

Revival and Reformation
The Promised Revival: God's Mission Completed

Lesson #13 for September 28, 2013

Scriptures: Matthew 28:18-20; James 5:7-8; Zechariah 10:1; Matthew 3:11; Revelation 18:1; 19:11-16.

1. This lesson talks about the latter rain. The latter rain is the enhanced outpouring of the Holy Spirit which will place the finishing touches on God's remnant people to give them the power and the ability to reach the world with the final, true message about God.
2. What needs to happen for the latter rain to come? While the Seventh-day Adventist Church is growing fairly rapidly, there are still many places in the world where even the name *Seventh-day Adventist* has never been heard. So, what needs to happen to get us from where we are to the latter rain? See items # 8 and #9 below for an explanation of the early rain and the latter rain.
3. One very sobering thought is that to help deal with the crisis that arose in heaven, the focus of God's plans to resolve the controversy moved to this earth; and He began with Adam and Eve, started over with Noah, started again with Abraham, started yet again after the Babylonian captivity, finally moved on to that small group of disciples in the Christian church, then called for the Protestant Reformation, and finally established the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Is it really possible that this small group of people will be able to bring the work of God to a conclusion when all those others failed? What is different about us?
4. Read Matthew 28:18-20. God instructs us to go, teach, baptize, and make disciples; but, with that He gives us a promise that He will be with us. As we saw in a previous lesson, the challenge of reaching the whole world seemed impossible to the disciples. Nevertheless, Paul said in Colossians 1:23 that the gospel was being preached in the whole world. How was that accomplished? Acts 1:8 tells us that the Holy Spirit will come upon God's people as it did at Pentecost, and the gospel will be spread throughout the earth. What do we do?
5. Read Matthew 24:14. This statement from Jesus is a promise. Revelation 18:1 tells us that the whole earth will be lightened with the glory of the fourth angel.

I saw angels hurrying to and fro in heaven, descending to the earth, and again ascending to heaven, preparing for the fulfillment of some important event. Then I saw another mighty angel commissioned to descend to the earth, to unite his voice with the third angel, and give power and force to his message. Great power and glory were imparted to the angel, and as he descended, the earth was lightened with his glory. [Revelation 18:1] The light which attended this angel penetrated everywhere.—Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 277. [Content in brackets is supplied.]
6. How can each one of us be a part of the fulfillment of those promises? What do we need to do to prepare ourselves and those around us? What is our individual responsibility?
7. While the Holy Spirit is not mentioned as often in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit's work is represented as water, wind, and oil. Isaiah 44:3 and Joel 2:28 speak of the Holy Spirit coming as refreshing rains. In John 7:37-39, Jesus Himself used the symbolism of water to represent the work of the Holy Spirit. When will that happen? (See item #10.)
8. Read Joel 2:21-24; 28-32 and James 5:7-8. In Palestine in Bible times, sowing and planting were normally done around the middle of October during what was called the early rains. That gave enough moisture for the plants to germinate and start their growth. Then, there was a period of relative dryness until late spring when the latter rains came to ripen the harvest. If

the early rains and the latter rains were good, the harvest was good.

9. In the history of the Christian church, the *early rain* refers to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. (See Acts 2) The *latter rain* will come in even greater power just before the second coming of Christ. It will put the final touch on God's work here on earth. We use the term *early rain* also to refer to God's Spirit convicting, instructing, guiding, and empowering each believer in the normal growth of the Christian. The latter rain is spoken of in the life of an individual as a special endowment of God's Holy Spirit just before the second coming.

Under the figure of the early and the latter rain, that falls in Eastern lands at seedtime and harvest, the Hebrew prophets foretold the bestowal of spiritual grace in extraordinary measure upon God's church. The outpouring of the Spirit in the days of the apostles was the beginning of the early, or former, rain, and glorious was the result. . . . [See Acts 2.]

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

10. Read 2 Peter 3:10-12 and *Evangelism* pages 694-697. Let us be very clear about the fact that we are not waiting for God; He is waiting for us. And it need not take a long time.

You will not be able to say that He will come in one, two, or five years, neither are you to put off His coming by stating that it may not be for ten or twenty years. . . . We are not to know the definite time either for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit or for the coming of Christ.—*Review and Herald*, March 22, 1892; *Ev* 221.1. (This was soon after 1888; a national Sunday law was in congress)

11. What preparation is necessary for receiving the Holy Spirit's power in its fullness as the latter rain? Read Acts 1:14; Zechariah 10:1; Acts 3:18-20; 4:31; Psalm 119:25; and John 6:63. God calls for His people to gather together frequently for prayer. As they pray for the latter rain, times of spiritual strength will come, and miraculous signs will be seen in the earth. God's people will be revived, and God's life-giving Spirit will give them the power and the authority to finish the gospel. Imagine yourself as a step-brother of Jesus after discovering who He really was! Would you panic, considering how you had mistreated Him as a child?
12. The experience of the disciples between crucifixion and Pentecost is a perfect example. God is just waiting for us to have that kind of experience. Bible study and prayer are the preparations we need to help us be open to the Spirit of God and ready to do the witnessing necessary for finishing God's work on this earth. What is the purpose of the latter rain?
13. Read Psalm 51:10-13; Acts 4:13,20; 5:33; 8:1,4. David reminded us that we need clean hearts and right spirits. God promises He will teach us so we can teach others. After Pentecost, Peter and John were bold; even their enemies recognized that they had been with Jesus. They could not stop speaking of what they had seen and heard. That made the Sanhedrin furious. When the persecution started, disciples were scattered everywhere, preaching the word. When we have really understood our role and have a right relationship with the Holy Spirit, like Paul we will not be able to keep quiet. (Romans 1:1)
14. How do you explain the words in Acts 17:6, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too." (NKJV) As you look at the world around you, finishing the gospel might seem like an impossible task. But, God's Holy Spirit is offered in infinite supply to accomplish this most urgent important task. Could the Seventh-day Adventist Church in our day turn the

world upside down? What would that take? A new understanding of truth? A new truth?

15. In addition to the symbols of water, wind, and oil, John the Baptist described the coming of the Holy Spirit as fire. (Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16) In what sense is the coming of the Holy Spirit like fire? And what does it mean to be baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire? Are you excited about being totally immersed in fire? Read Isaiah 33:10-16; Exodus 3:2-6; 24:17; 1 Kings 18:24; Malachi 3:2-3; Acts 2:1-4; and Hebrews 12:29. In these verses it should be clear that the fire that is spoken of in Scripture is a representation of God's presence and power; it is sometimes called God's glory. We see the work of the Holy Spirit at the burning bush in Moses' day, on the top of Mount Carmel in Elijah's day, and with tongues of fire at Pentecost. What needs to happen to us? Why haven't we received signs of God's glory?
16. Read Habakkuk 2:14. What does it mean to be as filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea? Revelation 18:1 says that the whole earth will be enlightened by the glory of God's angel. God's glory is also spoken of as His loving character. How can that best be revealed to our sinful world?
17. It might seem like Satan and sin are conquering our world. But, the book of Revelation gives a different ending. Read Revelation 12:17; 17:13-14; and 19:11-16. The message of Revelation is that, ultimately, Jesus wins and Satan loses. Ezekiel 28:18-19 tells us that self-destructive fire will come forth from within the Devil, and he will be totally destroyed. Revelation 19:19-21 tells us that God will win in the end. How is the latter rain involved?
18. And how will we be involved?

Servants of God, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given. Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 612.1

19. Is there anything else that could possibly rival that in importance? Isn't it clear that God is ready? But, He has chosen to work through us; so, He chooses not to do anything until we are ready.

The message will be carried not so much by argument as by the deep conviction of the Spirit of God. The arguments have been presented. The seed has been sown, and now it will spring up and bear fruit. The publications distributed by missionary workers have exerted their influence, yet many whose minds were impressed have been prevented from fully comprehending the truth or from yielding obedience. Now the rays of light penetrate everywhere, the truth is seen in its clearness, and the honest children of God sever the bands which have held them. Family connections, church relations, are powerless to stay them now. Truth is more precious than all besides. Notwithstanding the agencies combined against the truth, a large number take their stand upon the Lord's side.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 612.2

20. What is the implication of saying the message is to be carried "not so much by argument as by the deep conviction of the Spirit of God"? What happened at Pentecost? Consider Matthew 5:16.
21. Seventh-day Adventists have the most logical and coherent message in the field of religion and theology that has ever been known. We have a massive amount of information that we can study and digest. We have so many promises from God that we cannot even quote them all. For what are we waiting? How much information do we have compared to the disciples?

22. How do promises we have received compare with the promises God gave to His people in the days of the Old Testament? Read Deuteronomy 11:13-21; Hosea 6:1-3; 10:12. As Romans 8:31 tells us: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (*GNB*)
23. Dr. Stephen Hawking, one of the world's greatest scientists, called the concept of an afterlife a "fairy story for people afraid of the dark." Why does a statement like that show just how crucial and hopeful our message is for a world that knows neither God nor His love? (*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, p. 155.)
24. Do we really want Jesus to come back? Do we have questions about His promises? Do we really believe them? What can we do to encourage progress toward the great culmination?
25. Is it clear in your mind how and when and why the Holy Spirit will be poured out upon His people at the end of time? Almost 2000 years ago, Jesus promised us the Holy Spirit. Does it seem like fulfillment of the promise of Matthew 24:14 is impossible? Is our life too good?
26. In 1888 at the time of the general conference session in Minneapolis, there were only a few thousand Adventists, nearly all in North America. (*1SM* 233-235) Yet, God spoke to Ellen White and told her that the general conference leaders at that meeting had turned back the latter rain! Could the latter rain have actually come in 1888? How could that small group of Adventists which had just begun to spread around the world have experienced the latter rain and finished up the gospel in those days? How did the disciples almost do it in their day?
27. On that occasion, it seemed like the problem was that they had the wrong message. Do we have the right message today? Which message is the right message? Are we sure?
28. There are many ways to spread the gospel. People who cannot read or even who are blind have gone from door-to-door asking their neighbors to read to them; and by asking questions, they have brought people to the gospel. What is our excuse? Could we be effective witnesses for God? Jesus stated in Matthew 28:18-20 that He would give us authority, and the Greek word *exousia* could imply "divine privilege" or even "power."

Thus Christ gave His disciples their commission. He made full provision for the prosecution of the work, and took upon Himself the responsibility for its success. So long as they obeyed His word, and worked in connection with Him, they could not fail.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 822.

29. Could we be baptized with fire as they were on the day of Pentecost? LeRoy Froom explained the expression "a baptism of fire" in these words: "It is an explanatory phrase, completing the idea. It is the Scriptural way of repetition to emphasize and enforce a single thought. We are to be baptized with divine fire now to save us from destruction by consuming fire later."—*The Coming of the Comforter* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1956), p. 268 as quoted in the *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, page 159.
30. If we have the possibility of having Jesus and the Holy Spirit working with us and through us, for what more could we ask?
31. So, why hasn't Jesus come yet? Read *Evangelism* 694-697.
32. What would a church be like that was full of Spirit-filled members? If we could be like Paul or even Christ-like in our witness, what would that look like in the 21st century?

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