet. She was surprised to learn that it was a Seventh-day Adventist school. She had never heard of Adventists, so she looked for more information online. To her surprise, she read that Adventists not only have many schools but they also publish many books for children, including her beloved bedtime stories. She knew that she wanted her son to study at the Adventist school.

But first she wanted to know more about the Adventist Church. An Adventist church was located on the property of the Adventist school, and she began to attend its Sabbath worship services. She felt great peace as she sang hymns and listened to sermons.

Saki got hold of a new set of bedtime stories and began to read them to

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her sons. The boys loved the stories. As Saki read to her boys, she began to read another Book on her own—the Holy Bible. Just as her son started the first grade, she joined a Bible study group at the school. Months later, she gave her heart to Jesus and was baptized.

Today, Saki Takahagi, 35, still reads bedtime stories to her young sons. She also shares the Bible with them. She loves the Bible, and she loves Jesus.

SAKI learned about Jesus through the bedtime stories and later by searching for information on the internet. Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will go to a project to help many Japanese people, especially young people, learn about Jesus through the internet. Thank you for planning a generous offering.



Provided by the General Conference Office of Adventist Mission, which uses Sabbath School mission offerings to spread the gospel worldwide. Read new stories daily at AdventistMission.org.

LESSON 5

* *October 23–29*

The Stranger *in* Your Gates



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Mark 12:29–31, Deut. 10:1–19, Ps. 146:5–10, Matt. 7:12, Deut. 27:19, James 1:27–2:11.*

Memory Text: “ ‘Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt’ ” (*Deuteronomy 10:19, NKJV*).

As we read last week, when asked by a scribe about “ ‘the first commandment of all’ ” (*Mark 12:28*), Jesus answered by giving the affirmation of God as one, and then He said: “ ‘ “And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.” This is the first commandment’ ” (*Mark 12:30, NKJV*).

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However, Jesus continued, talking then about the “ ‘second, like it’ ” (*Mark 12:31, NKJV*), something that the scribe hadn’t asked about. Nevertheless, Jesus, knowing how important it was, said: “ ‘And the second, like it, is this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” There is no other commandment greater than these’ ” (*Mark 12:31, NKJV*).

No *commandment* greater than these? Jesus linked love for God and love for one’s neighbor into one commandment, and that commandment was the greatest of all.

Again, Jesus wasn’t coming up with something new, something that the Jews hadn’t heard before. Instead, the call to love Him supremely— the idea of loving one’s neighbor and of loving other people as a way to express our love for God was, yes, taken from the book of Deuteronomy.

** Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 30.*

SUNDAY *October 24*

Circumcise Your Hearts

Deuteronomy 10, a continuation of Deuteronomy 9, is basically God’s reaffirmation of the covenant that He had made with Israel. Indeed, much of this book is a kind of covenant renewal. That is, even after their terrible sin at Horeb, at which time no sooner did Moses leave them for a little while than they fell into idolatry, the Lord still wasn’t done with them.

Read Deuteronomy 10:1–11. What is going on here that helps us to understand that God forgave His people their sin and was reaffirming the covenant promise made to them and their fathers?

Moses smashed the Ten Commandment tablets (*Deut. 9:17*)—a sign of the broken covenant (*Deut. 32:19*). “To show his abhorrence of their crime, he threw down the tables of stone, and they were broken in the sight of all the people, thus signifying that as they had broken their covenant with God, so God had broken His covenant with them.” —Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 320.

Thus, the fact that God told Moses to hew new tables “like the first” and He would write on them the words that were on the first shows that God had forgiven the people and was not done with them, even then.

Read Deuteronomy 10:14–16. What is God saying to them? What is the meaning of the images that the Lord used here?

There's a mixture of images here: the foreskin, the heart, the neck. Nevertheless, the point is clear. Circumcision was a sign of the covenant, but it's only an *outward* sign. God wanted their hearts; that is, their minds, their affections, their love. The stiff-necked image simply pointed to how stubborn they were in their unwillingness to obey the Lord. And, basically, here and elsewhere, the Lord was telling them to stop with their divided loyalties and serve Him with all their heart and soul.

Think about all the times the Lord has forgiven you your sins. What should that tell you about His grace?

MONDAY *October 25*

Love the Stranger

Amid these admonitions Moses declares: “ ‘Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the LORD your God, also the earth with all that is in it’ ” (*Deut. 10:14, NKJV*). What a powerful expression of the sovereignty of the Lord, an idea found in other places in the Bible, as well: “The earth is the LORD’S, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein” (*Ps. 24:1, NKJV*).

Read Deuteronomy 10:17–19. What other declaration does Moses make about the Lord here? Even more important, what does God command His people as a result of that declaration?

Yahweh is not only the sovereign of heaven and earth, but He also is the “God of gods, and Lord of lords” (*Deut. 10:17*). This doesn’t mean that there are other gods, lesser gods, such as the supposed gods the pagans around them worshiped. Rather, it was a way of talking about more than just His being the only God (“ ‘ “Now see that I, even I, am He, and there is no God besides Me” ’ ” [*Deut. 32:39, NKJV*]). It asserts His total supremacy over all other powers, real or imagined, either in heaven or on earth.

The text says, too, that He is “the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe.” All of this is part of the bigger message: Yahweh is your God, and you, His people, need to obey Him.

What a powerful contrast is being presented here, as well. Yes, Yahweh

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is the God of gods and Lord of lords, the sovereign Ruler and Sustainer of the creation (*Col. 1:16, 17*), but He also cares about the fatherless, the widow, and the stranger, and He shows that care by ministering to their immediate physical needs. The God who takes note if a sparrow falls to the ground (*Matt. 10:29*) knows about the plight of those on the margins of society. In other words, the Lord is telling the people that, *OK, maybe you are chosen, you are special, and I love you, but I love others, too, including the needy and helpless among you. And just as I love them, you must love them, as well. This is one of your covenant obligations, and an important one, too.*

Read Psalm 146:5–10. What is the message of the psalm that reflects what God is saying here, and what should this mean to us today, as Christians?

TUESDAY *October 26*

For You Were Strangers in Egypt

“ ‘Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt’ ” (*Deut. 10:19, NKJV*).

What is the message to ancient Israel here? What should the message from this verse be for us, as well?

Centuries earlier the Lord told Abram: “ ‘Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years’ ” (*Gen. 15:13, NKJV; see also Gen. 17:8, Acts 13:17*). This is, of course, what happened, and in the early chapters of Exodus the dramatic story of their redemption (*Exod. 15:13*) and salvation (*Exod. 14:13*) from Egypt has been recorded for posterity, a symbol, a type, of the redemption and salvation that we have been given in Christ Jesus. In this verse, the Lord wants them to remember where they had been and *what* they had been—and that was, strangers in another land.

In other words, *Remember when you were on the margins of society, outcasts, even slaves, and thus at the mercy of those who were stronger than you and who could abuse you and, indeed, often did.* And though Israel was a chosen nation, called of God, a “kingdom of priests” (*Exod. 19:6*), and though there were some differences between them and the strangers among them—especially in regard to religious services—when it came to “human rights,” the stranger, the widow, the orphan needed to be treated with the same

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fairness and justice as the Israelites expected for themselves.

Read Matthew 7:12. How does the verse encapsulate what the Lord was telling ancient Israel about how they were to treat the weak among them?

This admonition to Israel about how they were to treat outcasts was not, by any means, the norm in the ancient world, where outcasts could be treated in some cases no better than animals, if even that well.

In contrast, Israel was to be different, a light unto the nations. And, yes, that difference would be found in the God whom they worshiped, how they worshiped Him, and the whole religious system of truth that God had given them. Yet, their kind treatment of the marginalized could have been a powerful witness to the world of the superiority of their God and of their faith, which in one sense was the whole point of their existence, anyway, to be a witness to the world of their God.

WEDNESDAY *October 27*

Judge Righteously

As believers, we have been called to reflect the character of God. Paul wrote about “my little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you” (*Gal. 4:19, NKJV*). After all, we had originally been made “in the image of God” (*Gen. 1:27*), an image later defaced by sin. And as we saw, when Moses talked about the power and majesty of God, he also said that God didn’t take a bribe and that He cared about the weak and the outcast. God does this; therefore, we need to do the same.

Read the following texts in Deuteronomy. What is the common theme among them all?

Deut. 1:16 _____

Deut. 16:19 _____

Deut. 24:17 _____

Deut. 27:19 _____

It’s all but proverbial how the weak, the poor, the outcasts don’t get the same kind of “justice” in most human courts as do those with money, power, and connections. It doesn’t matter the country, the era, the culture, or how lofty the principles of justice and equity that are enshrined in constitutions or laws or whatever; the reality remains the same: the poor,

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the weak, and the outcasts almost never get the justice that others do.

That's what is so remarkable about what the Lord Himself was saying here. This unfairness, which is everywhere else, should not exist in Israel, among God's people, the ones who are to represent Him to the world. In a sense, to use a term from the modern era, the Lord wanted there to be "equal justice under the law" in ancient Israel.

But this goes even deeper than mere jurisprudence. " ' "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy" ' " (*Lev. 19:2, NKJV*). Yes, they knew who the true God was, and they had the correct forms of worship, and they brought the right kinds of offerings. That's all fine. But in the end, what good was all that if they were mistreating the weak and poor among them? Again and again, in the prophets, the Lord rails against the oppressors of the poor and the needy in Israel. How can you be "holy" and mistreat others at the same time? You can't, regardless of how strictly you adhere to proper religious rituals.

Read Amos 2:6; Amos 4:1; Amos 5:11; Isaiah 3:14, 15; Isaiah 10:1, 2; and Jeremiah 2:34. What are the prophets saying that reflects what the Lord had warned ancient Israel about? What do these words say to us today?

TURSDAY *October 28*

Pure Religion Before God

Read Deuteronomy 24:10–15. What important principles are being expressed here regarding how we are to treat those who are under our control?

Again we see the Lord's concern for basic human dignity. *Yes, someone owes you something, and it's time to collect—but show the person a bit of respect, a bit of dignity, will you? Don't go barging into his place and demand it. Instead, wait outside and let him come and give it to you.* Deuteronomy 24:12, 13 seems to say that if some poor soul gave you his garment as “collateral,” you need at least to let him sleep in it overnight. The other verses deal with how one treats the poor who work for him or her, who can be so easily oppressed. Don't oppress them, because in the eyes of God it is a sin, and surely a grievous one too. Again, if Israel were to be a witness, a holy people walking in truth amid a world steeped in error, idolatry, evil, and sin, surely they would have to be kind to the weakest and most marginalized among them. Otherwise, their witness would be nothing.

Read James 1:27–2:11. What is James saying here that reflects what the Lord was telling His people in Deuteronomy? What significance is there in the fact that in these verses, James links mistreatment of the poor with the Ten Commandments?

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Though nothing in the Ten Commandments themselves *directly* relates to showing partiality to the rich over the poor, sternly adhering to the letter of the law while at the same time mistreating the poor or needy makes a mockery of one's profession of faith and any claim to keep the commandments. Loving your neighbor as yourself is the highest expression of God's law—and this is present truth now as much as it was in the time of James, and as it was when Moses spoke to Israel on the borders of the Holy Land.

Why must we as Seventh-day Adventists, who take keeping the law seriously, make sure we are as serious about the words of James and Deuteronomy? Given what we read in James, why should our belief in the keeping of the law only strengthen our resolve to help the poor and needy among us?

FRIDAY *October 29*

Further Thought: It is hard to imagine how even in the best of times, such as under David and Solomon, the people of Israel could have been so blessed by God and yet could have so oppressed the poor, the helpless, and the outcasts among them.

“Therefore, because you tread down the poor
and take grain taxes from him,
though you have built houses of hewn stone,
yet you shall not dwell in them;
you have planted pleasant vineyards,
but you shall not drink wine from them.
For I know your manifold transgressions
and your mighty sins:
Afflicting the just and taking bribes;
Diverting the poor from justice at the gate” (*Amos 5:11, 12, NKJV*).

“The LORD will enter into judgment with the elders of His people and His
princes:
‘for you have eaten up the vineyard;
the plunder of the poor is in your houses’ ” (*Isa. 3:14, NKJV*).

Discussion Questions:

1 Israel needed to remember that they had been “strangers” in Egypt, which was one reason they were to treat strangers and outcasts in Israel as they wished they had been treated when they were outcasts. How does this truth relate to the gospel, to the idea that, through the blood of Jesus, we have

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been freed from the slavery of sin? Why, and in what parallel ways, should what Jesus has done for us impact how we treat others, especially the helpless among us?

2 Think about it. We can worship on the right day and understand the truth about death, hell, the mark of the beast, and so forth. That's fine. But what does it all mean if we treat others nastily or oppress the weak among us or don't administer justice fairly when we need to judge a situation? Especially because of the truth that we have, why must we be extra careful not to think that, somehow, just knowing the truth, in and of itself, is all that God requires of us? Why is that a potentially dangerous trap for us?

3 What role should our faith have in helping us understand what is commonly referred to as "human rights"?

Message Received

By YOUNGSUK CHAE

Kim Hye-sun is a devout Christian in South Korea. She yearned for God and wanted to know more about His Word. So she joined a Bible study with friends but didn't understand the discussion. She soon stopped attending.

Hye-sun usually drives a car, but one day she felt like taking the bus. As she waited at the bus stop in front of her house, she overheard two women talking enthusiastically. "Read this message!" one woman said, holding out her cell phone. "Someone sends me a message every day, and I love them!"

"Really?" the other woman said. "Let me see."

Hye-sun found herself drawn to the women. "Can I see it too?" she asked. She didn't usually talk to strangers, but she was curious.

On the cell phone, she read, " 'God is love' is written upon every opening bud, upon every spire of springing grass. The lovely birds making the air vocal with their happy songs, the delicately tinted flowers in their perfection perfuming the air, the lofty trees of the forest with their rich foliage of living green—all testify to the tender, fatherly care of our God and to His desire to make His children happy" (*Steps to Christ*, p. 10).

Wow! Hye-sun thought, *This is what I need!*

She asked how she could receive the text messages. The woman with the cell phone promised to help. Soon she began receiving daily messages, and she expressed her gratitude by replying to each one. On Sundays, she texted back, "Have a good Lord's day!" After some time, at her texted request for more information, she received *The Great Controversy* and other books in the mail. She has stopped sending Sunday greetings, but continues to express joy over the messages and is reading the books that she has received.

The text messages come from Lim Myung-Sook, a Seventh-day
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Adventist deaconess who sends Ellen White quotations daily to about 2,500 people, including leaders from other denominations. Myung-Sook is praying that Hye-sun and others who read the messages will grow closer to Jesus. “I don’t know how many people read these messages and how the messages are making a difference in their lives,” she said. “I am just a sower. But I believe God will make the seed grow and reap its fruits.”

This mission story illustrates Mission Objective No. 1 of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s “I Will Go” strategic plan: “To revive the concept of worldwide mission and sacrifice for mission as a way of life involving not only pastors but every church member.” Learn more at IWillGo2020.org. This quarter, your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will support two mission projects in South Korea.



Provided by the General Conference Office of Adventist Mission, which uses Sabbath School mission offerings to spread the gospel worldwide. Read new stories daily at AdventistMission.org.

LESSON 6

*October 30–November 5

For What Nation *Is* There So Great?



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Deut. 4:1–9, Matt. 15:1–9, Num. 25:1–15, 1 Cor. 10:13, Deut. 4:32–35, Matt. 5:13–16.*

Memory Text: “ ‘And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?’ ” (*Deuteronomy 4:8, NKJV*).

The first three chapters of Deuteronomy were basically a history lesson, reminding the people of what they had been through up to that point. By the time we get to [chapter 4](#), the history lesson shifts more into a sermonic mode. The recounting of events wasn't just for history

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buffs; instead, it served a purpose, showing the people the power and grace of God working among them, and that even though they messed up, the Lord was still going to honor His covenant with them.

Chapter 4 begins with the Hebrew word (a conjunction and an adverb) *we 'attah*, which can be translated as “And now” or “So now.” They just had reviewed their recent history, a reminder of what God had done in bringing them to this point—thus, or “so now,” they are to do what God tells them to do (*see also Deut. 10:12*) in response.

That’s why the first verb that appears after the “So now” is *shama'*, the same verb (and in the same form) as used in the beginning of the Shema prayer, and it means “hear” or “listen” or “obey”—a verb repeated all through Deuteronomy.

Thus, the chapter begins: *So now, Israel, because of what I have done for you, you must obey the following ...*

** Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 6.*

SUNDAY *October 31*

Do Not Add or Take Away

Read Deuteronomy 4:1, 2. What was the specific warning that the Lord gave them in regard to His “statutes and judgments,” and why would this be something that they are warned about right away? (See also Deut. 12:32.)

The Lord tells them to obey the “statutes and judgments” and not to add or take away from them. Why say that? After all, why would anyone want to *change God’s law*?

We know the answer, of course.

“Satan has been persevering and untiring in his efforts to prosecute the work he began in heaven, to change the law of God. He has succeeded in making the world believe the theory he presented in heaven before his fall, that the law of God was faulty, and needed revising. A large part of the professed Christian church, by their attitude, if not by their words, show that they have accepted the same error.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 107.

When you think about the history of ancient Israel, you see that in many ways they got in trouble because not only would they ignore certain precepts of the law, which for all practical purposes was taking away from the law, but also they would add to it, in the sense of bringing in practices that were not specified in the law and that, in fact, led ultimately to transgressing it.

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Read Matthew 15:1–9. How do we see an example here of the principle that, though in another context, Moses warned the children of Israel about?

When the Hebrews eventually got the land promised them, they would often ignore the direct warnings about, for instance, idolatry. As a result, they followed many pagan practices, sometimes even as part of their supposed worship of Yahweh. By the time of Jesus, however, they had added all sorts of human traditions that, as Jesus Himself said, made “the commandment of God of none effect.”

Either way, adding or taking away, the law was changed, and the nation suffered the consequences.

In what ways do we need to be careful about not adding to or taking away from what God tells us to do?

MONDAY *November 1*

Baal Peor

In Deuteronomy 4:3, 4, the children of Israel are given a bit more of a history lesson, to function as a reminder of the past and of whatever spiritual and practical truths that they ideally should learn from it.

Read Numbers 25:1–15. What happened, and what spiritual and practical truths should the people have taken from this fiasco?

However uncomfortable we are with the stories of Israel wiping out some of the pagan nations around them, this account certainly helps in explaining the logic behind the command. Israel was to be a witness to the pagan nations around them of the true God—the only God. They were to be an example to show what worship of the true God was like. Instead, by adhering to the pagan “gods” around them, they often fell into outright rebellion against the very God whom they were to represent to the world.

Though the phrase to “commit harlotry” often has a spiritual meaning, in that Israel went after pagan gods and practices (*see Hos. 4:12–14*), in this case the language (and the rest of the story) suggests that there was sexual sinning, at least at first. Here again, Satan took advantage of fallen human nature, using the pagan women to seduce the men, who obviously allowed themselves to be seduced.

No doubt, the act of physical harlotry degenerated into spiritual harlotry, as well. The people involved eventually got caught up in pagan

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worship practices in which Israel was “joined to Baal of Peor”; that is, they somehow became attached to this false god and even sacrificed to it. Despite everything they had been taught and told, they were willing to throw it all away in the heat of passion and lust.

How could this have happened? Easily. By hardening their consciences with the first sin, the physical one, they were ripe for falling into the latter one, the spiritual one, which must have been Satan’s ultimate goal. They had become so debased that, according to the text, one man brought his Midianite woman right into the camp itself, right before Moses, and before the people who were weeping outside the tabernacle.

Our minds and bodies are intimately linked. What affects one affects the other. What can we learn from this story about how dangerous indulgence can be to us spiritually?

TUESDAY *November 2*

Cleave to the Lord Your God

Thousands died in the sin with Baal Peor. “All the men who followed Baal Peor” were destroyed. However, many didn’t follow in the apostasy. Who were they?

“But ye that did cleave unto the LORD your God are alive every one of you this day” (*Deut. 4:4*).

How does this text explain the difference between those who fell into sin and those who didn’t? What’s the important message for us here regarding sin and temptation and the power of God in our lives?

Notice the contrast between the word “all” in this verse and the verse before. “All” who followed after Baal Peor were destroyed; but “every one of you” who did cleave to the Lord were alive. There was no middle ground then, and there is none now, either. We’re either for or against Jesus (*Matt. 12:30*).

The Hebrew word for “did cleave,” *dbq*, often points to a strong commitment to adhere to something outside of oneself. The same Hebrew word root is used in Genesis 2:24, when a man shall leave his family and “cleave” unto his wife (*see also Ruth 1:14*). It, in this context, appeared four more times in Deuteronomy (*Deut. 10:20, Deut. 11:22, Deut. 13:4, Deut. 30:20*),

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and in each case the idea was the same: they, the people, were to cleave (cling) to their God. That is, they were to give themselves to Him and to draw power and strength from Him.

What's important to remember is that the people themselves are the subject of the verb: they must do the cleaving. They must make the choice to "cleave" to God and then, in His power and strength, avoid falling into sin.

Read Jude 24 and 1 Corinthians 10:13. What is being said here in the New Testament that also is found in Deuteronomy 13:4?

God is faithful; God is able to keep us from falling. But we have to make the conscious choice, as did the faithful at Baal Peor, to cleave to God. If so, then we can be assured that, whatever the temptation, we can remain faithful.

How do such things as prayer, Bible study, worship, and fellowship help us cleave to the Lord?

WEDNESDAY *November 3*

For What Nation Is There So Great?

What follow in the next few verses after Deuteronomy 4:4 are some of the most profound and beautiful texts in all Scripture (the Hebrew is magnificent!). One could argue that, in essence, the message of Deuteronomy is found right here, and everything else is commentary. As you read these texts, think about various ways the principle here could be applied to us today, as well.

Read Deuteronomy 4:5–9. Why would the Lord through Moses have said what He did here to Israel?

The Lord wants the people to realize that they have been called, chosen, for a special reason. They are a “great” nation, just as God had told Abram right from the first call out of the Chaldees that “ ‘I will make you a *great* nation’ ” (*Gen. 12:2, NKJV, emphasis supplied; see also Gen. 18:18*).

But the purpose of making them great was that they could be a “blessing” (*Gen. 12:2*) to “all the families of the earth” (*Gen. 12:3, NKJV*). And though the ultimate blessing would be that Jesus, the Messiah, would come through their bloodline, until then they were to be the light of the world. “ ‘I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth’ ’ ” (*Isa. 49:6, NKJV*). Not that salvation was found in them, but that, through them, the true God, who alone can save, was to be revealed.

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Israel was worshiping and serving the God who created the cosmos, the Lord of heaven and earth; the pagans were worshiping rocks, stones, wood, and demons (*Deut. 32:17, Ps. 106:37*).

What a stark difference!

In these verses, Moses pointed to two things that made Israel special. First, the Lord was near to them, as He was in a unique way such as through the sanctuary, and second, the “statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law” (*Deut. 4:8*).

Read Deuteronomy 4:32–35. What else was the Lord saying to them that should have made them realize what a special calling they had been given?

No question, Israel had been given so much. Now, how would they respond?

THURSDAY November 4

Your Wisdom and Your Understanding

Deuteronomy 4:1–9, as we saw, was a powerful expression of not merely the nation’s special status but of its missionary calling, as well. Woven all through those verses is the idea that they need to obey, to follow, to do what the Lord commands them to do.

Read again Deuteronomy 4:6. What specifically does the Lord say is their “wisdom” and “understanding” in the eyes of these nations?

At first glance it might seem as if the statutes and judgments themselves were what contained the wisdom and understanding. But that’s not what the text says. The Lord had taught them statutes and judgments, yes; but their wisdom and understanding came from their *keeping them*, from their *obeying them*. Their obedience—that was their wisdom and understanding.

Israel could have had the most wonderful system of law and rules and regulations the world had ever seen (in fact, it did), but what good would it all be if Israel didn’t follow it? Instead, their wisdom, their understanding, came from the real-time manifestation of God’s laws in their lives. They were to live out the truths that the Lord had given them, and they could do that only by obeying them. All the light and all the truth wasn’t going to do them or the pagans around them any good if Israel didn’t live out that truth.

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Hence, again and again they were called to obey, because their obedience to the statutes and judgments, not the statutes and judgments themselves, was what mattered in terms of being a witness to the world.

“Their obedience to the law of God would make them marvels of prosperity before the nations of the world. He who could give them wisdom and skill in all cunning work would continue to be their teacher, and would ennoble and elevate them through obedience to His laws. If obedient, they would be preserved from the diseases that afflicted other nations and would be blessed with vigor of intellect. The glory of God, His majesty and power, were to be revealed in all their prosperity. They were to be a kingdom of priests and princes. God furnished them with every facility for becoming the greatest nation on the earth.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 288.

Read Matthew 5:13–16. In these verses, what is Jesus saying to us that reflects the same thing He had said to ancient Israel? How, especially, should this apply to us as Seventh-day Adventists?

FRIDAY *November 5*

Further Thought: “From the very beginning of the great controversy in heaven it has been Satan’s purpose to overthrow the law of God. It was to accomplish this that he entered upon his rebellion against the Creator, and though he was cast out of heaven he has continued the same warfare upon the earth. To deceive men, and thus lead them to transgress God’s law, is the object which he has steadfastly pursued. Whether this be accomplished by casting aside the law altogether, or by rejecting one of its precepts, the result will be ultimately the same. He that offends ‘in one point,’ manifests contempt for the whole law; his influence and example are on the side of transgression; he becomes ‘guilty of all.’ James 2:10.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 582.

Concerning Baal Peor, Ellen White wrote: “They ventured upon the forbidden ground, and were entangled in the snare of Satan. Beguiled with music and dancing, and allured by the beauty of heathen vestals, they cast off their fealty to Jehovah. As they united in mirth and feasting, indulgence in wine beclouded their senses and broke down the barriers of self-control. Passion had full sway; and having defiled their consciences by lewdness, they were persuaded to bow down to idols. They offered sacrifice upon heathen altars and participated in the most degrading rites.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 454.

Discussion Questions:

- 1** Think about the ways in which we Seventh-day Adventists are in the place where ancient Israel was. Think about all that we have been given in contrast to the world around us and, yes, even in contrast to other churches. The question for us, then, is this: How are we responding to what

we have been given? How well are we projecting our “wisdom and understanding” before the world?

2 “But ye that did cleave unto the LORD your God are alive every one of you this day.” Again, the subject of the verb “did cleave” is the people. The Lord won’t cleave to us in the sense that He won’t force us to Himself. Instead, using the sacred gift of free will, we have to choose to cleave to Him. Once we make that choice, how do we follow through and cleave to Him?

3 Dwell more on the question at the end of Sunday’s study. What does it mean to add to or to take away from God’s commands? Outside of the obvious, such as the attempted change of the Sabbath, how might something like that happen so subtly we don’t even realize what is happening?

What Kind of Book Is This?

By AIKI SAITO

A stranger handed a Bible to the 12-year-old girl as she walked home from school in Japan. But she wasn't interested and placed the book on a shelf in her bedroom. Later, as she cleaned her room, she saw the Bible on the shelf and felt a strong desire to give it to her eight-year-old brother, Ryotaro.

"Would you like to read this?" she asked.

Ryotaro wondered what kind of book she was holding. When he looked more closely, he saw the word "Bible" on the cover. He had seen a Bible at his grandfather's house, and he was curious about what kind of book it might be.

"Yes, I'd like to read it," he said.

The Bible was his.

The Bible contained only the New Testament, and he started reading from the beginning, the Gospel of Matthew. *Who is Matthew?* he thought.

As he read, he learned about a Man named Jesus who healed many sick people. He realized that Jesus was a great Person. When he finished Matthew, he wondered what would happen next, so he started reading the next book, Mark. But the story sounded similar to what he had just read in Matthew, so he quit halfway through. After that, he read here and there, but he didn't finish any book. He longed to know more about Jesus. His family was not Christian, and he didn't tell them about the longing of his heart.

Meanwhile, the Bible became an important part of his life. Inside he found a page with promises that he could claim. There were promises for when he was sick or having a bad day. Every time he needed peace, he read the promises and felt comforted. With a pencil, he underlined the verses

that he liked. When he left the house, he always carried the Bible with him. Although no one had ever taught him to pray, when he went on trips with his family, he always prayed, “God, please protect us.”

When he finished elementary school, he decided to go to Okinawa Saniku Junior High School, a Seventh-day Adventist school that Father and Mother found on the internet. He hoped to learn more about Jesus—and he is. Today, Ryotaro is 12 and living in the boys’ dormitory at the school. Not long ago, he announced to his parents that he wanted to be baptized.

RYOTARO learned about the Adventist school through the internet. Part of this quarter’s Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will go to a project to help many Japanese people, especially young people, learn about Jesus through the internet. Thank you for planning a generous offering.



Provided by the General Conference Office of Adventist Mission, which uses Sabbath School mission offerings to spread the gospel worldwide. Read new stories daily at AdventistMission.org.

LESSON 7

*November 6–12

Law and Grace



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Ezek. 28:15, 16; Deut. 4:44; Rom. 3:20; Deut. 10:1–15; Deut. 5:6–22; Deut. 9:1–6.*

Memory Text: “ ‘I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain’ ” (*Galatians 2:21, NKJV*).

Christians of most denominations talk about law and grace and understand the relationship between the two. The law is God's standard of holiness and righteousness, and violation of that law is sin. “Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness” (*1 John 3:4, NKJV*). And because we all have violated that law

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—“but the Scripture has confined all under sin” (*Gal. 3:22, NKJV*)— it’s only God’s grace that can save us. “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God” (*Eph. 2:8, NKJV*).

(Of course, there is the “slight detail” of the seventh-day Sabbath as part of the law. Yet, for various reasons, many Christians are determined, at least for now, to reject the seventh-day Sabbath, coming up with all sorts of weak excuses to justify their rejection. But that’s all another topic.)

Even if expressed in different ways and in various scenarios, the theme of law and grace certainly is found all through the Bible, including the book of Deuteronomy. Yes, Deuteronomy, too, presents the relationship between law and grace but in a unique context.

** Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 13.*

SUNDAY *November 7*

Law in Heaven

God is a God of love, and love is the overarching principle of His character and the foundation of His government. And because God wants us to love Him in return, He has created us as moral creatures with moral freedom, the freedom inherent in love.

And central to the idea of moral freedom is moral law. Subatomic particles, ocean waves, kangaroos, though following to some degree *natural* law, don't follow or need *moral* law. Only moral beings do, which is why even in heaven God has a moral law for the angels.

Read Ezekiel 28:15, 16, which talks about the fall of Lucifer in heaven. “Iniquity” was found in him, and he also “sinned.” What does the use of these words here, in the context of heaven, reveal about the existence of moral law in heaven?

Both “iniquity” and “sinned” are words used here among us humans. But Scripture used the same terms for what happened in heaven, in another part of the creation itself. This should tell us something about what exists in heaven, as well as on earth.

“What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, ‘You shall not covet’ ” (*Rom. 7:7, NKJV*).

How might the same idea, at least in principle, exist in heaven, where moral beings—angels—exist, as well?

As Ellen G. White explains: “The will of God is expressed in the precepts of His holy law, and the principles of this law are the principles of heaven. The angels of heaven attain unto no higher knowledge than to know the will of God, and to do His will is the highest service that can engage their powers.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 109.

Heaven, earth—it doesn’t matter: if God has moral beings, He will have a moral law to govern them, and violation of that law, in heaven or on earth, is sin.

Why is the idea of a moral law inseparable from the idea of moral beings? Without that law, what would define what is moral and what is not?

MONDAY *November 8*

Law in Deuteronomy

The Hebrew nation on the borders of Canaan, God's chosen people, are finally about to inherit the land that God had promised them. And, as we have seen, Deuteronomy is Moses' final instructions to the Hebrews before they take the land. And among those instructions were the commands to obey.

Read the following texts. What point is expressed again and again and again, and why is this point so important for the people? *Deut. 4:44, Deut. 17:19, Deut. 28:58, Deut. 30:10, Deut. 31:12, Deut. 32:46, Deut. 33:2.*

Even the most cursory reading of the book of Deuteronomy shows how crucial obedience to the law was for the nation of Israel. In a real sense, it was the people's covenant obligation. God had done so much for them and would continue to do so much for them—things that they couldn't do for themselves and that they did not deserve to begin with (which is what grace is: God giving us what we don't deserve). And what He asked in response was, well, obedience to His law.

It's no different now. God's grace saves us, apart from the works of the law—"therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law" (*Rom. 3:28, NKJV*)—and our response is obedience to the law. We obey the law, though, not in a vain attempt to be saved by it —"therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for

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by the law is the knowledge of sin” (*Rom. 3:20, NKJV*)—but as the result of the salvation that we so graciously have been given. “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (*John 14:15, NKJV*).

Deuteronomy could be seen as one big object lesson in grace and law. By grace God redeems us, doing for us what we couldn’t do for ourselves (any more than Israel could have escaped from Egypt by themselves), and in response we live, by faith, a life of obedience to Him and to His law. From the fall of Adam onward, up to those who live through the time of trouble and the mark of the beast, a people depicted as those who “keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (*Rev. 14:12, NKJV*)—God’s relationship with His covenant people is one of law and grace. God’s grace forgives us for having violated His law, and God’s grace enables us to obey His law, as well, an obedience that arises from our covenant relationship with Him.

How can we avoid the trap of legalism as we obey the law?

TUESDAY *November 9*

L^etov Lak

Skeptics, those looking for reasons to reject the Bible, often point to some strong words of God that appear in the Old Testament. The idea is that the God of the Old Testament was harsh, vindictive, and mean-spirited, especially in contrast to Jesus. This isn't a new argument, but it's as flawed now as it was when first promoted many centuries ago.

Again and again, the Old Testament presents the Lord as loving His ancient people Israel and wanting only what is best for them. And this love appears powerfully in the book of Deuteronomy.

Read Deuteronomy 10:1–15. What is the immediate context of these verses, and what do they teach us about how God felt toward His people, even after their sin? What do they teach us, indeed, about grace?

God's grace and love for Israel exudes from these texts. Notice, particularly, verses 12 and 13. They are really one long sentence, a question, and the question is simple: *What am I, the Lord, asking you to do but the following ... walk in My ways, love Me, serve Me, and keep My statutes for your own good?*

All through the Hebrew in these verses the words for "your" and "you" are in singular form. Though God certainly is speaking to the nation as a

whole, what good will His words do if the people, each one individually, don't obey them? The whole is only as good as the sum of the parts. The Lord was speaking one-to-one, individually, to Israel as a nation.

We can't forget, either, the end of verse 13: keep these things *l'tov lak*, that is, "for your good." In other words, God is commanding the people to obey because it is in their best interest to do so. God made them, God sustains them, God knows what is best for them, and He wants what's best for them. Obedience to His law, to His Ten Commandments, can work only to their benefit.

The law often has been compared to a hedge, a wall of protection, and by staying within that wall, God's followers are protected from a raft of evils that otherwise would overtake and destroy them. In short, out of love for His people, God gave them His law, and obedience to His law would be "for your good."

What are ways in which we can see for ourselves how obedience to God's law has, indeed, been for "our own good"?

WEDNESDAY November 10

A Slave in Egypt

In the book of Deuteronomy, one theme appears and reappears: that of the Lord redeeming His people Israel from the land of Egypt. Again and again, they are reminded of what God has done for them: “ ‘ “So the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders” ’ ” (*Deut. 26:8, NKJV; see also Deut. 16:1–6*).

All through the Old Testament, in fact, the story of the Exodus has been referred to as an example of God’s mighty deliverance, by His grace, from the slavery and oppression of Egypt: “For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, I redeemed you from the house of bondage” (*Mic. 6:4, NKJV*).

Even in the New Testament, this idea appears, with the exodus of Egypt by God’s great power a symbol of salvation by faith in Christ: “By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned” (*Heb. 11:29, NKJV; see also 1 Cor. 10:1–4*).

Read Deuteronomy 5:6–22, where Moses repeats the law, the Ten Commandments, the foundation stipulation of their covenant with Yahweh. Notice the fourth commandment and the reason given here for it. What is being said here that reveals the reality of law and grace?

Moses repeats the basic commandment to rest on the seventh-day Sabbath, but he gives it an added emphasis. That is, though it has been written in stone in Exodus, here Moses is expanding on what already had been given them. Keep the Sabbath, not only as a memorial of Creation but also as a memorial of redemption from Egypt. God's grace saved them from Egypt and offered them rest from their works (*Heb. 4:1–5*). Now, in response to the grace God gave them, they needed to extend that grace to others.

In this case, then, the seventh-day Sabbath becomes not just a powerful symbol of Creation but a powerful symbol of Redemption and grace. Everyone in the household, not just the children—but the servants, the animals, and even the strangers among them—can rest. The Sabbath extends to others the grace given to the Jews, as well, even to those outside of the covenant people themselves. And it is found in the heart of God's law. What God has graciously done for them, they need to do for others. It's that simple.

Read Matthew 18:21–35. In what way is the principle in this parable revealed in the Sabbath commandment, especially as emphasized in Deuteronomy?

THURSDAY *November 11*

Not for Your Righteousness

Central to the Christian religion, to all biblical religion, actually, is the great theme of justification by faith alone. “For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (*Rom. 4:3*).

Ellen G. White famously expressed it like this: “What is justification by faith? It is the work of God in laying the glory of man in the dust, and doing for man that which it is not in his power to do for himself. When men see their own nothingness, they are prepared to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ.”—*The Faith I Live By*, p. 109.

Beyond question, when you consider who God is and how holy He is, in contrast to who we are and how unholy in contrast to Him we are, it would have to take an amazing act of grace to save us. And it did: that act of grace happened at the cross, with Christ, the innocent One, dying for the sins of the guilty.

With this context in mind, read Deuteronomy 9:1–6. What is Moses saying to the people here that reveals in a dramatic way the reality of God’s grace for the unworthy? How does what happened here reflect the principle of justification by faith?

If one could encapsulate Paul's teaching on the gospel, perhaps it could be found in the phrase from Deuteronomy 9:5, "not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart" (*NKJV*) is God going to save you. Instead, He is going to do it because of the promises of the "everlasting gospel" (*Rev. 14:6*), a promise given us "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. 1:9, NKJV; see also Titus 1:2*). If the promise was given us "before time began," it certainly couldn't be from our works because we didn't even exist "before time began," and thus had no works.

In short, despite your faults, your flaws, your stiff necks, the Lord is going to do this wonderful work for you and in you. Thus, as a result, the Lord commands you to obey Him and His laws. The promise already has been given and delivered: your works, your obedience, even if they were good enough (which they aren't), aren't the means of your salvation. They are, instead, the result.

The Lord has saved you by grace; now, with His law written in your heart and His Spirit empowering you, go and obey His law.

FRIDAY *November 12*

Further Thought: “The enemy of Christ, who rebelled against God’s law in heaven, has, as a skilled, trained general, worked with all his power, bringing out one device after another, full of deception, to make of none effect the law of God, the only true detector of sin, the standard of righteousness.”—Ellen G. White, “A Peculiar People,” *Review and Herald*, November 18, 1890.

Two trillion galaxies burnish the cosmos. One hundred billion stars comprise each galaxy. That’s 100,000,000,000. Two trillion galaxies, of 100 billion stars each, come to 200,000,000,000,000,000,000 stars.

Now, it’s a principle of existence: whatever conceives of and creates something must be greater than and transcend what it conceived of and created. Picasso is greater than and transcends an artwork by Picasso. The God who conceived of and created our cosmos must be greater than the cosmos and transcend it, as well.

With that in mind, think of the following text: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (*John 1:1–3, NKJV*). That is, the God who created all that was created, the 200,000,000,000,000,000,000 stars and everything else—He did what? He “shrank down,” became a human baby, lived a sinless life, then died on the cross, bearing in Himself the penalty for our sins and evil so that we can have the promise of eternal life.

Before us is this great truth: the grace given us in Jesus Christ on the cross. And what does God ask from us in return? “Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind” (*Eccl. 12:13, NIV*).

Discussion Questions:

- 1** In class, go over the question at the end of Monday's study, about how people who believe in keeping God's law, the Ten Commandments (including the fourth), can avoid the subtle traps of legalism. How does obedience, even strict and unwavering obedience, differ from legalism, and how can we know the difference between the two?
- 2** What are some stories you have heard (or known firsthand) about how those who have violated the Ten Commandments suffered terrible consequences from that violation? What should this teach us about how the law reflects the reality of God's love for us?
- 3** Why should the cross show us the futility of trying to earn our way to heaven?

Angels Protected My Boy

By JOELLE AKIKI BARKANIAN

August 4, 2020, was a day like no other in Beirut, Lebanon.

I had just finished cleaning our home in preparation to welcome friends whom we haven't seen for some time because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

My eldest son, seven-year-old James, was so excited that he prepared a welcome picture and hung it on the door for the arrival of the guests on the campus of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Middle East University, where I work as a business teacher. "Welcome," read the picture, which included three hand-drawn faces and three hearts.

I saw that the trash needed to be collected and went around the rooms. As I reached the front door to throw out the trash bag, the house suddenly shook. I turned my eyes toward the window to see what was happening and saw James staring out the sliding glass door to the balcony, also wondering what was going on. "Move away from the glass!" I shouted.

I barely finished speaking when a second explosion caused the doubleglassed door to shatter and crash down on James. My other two children, four-year-old Peter and two-year-old Katelyn, started shrieking. Reaching under the broken glass, my husband lifted James up by the shoulder and ran with him outside the house. From what I saw in that split moment, I knew that James could not have survived. I raced outside and held James tightly in my arms, assuming that he was gone. I was in shock, crying, and hearing nothing but a high-pitched ringing in my ears. Then my husband's voice broke through. "James is fine," he repeated over and over.

On August 4 at 6:08 P.M., God sent angels to protect my son from the glass. James was barefoot and wearing shorts and a T-shirt, yet he did not suffer a single scratch. Angels shielded him. "For he will command his

angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways” (*Psalm 91:11, NIV*).

That night, before going to bed, James prayed, “Dear Jesus, please bless this day and every day. And please don’t let this thing that happened with the glass ever happen again. And help us to be safe. Stay with us. Amen.”

My son’s prayer makes my heart ache for the soon return of Jesus.

The next day, I removed the welcome picture from the door. I will treasure it always. Sometimes, we focus on the big things and forget how our plans could change in seconds, our dreams could shatter, and our loved ones could be lost. We always need to be ready for Jesus’ return.

This mission story illustrates Spiritual Growth Objective No. 5 of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s “I Will Go” strategic plan: “To disciple individuals and families into spirit-filled lives.” Learn more at IwillGo2020.org.



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LESSON 8

*November 13–19

Choose Life



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Gen. 2:8, 9; Rom. 6:23; 1 John 5:12; Deut. 30:1–20; Rom. 10:6–10; Deut. 4:19; Rev. 14:6–12.*

Memory Text: “ ‘I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live’ ” (*Deuteronomy 30:19, NKJV*).

lways, it's a sad story: a young person, in this case a 22-year-old woman, diagnosed with a deadly disease. Brain tumor. Even with all the marvels of

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A modern medicine, nothing could be done until the inevitable. But this young woman, “Sandy,” didn’t want to die.

So, she had a plan. After she died, her head would be put in a deep freeze, into a vat of liquid nitrogen, in hopes of preserving her brain cells. And there it would wait, fifty years, one hundred years, a thousand years, until sometime in the future, when technology had advanced enough so that her brain, composed of neural connections, could then be uploaded into a computer. And yes, Sandy could “live” on, maybe even forever.

Sad story, not just because a young person was going to die but because of where she put her hope of life. Like most people, Sandy wanted life, wanted to live. But she chose a path that, in the end, surely won’t work.

This week, as we continue in Deuteronomy, we will look at the choice of life and the opportunity given us to choose life, to choose it on the terms that God, the Giver and Sustainer of life, has graciously offered.

** Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 20.*

SUNDAY *November 14*

The Tree of Life

None of us asked to be here, did we? We didn't choose to come into existence any more than we chose where and when we were born and who our parents were.

It was the same with Adam and Eve. They no more chose to be created by God than did a leaf, a rock, or a mountain. As human beings, we have been given not just existence (a rock has existence), and not just life (an amoeba has life), but life as rational free beings made in the image of God.

But we didn't choose to come into existence as rational free beings made in the image of God, either. What God does offer us, however, is the choice to remain in existence—that is, to choose to have life, eternal life, in Him, which is what we can have because of Jesus and His death on the cross.

Read Genesis 2:8, 9, 15–17 and Genesis 3:22, 23. What two options did God present to Adam in regard to his existence?

“In the midst of Eden grew the tree of life, whose fruit had the power of perpetuating life. Had Adam remained obedient to God, he would have continued to enjoy free access to this tree and would have lived forever. But when he sinned he was cut off from partaking of the tree of life, and he became subject to death. The divine sentence, ‘Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return,’ points to the utter extinction of life.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 532, 533.

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Thus, right from the start, the Bible presents us with just one of two options: eternal life, which is what we were originally supposed to have, and eternal death, which in a sense is merely going back to the nothingness out of which we first came.

It's interesting, too, how the "tree of life," which Scripture says gives immortality, and that first appears in the first book of the Bible, reappears in the last book. Read Revelation 2:7 and Revelation 22:2, 14. Perhaps the message is that though we were supposed to have access to the tree of life, because of sin we lost that access; then, at the end, once the sin problem had been ultimately and completely finished, thanks to Jesus and the plan of salvation, the redeemed, those who chose life, will have access to the tree of life as we were supposed to from the start.

Think about it: By our daily choices, how are we opting either for life or for death?

MONDAY *November 15*

No Middle Ground

All through the Bible, we are presented with one of two choices. Two options are presented here for us.

Read the following texts. What two options, what two choices, are either openly stated or implied in these texts, and how are these options presented?

John 3:16 _____

Gen. 7:22, 23 _____

Rom. 6:23 _____

Rom. 8:6 _____

1 John 5:12 _____

Matt. 7:24–27

In the end, there is no middle ground for us human beings. Before the great controversy is completely over, sin, Satan, evil, disobedience, and rebellion will be eradicated. After that happens, each one of us, individually, will either have the life, the eternal life, that God originally had planned for us all to have before the Creation of the world, or face eternal death, that is, "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power" (*2 Thess. 1:9, NKJV*). The Bible doesn't appear to present any other options for us.

Which fate will be ours? That answer, ultimately, rests with us. We have the choice before us, life or death.

In the context of eternal life or eternal death, why is the biblical truth that hell is not burning and torturing people forever such a comforting truth? What would it say about the character of God were eternal, conscious torment truly the fate of the lost?

TUESDAY *November 16*

Life and Good, Death and Evil, Blessings and Curses

Toward the end of the book of Deuteronomy, after a long discourse on what will happen to the people if they disobey the Lord and violate the covenant promises, Deuteronomy 30 begins with a promise that even if they fall into disobedience and are punished with exile, God will nevertheless restore them to the land.

That is, if they repented and turned from their evil ways.

Read Deuteronomy 30:15–20. What are the options presented to ancient Israel here, and how do these options reflect what we have seen all through the Bible?

The Lord is very clear: He, Yahweh, has set before them one of two options, basically what He did with Adam and Eve in Eden. In fact, the Hebrew words for “good” (*tov*) and “evil” (*ra'*) in Deuteronomy 30:15 are the same Hebrew words used in Genesis for the tree of the knowledge of “good” (*tov*) and “evil” (*ra'*). Here, as all through the Bible, there is no middle ground, no neutral place to be. They will either serve the Lord and have life, or they will choose death. It’s the same for us, as well.

Life, goodness, blessing, in contrast to what? Death, evil, and curses. In the end, though, one justly could argue that God really offers them only the

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good, only life, and only blessings. But if they turn away from Him, these bad things will be the natural result, because they no longer have His special protection.

However we understand it, the people are presented with these options. It's very clear, too, the reality of their free will, their free choices. These verses, along with so much of the Bible, Old and New Testament, make no sense apart from the sacred gift of free will, free choice.

In a real sense, the Lord said to them: *Therefore, with the free will that I have given you—choose life, choose blessing, choose goodness, not death, evil, and curses.*

It seems so obvious what the correct choice would be, doesn't it? And yet, we know what happened. The great controversy was as real then as it is now, and we should learn from Israel's example what can happen if we don't give ourselves wholly to the Lord and choose life and all that this choice entails.

Read Deuteronomy 30:20. Notice here the link between love and obedience. What must Israel do in order to be faithful to the Lord? How do the same principles apply to us today?

WEDNESDAY *November 17*

Not Too Hard for You

Deuteronomy 30 opens with the Lord telling His people what would happen if they repented and turned away from their evil ways. What wonderful promises were offered them too!

Read Deuteronomy 30:1–10. What are the promises given them by God, despite the fact that this section is talking about what would happen to them if they disobeyed? What does this teach us about God's grace?

That would certainly have been comforting to hear. However, the point was not that it didn't matter if they turned away from what God had commanded. The Lord doesn't offer anyone cheap grace. If anything, it should have shown them God's love, and thus, as a response, they would love Him back, revealing their love by being obedient to what He told them to do.

Read Deuteronomy 30:11–14. What is the Lord saying to them there? What is the basic promise in these verses, and what New Testament texts can you think of that reflect the same promise?

Look at the appeal here, with its beautiful language and airtight logic. The Lord is not asking of them anything too hard to do. God's command is not too "difficult" or "mysterious" for them to understand. Nor is it too far out of their reach to attain. It's not way up in heaven, so far away that someone else has to get it for them; nor is it across the seas, so someone else must bring it to them. Instead, the Lord says: "But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it" (*Deut. 30:14, NKJV*). That is, you know it well enough to be able to speak it, and it's in your heart so you know that you must do it. Hence, there is no excuse for not obeying. "All His biddings are enablings." —Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 333.

In fact, the apostle Paul quotes some of these verses in the context of salvation in Christ; that is, Paul refers to them as an example of righteousness by faith. (*See Rom. 10:6–10.*)

And then, after these verses in Deuteronomy, the children of Israel are told, yes, to choose life or death, blessing or cursing. And if, by grace and by faith, they choose life, they will have it.

It's no different today, is it?

THURSDAY *November 18*

A Question of Worship

Central to the covenant relationship between the Lord and Israel was worship. What made the Israelites different from all the world around them was that they alone as a nation were worshipping the true God, as opposed to the false gods and goddesses of the pagan world, which were really no gods at all. “ ‘ “Now see that I, even I, am He, and there is no God besides Me” ’ ” (*Deut. 32:39, NKJV*).

Read Deuteronomy 4:19, Deuteronomy 8:19, Deuteronomy 11:16, and Deuteronomy 30:17. What is the common warning in all of these verses? Why is this warning so essential to the nation of Israel?

Thousands of years ago, just as today, God’s people existed in a culture and environment that, in most cases, exuded standards and traditions and concepts that conflicted with their faith. Hence, God’s people must always be on guard, lest the ways of the world, its idols, and its “gods” become the objects of their worship.

Our God is a “jealous God” (*Deut. 4:24, Deut. 5:9, Deut. 6:15*), and He alone, as our Creator and Redeemer, is worthy of our worship. Here, too, there is no middle ground: we either worship the Lord, who brings life, goodness, and blessings, or we worship any other god, which brings evil, curses, and death.

Read Revelation 13:1–15 and focus on the question of how worship is being presented there. Then contrast those verses with Revelation 14:6–12. What is happening here in Revelation that reflects the warning given in Deuteronomy (and all through Scripture, actually) about false worship?

However different the context, the issue is the same: Will people worship the true God and have life, or will they succumb to the pressures, either overt or subtle or both, to turn their allegiance away from Him and face death? Ultimately the answer lies within each individual heart. God did not force ancient Israel to follow Him, and He won't force us. As we see in Revelation 13, force is what the beast and his image will employ. God, in contrast, works by love.

How can we make sure that, even subtly, we are not slowly leaving our allegiance to Jesus for some other god?

FRIDAY *November 19*

Further Thought: Then, as now, we all are given a choice. The crucial word here is *choice*. Unlike a certain understanding of Christianity, in which, even before humans were born, God predestined some people not just to be lost but even to burn in hell forever, Scripture teaches that our own free choice of life or death, blessing or cursing, good or evil, determines which triad—life, good, blessing or death, evil, cursing—we will ultimately face. And how good to know that even if someone makes the wrong choice, the result is death, eternal death, not eternal torment in a never-ending lake of fire.

“ ‘The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.’ Romans 6:23. While life is the inheritance of the righteous, death is the portion of the wicked. Moses declared to Israel: ‘I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil.’ Deuteronomy 30:15. The death referred to in these scriptures is not that pronounced upon Adam, for all mankind suffer the penalty of his transgression. It is ‘the second death’ that is placed in contrast with everlasting life.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 544.

Discussion Questions:

- 1** In class, talk more about the idea presented in Tuesday’s study, about whether it is God who directly brings punishment here and now for disobedience or whether it comes as a law-like consequence of the acts of disobedience. Or might it be both? Might there be cases where it is one or the other? How do we understand this topic?
- 2** What do the texts we looked at in the Ellen White statement today teach us about the power of God available to

us to overcome sin?

3 Read Romans 10:1–10, where Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 30:11–14 as he expounds on salvation by faith in Jesus in contrast to seeking salvation and righteousness through the law. Why do you think he used these verses from Deuteronomy? Pay special attention to Romans 10:10: “For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (NKJV). What point is Paul making?

4 What are ways that your own culture, your own society, your own people group, could hold views that, if you aren’t careful, could lead you into false worship?

Prayer of Faith in Dallas

By RUBER LEAL

I needed encouragement, and God gave it in a most unexpected way.

For the past two years, I had gone once a week to a public library in Dallas, in the U.S. state of Texas, to work on my doctoral dissertation. A homeless man who often read in the library lobby always asked me for money when he saw me. I had declined to give him money and instead brought food and shared it with him. Despite my efforts to be friendly and talk, he always seemed to be angry. It might have been because I never gave him money.

One day, he found me in the library stairwell, and he was very upset.

“What is going on, Gerald?” I asked.

He told me that he needed God.

At first, I was uncertain about Gerald’s sincerity. But we talked about the plan of salvation, and I asked whether he wanted to accept Jesus into his life as Lord and Savior.

“Yes!” Gerald exclaimed.

I led him in prayer to accept Jesus.

After that day, I did not see him for six months.

Then, shortly before the U.S. holiday of Thanksgiving in late November, I walked into the library and immediately saw my homeless friend.

I waited for Gerald to ask me for money, but he did not.

Instead, he gave me the biggest smile I have ever seen on his face. He went on to tell me about how God had been working on his heart for the past half year.

He said he joined a church and went to prayer meeting every week.

He recited all the Bible verses he had learned by heart over the past six

months.

He even showed me his Bible.

I was overjoyed! We prayed together, and he closed with a most beautiful prayer for me.

As we said goodbye, I pulled money from my pocket and said, “Gerald, happy Thanksgiving!”

RUBER LEAL works as Family Ministries director at the Texas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. This mission story illustrates Mission Objective No. 2 of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s “I Will Go” strategic plan: “To strengthen and diversify Adventist outreach in large cities.” Learn more at IWillGo2020.org.



Provided by the General Conference Office of Adventist Mission, which uses Sabbath School mission offerings to spread the gospel worldwide. Read new stories daily at AdventistMission.org.

LESSON 9

*November 20–26

Turn Their Hearts



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Deut. 5:22–29; Deut. 4:25–31; Deut. 30:1–10; Matt. 3:1–8; Mark 1:15; Acts 2:37, 38.*

Memory Text: “ ‘But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul’ ” (*Deuteronomy 4:29, NKJV*).

A simple fact of life follows us all: we are sinful. Occasionally we hear some “expert” bemoan the Christian idea of basic human corruption, but all one has to do is look at the news for a day or so

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or take a quick survey of human history, and the truthfulness of this Christian doctrine becomes apparent.

Or, even easier, all one has to do is look in the mirror; not that far, actually. Whoever has the courage to take a long look deep inside one's own heart (which can be a scary place to go) knows the truthfulness of Romans 3:9–23, which ends with the words “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (*Rom. 3:23, NKJV*).

Of course, the good news is found in the next verse, about being “justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (*Rom. 3:24, NKJV*). Crucial to this great news is repentance: acknowledging our sin; being sorry for it; asking God's forgiveness for it; and, ultimately, turning away from it. Because we are sinful, repentance should be a central part of our Christian existence. And this week, we will see the idea of repentance as expressed in Deuteronomy.

** Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 27.*

SUNDAY *November 21*

Mi-Yitten

Biblical Hebrew, like most languages, is sprinkled with idioms, when specific words are used to mean something different from what they actually say. One idiom in the Old Testament is *Mi-yitten*. *Mi* is the question “who?” and *yitten* means “will give.” So, literally, *Mi-yitten* is “Who will give?”

In the Old Testament, however, the phrase expresses the idea of a wish, of a desire, of someone wanting something badly.

For instance, after their escape from Egypt, the children of Israel, facing challenges in the wilderness, exclaimed, “ ‘If only we had died by the LORD’S hand in Egypt!’ ” (*Exod. 16:3, NIV*). The phrase “if only” came from *mi-yitten*.

In Psalm 14:7 David utters, “Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!” The Hebrew doesn’t say “Oh”; it says *mi-yitten*.

In Job 6:8, when he exclaims, “Oh, that I might have my request” (*NKJV*) —“Oh” is, again, from *mi-yitten*.

Read Deuteronomy 5:22–29, focusing especially on verse 29. What does it mean that the word translated as “Oh” comes from *miyitten*?

Here is the Lord—the Creator God, the One who made space, time, and matter, the One who spoke our world into existence, the One who breathed into Adam the breath of life—uttering a phrase generally associated with the weaknesses and limitations of humanity. What an example of the reality of

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free will! Here we see that there are limits to what God can do in the midst of the great controversy. This use of *miyitten* reveals that even God can't trample on free will; for the moment He did, it would no longer be free.

And just as we humans are free to sin, we also are free to choose the Lord, to choose to be open to His leading, to choose, by responding to His Spirit, to repent from our sins and to follow Him. Ultimately the choice is ours, and ours alone, and it is a choice that we have to make day by day, moment by moment.

What are some of the choices that you are going to face in the next few hours or days? How can you learn to surrender your will to God so that, in His strength, you can make the right choices?

MONDAY *November 22*

Seek Me and Find Me

All through the Bible we find evidence of God’s foreknowledge. That is, He knows beforehand all that will happen. Whether the rise and fall of world empires (*Daniel 7*) or individual actions just hours before they occur —“ ‘Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times’ ” (*Matt. 26:34, NKJV*)—the Lord knows the end from the beginning. His foreknowledge, even of our free choices, has no bearing whatsoever on the freedom of those choices.

Thus, the Lord knew, even before He brought the children of Israel into the land, what they would do when in the land.

Read Deuteronomy 4:25–28. What did the Lord say that the people would do after they had been in the land promised them?

In the verses before, the Lord tells them specifically not to make idols and not to worship them (*Deut. 4:15–20*). Yet, the following verses pretty much say that making idols and worshiping them is exactly what they are going to do, despite all the warnings.

Notice that in Deuteronomy 4:25 Moses is clear that it won’t happen immediately. After all that they just had experienced, they weren’t likely to fall into idolatry right away. However, over time, after a generation or so, the tendency to “forget” (*Deut. 4:9*) what the Lord had done for them, and what He had warned them against, would lead them to do exactly what He

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warned against.

Read Deuteronomy 4:29–31. What does the Lord say He will do for them in this specific situation?

God’s grace is amazing. Even after they fall into the horrific evil of idolatry, even after they have received the due consequences of their sins, if they turn to the Lord, He will forgive them and restore them. In short, if they freely choose to repent, He will accept their repentance.

The word in Deuteronomy 4:30, often translated “turn,” really means “to return.” That is, they are going *back* to the Lord, to where they were supposed to have been all along. The Hebrew word *teshuvah*, from that same root word for “to return,” means “repentance.”

Thus, at the core, whatever else is involved in repentance, it is a return to God after we have been separated from Him by our sins.

TUESDAY *November 23*

Teshuvah

All through the book of Deuteronomy, a key theme appears: obey the Lord and be blessed, disobey and you will suffer the consequences. It's no different in the New Testament. "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life" (*Gal. 6:7, 8, NKJV*).

Unfortunately, at least after the Fall, sin seems as easy and as natural as breathing. And despite all the warnings and promises—" 'For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off' " (*Deut. 30:11, NKJV*)—many of the people did precisely that: they fell into the sins that God had warned them about.

And yet, even then, God was willing to take them back if, using their free will, free choice, they repented and returned to Him.

Read again Deuteronomy 30:1–10. What is the Lord saying He will do for His people, despite all the wrong that they have done? What, though, is *the condition* upon which these wonderful promises rest?

The idea is simple and straightforward: if you mess up, terrible consequences will result for you and your family. That's what sin does. However, even then, you can repent, and the Lord will take you back and bless you.

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Numerous times the same Hebrew root word behind *teshuvah* appears in these verses. In Deuteronomy 30:2, the text says “ ‘and you *return* to the LORD your God’ ” (NKJV, *emphasis supplied*); in Deuteronomy 30:8, though it is often translated, and correctly so, “you will *again* obey the voice of the LORD” (NKJV, *emphasis supplied*), it could be translated literally, “And you *return* and obey the voice of the LORD.” Finally, in Deuteronomy 30:10, where it reads “ ‘and if you *turn* to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul’ ” (NKJV, *emphasis supplied*), again the word “turn” is really “return.”

In other words, despite all that happened to them, despite their utter violation and breaking of the covenant, the Lord was not through with these people, and if they didn’t want Him to be through with them, they could manifest that desire by repentance.

Though dealing with the nation as a whole, how do these texts, despite the different context from ours today, still reflect the reality of how central true repentance is to us as believers who, at times, violate the covenant we have made with God, as well?

WEDNESDAY *November 24*

With All Your Heart

Deuteronomy 30:1–10 reveals the grace and goodness of God for backsliders and sinners, even when those sinners and backsliders were previously blessed by God in unique ways: “ ‘For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the LORD our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him?’ ” (*Deut. 4:7, NKJV*). Despite all that He had done for them, and despite the fact that they had no real excuse or justification for their sin, they sinned anyway (can anyone relate?).

And yet, even then—what?

In Deuteronomy 30:1–10, focus on what repentance, returning (*teshuvah*) to God entailed. What was required, and what should that teach us today about what true repentance involves?

Ultimately, they had to make the choice to return to Him, and to obey Him, *with all their hearts*. In one sense, the real issue was their hearts, because if their hearts were right with God, their actions would follow; that is, they would be obedient.

This is why they were given the wonderful promise that if they “returned” to the Lord, sincerely turned to Him, then He would work in them and would “circumcise” their hearts. They would have to make the choice, amid their captivity, to return to God, and He would then bring them back to Himself and to the land. And then there, in the land, He would

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bless them. And part of the blessing is that He would work in them to change their hearts even more toward Him, so that they and their children would “love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live” (*Deut. 30:10, NKJV*).

In the end, responding to the promptings of God (*see Acts 5:31*), they would have to truly repent of their sins. And, although dealing with a different historical context, Ellen G. White wrote: “The people mourned because their sins had brought suffering upon themselves, but not because they had dishonored God by transgression of His holy law. True repentance is more than sorrow for sin. It is a resolute turning away from evil.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 557. And this is a truth that we can see in Deuteronomy 30:1–10.

How can we know the difference between being sorry for the consequences of our sins, which anyone can do, and being sorry for the sins themselves? Why is this distinction so important?

TURSDAY *November 25*

Repent and Be Converted

The New Testament, of course, is filled with the idea of repentance. In fact, John the Baptist began his ministry with a call to repentance.

Read Matthew 3:1–8. How does the idea of “return” appear in these verses? In other words, what is John the Baptist telling them to do that reflects what was found in Deuteronomy? Why, also, would his words have special relevance for the Pharisees and Sadducees?

Jesus, too, began His ministry with calls for repentance.

Read Mark 1:15. What does Jesus say, and why does He relate repentance with the gospel?

Whether it be John the Baptist talking specifically to the religious leaders or Jesus to the nation as a whole, the idea is the same. We are sinners, and though Christ came to save sinners, we must repent of our sins.

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And that repentance—whether as a backslider or as a faithful Christian who falls into sin or as a new convert—includes a turning from our old sinful ways. We must acknowledge our sinfulness and, expressing repentance for our sins themselves (and not just the consequences of them), we must make the conscious choice to put away those sins and, relying wholly on the merits of Jesus, “ ‘obey the voice of the LORD your God’ ” (*Deut. 15:5, NKJV*).

Some biblical scholars see in the New Testament echoes of the idea of repentance as expressed in Deuteronomy. For example, when Peter accuses the nation of having crucified Jesus, many of the people “were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’ ” (*Acts 2:37, NKJV*). That is, being aware of their sin, they were sorry for it (“cut to the heart”), and they wanted to know what they should do now to be right with the God whom they had offended.

Is this not pretty much the same situation as with all of us: sinners who have offended God?

Read Acts 2:38. How did Peter respond to their question, and how does this episode reveal the principle behind true repentance?

FRIDAY *November 26*

Further Thought: “At every advance step in Christian experience our repentance will deepen. It is to those whom the Lord has forgiven, to those whom He acknowledges as His people, that He says, ‘Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight.’ Eze. 36:31. Again He says, ‘I will establish My covenant with thee, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord; that thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.’ Eze. 16:62, 63. Then our lips will not be opened in self-glorification. We shall know that our sufficiency is in Christ alone. We shall make the apostle’s confession our own. ‘I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing.’ Rom. 7:18. ‘God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.’ Gal. 6:14.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 160, 161.

“‘The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.’ Rom. 2:4. A golden chain, the mercy and compassion of divine love, is passed around every imperiled soul. The Lord declares, ‘I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.’ Jer. 31:3.”—Page 202.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Though we must repent, how can we be careful to avoid the trap of making repentance into something meritorious, as if the act of repenting itself is what makes us right before God? What is the only way we can be right before God?
- 2 “Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, ‘I have

sinned by betraying innocent blood.’ And they said, ‘What is that to us? You see to it!’ Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself” (*Matt. 27:3–5, NKJV*). No doubt Judas was sorry for what he had done to Jesus (after all, he killed himself). Why, though, are his actions not deemed true repentance?

3 How should the reality of human sinfulness, even our own sinfulness, keep us humble before others (in that we don’t judge them) and before God? Why should the fact that it took the cross (i.e., the death of the Son of God) to save us show us just how bad sin really is?

Missionary Shares Faith on TV

By CHANMIN CHUNG

Carlos Biaggi, an Argentine missionary in Lebanon, was flooded with messages and prayers from around the world after a powerful explosion rocked Beirut, killing about 200 people, in August 2020.

One of the messages that Carlos received came from an Argentine pastor with whom he previously had served as a missionary in Paraguay.

“I have contacts with the media in Buenos Aires,” the friend wrote. “If someone wants to interview you, would you be willing?”

Minutes after Carlos said he was willing, the friend wrote that a journalist from C5N television, a 24-hour national news channel, wished to conduct an on-air interview the next day. “When you see an appropriate time during the interview, give your personal testimony,” he said. “Because it’s a major television channel, I believe that the interview will be short, most probably five minutes at the most. It will be a miracle if it lasts ten minutes.”

The interview, broadcast live across Argentina and other parts of the Spanish-speaking world, lasted an astounding nine minutes and fifty seconds. During that time, Carlos, dean of the business administration faculty at the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s Middle East University, described the wave of hot air that struck his face moments after a warehouse exploded in Beirut’s port. He spoke about efforts by the Adventist Church and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency to respond to the tragedy. At the request of the television host, he also shared his personal testimony about how God called him to work in Lebanon.

Carlos said he had followed God’s leading to Beirut after receiving a doctorate in business from the Adventist International Institute of

Advanced Studies in the Philippines.

“They invited me to work here and said, ‘The truth is that it wouldn’t be easy,’ ” he said. “But I said, ‘If God wants me to go to Lebanon, I will go. If He doesn’t want me to go, I won’t go.’ No matter what family or friends said, God had to show me that this was the place where He wanted me to be.

“That day I prayed and opened my Bible to Isaiah 6,” he concluded. “What I read confirmed God’s plan for me because Isaiah replied, ‘Here I am, send me.’ I knew that this was a sign, and I thanked God.”

This mission story illustrates Mission Objective No. 2 of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s “I Will Go” strategic plan: “To strengthen and diversify Adventist outreach in large cities, across the 10/40 Window, among unreached and under-reached people groups, and to non-Christian religions.” Learn more at IwillGo2020.org.



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LESSON 10

*November 27–December 3

Remember, Do Not Forget



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Gen. 9:8–17; Deut. 4:32–39; Rev. 14:12; Deut. 4:9, 23; Deut. 6:7; Deut. 8:7–18; Eph. 2:8–13.*

Memory Text: “ ‘Remember! Do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day that you departed from the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD’ ” (*Deuteronomy 9:7, NKJV*).

wo words appear all through the Bible: “remember” and “forget.” Both refer to something human, something that happens in our minds. Both are verbs,
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Tand they are opposites: to remember is not to forget, and to forget is not to remember.

God often tells His people to remember all the things that He has done for them; to remember His grace for them and His goodness toward them. So much of the Old Testament consisted of the prophets telling the people, the Hebrew people, not to forget what the Lord had done for them. But also, most important, they were not to forget what their calling in Him was and what kind of people they were to be in response to that calling. “I will remember the works of the LORD; surely I will remember Your wonders of old” (Ps. 77:11, NKJV).

Is it any different for us today, both at a corporate level and, even more so, at a personal one? How easy it is to forget what God has done for us.

This week, as expressed in Deuteronomy, we’ll look at this important principle, that of remembering and not forgetting God’s interaction in our lives.

** Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 4.*

SUNDAY *November 28*

Remembering the Rainbow

The first time the word “remember” appears in the Bible is in Genesis 9, when—after the worldwide flood—the Lord told Noah that He would put the rainbow in the sky as a sign of His covenant with all earth, that He would never again destroy all the earth with a flood.

Read Genesis 9:8–17. How is the word “remember” used here, and what can we learn from its use for how we should remember what God has done for us?

Of course, God doesn’t need the rainbow to remember His promise and His covenant. He just spoke in language that humans could understand. If anything, the rainbow is for us, as humans, to remember God’s promise and covenant not to destroy the world again by water. In other words, the rainbow was to help people remember this special covenant that God had made; each time the rainbow appeared, God’s people would remember not only God’s judgment upon the world for its sin but also His love for the world and His promise not to flood it again.

Hence, we see here the importance of the idea of remembering: remembering God’s promises, remembering God’s warnings, remembering God’s action in the world.

The rainbow in the sky becomes even more important today when, based on the continuity of the laws of nature, many scientists reject the idea

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that there ever was a worldwide flood to begin with. How fascinating that Ellen G. White wrote that before the Flood came, many people had the same idea that the continuity of the laws of nature ruled out the possibility that a worldwide flood could ever happen. She wrote that the wise men argued that nature's "laws are so firmly established that God Himself could not change them."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 97. So, before the Flood, people argued, based on the laws of nature, that it couldn't come; after the Flood, people argued, based on the laws of nature, that it never came to begin with.

However, God in His Word told us about the Flood and gave the world a sign, not only of the Flood but also of His promise not to bring one again. Thus, if we remember what the rainbow means, we can have the assurance, written across the sky in these beautiful colors, that God's Word is sure. And if we can trust His Word on this promise, why not trust His Word on all that He tells us, as well?

Next time you see a rainbow, think of God's promises. How can we learn to trust all of those promises?

MONDAY *November 29*

Concerning the Days That Are Past

In Deuteronomy 4, we have read the wonderful admonitions that the Lord gave to His people through Moses regarding their great privileges as God's chosen people. He had redeemed them out of Egypt " 'by trials, by signs, by wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes' " (*Deut. 4:34, NKJV*). In other words, not only did God do something great for you, but He also did it in ways that should help you remember, and never forget, what great things He has done for you.

Read Deuteronomy 4:32–39. What was the Lord telling them to remember, and why was it so important that they remember these things?

Moses points the people back through all history, even to the Creation itself, and asks them, rhetorically, if anything in all history had ever been done as was done for them. In fact, he tells them to ask; that is, to study for themselves and see if anything such as what they experienced had ever happened before. By asking them a few questions, Moses was trying to get them to realize for themselves what the Lord had done for them, and thus, ultimately, how grateful and thankful to Him they should be for His mighty acts in their lives.

Central to these acts was the deliverance from Egypt and then, perhaps
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in some ways even more astonishing, God speaking to them at Sinai, which allowed them to hear “His words out of the midst of the fire.”

Read Deuteronomy 4:40. What conclusion, then, did Moses want the people to draw from these words about what God had done for them?

The Lord didn't do all those things for no purpose. He had redeemed His people, keeping His end of the covenant that He had established with them. They were freed from Egypt, about to enter the Promised Land. God did His part; they were now called on to do theirs, which was, simply, to obey.

How does this model represent the plan of salvation as expressed in the New Testament? What did Jesus do for us, and how are we to respond to what He has done for us? (See Rev. 14:12.)

TUESDAY *November 30*

“Take Heed ... Lest You Forget”

Read Deuteronomy 4:9, 23. What is the Lord telling them to do here, and why is this admonition so important for the nation?

Two verbs dominate the opening of both these verses: “take heed” and “forget.” What the Lord is saying to them is: *Take heed so that you don't forget.* That is, *Don't you forget what the Lord has done for you nor the covenant that He has made with you.*

The verb “take heed,” *smr* (which also is used in a different form in Deuteronomy 4:9, translated “keep yourself”), occurs all through the Old Testament, and it means to “keep,” “to watch,” “to preserve,” or “to guard.” Interestingly enough, the first time it appears in Scripture is even before sin, when the Lord told Adam to “keep” the garden that He had given to him (*Gen. 2:15*).

Now, though, the Lord tells the people, each one individually (the verb is in the singular), to guard themselves, lest they forget. This is not “forget” so much in the sense of memory loss (though over time and in new generations that could come), but more in the sense of being lax about their covenant obligations. That is, they were to be mindful about who they were and what that meant in terms of how they were to live before God, before other Hebrews, before the strangers among them, and before the nations around them.

Read Deuteronomy 4:9 (see also Deut. 6:7 and Deut. 11:19) again, but focus on the last part, about the Israelites teaching the nation's history to their children and grandchildren. What would that have to do with helping them not to forget?

It's not a coincidence that right after Moses tells them not to forget, not to let these things "depart from your heart," he tells them to teach these things to the next generation and to the generation after. Not only did their children need to hear about these things, but also, perhaps even more important, by telling and retelling the stories of what God had done for them, the people would not forget what those things were. Hence, what better way to preserve knowledge of what the Lord had done for His chosen people?

How has telling others of your experience with the Lord benefited not just others but yourself, as well? How has the recounting of God's leading helped you not to forget His leadings?

WEDNESDAY *December 1*

Eaten and Full

One former church leader, who had worked at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists for 34 years, told a story about how, many years earlier, he and his wife, having landed at an airport, had lost a piece of luggage. “Right there,” he said, “by the luggage conveyer belt and in public, we got on our knees and prayed, asking the Lord for the return of our lost luggage.” He then said that, many years later, the same thing happened: they arrived at the airport, but a piece of luggage didn’t. He told what happened next. “Don’t worry,” he had said to his wife. “Insurance will cover it.”

With this story in mind, read Deuteronomy 8:7–18. What warning is the Lord giving to His people here, and what should it mean for us today, as well?

Look at what being faithful to the Lord would bring them. Not only would they possess a wonderful and rich land, “ ‘a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing’ ” (*Deut. 8:9, NKJV*), but also they would be exceedingly blessed in that land: flocks and herds and gold and silver and beautiful houses. That is, they would be given all the material comforts that this life affords.

But then, what? They would face the danger that always attends wealth and physical prosperity, that of forgetting that it was only the Lord “ ‘who

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[gave them] power to get wealth' ” (*Deut. 8:18, NKJV*).

Maybe not at first, but as the years go by and they have all the material comforts that they need, they will forget their past, forget how the Lord had led them through “that great and terrible wilderness” (*Deut. 1:19, NKJV*), and, indeed, think that it was their own smartness and talents that enabled them to be so successful.

This is precisely what the Lord was warning them against doing (and unfortunately, especially as one reads the later prophets, this is exactly what happened to them).

Thus, amid this prosperity, Moses tells them to remember that it was the Lord alone who had done this for them and not to be deceived by the material blessings that He had given them. Centuries later, Jesus Himself warned, in the parable of the sower, about “the deceitfulness of riches” (*Mark 4:19*).

No matter how much money and how many material possessions we have here, we are all flesh and blood awaiting a hole in the ground. What should this tell us about the dangers that come from wealth, in that wealth can make us forget our need of the only One who can deliver us from that hole in the ground?

THURSDAY *December 2*

Remember That You Were a Slave

Read Deuteronomy 5:15; Deuteronomy 6:12; Deuteronomy 15:15; Deuteronomy 16:3, 12; and Deuteronomy 24:18, 22. What specifically did the Lord want the people never to forget, and why?

As we have seen, all through the Old Testament the Lord constantly brought the minds of the people back to the Exodus, their miraculous deliverance by God from Egypt. To this day, thousands of years later, practicing Jews keep the Passover celebration, a memorial to what the Lord has done for them. “It will come to pass when you come to the land which the LORD will give you, just as He promised, that you shall keep this service. And it shall be, when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’ that you shall say, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice of the LORD, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households’ ” (*Exod. 12:25–27, NKJV*).

For the church today, the Passover is a symbol of the deliverance we have been offered in Christ: “For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (*1 Cor. 5:7, NKJV*).

Read Ephesians 2:8–13. What are these Gentile believers told to remember? How does it parallel what the Hebrews in Deuteronomy were told to remember, as well?

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Paul wanted these people to remember what God had done for them in Christ, what He had saved them from, and what they now had because of God's grace to them. As with the children of Israel, it wasn't anything in and of themselves that commended them to God. Instead, it was only God's grace, given to them, even though they were "strangers from the covenants of promise," that made them who they were in Christ Jesus.

Whether Jews in the wilderness, Christians in Ephesus, or Seventh-day Adventists anywhere in the world, how crucial it is for us always to remember, and not forget, what God has done for us in Christ. No wonder, then, that we have these words: "It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 83.

FRIDAY *December 3*

Further Thought: “How great the condescension of God and His compassion for His erring creatures in thus placing the beautiful rainbow in the clouds as a token of His covenant with men! The Lord declares that when He looks upon the bow, He will remember His covenant. This does not imply that He would ever forget; but He speaks to us in our own language, that we may better understand Him. It was God’s purpose that as the children of after generations should ask the meaning of the glorious arch which spans the heavens, their parents should repeat the story of the Flood, and tell them that the Most High had bended the bow and placed it in the clouds as an assurance that the waters should never again overflow the earth. Thus from generation to generation it would testify of divine love to man and would strengthen his confidence in God.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 106, 107.

Since the founding of Christianity, there has never been a church that has partaken of the wealth and creature comforts that the church in some countries of the world enjoys today. The question is, *At what cost?* Such affluence *surely* influences our spirituality—and not for good, either. How could it? Since when have wealth and material abundance fostered the Christian virtues of self-denial and self-sacrifice? In most cases, the opposite occurs: the more people have, the more self-sufficient they become, and the less they tend to depend upon God. Wealth and prosperity, however nice, do come with many dangerous spiritual traps.

Discussion Questions:

- 1** Discuss the question of how wealth (which can be very relative; that is, someone not deemed wealthy in his country might be seen as super-rich by those in another one) impacts

our spirituality. What are ways that those “with money” can protect themselves from some of the spiritual dangers that wealth can create?

2 In class, talk about the closing scenes in Christ’s life and what they tell us about God’s love for us and why we must never forget the reality of that love. What other things can you think of that reveal the goodness of God, and why we should always keep this reality in mind?

3 Though some scientists say there was no worldwide flood, despite the Bible saying that there was (and the rainbow), some say there was no six-day Creation, either, despite the Bible saying that there was (and the seventh-day Sabbath to memorialize it). What should this tell us about what a powerful, and negative, impact culture can have on faith?

First-Time Visitor Knows All

By ELIANE HOSOKAWA IMAYUKI

Brazilian immigrant Sandra Sato drove straight to a Seventh-day Adventist church in Kakegawa, Japan, to thank God for her newly acquired driver's license.

She had promised God that if she got her license, the first place she would go with the car would be the church.

That evening, Sandra joyfully told members of the Tokai Christian Center church that God had answered her prayers to obtain a driver's license.

“And I'm also ready for baptism,” she announced.

The church members were surprised. They had never seen Sandra until that evening.

Their astonishment grew as Sandra turned to various members and addressed them by name.

“I know many of you,” she said. “I have been watching live church broadcasts on social media.”

Then she told her story. Sandra and her husband, a former Adventist, worked with thousands of other Brazilian immigrants in factories in central Japan.

While discussing religion, her husband had declared that if she ever wanted to worship, he would only accept her attending an Adventist church. She had belonged to another Christian denomination. Intrigued by her husband's former faith, Sandra had watched live broadcasts from the Tokai Christian Center church. With her husband's help, she had completed Bible studies provided by Hope Channel's affiliate in Brazil. Then she had promised God that she would begin to attend church in person if she got

her driver's license.

After a review of the Bible with the Tokai Christian Center pastor, Sandra was baptized. No family members attended the baptism, not even her husband. But her faith has remained strong. At her initiative, a small Bible study group has been established in another city, Iwata, for people seeking to know Christ. God's word is spreading in Japan.

Read next week about how God is using the small group in Iwata to bless other Brazilian immigrants. Sandra became familiar with the Tokai Christian Center church after watching its online services. Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will go to a project to help many Japanese people, especially young people, learn about Jesus through the internet. Thank you for planning a generous offering.



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LESSON 11

*December 4–10

Deuteronomy *in the* Later Writings



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *2 Kings 22, Neh. 9:6, Jer. 7:1–7, Ps. 148:4, Jer. 29:13, Mic. 6:1–8, Dan. 9:1–19.*

Memory Text: “ ‘The LORD delighted only in your fathers, to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as it is this day.’ ” (*Deuteronomy 10:15, NKJV*).

One of the fascinating things about the Bible, especially the Old Testament, is how often it refers or alludes to itself; that is, later writers in the Old Testament refer to earlier ones, using them and their writings to make their point.

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Psalm 81, for example, goes back to the book of Exodus and then almost quotes verbatim from the preamble of the Ten Commandments when the psalmist writes: “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt” (*Ps. 81:10, NKJV*).

All through the Old Testament, Genesis—especially the Creation story—is referenced, such as in “I beheld the earth, and indeed it was without form, and void; and the heavens, they had no light” (*Jer. 4:23, NKJV; see also Gen. 1:2*).

And, yes, many times the later writers of the Old Testament, such as the prophets, referred back to the book of Deuteronomy, which played such a central role in the covenantal life of early Israel. This week we will focus on how the book was used by later writers. What parts of Deuteronomy did they use, and what points were they making that have relevance for us today?

** Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 11.*

SUNDAY *December 5*

The Book of the Law

King Josiah of Judah, who was eight years old when he became king, reigned 31 years (640 B.C.–609 B.C.) before his death on the battlefield. In the eighteenth year of his reign, something happened that, at least for a while, changed the history of God’s people.

Read 2 Kings 22. What lessons can we learn from this incident?

Scholars have long concluded that the “Book of the Law” (*2 Kings 22:8, NKJV*) was Deuteronomy, which apparently had been lost to the people for many years.

“Josiah was deeply stirred as he heard read for the first time the exhortations and warnings recorded in this ancient manuscript. Never before had he realized so fully the plainness with which God had set before Israel ‘life and death, blessing and cursing’ (Deuteronomy 30:19). ... The book abounded in assurances of God’s willingness to save to the uttermost those who should place their trust fully in Him. As He had wrought in their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, so would He work mightily in establishing them in the Land of Promise and in placing them at the head of the nations of earth.”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 393.

All through the next chapter, we can see just how seriously King Josiah sought “to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes, with all his heart and all his soul” (*2 Kings 23:3, NKJV*; see also *Deut. 4:29*,

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Deut. 6:5, Deut. 10:12, Deut. 11:13). And this reformation included a cleansing and purging of “all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD” (*2 Kings 23:24, NKJV*).

Deuteronomy was filled with warnings and admonitions against following the practices of the nations around them. The actions of Josiah, and all the things that he did, which included the execution of what must have been idolatrous priests in Samaria (*2 Kings 23:20*), revealed just how far the people of God had strayed from the truth entrusted to them. Instead of remaining the holy people they were supposed to be, they compromised with the world, even though they often thought, *We are just fine with the Lord, thank you.*

What a dangerous deception.

In our own homes or even in church institutions, what things might we need to purge thoroughly in order truly to serve the Lord with all our heart and soul?

MONDAY *December 6*

The Heaven of Heavens

Deuteronomy makes it so clear that the law and the covenant were central, not only to Israel's relationship to God, but also to the nation's purpose as the "chosen" people (*Deut. 7:6, Deut. 14:2, Deut. 18:5*).

Read Deuteronomy 10:12–15, where much of this idea of law and Israel's chosen status is stressed. What, however, does the Bible mean by the phrase "heaven of heavens"? What point is Moses making with that phrase?

What "heaven of heavens" means isn't absolutely clear, at least in this immediate context, but Moses is pointing to the majesty, power, and grandeur of God. That is, not only heaven itself but also "the heaven of the heavens" belongs to Him, most likely an idiomatic expression that points to God's complete sovereignty over all the creation.

Read the following verses, all based on the phrase that appears first in Deuteronomy. In each case, what point is being made, and how do we see the influence of Deuteronomy there?

1 Kings 8:27 _____

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Neh. 9:6 _____

Ps. 148:4 _____

Especially clear in Nehemiah 9 is the theme of God as the Creator and the One who alone should be worshiped. He made everything, even “the heaven of heavens, with all their host” (*Neh. 9:6, NKJV*). In fact, Nehemiah 9:3 says that he “read from the Book of the Law” (*NKJV*), most likely, as in the time of Josiah, the book of Deuteronomy, which explains why a few verses later the Levites, amid their praise and worship of God, used the phrase “heaven of heavens,” which came directly from Deuteronomy.

God is the Creator not only of earth but also of “the heaven of heavens.” And then to think that this same God went to the cross! Why is worship such an appropriate response to what God has done for us?

TUESDAY *December 7*

Deuteronomy in Jeremiah

Years ago, a young man, an agnostic, was a passionate seeker for truth—whatever that truth was and wherever it led him. Eventually he came not only to believe in God the Father and in Jesus, but he also accepted the Seventh-day Adventist message. His favorite verse in the Bible was Jeremiah 29:13, which reads: “And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart” (NKJV). Years later, however, he found that verse again while studying his Bible, but way back in the book of Deuteronomy. That is, Jeremiah got it from Moses.

Read Deuteronomy 4:23–29. What is the context of this promise to Israel, and how could it relate to us today?

As we already have seen, the book of Deuteronomy had been rediscovered during the reign of King Josiah, and it was under Josiah’s rule that Jeremiah began his ministry. No wonder, then, that the influence of Deuteronomy can be seen in the writings of Jeremiah.

Read Jeremiah 7:1–7. What is Jeremiah telling the people to do, and how does it relate to what had been written in the book of Deuteronomy?

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Again and again in Deuteronomy, Moses stressed how the Israelites' existence in the land of Canaan was conditional, and that if they disobeyed, they would not remain in the place that God had chosen for them. Look at the particular warning in Jeremiah 7:4, the implication being that, yes, this was God's temple and, yes, they were the chosen people, but none of that mattered if they weren't obedient.

And that obedience included how they treated strangers, orphans, and widows—an idea that goes directly back to Deuteronomy and some of the covenant stipulations that were incumbent upon them to follow: “ ‘You shall not pervert justice due the stranger or the fatherless, nor take a widow's garment as a pledge’ ” (*Deut. 24:17, NKJV; see also Deut. 24:21; Deut. 10:18, 19; Deut. 27:19*).

Read Jeremiah 4:4 and compare it to Deuteronomy 30:6. What is the message there to the people, and how does the principle equally apply to God's people today?

WEDNESDAY *December 8*

What Does the Lord Require?

So much of the writings of the prophets consisted of appeals to faithfulness. And not just faithfulness in general, but, in particular, faithfulness to the Israelites' end of the covenant, which was reaffirmed just before they entered the land. This is what the book of Deuteronomy depicted: the reaffirmation of God's covenant with Israel. The Lord was now, after the 40-year detour, about to fulfill (or to begin to fulfill) more of His covenant promises, His end of the deal. Thus, Moses admonished the people to fulfill their end, as well. Indeed, much of the writings of the prophets was basically the same: appeals for the people to uphold their side of the covenant.

Read Micah 6:1–8. What is the Lord telling the people there, and how does it relate to the book of Deuteronomy? (See also Amos 5:24 and Hos. 6:6.)

Bible scholars have seen in these verses in Micah what is known as a “covenant lawsuit,” in which the Lord “sues” or brings a case against His people for violation of the covenant. In this case, Micah says that the Lord “has a complaint against His people” (*Mic. 6:2, NKJV*), in which the word “complaint” (*riv*) can mean a legal dispute. That is, the Lord was bringing a legal case against them, imagery that implies the legal (besides the relational) aspect of the covenant. This shouldn't be surprising because,

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after all, central to the covenant was law.

Notice, too, how Micah borrows language directly from Deuteronomy: “ ‘And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good?’ ” (*Deut. 10:12, 13, NKJV*). Instead, though, of quoting it directly, Micah modifies it by exchanging the “letter of the law” of Deuteronomy for the “spirit of the law,” which is about being just and merciful.

What seems to be happening here is that whatever the outward appearance of religion and piety (lots of animal sacrifices, i.e., “thousands of rams”), that’s not what constitutes Israel’s covenant relationship with God. What good is all this outward piety if, for example, “they covet fields and take them by violence, also houses, and seize them. So they oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance” (*Mic. 2:2, NKJV*)? Israel was supposed to be a light to the world, about which the nations would say, with wonder: “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people” (*Deut. 4:6*). Hence, they were to act with wisdom and with understanding, which included treating people with justice and mercy.

THURSDAY *December 9*

Daniel's Prayer

One of the most famous prayers in all the Old Testament is in Daniel 9. Having learned from reading the prophet Jeremiah that the time of Israel's "desolations" (*Dan. 9:2*), 70 years, was soon to be up, Daniel earnestly began praying.

And what a prayer it was—a poignant and tearful supplication in which he confessed his sins and the sins of his people, while at the same time acknowledging God's justice amid the calamity that had befallen them.

Read Daniel 9:1–19. What themes can you find that directly relate back to the book of Deuteronomy?

Daniel's prayer is a summary of exactly what the nation had been warned about in Deuteronomy regarding the fruits of not keeping their end of the covenant. Twice Daniel referred back to "the law of Moses" (*Dan. 9:11, 13*), which certainly included Deuteronomy and, in this case, might have been specifically referring to it.

As Deuteronomy had said, they were driven from the land (*see Deut. 4:27–31 and Deuteronomy 28*) because they didn't obey, exactly what Moses had been told would happen (*Deut. 31:29*).

How tragic, too, that instead of the nations around them saying, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people" (*Deut. 4:6*), Israel became a "reproach" (*Dan. 9:16*) to those same nations.

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In all of Daniel's tears and supplications, he never asked the common question that so many ask when disaster strikes: "Why?" He never asked because, thanks to the book of Deuteronomy, he knew exactly why all these things happened. In other words, Deuteronomy gave Daniel (and other exiles) a context in which to understand that the evil that came upon them wasn't just blind fate, blind chance, but the fruits of their disobedience, exactly what they had been warned about.

But, and perhaps more important, Daniel's prayer expressed the reality that despite these events, there was hope. God had not abandoned them, no matter how much it might have seemed that way. Deuteronomy not only provided a context for understanding their situation, but it also pointed to the promise of restoration, as well.

Read Daniel 9:24–27, the prophecy of Jesus and His death on the cross. Why would this prophecy be given to Daniel (and to the rest of us) in the context of Israel's exile and the promise of the people's return?

FRIDAY *December 10*

Further Thought: “This [Micah 6:1–8] is one of the great passages of the OT. It, like Amos 5:24 and Hos. 6:6, epitomizes the message of the eighth-century prophets. The passage opens with a beautiful example of a covenant lawsuit in which the prophet summons the people to hear the charge Yahweh has against them. The mountains and hills are the jury because they have been around a long time and have witnessed God’s dealing with Israel. Rather than directly charging Israel with breaking the covenant, God asks Israel if they have any charges against [Him]. ‘What have I done? How have I wearied you?’ In the face of injustice some of the poor people may have become ‘weary in well doing.’ In the face of opportunities to get rich quick some of the land-owners might have grown weary of keeping the covenant laws.”—Ralph L. Smith, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 32, *Micah-Malachi* (Grand Rapids, MI: Word Books, 1984), p. 50.

“In the reformation that followed, the king [Josiah] turned his attention to the destruction of every vestige of idolatry that remained. So long had the inhabitants of the land followed the customs of the surrounding nations in bowing down to images of wood and stone, that it seemed almost beyond the power of man to remove every trace of these evils. But Josiah persevered in his effort to cleanse the land.”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 401.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Sure, we’re Seventh-day Adventists, and with our present-truth message, we see ourselves and (rightly so) in the same place that the people of ancient Israel had been in: having truths that the world around them needed to hear. It’s a great privilege for us. How well, though, do you think we are living

up to the responsibilities that come with such privilege?

2 Imagine being Daniel, having seen your nation invaded and defeated, and knowing that the temple, the center of your whole religious faith, was destroyed by idolatrous pagans. How, though, could knowledge of the book of Deuteronomy have been very faith-sustaining for him (or any other Jew) at this time? That is, how did the book help him understand all that was happening and why it happened? In a similar way, how does our understanding of Scripture as a whole help us deal with trying times and events that otherwise, without our knowledge of Scripture, could be very discouraging to us? What should the answer teach us about how central the Bible must be to our faith?

3 In class, go over the 70-week prophecy of Daniel 9:24–27. What role does the covenant have in that prophecy, and why is the idea of covenant so important to it—and to us?

God's Perfect Timing

By ELIANE HOSOKAWA IMAYUKI

Marcia Yuassa, one of the thousands of Brazilian immigrants working long hours at factories in central Japan, was forced to stay at home after falling ill.

Suffering severe pain, she didn't know how she could take care of her family or even survive. She cried out to God not to let her die.

Unable to do much in her ill condition, she spent a lot of time on the internet.

One day, she stumbled across an online series of Bible-based health courses by a Seventh-day Adventist physician in Brazil. She watched every YouTube video that she could find and, as she learned about various aspects of a healthy lifestyle, she also heard about the seventh-day Sabbath.

Then, while looking on social media for friends from her youth in Brazil, she found a former classmate who recently had created a profile. Marcia happily reconnected with her old friend and enthusiastically told her in a call about her new findings on health and the Sabbath.

The friend listened attentively and, when Marcia finished, said she worshiped Jesus on the Sabbath. She had become a Seventh-day Adventist after losing contact with Marcia. The two women began to study the Bible together.

After some time, the friend sent contact information for an Adventist church and its pastor in her region. But when Marcia looked up the church's address, she realized that it was in another city, too far away to visit because she did not drive. Still she called the church and spoke with me, the pastor's wife.

To her surprise, I informed her that a small Bible study group had been formed in Iwata, the city where she lived, and would meet for the first time

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that same week.

Three days later, the group met less than a mile (a kilometer) from Marcia's house, so close that she could walk there. God has healed her illness, and Marcia, 54, has not missed a meeting since.

Marcia learned about the seventh-day Sabbath through the internet. Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will go to a project to help many Japanese people, especially young people, learn about Jesus through the internet. Thank you for planning a generous offering.



Provided by the General Conference Office of Adventist Mission, which uses Sabbath School mission offerings to spread the gospel worldwide. Read new stories daily at AdventistMission.org.

LESSON 12

*December 11–17

Deuteronomy *in the* New Testament



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Matt. 4:1–11, Deut. 8:3, Acts 10:34, Gal. 3:1–14, Acts 7:37, Heb. 10:28–31.*

Memory Text: “ ‘It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” ’ ”
(*Matthew 4:4, NKJV*).

The New Testament is saturated with the Old. That is, the inspired writers of the New Testament quoted the inspired writers of the Old as a source of authority. Jesus Himself said, “It is written” (*Matt. 4:4*), meaning, “It is written in the Old Testament;” and He said that “ ‘the
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Scriptures must be fulfilled' ” (*Mark 14:49, NKJV*)— meaning the Scriptures of the Old Testament. And when Jesus met two disciples on the road to Emmaus, instead of doing a miracle to show them who He was, “beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (*Luke 24:27, NKJV*).

Whether direct Old Testament quotations, or allusions, or references to stories or prophecies, the New Testament writers constantly used the Old Testament to buttress, even justify, their claims.

And among the books often quoted or referred to was Deuteronomy (along with Psalms and Isaiah). Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Hebrews, the pastoral epistles, and Revelation all go back to Deuteronomy.

This week we'll look at a few of those instances and see what truth, present truth, we can draw from them.

** Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 18.*

SUNDAY *December 12*

“It Is Written”

Read Matthew 4:1–11. How did Jesus respond to Satan’s temptations in the wilderness, and what is the important lesson here for us in His response?

Jesus didn’t argue with Satan or debate with him. He simply quoted Scripture because, as the Word of God, it is “living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword” (*Heb. 4:12, NKJV*). And in each case, the Word He quoted was from Deuteronomy. How interesting that Jesus, in the wilderness, chose to quote texts that were given to Israel in the wilderness, as well.

In the first temptation, Jesus referred to Deuteronomy 8:3. Moses had been recounting to the people of Israel how the Lord had provided for them all those years in the wilderness, including giving them manna— all part of a refining process, as the Lord was seeking to teach them spiritual lessons. And among those lessons was the one that “man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD” (*NKJV*). *God fed you physical food, but He also gives you spiritual nourishment. You can’t take only the first without the second.* Jesus used the image of bread as a transition to Deuteronomy and to rebuke Satan and the doubt he tried to instill in Jesus.

In the second temptation, Jesus went back to Deuteronomy 6:16, where Moses pointed the people back to their rebellion in Massah (*see Exod. 17:1–*

7), saying, “ ‘You shall not tempt the LORD your God as you tempted Him in Massah’ ” (NKJV). The word for “tempt” can mean “try” or “test.” The Lord already had shown them, again and again, His power and willingness to provide for them; yet, the moment trouble came, they cried out, “ ‘Is the LORD among us or not?’ ” (Exod. 17:7, NKJV). And it was from that story that Jesus drew from the Word of God to rebuke Satan.

In the third temptation, Satan this time sought to get Christ to bow down and worship him. What an open and blatant revelation of just who he really was and what he really wanted! Rather than debate, Jesus rebuked Satan and again reverted to the Word of God, Deuteronomy, where the Lord was warning His people about what would happen if they were to fall away and worship other gods. “ ‘You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him’ ” (Deut. 6:13, NKJV), meaning Him and Him alone.

How can we learn to draw more power in our own lives from our study of the Word of God in order to reflect more fully the character of Jesus and, like Him, resist Satan’s temptations?

MONDAY *December 13*

Lifting Up Faces

In Deuteronomy 10, Moses (again) was recounting Israel's history and (again) used those accounts to admonish his people to faithfulness. Amid that admonishment he said something else.

Read Deuteronomy 10:17–19. What's the essential message to the people here, and why is this message relevant to God's church today?

The phrase “shows no partiality” is translated from a Hebrew figure of speech; it means literally that He does not “lift up faces.” This is believed to have come from a legal setting in which the judge or king sees the face of the person on trial and, based on that person's status (important person or someone insignificant), the judge or king renders a verdict. The implication here in Deuteronomy is that the Lord doesn't treat people in such a manner, despite His great power and might. He's fair with everyone, regardless of their status. This truth, of course, was revealed in the life of Jesus and how He treated even the most despised in society.

Read Acts 10:34, Romans 2:11, Galatians 2:6, Ephesians 6:9, Colossians 3:25, and 1 Peter 1:17. How do these texts make use of Deuteronomy 10:17?

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However varied the circumstances in each one of these references (in Ephesians Paul tells masters to be careful how they treat their slaves; in Romans Paul is talking about the fact that, when it comes to salvation and condemnation, there's no difference between Jews and Gentiles), they all go back to Deuteronomy and to the idea that God "does not lift up faces." And if the "God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome" won't do it, then certainly we shouldn't, as well.

Particularly in how Paul in Romans frames it, we can see a revelation of the gospel: we are all on the same plane, regardless of who we are in terms of status. We are all fallen beings in need of God's saving grace. And the good news is that, regardless of our status, we all are offered salvation in Jesus Christ.

How often, even subtly, do you "lift up faces," and why does the Cross show us how sinful that attitude really is?

TUESDAY *December 14*

Cursed on a Tree

Read Galatians 3:1–14. What is Paul saying there that is relevant to us today, and how does he use Deuteronomy 27:26 and Deuteronomy 21:22, 23 to make his point?

Unfortunately, it's common in Christianity to use this letter as some kind of justification for not keeping the law, the Ten Commandments. Of course, that argument is really used as a reason not to keep the fourth commandment, as if keeping that one commandment, as opposed to the other nine, is somehow an expression of the legalism that Paul was dealing with here.

Yet, Paul was not speaking against the law, and certainly nothing in this passage could justify breaking the Sabbath commandment. The key can be found in Galatians 3:10, where he writes that “all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse” (*NIV*), and then he quotes Deuteronomy 27:26. The issue isn't obedience to the law, but “relying on the law”—a tough position, if not an impossible one, for fallen beings such as ourselves.

Paul's point is that we are not saved by the works of the law, but by Christ's death on our behalf, which is credited to us by faith. His emphasis here is on what Christ has done for us at the cross. And to help make this point, he refers back to Deuteronomy again, this time Deuteronomy 21:23. Like Jesus, Paul says, “It is written,” showing the authority of the Old Testament, and now he quotes from a text dealing with someone who,

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having committed a capital crime, and having been executed for it, was then hung on a tree, perhaps as a deterrent to others.

Paul, though, uses that as a symbol for Christ's substitutionary death in our behalf: Christ became a "curse for us" in that He faced the curse of the law; that is, death, which all humans would face because all have violated the law. The good news of the gospel, however, is that the curse that should have been ours became His, at the cross, "that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (*Gal. 3:14, NKJV*).

Or, as Ellen G. White said it: "None but Christ could redeem fallen man from the curse of the law and bring him again into harmony with Heaven. Christ would take upon Himself the guilt and shame of sin— sin so offensive to a holy God that it must separate the Father and His Son."—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 63.

Think about what you would face if you were to receive the just punishment for whatever wrongs you have committed. However, because Christ bore the punishment for your wrongs in Himself, so that you don't have to, what should your response to His sacrifice be?

WEDNESDAY *December 15*

A Prophet Like Unto Thee

Again and again, the Lord had warned Israel not to follow after the practices of the nations around them. On the contrary, they were to be witnesses to those nations (*Deut. 4:6–8*). In Deuteronomy 18:9–14, Moses again warns them about their specific practices, which were an “abomination to the LORD” (*Deut. 18:12, NKJV*). In that context then, he tells them that they must be “blameless before the LORD your God” (*Deut. 18:13, NKJV*).

Read Deuteronomy 18:15–19. What is Moses telling them there? Then compare this with Acts 3:22 and Acts 7:37. How do Peter and Stephen apply Deuteronomy 18:18?

In reference to the covenant at Sinai, Moses talks about how the children of Israel, at the revelation of God’s law (*Exod. 20:18–21*), wanted Moses to act as a mediator, an intercessor between them and God. It is then that Moses promises them, twice (*Deut. 18:15, 18*), that the Lord will raise up a prophet like Moses, the idea being, given the context, that this prophet, like Moses, also will be, among other things, an intercessor between the people and the Lord.

Many centuries later, both Peter and Stephen quote the text in reference to Jesus. Peter is seeking to show that Jesus is the fulfillment of what had been spoken of by “all His holy prophets” (*Acts 3:21, NKJV*), and that the

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leaders need to obey Him and what He says. That is, Peter uses this text, which the Jews knew about, and applies it directly to Jesus, with the idea that they need to repent for what they had done to Him (*Acts 3:19*).

Next, in *Acts 7:37*, when Stephen, though in a different context than Peter's, is proclaiming Jesus, he, too, refers back to that famous promise, and he, too, claims that it pointed to Jesus. He is saying that Moses, in his role in history and leading the Jews, had prefigured Jesus. That is, as Peter had done, Stephen is seeking to show the people that Jesus was the fulfillment of prophecy and that they need to listen to Him. Contrary to the charge against him, that Stephen had been speaking " 'blasphemous words against Moses and God' " (*Acts 6:11, NKJV*), Stephen proclaims Jesus as the Messiah, a direct fulfillment of what God had promised through Moses.

How do these verses show us just how central Jesus is to the entire Bible, and why all our understanding of it must be Christ-centered?

THURSDAY *December 16*

A Fearful Thing

The book of Hebrews, in all its depth and sublimity, is, in many ways, just one long exhortation to Jewish believers in Jesus. And what it exhorts them to do is: *Stay faithful to the Lord!*

This faithfulness, of course, should stem from our love of God, of who He is and of His character and goodness, most powerfully expressed at the cross of Christ. Sometimes, though, human beings need to be reminded of what the terrible consequences of falling away will be. That is, we need to remember that, in the end, if we don't accept what Jesus has done for us in having paid the penalty for our sins, we will have to pay that penalty ourselves, and that means "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (*Matt. 22:13*) followed by eternal destruction.

Read Hebrews 10:28–31. What is Paul saying, and how does it apply to us, as well?

How interesting that in order to exhort Jewish believers to stay faithful to God, Paul quotes Deuteronomy, an earlier exhortation to Jewish believers to stay faithful to God! Paul quotes Deuteronomy 17:6 in regard to the fact that someone deemed worthy of death would face that death only after at least two people testified against that person.

But Paul did this to make the point that if unfaithfulness could lead to death under the old covenant, how much "worse punishment, do you

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suppose, will he be thought worthy [of] who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?" (*Heb. 10:29, NKJV*). In other words, *You have more light and more truth than they did, and you know about the sacrifice of the Son of God for your sins; thus, if you fall away, your condemnation will be greater than theirs.*

Then Paul immediately goes back to Deuteronomy, now to Deuteronomy 32:35, simply to buttress his argument. Considering what they had been given in Christ and their knowledge of the great provision made for them, the Lord, who said, " 'vengeance is Mine' " (*NKJV*), will "judge His people" (*NKJV*) for their apostasy and unfaithfulness. After all, He had judged their forefathers, who didn't have what these New Testament Jews did, the fuller revelation of God's love revealed at the cross. Thus, basically, Paul was saying: *be warned.*

“ ‘The LORD will judge His people’ ” (*Deut. 32:36 NKJV*). What's our only hope in that judgment? (*See Rom. 8:1.*)

FRIDAY *December 17*

Further Thought: Just as the Old Testament quotes itself (that is, some of the prophets would quote or refer to, for example, texts from the five books of Moses), the New Testament is filled with direct quotes, references, and allusions to the Old. Psalms, Isaiah, and Deuteronomy were among the most quoted. Often, too, the New Testament writers would quote from what is known as the Septuagint (LXX), sometimes called the “Greek Old Testament,” which was the earliest known Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. The first five books of the Bible, known as the Torah or the Pentateuch, were translated in the third century B.C., and the rest of the Old Testament about the second century B.C.

One can learn a great deal, too, about how to interpret the Bible by how the inspired writers of the New Testament used the Old. And one of the first lessons we could learn is that, unlike so much Bible scholarship today, the New Testament writers never raised any question about the authenticity or authority of the Old Testament books. Nothing in their writings revealed, for instance, doubt about the historicity of Old Testament stories, from the existence of Adam and Eve, the Fall, and the Flood to the call of Abraham, and so forth. The “scholarship” that questions these things is just human skepticism, and it should have no place in the hearts and minds of Seventh-day Adventists.

Discussion Questions:

1 Considering all the light that we have been given as Seventh-day Adventists, what should it teach us about the great responsibility upon us to be faithful to the truths that we have been given?

2 Read again Deuteronomy 18:9–14. What modern manifestations of these “abominations to the LORD” exist

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today, and how can we make sure that we avoid them?

3 Why, of all people, should Christians, who understand the universal application of Christ's death on the cross, never "lift up faces" (see Monday's study)? How can we recognize in ourselves the tendency to do just that (and don't we fool ourselves if we deny that there is at least some tendency in us to do just that)? How can the cross, and keeping the cross before us, cure us of this wrong attitude?

Unforgettable Birthday

By OH DONGJUN

Nine-year-old Ji-yul is a popular boy at his school in rural South Korea. The teacher also likes him because he helps clean up the classroom.

But Ji-yul had a problem. His friends did not want to come to his house to play after school. Ji-yul often went to their homes and saw their new toys, aquariums, and pets. But no one seemed to want to come to his house. He didn't understand why they wouldn't come to his house.

One day, when Ji-yul invited a friend to play after school, the boy said, "Mother said I can play with you at school, but I cannot go to your house."

"Why did your mother say that?" Ji-yul asked.

"It's because your house is a church," the friend replied.

Ji-yul is the son of a Seventh-day Adventist pastor, and his home occupies a wing of a Seventh-day Adventist church building. Most of the town's other residents attend three large churches that belong to other Christian denominations in the town center. The parents of Ji-yul's friends didn't want their children going to the house inside the Adventist church.

Ji-yul told his parents about the conversation at school. His parents wondered how Ji-yul could have friends over to play. Seeing that Ji-yul would soon have his birthday, they decided that instead of going out, they would celebrate at home for the first time. Ji-yul prayed earnestly. "Please let my friends come to the birthday party and have a good time," he prayed. "Give their parents a good heart toward the church."

Ji-yul made birthday invitations with the name and location of the church. Together with small gifts, he gave the cards to all his classmates.

Finally, Ji-yul's birthday arrived. When the party started at 11:00 A.M., ten friends showed up to celebrate the day with him. Ji-yul was so happy. For the first time, he could play with friends at home.

From that day on, if there is a concert or another event at the church, Ji-yul makes invitations and distributes them to his classmates. He has learned that the more often his friends come to church, the more fun he has at home. Now he has three friends who come regularly to his house to play. He prays that someday his friends will worship with him at the church.

This mission story illustrates Spiritual Growth Objective No. 6 of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's "I Will Go" strategic plan: "To increase accession, retention, reclamation, and participation of children, youth, and young adults." Learn more at IWillGo2020.org. This quarter, your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will support two mission projects in South Korea.



Provided by the General Conference Office of Adventist Mission, which uses Sabbath School mission offerings to spread the gospel worldwide. Read new stories daily at AdventistMission.org.

LESSON 13

*December 18–24

The Resurrection of Moses



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Num. 20:1–13, Deut. 31:2, Deut. 34:4, Deut. 34:1–12, Jude 9, 1 Cor. 15:13–22.*

Memory Text: “Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you!’ ” (*Jude 9, NKJV*).

As we have seen all quarter, Moses is the central mortal in Deuteronomy. His life, his character, his messages pervade the book. Though, yes, *****ebook converter DEMO Watermarks*****

A Deuteronomy is about God and His love for ‘*am yisra’el*, “the people of Israel,” God often used Moses to reveal that love and to speak to His people Israel.

Now, as we come to the end of the quarter, the end of our study of Deuteronomy, we also come to the end of Moses’ life, at least his life here.

As Ellen G. White expressed it: “Moses knew that he was to die alone; no earthly friend would be permitted to minister to him in his last hours. There was a mystery and awfulness about the scene before him, from which his heart shrank. The severest trial was his separation from the people of his care and love—the people with whom his interest and his life had so long been united. But he had learned to trust in God, and with unquestioning faith he committed himself and his people to His love and mercy.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 470, 471.

As Moses’ life and ministry revealed much about the character of God, so, too, does his death and resurrection.

** Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 25.*

SUNDAY *December 19*

The Sin of Moses: Part 1

Time and again, even amid their apostasy and wilderness wanderings, God miraculously provided for the children of Israel. That is, however undeserving they were (and often remained that way), God's grace flowed out to them. We, too, today, are recipients of His grace, however much we are undeserving of it, as well. After all, it wouldn't be grace if we deserved it, would it?

And besides the abundance of food that the Lord had miraculously provided for them in the wilderness, another manifestation of His grace was the water, without which they would quickly perish, especially in a dry, hot, and desolate desert. Talking about that experience, Paul wrote: "And all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ" (*1 Cor. 10:4, NKJV*). Ellen G. White also added that "wherever in their journeyings they wanted water, there from the clefts of the rock it gushed out beside their encampment."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 411.

Read Numbers 20:1–13. What happened here, and how do we understand the Lord's punishment for Moses because of what he had done?

On one level, it's not hard to see and understand Moses' frustration. After all that the Lord had done for them, the signs and wonders and
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miraculous deliverance, here they are, finally, on the borders of the Promised Land. And then—what? Suddenly, they are short on water, and so they begin to conspire against Moses and Aaron. Was it that the Lord could not provide water for them now, as He had done for them so often before? Of course not; He could have, and was going to do so again.

However, look at Moses' words as he struck the rock, even twice. “ ‘Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?’ ” (*Num. 20:10, NKJV*). One can all but hear the anger in his voice, for he begins by calling them “rebels.”

The problem wasn't so much his anger itself, which was bad enough but understandable—but when he said “ ‘Must we bring water for you out of this rock?’ ” as if he or any human being could bring water out of a rock. In his anger, he seemed to forget at the moment that it was only the power of God, working among them, that could do such a miracle. He, of all people, should have known that.

How often do we say or even do things in a fit of anger, even if we believe the anger is justified? How can we learn to stop, pray, and seek the power of God to say and do right before we say and do wrong instead?

MONDAY *December 20*

The Sin of Moses: Part 2

Read again Numbers 20:12, 13. What specific reason did the Lord give to Moses for why he couldn't go over because of what he did? (See also Deuteronomy 31:2 and Deuteronomy 34:4.)

According to this text, there was more to Moses' sin than just his own attempt to take the place of God, which was bad enough. He also showed a lack of faith, which, for someone like Moses, would be inexcusable. After all, this is the man who, from the burning bush (*Exod. 3:2–16*) onward, had had, unlike most people, an experience with God, and yet, according to the text, Moses did not “believe Me” (*NKJV*); that is, Moses showed a lack of faith in what the Lord had said, and as a result he had failed to “hallow Me,” before the children of Israel. In other words, had Moses kept his calm and done the right thing by showing his own faith and trust in God amid their apostasy, he would have glorified the Lord before the people and been, again, an example to them of what true faith and obedience were like.

Notice, too, how Moses had disobeyed what the Lord told him specifically to do.

Read Numbers 20:8. What had the Lord told Moses to do, but what did Moses do instead (*Num. 20:9–11*)?

Verse 9 has Moses taking the rod as the Lord had commanded him. So far, so good. But by verse 10, instead of speaking to the rock, from which water would then have flowed as an astounding expression of God's power—Moses struck it, not once but twice. Yes, hitting a rock and having water come from it was miraculous, but certainly not as miraculous as just speaking to it and seeing the same thing happening.

Sure, on the surface it might have seemed that God's judgment upon Moses was extreme: after all that Moses had been through, he was not going to be allowed to cross over into the Promised Land. For as long as this story has been told, people have wondered why—because of one rash act—would what he had been anticipating for so long be denied him?

What lesson do you think the children of Israel should have learned from what happened to Moses?

TUESDAY *December 21*

The Death of Moses

Poor Moses! Having come so far, having gone through so much, only to be left out of the fulfillment of the promise made to Abram many centuries earlier: “ ‘To your descendants I will give this land’ ” (*Gen. 12:7, NKJV*).

Read Deuteronomy 34:1–12. What happened to Moses, and what did the Lord say about him that showed what a special man he was?

“In solitude Moses reviewed his life of vicissitudes and hardships since he turned from courtly honors and from a prospective kingdom in Egypt, to cast in his lot with God’s chosen people. He called to mind those long years in the desert with the flocks of Jethro, the appearance of the Angel in the burning bush, and his own call to deliver Israel. Again he beheld the mighty miracles of God’s power displayed in behalf of the chosen people, and His long-suffering mercy during the years of their wandering and rebellion. Notwithstanding all that God had wrought for them, notwithstanding his own prayers and labors, only two of all the adults in the vast army that left Egypt had been found so faithful that they could enter the Promised Land. As Moses reviewed the result of his labors, his life of trial and sacrifice seemed to have been almost in vain.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 471, 472.

Deuteronomy 34:4 says something very interesting. “ ‘This is the land of which I swore to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, “I will give it to
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your descendants” ’ ” (NKJV). The Lord was using language almost verbatim from what He had said again and again to the patriarchs and to their children, about giving them this land. Now He was repeating it to Moses.

The Lord also said that “ ‘I have *caused you to see* it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there’ ” (Deut. 34:4, NKJV, *emphasis supplied*). There’s no way that Moses, standing where he was, could have seen with normal vision all that the Lord had pointed him to—from Moab to Dan to Naphtali, and so forth. Ellen G. White was clear: it was a supernatural revelation, not only of the land but also of what it would look like after they had taken possession.

In one sense, it would almost seem as if the Lord had been teasing Moses, rubbing it in: *You could have been here had you simply obeyed Me as you should have*, or something like that. Instead, the Lord was showing Moses that despite everything, even despite Moses’ mistake, God was going to be faithful to the covenantal promises that He had made with the fathers and with Israel itself. As we will see, too, the Lord had something even better in store for His faithful but flawed servant.

WEDNESDAY *December 22*

The Resurrection of Moses

“So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth Peor; but no one knows his grave to this day” (*Deut. 34:5, 6, NKJV*). Thus, with these few verses, Moses—so central to the life of Israel, a man whose writing lives on, not only in Israel but also even in the church and in the synagogue today, as well—died.

Moses died and was buried, the people mourned, and that was that. Certainly, the principle of the words of Revelation applies here: “ ‘ “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” ’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them’ ” (*Rev. 14:13, NKJV*).

However, Moses’ death was not the final chapter in the story of Moses’ life.

Read Jude 9. What is happening here, and how does this text help explain the appearance of Moses later in the New Testament?

Though we’re given only a glimpse, what an incredible scene is depicted here. Michael, Christ Himself, disputed with the devil about the body of Moses. Disputed over it how? There’s no doubt that Moses was a sinner; indeed, his last known sin, the taking on himself glory that was God’s, was the same kind of sin—“ ‘I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will

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be like the Most High' ” (*Isa. 14:14, NKJV*)—that got Lucifer himself thrown out of heaven in the first place. The dispute over Moses' body must have been because Christ was now claiming for Moses the promised resurrection.

But how could Christ do that for a sinner, Moses, someone who had violated His law? The answer, of course, could only be the Cross. Just as all the animal sacrifices pointed ahead to Christ's death, so obviously the Lord now, looking ahead to the cross, claimed the body of Moses to be resurrected. “In consequence of sin Moses had come under the power of Satan. In his own merits he was death's lawful captive; but he was raised to immortal life, holding his title in the name of the Redeemer. Moses came forth from the tomb glorified, and ascended with his Deliverer to the City of God.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 479.

How does this account of Moses help us to understand the depth of the plan of salvation, that even before the cross Moses would be raised to immortality?

THURSDAY *December 23*

The Resurrection of Us All

With the added light of the New Testament, the exclusion of Moses from the Promised Land doesn't seem like much of a punishment, after all. Instead of an earthly Canaan and later an earthly Jerusalem (which for all its known history has been a place of war, conquest, and suffering), "the heavenly Jerusalem" (*Heb. 12:22*) is, even now, his home. A much better abode for sure!

Moses was the first known example in the Bible of the resurrection of the dead. Enoch was brought to heaven without having seen death (*Gen. 5:24*), and Elijah, too (*2 Kings 2:11*), but as far as the written record goes, Moses was the first one to have been resurrected to eternal life.

How long Moses slept in the ground we don't know, but as far as he was concerned, it didn't matter. He closed his eyes in death, and whether it was three hours or 300 years, for him it was the same. It also is the same for all the dead throughout history; their experience, at least as far as being dead goes, will be no different than Moses'. We close our eyes in death, and the next thing we know is either the second coming of Jesus or, unfortunately, the final judgment (*see Rev. 20:7–15*).

Read 1 Corinthians 15:13–22. What great promise is found here, and why do Paul's words make sense only if we understand that the dead sleep in Christ until the resurrection?

Without the hope of the resurrection, we have no hope at all. Christ's resurrection is the guarantee of ours; having "purged our sins" (*Heb. 1:3*) on the cross as our sacrificial Lamb, Christ died and rose from the dead, and because of His resurrection we have the surety of ours, with Moses being the first example of a fallen human being raised from the dead. Because of what Christ would do, Moses had been raised; and because of what Christ has done, we, too, will be raised, as well.

Thus, we can find in Moses an example of salvation by faith, a faith made manifest in a life of faithfulness and trust in God, even if he faltered at the end. And all through the book of Deuteronomy, we can see Moses seeking to call God's people to a similar faithfulness, a similar response to the grace given to them as it has been given to us—we, too, who are on the borders of the Promised Land.

**Is not God, this same God, calling us to faithfulness, as well?
What can we do to make sure we don't make the mistakes
Moses forewarned about in Deuteronomy?**

FRIDAY *December 24*

Further Thought: “When they angrily cried, ‘Must we fetch you water out of this rock?’ they put themselves in God’s place, as though the power lay with themselves, men possessing human frailties and passions. Wearied with the continual murmuring and rebellion of the people, Moses had lost sight of his Almighty Helper, and without the divine strength he had been left to mar his record by an exhibition of human weakness. The man who might have stood pure, firm, and unselfish to the close of his work had been overcome at last. God had been dishonored before the congregation of Israel, when He should have been magnified and exalted.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 418.

“Upon the mount of transfiguration Moses was present with Elijah, who had been translated. They were sent as bearers of light and glory from the Father to His Son. And thus the prayer of Moses, uttered so many centuries before, was at last fulfilled. He stood upon the ‘goodly mountain,’ within the heritage of his people, bearing witness to Him in whom all the promises to Israel centered. Such is the last scene revealed to mortal vision in the history of that man so highly honored of Heaven.”—Page 479.

Discussion Questions:

1 In one sense, yes, Moses was resurrected and brought to heaven shortly after his death. But at the same time, poor Moses (we assume) gets to witness the terrible mess of things down here. How fortunate that most of us will be resurrected after all the struggle on earth is over at the Second Coming. In what ways is this, then, a greater blessing than what Moses experienced?

2 How does the story of Moses’ death and later resurrection show us how the New Testament, though often based on the

Old Testament, does take us further than the Old Testament and can, indeed, shed much new light upon it?

3 How is the story of Moses' life, including smiting the rock in a fit of anger, an example of what it means to live by faith and to be saved by faith, apart from the deeds of the law?

4 In class, talk about the promise of the resurrection at the end of time. Why is this so central to all our hopes? Also, if we can trust God on this (that is, on raising us from death), shouldn't we be able to trust Him for everything else? After all, if He can *do that* for us, what can't He do?

Teen Makes Christmas Music

By ANDREW McCHESNEY

Every year, Miharu Shimizu's church organizes a special Christmas program in Tokyo, Japan. Every year, Miharu wished that she could participate and somehow share her joy about Christ's birth. One fall, during her first year in university, a teacher asked her to write the lyrics for a musical.

The musical turned out to be the final exam for all 30 students in her class. Miharu was supposed to write the script and lyrics, while the teacher would compose the music. Then the class would be divided into four groups, and each group would learn and sing the musical.

After some prayer, Miharu put together a short story about Christmas caroling. The songs were filled with praise for Jesus at Christmas. She wasn't sure what the teacher or classmates would think. None of them were Christian. When Miharu submitted the eight-minute musical, the teacher didn't change a single word. "The lyrics are very noble," he said.

As the class learned and rehearsed the musical, Miharu remembered the Christmas program at church. Maybe her musical could be her contribution to the Christmas program.

That Christmas, she played the piano as seven classmates performed her musical at Setagaya Seventh-day Adventist Church, a church for young people in Tokyo. Young Adventists assisted the production behind the scenes.

More people showed up to watch the musical than Miharu had expected. About 75 people crowded into the small church building, overflowing a space where usually only 25 church members worshiped on Sabbaths.

Miharu was delighted. She sensed a bond with the audience. She saw

that she and they were sharing the true spirit of Christmas—the joy that Jesus loves people so much that He came to the earth as a baby. Miharu was especially happy that one of her classmates was sitting in the audience. Afterward, the classmate asked for Bible studies.

Miharu decided to compose another musical for the next Christmas. She wrote a musical about how her grandfather became a Seventh-day Adventist. Finding classmates to participate in the new musical proved easy. They liked the previous Christmas musical and were eager to sing again. One of the new participants was the classmate taking Bible studies. Miharu, 19, is praying that Jesus will use her musical talents to draw classmates to Him.

Thank you for your Thirteenth Sabbath Offering three years ago that helped Miharu's Setagaya church establish a youth evangelism training center. Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will reach out to more Japanese young people through online ministry.



Provided by the General Conference Office of Adventist Mission, which uses Sabbath School mission offerings to spread the gospel worldwide. Read new stories daily at AdventistMission.org.

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2022 Bible Study Guide for the First Quarter

In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews by Félix Cortez will be this quarter's study. Jesus was born of a woman, as we were, and He has been tempted and ridiculed, as we have been. Yet, still, He sits at the center of power in the universe. When we gaze at the heavenly scene, with its diverse and fantastic celestial beings, our eyes are attracted to the One who looks like us because He has become one of us. Jesus is there, in heaven, representing us, despite the shame of our sin. In the person of Jesus, three dimensions of redemption intersect. The first is the local, personal dimension. For those tired of the reproaches and hardships of Christian life, Jesus is the Author and Perfecter of faith. The second is the corporate, national dimension. For the people of God, who are traveling toward God's Promised Land, Jesus is the new Joshua. The third is the universal dimension. Jesus is the new Adam, the Son of man in whom God's purposes for humanity are fulfilled. May the Jesus portrayed in Hebrews capture not just our gaze, but our love and admiration.

Lesson 1—The Letter to the Hebrews and to Us

The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **A Glorious Beginning** (*Heb. 2:3, 4*)

MONDAY: **The Struggle** (*Heb. 13:3*)

TUESDAY: **Malaise** (*Heb. 13:1–9, 13*)

WEDNESDAY: **Press Together** (*Heb. 5:11–6:3*)

THURSDAY: **These Last Days** (*Heb. 1:2, Heb. 10:36–38*)

Memory Text—*Hebrews 10:36*

Sabbath Gem: Hebrews was addressed to believers who accepted Jesus but then experienced difficulties. Paul challenges us to persevere in our faith in Jesus and to fix our eyes upon Him in the heavenly sanctuary.

Lesson 2—The Message of Hebrews

The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: **Jesus Is Our King** (*Heb. 1:5–14*)

MONDAY: **Jesus Is Our Mediator** (*2 Sam. 7:12–14*)

TUESDAY: **Jesus Is Our Champion** (*Heb. 2:14–16*)

WEDNESDAY: **Jesus Is Our High Priest** (*Heb. 5:1–4*)

THURSDAY: **Jesus Mediates a Better Covenant** (*Hebrews 8–10*)

Memory Text—*Hebrews 8:1*

Sabbath Gem: Paul wrote Hebrews to strengthen the faith of believers amid their trials. He reminds us that the promises of God will be fulfilled through Jesus, who will soon take us home.

Lessons for People Who Are Legally Blind The *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* is available free in braille, on audio CD, and via online download to people who are legally blind or physically disabled. 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 for the Blind, Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506-0097. Phone: 402-488-0981; email: services@christianrecord.org; website: www.christianrecord.org.