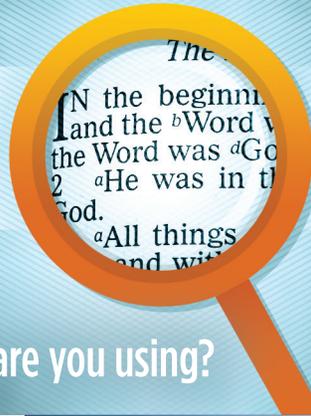


BIBLE



OPTICS

What lens are you using?

The WORD or the world?

This issue:

01. *Disappointed but not Disheartened*
04. *Renewed Hope*
05. *Q&A – True Revival*
07. *Divide & Multiply*
08. *The Results of a God-led Conversation*

From the Pastor

Disappointment. Division.

Those words don't spark hope in your heart, do they?

Sin has loaded those words with years of weary sorrow. Just looking at them can bring to mind memories of broken friendships, years lost to cancer, a budding career destroyed.

Yet God specializes in comforting those who mourn and turning our "mourning into dancing" (Psalm 30:11). He is our loving heavenly Father who "causes all things to work together for good for those who love the Lord, who are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

This month we look at disappointment and division in the light of God's Word. As we do so, you'll gain a new perspective on how God transforms both of them into something beautiful and inspiring.

May God transform every desolate place in your life into a valley of blessing!



Nelson Mercado | Pastor
Nashville First Seventh-day Adventist Church



Disappointed, But Not Disheartened

Finding Hope in the Midst of Disappointment

Shouts of hosanna carried on the spring breeze. With hope in their hearts, thousands flocked to see Him. The Messiah was riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, the mount of Jewish royalty. All eyes were on Jesus. He was about to proclaim Himself King, they thought. The Roman yoke was soon to be broken. Their long-awaited hopes were not in vain!

Prophecy was finally being fulfilled, but it wouldn't end as they expected. Christ was drawing attention to Himself for a very different type of coronation.

Wearing a crown of thorns, Jesus died on a Roman torture device a few days later. His broken-hearted disciples hid in fear for their own lives. They had been certain He was the one to emancipate Israel. What had gone wrong? Mercifully, God soon granted them understanding.



After His resurrection, Jesus used the Scriptures (Luke 24:27,45) to give His disciples understanding. He showed them from the prophetic writings that His death was necessary for their salvation. Hope revived in their hearts. Jesus returned to heaven shortly thereafter to begin His ministry as High Priest in the Holy Place and pour out His Spirit upon His waiting disciples. In their new understanding and with divine power, they went forth preaching and teaching.

Over eighteen hundred years later, another devoted group of Jesus' followers went through a similarly disappointing experience. Just like before, God did not leave them in distress for long. The study of God's Word brought understanding and new hope.

Bitter Disappointment

In the 1830s and 40s, careful Bible study led believers around the world to look for Jesus' return on October 22, 1844. William Miller, an American lay preacher, was foremost among those teaching the soon return of Christ. Yet the day passed uneventfully, eventually becoming known as The Great Disappointment. One man later wrote: "Our fondest hopes and expectations were blasted, and such a spirit of weeping came over us as I never experienced before. It seemed that the loss of all earthly friends could have been no comparison. We wept, and wept, till the day dawn."¹

Why had they been so convinced of Christ's return on that particular day? What went wrong?

“ Why had they been so convinced of Christ's return on that particular day? What went wrong?

The prophecy, "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed," (Daniel 8:14) had led Advent believers to conclude that the coming of Christ was imminent. They believed that the cleansing of the sanctuary meant the cleansing of the earth by fire at Jesus' return. They understood the 2300 days to represent 2300 literal years which began in 457 B.C. and would conclude in 1844. Continued study showed that the end of the prophecy aligned with the Jewish cleansing of the sanctuary known as the Day of Atonement. This pinned the date that Jesus would return

to October 22, 1844.

Yet Jesus did not return on October 22, 1844. The majority of Advent believers abandoned their faith, but a faithful remnant returned to the Scriptures for further study. "We were disappointed but not disheartened. We resolved to submit patiently to the process of purifying that God deemed needful for us; to refrain from murmuring at the trying ordeal by which the Lord was purging us from the dross and refining us like gold in the furnace. We resolved to wait with patient hope for the Savior to redeem His tried and faithful ones."²

Soon after the Great Disappointment, God showed Hiram Edson, an Advent believer and farmer, what had actually happened. The event was not the second coming. Instead, Christ transitioned from the Holy Place to the Most Holy Place in the heavenly sanctuary. The confusion had resulted from the belief that the earth was the sanctuary to be cleansed. The Advent believers, like the disciples in ancient Jerusalem, had understood that something great was about to take place. They simply misunderstood what that event was to be.

1 Edson, Hiram, *Unpublished Manuscript, Document File 588*, Ellen G. White Estate [see also *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, June 23, 1921]

2 Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of James White and Ellen G. White*, Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1880, p. 190



His Judgment Hour

An in-depth study of the book of Hebrews revealed that the Jewish tabernacle was “the copy and shadow of the heavenly things” (Hebrews 8:5). Thus, the “cleansing of the sanctuary” in Daniel 8:14 did not refer to Jesus’ return to earth, but to the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary. We may ask, why does the Heavenly Sanctuary need this cleansing?

The Hebrew Day of Atonement provided significant insight. During this earthly ceremony, those who had confessed their sins throughout the year, had the record of their sins removed from the sanctuary. If an individual had not confessed His sins and placed faith in the cleansing blood of the Lamb of God, that person was to be “cut off” from his people. It was a day of judgment.

As these faithful ones in 1844 studied the Hebrew Day of Atonement and the heavenly judgment, they realized that something absolutely vital did begin on October 22, 1844. On this day, Jesus changed His focus from a priest forgiving sin, to a High Priest standing in our place as judge and advocate. The earthly priests had ministered throughout the year serving the people regarding daily sins. The daily service transferred the sins to the tabernacle. On the Day of Atonement, a most singular service occurred of transferring those accumulated sins of the year to the scapegoat. They were then removed from the sanctuary, thus cleansing it. Thus, the High Priest stood as an advocate for the people and effected a yearly judgment that the camp of Israel was now clean.

These earnest Bible students began to finally understand what was meant in Revelation 14:6 about “the hour of His judgment has come” (Revelation 14:6). They began to see the new mission Jesus had embarked upon for their final restoration. He was now working as their advocate and judge to effect the final cleansing of the universe from sin.

Jesus Does Not Disappoint

One hundred and seventy-five years have passed since Jesus began the heavenly judgment. Several generations have passed away since 1844, all expecting to see Jesus come in the clouds. Is it not time for Him to return to this earth?

Is it possible that, like the apostles and Advent believers, God is using our disappointment over His delay to call us to a deeper study of Scripture so that we can know Him and understand His plans? Are there things God is wanting to teach us in our disappointment that we can learn only through His Word?

Jesus did not disappoint His disciples. His death and resurrection gave them something far better than they had ever dreamed. The faithful Advent believers also discovered a truth of much greater value through their disappointment.

Friend, Jesus will not let us down. He is doing a vital work during this time to prepare His people for the second coming. As we wait, let us determine that “We are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul” (Hebrews 10:39). Let us return to a deep study of the Scriptures for “All the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen” (2 Corinthians 1:20). It’s guaranteed, we will see our Savior soon!

By: John Cloud

DIG DEEPER

Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, Ch. 22

Renewed Hope

The story of Hiram Edson & God's answer to prayer

October 22, 1844 dawned with bright hopes for the Advent believers. Today was the day that Jesus would come for them!

They were ready. They had confessed their sins and were right with God. They had diligently studied the prophecies and seen clear evidence for their faith based on these events: “The 2300 days stretching from the fall of 457 BC to the fall of 1844; the advent awakening as a fulfillment of the first and second angels’ messages; the “tarrying time” after the spring disappointment, and the “midnight cry” at the camp meeting in August; and especially Samuel Snow’s clear exposition of the cleansing of the sanctuary in the light of the Day of Atonement.”¹

Yet the day slipped away, and Jesus did not come. In Port Gibson, New York, a farmer named Hiram Edson wept bitterly with other Advent believers. “Our fondest hopes and expectations were blasted,”² Edson said later. Yet as the hours after midnight passed, Edson began to review the ways God had led him thus far. He recalled the individuals God had healed, the hundreds who had given their lives to God, and the peace he had experienced.

With growing hope, he invited the men still at his house to join him for prayer in the barn. Together, “we continued in earnest prayer until the witness of the Spirit was given that our prayer was accepted, and that light should be given, our disappointment be explained, and made clear and satisfactory,”³ Edson recalled.

Later that morning, Edson and a friend went to encourage other Advent be-

lievers. Suddenly “I was stopped about midway through the field,” Edson says. “Heaven seemed open to my view, and I saw distinctly and clearly, that instead of our High Priest coming out of the Most Holy of the heavenly sanctuary to come to this earth [on October 22], ... that He for the first time entered on that day the second apartment of that sanctuary; and that he had work to perform in the Most Holy before coming to this earth.”

Thus, through study of the Scriptures, Edson and his fellow Advent believers were encouraged to continue on in faith.

Edson and the other believers studied the Scriptures for further clarification. They discovered that Jesus had not come to cleanse the earth but had begun a work of

judgement in the heavenly sanctuary (Daniel 7:13). They found clear explanations of Christ’s high priestly work in Hebrews, Daniel, Revelation and other parts of the Bible. They also discovered that the Bible plainly predicted a time of waiting and disappointment (Habakkuk 2:3, Revelation 10:10).

Thus, through study of the Scriptures, Edson and his fellow Advent believers were encouraged to continue on in faith. They were assured that God had led them thus far, that their faith was based upon the solid ground of truth, and that Jesus would return at the appointed time.

Truly, the Lord had given them “light with regard to their disappointment.”⁴

By: Shenalyn Page

1 Maxwell, Mervyn C. *Tell it to the World*. Pacific Press Publishing Association. 1976. p. 48

2 Ibid. p. 48

3 Ibid. p. 49

4 Ibid. p. 54

Bible Q&A

Is that the Holy Spirit at work? How to test a revival movement

Does true revival require a charismatic preacher, contemporary music, and modern facilities?

People often evaluate churches on the emotional experience they have there. Yet nowhere does Scripture teach that this is our measuring stick.

There is only one sure way to test any religious movement: By the Word of God.

We are told, "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). Paul teaches us to "Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:21,22).

We must ask whether what is being taught is true to Scripture. The people of the ancient city of Berea were praised because "they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).

In addition to testing the message, we must look carefully at the results of what is being taught. Jesus said, "You will know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:16).

The genuine work of the Holy Spirit convinces people of sin (John 16:8) and brings godly sorrow which leads to repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10). Where the true gospel is preached, converts exhibit a marked change in behavior. They love Jesus and keep the commandments of God (1 John 14:15; 1 John 2:4,5). Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance (Galatians 5:22,23 KJV) are their characteristics.

Satan works to deceive even the elect of God (Matthew 24:24). The Word of God is our only safeguard. It's important that we study it daily. We must claim the promise of the Spirit, "He will lead us into all truth" (John 16:13) and give us spiritual discernment (1 Corinthians 2:13,14).

We can count on the Holy Spirit and the Word of God to help us accurately judge any religious movement.

? GOT A QUESTION ABOUT THE JUDGMENT?

Tell us your questions about judgment in the Bible and we'll give you a Biblical answer in an upcoming issue.

Is there another topic you'd like us to address?

Tell us what it is!

Send your questions to: godled@kytn.net.

DIG DEEPER

Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, ch. 27;

Acts 3:19; 2 Chronicles 7:14; Job 42:6; Psalm 19:7



Divide & Multiply

The Old Testament story revolves around the Israelites, a nation separated out from the rest of the world as God’s chosen people. Was God being racist? No. He had something special in mind. “And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing” (Genesis 12:2).

Today, our society upholds unity as the path to ultimate peace. Division is despised as uncivilized and unkind. The Bible also calls us to unity, yet it sees division differently than the world does.

In the biblical narrative, division is often used as a means to separate the good and the bad. This separation, however, is not simply a distinction between two groups. It is also a means for God’s people to become equipped as ministers of the gospel.

The Source of Unhealthy Division

The Bible tells us that division began in the cosmos of the heavens, in the heart of Lucifer. The iniquity in his heart spread, causing a third of the angels to fall into deception.

Sin could not be present in the Kingdom of God, so God had to separate the good from the bad in order to protect the good and reveal the bad.

Satan has caused untold sorrow through division ever since his banishment from heaven. Think of Cain and Abel, and the trouble at the Tower of Babel. In more recent times, people have forced division on their fellow humans through apartheid in South Africa, Jim Crow laws in America, or Jewish concentration camps in Germany. It is Satan’s form of division that is hated today.

Why God Divides

The major difference between God dividing people and men enforcing division is this: God does it to protect and bless. Humans use it to protect their own interests and elevate themselves above others.

God uses division to mitigate the effects of sin. This invasive disease has plagued our planet for multiple millennia and is extremely contagious. Thus, the main reason that God socially distances His people from those that have not been vaccinated with His Holy Spirit is to keep them pure and focused on His mission. Division is a necessary aspect of the judgment that allows God to effectively identify and equip His children. In God’s hands, division becomes a blessing rather than a curse. The parable of the sheep and goats in Matthew 25 gives shows us how God uses division.

The Sheep and the Goats

“All nations [are] gathered” before the throne of God for the final judgment. God divides the nations into two groups, “as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats”. There are two groups of people—each holding a certain set of beliefs and living out definite characteristics. The outcomes for each are drastically different. God places the sheep on the right, grants them access to the kingdom of heaven, and calls them blessed because of their kindness to those in need.

“For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you invited me in; I needed clothes

COMING NEXT MONTH: WE’LL EXPLORE THE PROPHETIC “DAY OF JUDGMENT” THAT BEGAN IN 1844. WE’LL DISCOVER WHY IT MATTERS, WHAT IT MEANS, HOW GOD CALLS US TO LIVE DURING THE JUDGMENT, AND WHY WE DON’T HAVE TO BE AFRAID OF THE JUDGMENT. THE JUDGMENT REALLY IS GOOD NEWS!

and you clothed me; I was sick, and you looked after me; I was in prison and you came to visit me” (Matthew 25:35,36).

The goats are on the left. They are barred from heaven because they did not care for the needy.

When we follow Jesus’ line of reasoning through the parables in Matthew 25 (the parable of the virgins and the parable of the talents) we see something interesting. If we have the Holy Spirit, and are using our talents for God, but are not serving Christ in the broken humanity around us, we will not enter into the kingdom.

Jesus is telling us that God’s dividing lines are not based primarily on theology. Rather He draws His lines between those who live out practical Christianity in service to others versus those who merely talk Christianity.

Division for Multiplication

In separating the sheep and the goats, God has created a means for His special people to do ministry for those that are on the other side. This is counterintuitive in our culture. We humans use division as a means for us versus them, but God uses division as a means for us reaching them. In God’s hands, division becomes a tool to create multiplication.

This is a recurring theme in the Bible. God chooses specific people to be separate

**“FOR I WAS HUNGRY,
AND YOU GAVE ME SOMETHING TO EAT;
I WAS THIRSTY, AND YOU GAVE ME
SOMETHING TO DRINK; I WAS A
STRANGER AND YOU INVITED ME IN;
I NEEDED CLOTHES AND YOU
CLOTHED ME; I WAS SICK,
AND YOU LOOKED AFTER ME;
I WAS IN PRISON
AND YOU CAME TO VISIT ME”**

MATTHEW 25:35,36



**IN GOD’S HANDS,
DIVISION BECOMES
A TOOL TO CREATE
MULTIPLICATION.**

from the rest as a means of growing His kingdom. The Psalmist says, “the Lord has set apart the godly for himself” (Psalm 4:3).

Consider Abraham, called out to be a blessing to all nations; David, anointed as king to bless His people; and the Israelite nation, set apart to be a light to the Gentiles. The Israelites failed in their divinely appointed mission, yet their division from the Gentile nations set the stage for Messiah and His mission to bless the world. The apostles too were divided out from their peers and anointed with the Holy Spirit so that they could reach the world for God.

These are not examples of divine nepotism, but rather a means of assurance for the future kingdom. God’s people are set apart, not just for their own safety, but so they can work to draw others to the Father. Division is how He prepares us to be effective ministers for His kingdom. He divides in order to multiply.

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

By: Elijah Ramjattan

DIG DEEPER

Desire of Ages, Chapter 70 “The Least of These My Brethren”

A God-Led Conversation, Part 5

The Results of a God-Led Conversation

“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). Just two months had elapsed since Peter and John had abandoned Jesus in the time of His greatest need. What had changed?

If we follow the biblical chain of evidence, we find several important clues:

- They met the risen Lord and put their trust in Him (John 20 & 21).
- They had repented from the heart and prayed earnestly (Luke 22:60-62; Acts 1:14, 2:1).
- Jesus opened the Scriptures to them to give them a biblical foundation for their faith (Luke 24:13-28, 44-49).
- The Holy Spirit was given to them (John 20:21-23; Acts 2:1-4).

Four profound encounters with God changed everything. They changed Jesus’ jealous, fearful followers into the most focused, united, and loving group of individuals ever to walk the earth. They were the ones who “turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6). Christ led the Advent believers into a similar experience in 1844. “There was... deep searching of the heart, confession of sin, and forsaking of the world. A preparation to meet the Lord was [our burden]. There was persevering prayer and unreserved consecration to God.”¹ When their fondest hopes were disappointed, Jesus gave them answers and hope through Bible study.

God-led Bible study will do the same for us today. We will be transformed when we come to Scripture sincerely wanting God to teach us. Our risen Lord will lead us into prayer and repentance, unpack truths for us and give us His greatest gift—the Holy Spirit. I pray that God is leading you into a conversation with Him as you study His Word using the principles of Biblical reading, thinking and application. Because a God-led conversation changes everything!

If you’d like to learn more about how to have a conversation with God through the Bible, check out the articles on Bible study at Godled.info.

1 White, Ellen. Great Controversy. Pacific Press. 1950. P. 400-401.

Principles for a God-led Conversation

1. Pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
2. Read the chapter at least seven times.
3. Note verses and ideas that attract your attention.
4. Pay attention to the immediate and broader context of the verses.
5. Ask God questions about what you are learning.
6. What questions is God asking you? Ponder them prayerfully.
7. Consider: How do the Biblical ideas apply to your life?
8. Act on what God has shown you.

By: *Pastor Marshall McKenzie*



Nelson Mercado
Pastor

Our goal is to help you grow in your understanding of key Bible teachings, gain a Biblical perspective on what is happening in our world today, and find tools to share your faith more effectively.

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