



*The Reformation*  
**Messenger**  
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**WE BELIEVE:** The all-wise loving God created all things in the universe by His Son, Jesus Christ. He is the Owner and Sustainer. He met the challenge to His loving leadership and authority by reconciling the world to Himself through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, the Word made flesh. The Holy Spirit, Jesus' representative on earth convicts of sin, guides into truth, and gives strength to overcome all unrighteousness. The Bible is the record of God's dealings with mankind and the standard of all doctrine, the Ten Commandments are the transcript of His character and the foundation of all enduring reform. His people, in harmony with God's word and under the direction of the Holy Spirit call all men everywhere to be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus. Bible prophecy reveals that earth's history will soon close with the visible return of Jesus Christ as King to claim all who have accepted Him as the world's only Redeemer and their Lord.

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## Wait — Have Patience

In our world today, everything is fast moving. People seem to be in a continual hurry, speed is the key word. Cars and airplanes are made to go faster and faster, to save time; every minute is so precious. Even Christians are caught in this mad rush—so many things to do and to take care of, and not enough time for everything.

In the business world everything is in a great hurry. It is a common saying, “I need this yesterday.” Machinery and equipment are constantly being invented to save time, to do the work faster. This feverish pace is so catching, that even when there is no rush, people are not able to slow down.

The golden attribute of patience is hardly ever seen anymore. Yet, what does the Bible say? “Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” Revelation 14:12. Another translation says, “Here patience is required of the saints.”

How important is patience to us? “For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.” Hebrews 10:36

“But on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.” Luke 8:15

Without divine patience, we cannot bear fruit to the Lord.

Often people think that the Lord is slow in answering their prayers and giving justice to them, and they get impatient and do something about the problems themselves; or they seek human help, because their faith is not strong enough to wait for the Lord. The Israelites of old constantly murmured against the Lord; they complained and became impatient; they even wished to return back to Egypt, because 40 years in the wilderness was too long to their liking. They murmured about the lack of water, the lack of food, and the lack of protection, yet all these things were provided; they did not go thirsty, nor hungry, but they were afraid of the future. Jesus taught us to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.” He did not teach us to pray for tomorrow, but just for one day at a time.

Jesus purposely led the people of Israel to the Red Sea with the Egyptian army behind them, to test their faith, and to test their patience. In the last moment, He opened the way through the sea. He could have opened the way earlier, but then they would not have learned the lesson of trust and patience.

Noah was in the ark for seven days and no rain had fallen yet. God could have sent the rain on the first day when the door was closed; but no, He had to test the patience of Noah and his family.

Abraham could have had his son born many years earlier, but again God was testing his faith and patience,

that when he was 100 years old and his wife 90 years old, finally Isaac was born. God had made a promise to Abraham that his descendants shall be as the sand of the sea, but because he had no son yet, he thought that he must help God, and took to himself another wife, which resulted in much grief and sorrow to him and his wife.

Jacob thought that things were going wrong, “my brother will receive the firstborn blessing, and I am left out.” He questioned, “Should Esau inherit the firstborn blessing, who is so careless and indifferent?” In order to help God, he lied to his father to deceive him. Was this necessary? Who gave the blessing? Was it not God, by the Holy Spirit? God did not need Jacob’s deception to give the firstborn blessing to him. Much sorrow came to Jacob from his mistake. For twenty years he had to suffer in a strange country.

David writes, “Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.” Psalm 27:14

David had learned patient waiting; after he had been anointed as the future king, yet he had to wait 20 years, and be in danger for his life, seeking protection in the mountains, until suddenly he was called to the throne to be the king.

David writes of his experience in waiting patiently for the Lord. “Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.” Psalm 37:7. “For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.” Psalm 37:9. “Wait on the LORD, and keep His way, and He shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it.” Psalm 37:34

Solomon also writes, “Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the LORD, and He shall save thee.” Proverbs 20:22

Many times we suffer because of those who do not like us. They make plans against us because of jealousy, hatred, and covetousness. And those who hurt us seem to get away with it. Yet in due time, God will judge and repay to everyone according to their deeds.

Daniel was cast into the lion’s den because of jealousy,

but the Lord turned it into victory for Daniel, and into defeat for his enemies. If we wait on the Lord, He will not forsake us.

This happened also to Mordecai and Haman. Haman planned to destroy Mordecai, but the Lord turned defeat into victory for Mordecai, and Haman suffered defeat. God made a promise to faithful Abraham, “And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” Genesis 12:3

David had been let down by his brothers, by his friends, and by King Saul, but he waited upon God, and trusted in His salvation. “Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from Him cometh my salvation. My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him.” Psalm 62:1, 5

Even that David had committed sin he still waited upon God for mercy. “Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that He have mercy upon us.” Psalm 123:2

God well knows our needs, and He has promised to provide us all that is necessary, if we wait upon Him patiently. “He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew

their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.” Isaiah 40:29–31

God, who tested the patience of Noah, Abraham, Job, and the people of Israel, will today test our patience, and if we prove ourselves to be patient to the end, He will save us, He will deliver His people.

“The Lord frequently places us in difficult positions to stimulate us to greater exertion. In His providence special annoyances sometimes occur to test our patience and faith. God gives us lessons of trust. He would teach us where to look for help and strength in time of need.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 116

God will deliver us if we patiently wait for Him and, at the same time, hasten to obey His calling. Amen.

**Timo Martin**







## The Sin of Jealousy

What does the Bible say about jealousy? When we use the word “jealous,” we use it in a sense of being envious of someone who has something we do not have. This kind of jealousy is a sin and is not characteristic of a Christian; rather, it shows that we are still being controlled by our own desires. “For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?” 1 Corinthians 3:3. The Apostle Paul writes, “Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.” Galatians 5:26. Being jealous indicates that we are not satisfied with what God has given us. The Bible tells to, “be content with such things as ye have,” for God says, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Hebrews 13:5

The battle that rages inside all of us is that even when our intentions are good, we still have a sinful nature and often yield to sin. One of those sins is jealousy, which is closely related to one of the “seven deadly sins” called envy or covetousness. “These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto Him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.” Proverbs 6:16–19

In the past five issues we have been studying the Book of Daniel. I would like to summarize what has been studied. Daniel chapter 1 is about the God who turns defeat into victory. Daniel chapter 2 tells us how God is the revealer of secrets. In Daniel chapter 3 Jesus is the Redeemer of His people. The three young, brave Hebrews did not strive to save their own lives by violating the commandments of God, but rather gave themselves completely to the truth and its cause. Daniel chapter 4 relates the story of the conversion of a heathen king. After going through his seven years of trial, living as an animal, he finally surrendered to the King of kings. In Daniel chapter 5 we read how the God of justice brings an end to Babylon, the pride of the world.

The article in this issue is about “jealousy” and its devastating effects in the life of those who are given in to jealousy. However, it is not only about jealousy; it is also about how a complete surrender to God will bring victory in the midst of trials. The faith of Daniel has been an inspiration to many young people since he was faithful from his youth up; however, his faith is also an inspiration to the elderly. As a youth, Daniel purposed in his heart not to defile himself with the delicacies of the king when he first arrived in Babylon. Now, an old man, perhaps in his 80’s, Daniel is still found to be faithful in his service and commitment to the Lord. The account of Daniel’s faith is found in Daniel 6:1–28,

which is the well-known story of, “Daniel In the Lion’s Den”. This is the last story chapter in the book of Daniel. The book of Daniel is divided into two segments—prophecies, and stories. The prophecies deal with the great empires that ruled throughout history and bring us to a point called, “The Time of the End.” The two are very much connected in that the stories talk about how to prepare for that time of the end, with character qualities that Daniel and his companions possessed in the midst of heathenism and adversity. They had strong faith, courage and hope. The stories reveal “how” to stand in the time of the end and the prophecies reveal “when” the time of the end will occur.

Reading the last two verses of Daniel chapter 5 gives us a little background as to the setting of Daniel 6 and the events that led to Daniel being cast into the lion’s den. “In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.” Daniel 5:30–31. Here it reads that Babylon fell. Nebopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar, Nebonidus, and Belshazzar, the great kings of Babylon, went down, and as Babylon fell, Darius the Mede took the kingdom.

Moving to chapter 6, we read in verses 1–2: “It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage.” This is very interesting. Babylon falls, and as Medo-Persia takes over, the new king takes the prime minister’s assistant from the previous regime and makes him second in command. Darius saw something in Daniel. He saw a man of goodness, a man of honesty, and integrity. Today, God is looking for Daniels—men and women who purpose in their heart to serve God at all costs.

In his new position Daniel was successful; however, he was also envied and targeted. His success led to envy by other rulers and governors who were under him. “Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him.” Daniel 6:4. Even the godliest men have their enemies—those who oppose them. We can read about many of them in the Bible, such as Joseph, Job, David, and Daniel. Back to Daniel, these men in the court of King Darius were enemies of Daniel because of their jealousy of his noble character. This his enemies could see and therefore they could make no charge against

him. They found no fault or error in him because he was found to be faithful.

Daniel’s enemies determined that there was only one way to defeat him and that was to find some conflict between the law of God and that of the law of the Medes and Persians. “Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.” Daniel 6:5. Here is revealed the results of jealousy; the perilous pitfalls of allowing sinful habits to grow in the heart and mind. The wicked men checked Daniel’s finances. They checked his words. They checked his ambitions. They checked his public life. They checked his private life. His life was put through careful scrutiny, and they found nothing. Absolutely nothing. It would be wonderful if, in your life, you have nothing to hide. There is a peace that comes from knowing that your life, being totally transparent before God and before people, has nothing to hide or be ashamed of.

What would be the result if somebody scrutinized your private life? What if people knew the kind of books and magazines you are reading, the kind of television programs you are watching, or the kind of websites you are surfing? What about the words that you say, the jealousy that is in your mind, the envy that is in your heart, the criticism that escapes your lips? Brother, sisters, and friends, what a beautiful example we have in the life of Daniel the prophet. Even if people say something against you when you are not guilty, how precious before the Lord your life and character will be if you do not retaliate. No matter what people might say, it does not matter because you are standing on a solid rock and that Rock is Jesus.

“Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever. All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.” Daniel 6:6–8. Were they telling the truth? Did all the governors really meet together? Did the first governor meet with them? Did Daniel agree with them that this was a good law and therefore he would not pray to any other god except Darius? Not at all. Now, follow closely. Their jealousy led to envy. Their envy led to greed. Their greed led to lying. And

their lying led to their willingness to put an innocent man to death. Sin cherished in the mind never becomes less powerful in the life. It always becomes more powerful. This is truly an inspiring story of the wonderful experience of a man who was so faithful and committed to His Lord that he did not consider sparing his own life when God's principles were about to be trampled underfoot. Daniel's faithfulness is an example of what our faithfulness must be when God's Law is substituted for man's law. A death decree is waiting for God's people in the near future when the Sunday law will be enforced. We have to learn obedience to God now in order to be found faithful in that time.

Daniel continued to pray three times a day as his custom was. He prayed toward Jerusalem on his knees, with thankfulness to God, even in times of trouble. He did not hide his praying and thus it was easy for his enemies to catch him in the act. His enemies then reported Daniel to the king, reminding Darius of the unalterable decree that he had made. Daniel was accused of disregarding the king's decree and so the king was forced to abide by his own decree. "Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him. Then these men assembled

unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed." Daniel 6:14-15. Displeased with himself, the king tries to deliver Daniel but Daniel's enemies keep reminding him that he must abide by his decree.

Finally, Daniel is thrown into the lion's den, yet the king is hopeful that the God whom Daniel serves will deliver his servant. The den is closed with a stone and sealed. It appears that Daniel's enemies have won. He is in the lion's den and it is sealed, yet could any "seal" by man ever keep God from accomplishing His plans? "Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of musick brought before him: and his sleep went from him." Daniel 6:18. It is not the house you live in that enables you to sleep.

Peace does not come from material things. Peace comes from God. There are a lot of people in life who think, "If only I had something else, it would give me peace. If I had a new house, that would give me peace. If I had a new car, that would give me peace. If I had new shoes, that would give me peace. If I had a new suit, that would give me peace." The reality is that when you know God, it gives you a peace in your heart—a peace that enables you to face unusual circumstances with confidence, with joy and with hope. This is what was happening to Daniel; although he was put in a dangerous place, God gave him true peace. When the king

came to the lion's den in the morning, asking Daniel if he was ok, Daniel says, "My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before Him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt." Daniel 6:22. Daniel says, "My God," not some god. Not any god. "My God has sent His angel, and shut the lions' mouths."

Are you facing some problem in your life today, and feel as if you have been dropped into a pit of lions? Have you struggled with impatience? Have you struggled with anger? Have you struggled with lust? Have you struggled with resentment, and cannot conquer it? The lion seems to be

roaring in your ears, but today you can say, "Lord, tame the lion. Lord, shut the lion's mouth." And God, the great Lion Tamer, will come to your lion's den, and He will put all those lions to sleep. May we all learn from the example of Daniel, who is an excellent example of what it means to "seek ye first the kingdom of God." Matthew 6:33. Also, "We ought to obey God rather than men." Acts 5:29. I thank God that He still tames lions. I thank God that He still shuts lions' mouths. I thank God that He still renders the lions of my life powerless. He did it for Daniel, and He can do it for you. Amen!

**Nicholas Anca**







## A Chopstick in the Hands of God

Right now, millions of people are digging into their food with them. They have stood the test of time as a utensil for humans, even when countless thousands of other tools, gadgets and products have not. Used by Chinese, Japanese, Koreans and other Asians, these devices are held between the thumb and fingers. Commonly they are made of bamboo, plastic or wood. What am I talking about? Chopsticks, of course!

The Chinese philosopher Confucius had his hand in a lot of things in Chinese culture and chopsticks were one of them. This man really hated knives. In fact, Confucius hated knives so much that he, who was a vegetarian by the way, once said that the honourable man has to keep away from the slaughterhouse and that he should never allow knives on his table. With his influence on the Chinese people, it is no wonder that people soon put away their kitchen knives and started using chopsticks. China has been using them since 1200 BC, maybe even earlier. The first known sets were made of bronze and were mainly used for cooking as they were handy for reaching into boiling pots of oil or water. It was not until 400 AD that people started eating with them and then by 500 AD or so, chopsticks had spread all over Asia. Personally, I use them once in a while, but it was only recently that I realized they teach you the importance of:

**Cooperation.** First of all, chopsticks only work in pairs; they stand for close cooperation and team work. Also the Bible states that “Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.” Ecclesiastes 4:9–10. This appeared to be the guideline for the work of the Apostles in the first century. Two disciples were sent to find the colt. Peter and John were sent to prepare the Passover and were later sent together to Samaria. Paul and Barnabas were sent by the Church to Antioch and later, after they had their dissension, each took a companion. “And He called unto Him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two.” Mark 6:7

**Patience.** Eating with chopsticks takes patience and care. When I started learning to use them a few years ago, my friends showed me different techniques. First I was quite clumsy and it was frustrating because I would drop the simplest pieces of food. At some point I wanted to give up because I was not very patient. However, my friends encouraged me to take my time and practice. Sometimes in life you wait on God and lose patience because His timing is not yours. Paul reminds you, “Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer.” Romans 12:12. A woman that



really knew what it meant to be patient was Elisabeth Elliot. She once stated that, “waiting on God requires the willingness to bear uncertainty, to carry within oneself the unanswered question, lifting the heart to God about it whenever it intrudes upon one’s thoughts.”

**Slowing down.** A common health tip is to try to eat with chopsticks when you can. Why? Because it slows you down and allows your stomach to tell your brain you are full before you overeat. Eating with chopsticks is a slower process, but that is not necessarily a bad thing. Sometimes you need to slow down and take things one step at a time, break it down at each stage so that you have time to think. You probably live in a fast-paced society, rushing from one appointment to the next, but the Bible reminds you: “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.” Ecclesiastes 3:1

**Aim.** If you have ever tried using chopsticks, you know that you cannot get what you want by just haphazardly stabbing at the plate. To be able to get what you want, you have to aim for it. There is no way you can pick up everything in one go. Sometimes a little bit of focus makes the difference between failure and success. The apostle Paul also expressed the same idea for our spiritual life. “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 3:14

**Versatility.** Chopsticks are used to carry out many actions with food such as stirring, picking up, separating, mixing, cutting, pressing and transporting. At the same time, chopsticks are also used for many things other than eating. By na-



ture, their simplicity means that they are adaptable. Imagine being like chopsticks in this way, able to adapt in different situations and challenges. It also encourages you to innovate by combining skills and ideas from different areas of interest. Take for example David from the Bible: He was a shepherd, a musician, a soldier, a poet, a fugitive and outlaw, and the greatest King of Israel. He is described as “a man after [God’s] own heart.” 1 Samuel 13:14

**Efficiency.** Finally, chopsticks can be useful and efficient instruments if the person has the correct method of holding them. For an adult, the standard way is to place the thumb generally about one-third of the distance from the top of the chopsticks. This position not only looks elegant but also enables the best opening and closing of the tips. Studies show that while using chopsticks, people exercise over thirty joints and fifty muscles in the fingers, wrist, arm and shoulder. God created you according to His plan and for a purpose. If you are a chopstick in His hands, you can be efficient and of great use to many people around you. “In a large house there are not only utensils made of gold and silver, but also those made of wood and clay. Some are for special use, while others are for ordinary use.” 2 Timothy 2:20–21 (ISV)



*Manuela DiFranca*

**“Scatter Books Like Leaves of Autumn.—This is a work that should be done. The end is near. Already much time has been lost, when these books should have been in circulation. Sell them far and near. Scatter them like the leaves of autumn. This work is to continue without the forbidings of anyone. Souls are perishing out of Christ. Let them be warned of His soon appearing in the clouds of heaven.” – *The Review and Herald*, August. 13, 1908**

**“Some close their ears to the calls made for money to be used in sending missionaries to foreign countries and in publishing the truth and scattering it like autumn leaves all over the world. Such excuse their covetousness by informing you that they have made arrangements to be charitable at death. They have considered the cause of God in their wills. Therefore they live a life of avarice, robbing God in tithes and in offerings, and in their wills return to God but a small portion of that which He has lent them, while a very large proportion is appropriated to relatives who have no interest in the truth. This is the worst kind of robbery. They rob God of His just dues, not only all through life, but also at death.” – *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p 479–480**



# Punishment for Sin



Punishment for sin—perhaps in itself, so familiar a topic at first glance! Yet we must realize that, as we near the close of time (only a short time separates us from eternity), Satan’s efforts have much more intensified. He knows that “he hath but a short time.” Revelation 12:12. He untiringly sets worldly pleasures at the disposal of the people and many have fallen victims and have been taken captive at his will. Sin has raised its ugly head so boldly that even professed Christians are benumbed by its fatal influence. In flattery they continue in sinful pursuits. Only a few recognize its deadly results. So, for this reason we need to study this subject again.

To begin with, sin is defined in the Holy Bible as “the transgression of the law.” 1 John 3:4. It is disobedience to the expressed will or commands of God. It is strange, “an intruder, . . . mysterious, unaccountable, . . . it is the outworking of a principle at war with the great law of love which is the foundation of the divine government.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 492

To the first parents in Eden, apart from engraving His will in their hearts, deep down in their conscience, the expressed will of the Father was: “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it.” Genesis 2:17. He, [God] emphasized that disobedience to this command would surely result in death. In His original plan, He did not include death as part of the lot of the human race. Appearance of graves afterwards attests to the fact that man did not obey His Creator. Today, close to every village, sometimes right by the yard or plot, also in cities, special places are set apart for the burial of the dead. So, obvious as it is, it does not matter the rank of the person, education, status or whatsoever, death comes sooner or later. Even in affluent societies, graves exist! This is to say that God was right. The Bible says that “the wages of sin is death.” Romans 6:23. We will expound on this aspect further shortly. Before that, let us consider something related to this.

True as it is, there is another class, however, who have no remorse for sin; they love worldly pleasures and with

scorn they say in their hearts, “The LORD will not do good, neither will He do evil.” Zephaniah 1:12. “It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts?” Malachi 3:14

One of the most successful artifices of Satan is the teaching that God is so loving and merciful, that to punish sin is contrary to His principles—after all, look how many we are, God can not destroy all of us, they say—and further, the teaching is that there is no reward for right doing. He says, whatever you do, it does not matter. After all, what is right depends on your own judgment, or worse still, that there is no standard set up for right doing; the Bible is just an opinion of men like ourselves. In the days of old, “Satan was urging upon men the belief that there is no reward for the righteous or punishment for the wicked, and that it is impossible for men to obey the divine statutes.” — *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 88

“Satan deceives many with the plausible theory that God’s love for His people is so great that He will excuse sin in them; he represents that while the threatenings of God’s word are to serve a certain purpose in His moral government, they are never to be literally fulfilled.” — *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 522

As people of God we must strongly guard against this teaching, let alone think about it (read further on page 522 of *Patriarchs and Prophets*). We must learn and understand that God’s judgments to evil doers are as certain as it was during the flood, during the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, the smiting of Eli’s sons, the destructions of the cities of the plain, and many more. Conversely, obedience was equally rewarded in uncountable instances: The translation of Enoch and Elijah, the saving of Noah and his family, just to mention a few. Our God “is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” Hebrews 11:6. The revelator at Patmos heard Jesus say, “Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” Revelation 22:12



Now, let us return to the premise, “the wages of sin is death.” Romans 6:23

There are two types of death mentioned in the Bible, the first and second death. The first is as a result of Adam’s transgression and it is about the graves we can see today in every place. We, for now, cannot escape the first death, unless we are found alive by Christ at His coming. “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Romans 5:12

The second death is the final death and it is carried out by fire and brimstone! Unlike the first death which is “almost” compulsory (because some will be found alive at Jesus coming), the second is by choice! For Jesus saved us from it (Romans 5:19). Happily, it is reserved only for the wicked, the rejecters of His tenacious love, grace and mercy. “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.” Revelation 20:6

Having said all that, we must remember that the first death may well be a punishment for a particular sin in this life, not by default, because all people die. However, to some, in relation to the first death, a voice may be heard from heaven saying: “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.” Revelation 14:13. To others, sadly the Lord says: “As I live . . . I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.” Ezekiel 33:11

When God has done all He can to save, and all the provision for one’s salvation has been ignored, then great darkness comes, and great is that darkness (Matthew 6:23). The process is often gradual. In the language of Paul the apostle, it means God has “given [him] up” or “gives [him] over” (Romans 1:24, 26, 28). This situation is risky because the person is left defenseless and Satan quickly preys upon that person, especially by bringing death before they have an opportunity to repent. Then the destiny of that man is fixed.

Does death solve the sin problem? Actually, in the first place, sin itself is the cause of death. Once indulged, it deadens and removes from man the life-giving force, and then misery comes, with disease—then death results. But death is a tool by which sin is cleared from the world. Sin keeps polluting the world with its contaminating

spree. In his lifeless form the sinner is unable to continue to pursue his sinful acts (Ecclesiastes 9:5–6, 10). The first death, while to the righteous it is only a rest from their labours; regarding the wicked, it is giving the world temporary relief from their contamination. We may safely say that the first death helps to stem the tide of evil but not completely eradicate it. God’s destruction of the people by the flood, the cities of the plain and Eli’s children testify to this fact. Many times in the books of Moses, we read of God saying: “They shall surely be put to death, so shalt thou put evil away from among you.”

The second death, by fire and brimstone, will be the final clearance of sin from the face of the world. Sin is to exist no more. There would be no presence of those who practice it. The fire will not only clear the world of sinful people, but also clear the world itself from the curse of sin that has accumulated for thousands of years.

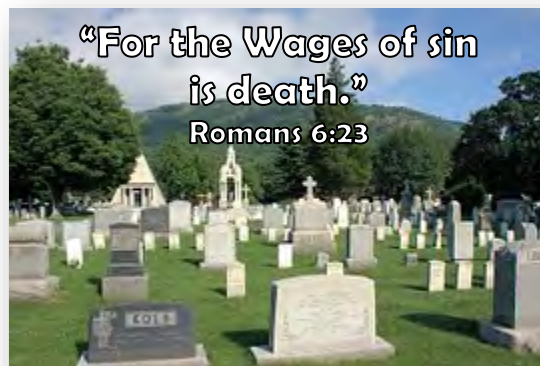
Let us consider that we have not said: “Follow God! Or else He will destroy you!” No, no. We have not said so! Many Bible texts and passages from the testimonies of

the Spirit of Prophecy tell us that God does not compel the conscience. On the contrary, He desires a service of love—A realization of His majesty, goodness, love, and His grace in sustaining us. With such people He listens to their penitent prayers, He pardons; saved in this life will grant them eternal life that will start at the Second Coming of

Christ. The faster we cultivate this intimate love for God, not out of fear for punishment, the faster we will attain His character and be fitted for heaven. We must do it at this time (Hebrews 4:7).

It is definite that by law the sinner must die. By law, the rejecters of God’s mercy and love will have to be punished and this will be by the second death. To our God, the work of destruction is a strange act (Isaiah 28:21). Since all the ways He tried to save have failed, He will act by execution of the sentence as pronounced in the judgment. According to their level of guilt, they suffer punishment in varying duration and intensity, yet all ending in the second death—to be seen no more. Fortunately, grace has been provided to make us separate from sin and its consequences of the second death. We have a choice. We must choose life! Amen.

**Joel Msiska, Malawi.**







# Christmas – A Christian holy day?

*Is Christmas pagan, Christian or just convenient?*

"Christmas is coming," is the note that is sounded throughout our world from east to west and from north to south. With youth, those of mature age, and even the aged, it is a period of general rejoicing, of great gladness. But what is Christmas, that it should demand so much attention?

Christmas is: "The 25th of December, on which the Church celebrates Christ's birth." –*Catholic Dictionary*, p. 161. "Christmas. . . the anniversary of the birth of Christ, and its observance; celebrated by most Protestants and by Roman Catholics on December 25." –*Zondervan's Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, p. 162

Some synonyms: Yule, Noel, Chrissy, Chrimble (Crimble), Crimbo (Chrimbo)

This day has been made much of for centuries. It is accepted by the unbelieving world, and by the Christian world generally, as the day on which Christ was born. When the world at large celebrates the day, do they show honour to Christ?

## IS CHRISTMAS PAGAN, CHRISTIAN OR JUST CONVENIENT?

For the vast majority of Christians, Christmas is a Christian holiday. After all, is it not Jesus' birthday? There are some Christians that recognize that the world has corrupted Christmas, but they still believe that it is a wonderful holiday. For this reason they struggle year after year to "put Christ back into Christmas." This may come as a shocking surprise to some, but there is nothing Christian about most of the festivities which revolve around Christmas. In fact, both in its present observance and in its origin, Christmas is a pagan festival. There is not one word in the Scriptures to tell us the date when Jesus Christ was born, but what is recorded shows that it could not have been on the 25th of December, in the very depth of winter in the northern hemisphere.

"The early Christians did not celebrate [Jesus'] birth because they considered the celebration of anyone's birth to be a pagan custom." –*The World Book Encyclopedia*

## WHY MAKE CHRISTMAS DAY AN ISSUE?

Many still celebrate Christmas despite knowing about its pagan roots and lack of support from the Bible. Such persons could ask: Why should Christians take such an unpopular stance? Why make it an issue?

Modern denominations, that claim to be Christian, observe various holy days in celebration of religious events. These holidays include Christmas, Easter, Lent, and many others. While you may read in the Bible about the events these days are supposed to memorialize, you find nothing written telling us to celebrate these holidays in memory of these events. They have been developed by men over the centuries since the New Testament was written. The purpose of this article is to examine these holy days and see what the Bible says about them and, in particular, Christmas.

Many people observe these days simply from habit. They may be awed or excited by the ritual surrounding Christmas, Easter, or Lent. Their churches celebrate the days, so the members participate without questioning whether or not they truly ought to be part of Christianity. It may never occur to these folks to question where these holidays came from, or whether they are really right.

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith. Prove your own selves." 2 Corinthians 13:5. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil." 1 Thessalonians 5:21–22. The question to be considered is whether these observances are pleasing to God. To please God, religious observances must be authorized in His word. Worship must be in spirit and in truth (John 4:23–24). "But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Matthew 15:9. The question we must consider is whether God has authorized this religious observance (Christmas) or whether it is human in origin.

Jesus commanded that we commemorate His death, not His birth (Luke 22:19–20).

Jesus' apostles and early disciples did not celebrate Christmas. The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* says that "the Nativity

feast was instituted no earlier than 243 [AD],” more than a century after the last of the apostles died. There is no proof that Jesus was born on December 25; His birth date is not recorded in the Bible. Had the Lord deemed this knowledge of His birth essential to our salvation, He would have spoken through His prophets and apostles that we might know all about the matter. But the silence of the Scriptures upon this point evidences to us that it is hidden from us for the wisest purposes.

Christmas is not approved by God because it is rooted in pagan customs and rites. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." 2 Corinthians 6:17

### ORIGIN OF CHRISTMAS

It is well known that the term "Christmas" is derived from the old English word "Christmesse," which means "Christ's Mass." The term originated during the Middle Ages from the practice of having a midnight Mass on the eve of December 25 to celebrate the birth of Christ. In other languages it is called "Nativity" (Latin, *natalis* ) or "Holy Nights" (German, *Weihnachten*).

A "mass" is the Catholic practice of repeating the sacrifice of Jesus in the Lord's supper, so that it becomes Jesus' literal, physical body and blood. However, Jesus was sacrificed only once (Hebrews 9:24–28; 10:8–10, etc.). The bread and fruit of the vine are not His literal body and blood but are memorials of them (1 Corinthians 11:23–26).

"In the East, and later in the West, Christ's birthday was observed on January 6th in connection with His baptism, a day on which the pagan world celebrated the feast of Dionysus, associated with the lengthening of the days. . . . In Rome, December 25th is attested as the day of Christ's birth in 336. It was introduced perhaps by Constantine the Great who evidently chose the day because of the popular pagan feast of the sun." —*Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, p. 117

"The first mention of its observance on December 25 is in the time of Constantine, about A.D. 325." —*Zondervan's Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, p. 162

"Whether or not the birth of our Lord really occurred on this day, ancient authorities are not agreed." —*Catholic Dictionary*, p. 161. Nothing is recorded in the Bible of anyone observing Jesus' birth. If it was in the Bible, we would know that Christians observed it. "The early Christians did not observe the festival of Christ's birth, to which they did not attach the importance ascribed to His death and resurrection." —*Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, p. 117. Clearly, those who observe Christmas religiously are admitting that the Bible does not authorize the practice. It is of later origin.

The practice began as a pagan festival in worship of the sun god, and was adopted by the Catholic church as a memorial

to Jesus' birth. It is a human religious ritual, formed in pagan idolatry and religious apostasy.

The Scriptures are our guide to good works (2 Timothy 3:16–17). These holy days are nowhere found in the Scriptures, so how can they be good works? Since this festivity is not ordained by Scripture, we do not consider it to be binding on believers. We recognize only one holy day, the Sabbath; and we keep it holy in obedience to our Creator and Redeemer.

In Calvin's time you could have been fined or imprisoned for celebrating Christmas. It was at the request of the Westminster Assembly that the English Parliament passed an act forbidding the observance of Christmas in 1644, calling it a heathen holiday. When the Puritans came to America, they passed similar laws. In the year 1620, the early New Englanders made it a point to work steadily through December 25 in "studied neglect" of the day. It was not until the nineteenth century that Christmas had any religious significance in Protestant churches.

### WHY DECEMBER 25?

Long before the onset of Christmas—even before the birth of Christ—a festival was celebrated among pagans at that precise time of the year. Why December 25? At that time of the year when the days began to lengthen again, the Babylonians celebrated the victory of the sun god. The Roman copy of this Babylonian custom was called Saturnalia, the feast of the birth of Sol.



"In the south of Europe, in Egypt and Persia, the sun gods were worshipped with elaborate ceremonies at the season of the winter solstice, as a fitting time to pay tribute to the benign god of plenty. . . . The exact day and year of Christ's birth have never been satisfactorily settled, but when the fathers of the church in A.D. 440 decided upon a date to celebrate the event, they wisely chose the day of the winter solstice which was firmly fixed in the minds of the people and which was their most important festival. . . .

"When missionaries were sent from Rome. . . . their instructions given by Pope Gregory I made clear the policy of the church: 'Let the shrines of idols by no means be destroyed but let the idols which are in them be destroyed. . . . And because they were wont to sacrifice oxen to devils, some celebration should be given in exchange for this. . . . they should celebrate a religious feast and worship God by their feasting, so that still keeping outward pleasures, they may more readily receive spiritual joys.' (Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*.)" —*Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol. 5, p. 643

It was for centuries an abomination to Christians. The celebration was an orgy of pagan revelry. But the Church, instead of standing firm against paganism, began to compromise.



New Christians that came into the church from paganism were used to celebrating this winter solstice. The Church did not want to lose all these new members, so they decided to consider this holiday to be the birth of the Son of God. Instead of losing people back to paganism, the idea was simply to combine the two and gradually win more pagans to profess Christianity. The twenty-fifth of December was at the center of the pagan festival, for it was the day on which Tammuz, the son of the Babylonian Queen of Heaven, Semi-Ramis, was born. History reveals something about the leaders of what was referred to as the Holy Roman Empire. As these men sought to strengthen their political base, they united the worship of the pagans with the worship of the Christians. As you could well imagine, the two were actually at opposite poles in terms of their philosophy. So this uniting of sun worship with Christ worship had to be very subtly and cleverly done so as not to alarm the Christians. Its success is owed to changing the names of the pagan gods and ceremonies and giving them Christian titles and appearance. Hence we have Christmas, Easter, Lent, Sunday worship, and so forth. While Easter and Pentecost have their parallels in Judaism, Christmas was invented later.

Calling Christmas a pagan celebration is only partly true. December 25 was observed as the birthday of Mythras, the god of the soldiers of the Roman legions. Though the timing of Christmas has its origin in a pagan festival, the content does not—the birth of Jesus is spoken of in the Bible.

Within the Christian Church no such festival as “Christmas” was ever heard of until the 3rd century AD and that not until the 4th century did it gain prominence. Christ’s birthday was never once celebrated by the apostles, neither was it ever celebrated by the Christian Church during the first 300 years of its existence. It was only as the Church began to drift away from the Bible and apostolic practices that Christmas began to be observed as a festival. As *McClintock and Strong’s Cyclopedia* states: “The observance of Christmas is not of divine appointment, nor is it of NT [New Testament] origin.”

Instead, an examination of the history of Christmas exposes its roots in pagan religious rites. The Bible shows that we offend God if we try to worship Him in a way that He does not approve of (Exodus 32:5–7). (see *The Reformation Messenger*, vol. 23, Number 8—August 2016, p. 17).

### WAS JESUS BORN IN DECEMBER?

Jesus warned His followers, “But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day.” Matthew 24:20. And if winter was not a fit time to flee, it would not be a fit time for shepherds to lie in their fields

at night watching their sheep, neither a fit time for citizens to be moving to their hometowns to be taxed by the Romans.

Although the Bible does not tell us when Jesus was born, it does give us sound reason to conclude that His birth did not take place in December. Consider the weather conditions at that time of the year in Bethlehem, where Jesus was born. The Jewish month of Chislev (corresponding to November/December) was a month with cold and rainy weather. The month after that was Tebeth (December/January). It saw the lowest temperatures of the year, with occasional snows in the highlands. Let us see what the Bible tells us about the climate of that region.

The Bible writer Ezra shows that Chislev was indeed a month known for cold and rainy weather. After stating that a crowd had gathered in Jerusalem “in the ninth month [Chislev], on the 20th day of the month,” Ezra also reports that people were “shivering . . . because of the heavy rain.” Concerning weather conditions at that time of the year, the congregated people themselves said: “It is the rainy season. It is not possible to stand outside.” (Ezra 10:9, 13; Jeremiah 36:22). No wonder shepherds living in that part of the world made sure that they and their flocks were no longer out of doors at night when December came around!



The Bible reports, however, that shepherds were in the fields tending their flocks on the night of Jesus’ birth. In fact, the Bible writer Luke shows that at that time, shepherds were actually living out of doors and keeping watch in the night over their flocks near Beth-

lehem (Luke 2:8–12), not just strolling outside during the day. They had their flocks in the fields at night. Does that description of outdoor living fit the chilly and rainy weather conditions of Bethlehem in December? No, it does not. So the circumstances surrounding Jesus’ birth indicate that He was not born in December.

### THE CHRISTMAS TREE

What could seem more harmless than the beautiful Christmas tree that lights up the homes during the Christmas season? From ancient times, trees have played an important role in pagan religion and were even worshipped. “Tree worship, common among the pagan Europeans, survived after their conversion to Christianity.” One of the ways in which tree worship survived is in the custom of

“placing a Yule tree at an entrance or inside the house in the midwinter holidays.” —*Encyclopædia Britannica*



Europeans decorated their homes “with lights and evergreens of all kinds” to not only celebrate the winter solstice but also to combat evil spirits. It is therefore common to hear it alleged that Christians adopted and adapted a pagan feast.

Norsemen, Celts, and Saxons used trees to ward off witches, evil spirits, and ghosts. In Egypt, the palm tree was prominent; in Rome, it was the fir. Because of this association, idols were often carefully carved from trees. Jeremiah warned the Old Testament people of God: “Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not.” Jeremiah 10:2–4

#### THE NATIVITY SCENE

Amazingly, even the nativity scene widely regarded as a Christian symbol of Christmas, can be tainted with some pagan influence. Nearly every recorded form of pagan worship which has descended from Babylonian “mysteries” focuses the attention of the worshipper on a mother goddess and the birth of her child. In Babylon it was the worship of the queen of heaven and her son Tammuz, the sun-god who was thought to be the incarnation of the sun. The birth of the sun-god took place at the winter solstice. “Yule” was the Babylonian name for the child or infant and “Yule Day” was celebrated on December 25, long before Christ’s birth. So the next time you see a manger with Mary and Jesus having a halo about their heads, be aware that the influence of the Babylonian “mysteries” rests upon much of society’s art and culture. Christmas is somehow connected with the Roman cult of the Invincible Sun (Latin, *Sol Invictus*), the rebirth of the sun, which was celebrated on December 25. This could explain the importance of lights during the celebration of the Nativity, although “light” is also associated with Christ in the Scriptures (e.g., Luke 1:78–79).

#### AS A CHRISTIAN, WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH THE PAGAN HOLY DAYS?

Will you serve God or man? You cannot serve both! We are told to shun all idolatry and sun worship (Ezekiel 6:4; 8:13–14). God warns that we can become ensnared by following pagan customs and keeping their holy days in like manner as they do. “Take heed to thyself that thou be

not snared by following them. . . and that thou enquire not after their gods. . . . What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.” Deuteronomy 12:30, 32

Prove all things. “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” Isaiah 8:20. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” 2 Timothy 3:16

The Seventh-day Adventist Church Reform Movement (International Missionary Society) does not celebrate Christmas or any other religious festivals throughout the calendar year as holy feasts established by God. The only period in time the Reform Adventists celebrate as holy is the weekly Sabbath (from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset). There is absolutely nothing wrong with selecting any particular time to meditate and reflect on the incarnation of our Saviour, but make sure to keep the Sabbath holy.

Regarding Christmas, we read from the Spirit of Prophecy:

“As the twenty-fifth of December is observed to commemorate the birth of Christ, as the children have been instructed by precept and example that this was indeed a day of gladness and rejoicing, you will find it a difficult matter to pass over this period without giving it some attention. It can be made to serve a very good purpose.

“The youth should be treated very carefully. They should not be left on Christmas to find their own amusement in vanity and pleasure seeking, in amusements which will be detrimental to their spirituality. Parents can control this matter by turning the minds and the offerings of their children to God and His cause and the salvation of souls.” — *The Adventist Home*, p. 478

The Bible encourages us to think for ourselves, to use our power of reason, “that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” Romans 12:1–2. It teaches us to value the truth (John 4:23–24). While we are interested in how others view us, we adhere to Bible principles even if it means that we become unpopular.

“We are nearing the close of another year. Christmas and New Year’s will soon be here. Let us candidly and carefully review our life during the year that is about to pass, with its burden of history, into eternity, and consider the many tokens we have had of the favor of God in the blessings He has bestowed upon us. The most unspeakable gift which God could bestow upon the world was the gift of His beloved Son.” — *The Review and Herald*, December 11, 1888

The only sanction Ellen G. White gave to the use of the Christmas tree is in the following quote. And notice it was



only for the purpose of giving gifts to Jesus, not to one another. It was not decorated as is the custom today, but people were encouraged to hang their monetary offerings to Jesus on the tree.

“On Christmas, so soon to come, let not the parents take the position that an evergreen placed in the church for the amusement of the Sabbath-school scholars is a sin; for it may be made a great blessing. Keep before their minds benevolent objects. In no case should mere amusement be the object of these gatherings. While there may be some who will turn these occasions into seasons of careless levity, and whose minds will not receive the divine impress, to other minds and characters these seasons will be highly beneficial. I am fully satisfied that innocent substitutes can be devised for many gatherings that demoralize.”

“Christmas is coming. May you all have wisdom to make it a precious season. Let the older church members unite, heart and soul, with their children in this innocent amusement and recreation, in devising ways and means to show true respect to Jesus by bringing to Him gifts and offerings. Let every one remember the claims of God. His cause cannot go forward without your aid. Let the gifts you have usually bestowed upon one another be placed in the Lord's treasury. I present before you, my brethren and sisters, an object, the European mission. In every church let your smaller offerings be placed upon your Christmas tree. Let the precious emblem, 'ever green,' suggest the holy work of God and His beneficence to us; and the loving heart-work will be to save other souls who are in darkness. If all, both old and young, will forego giving presents to one another, and forego the selfish outlay of means in these coming holidays, there would be in heaven a most precious record of self-denial for Christ's sake.

“Now, brethren, let us on Christmas make special efforts to come before the Lord with gifts and grateful offerings for the gift of Jesus Christ as a Redeemer to the world. Let nothing now be spent needlessly; but let every penny that can be spared be put out to the exchangers. Satan has had his way in managing these occasions to suit himself. Now let us turn the current heavenward instead of earthward.

Let us show by our offerings that we appreciate the self-denial and sacrifice of Christ in our behalf. Let God be brought to remembrance by every child and parent; and let the offerings, both small and large, be brought to the store-house of God.” – *The Review and Herald*, December 9, 1884

**Victor Shumbusho,  
D R Congo**



# Unity in the Church



Unity in the church is needed among those who profess to be waiting for the second Advent of Christ. On the other hand, Satan is striving with all his power to see that the church of God will not move in one accord. He wants us to be in disunion, thinking that then defeating us may be very easy. Christ, when on this earth, prayed for the disciples, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; That they all may be one; as Thou, Father art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou has sent Me." John 17:20–21

## UNITY IN DIVERSITY

"What kind of unity is spoken of in these words?—Unity in diversity. Our minds do not all run in the same channel, and we have not all been given the same work. God has given to every man his work according to his several ability. There are different kinds of work to be done, and workers of varied capabilities are needed. If our hearts are humble, if we have learned in the school of Christ to be meek and lowly, we may all press together in the narrow path marked out for us." –*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1148

Christ said, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." John 13:34

"Jesus designed that the faith of His people should be one. If one goes forth preaching one thing, and another differing with him preaches something else, how can those who believe through their word be one? There will be difference of sentiments." –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p.

John the beloved disciple admonished, "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." 1 John 4:7-8, 12

"There is among us a very limited amount of real, unselfish love. The Lord says: 'Everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.' 'If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us.'" – *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p.137

Ellen white continued, "In every true disciple this love, like sacred fire, burns on the altar of the heart. It was on the earth that the love of God was revealed through Christ. It is on the earth that His children are to reflect this love through blameless lives. Thus sinners will be led to the cross to behold the Lamb of God." – *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 334

#### LET US STRIVE FOR UNITY

Brethren, what is our position in the world? Are we revealing unselfish love as did God who gave His only begotten Son at the cross of Calvary? Let us think of the depth of God's love, and see if we are revealing it to others.

Christ says, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruits" John 15:1-2

The Apostle Paul said, "For the body is not one member, but many." 1 Corinthians 12:14

"The vine has many branches, but though all the branches are different, they don't quarrel. In diversity there is unity. All the branches obtain their nourishment from one source. This is an illustration of the unity that is to exist among Christ's followers. In their different lines of work they have one head. The same spirit in different ways works through them. There is harmonious action though the gifts differ." – *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1090

If we were all united like they were in the time of the apostles, God would have wrought wonders in us. "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all." Acts 4:32-33

"If the professed followers of Christ would accept God's standard, it would bring them into unity; but so long as human wisdom is exalted above His Holy Word, there

will be divisions and dissension." – *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 124

"Unity existing among the followers of Christ is an evidence that the Father has sent His Son to save sinners. It is a witness to His power; for nothing short of the miraculous power of God can bring human beings with their different temperaments together in harmonious action, their one aim being to speak the truth in love." – *Testimonies for the Church*. Vol. 9, p. 194

"Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth." John 17:17

"When Christ's prayer is fully believed, when its instruction is brought into the daily life of God's people, unity of action will be seen in our ranks. Brother will be bound to brother by the golden bonds of the love of Christ. The Spirit of God alone can bring about this oneness. He who sanctified Himself can sanctify His disciples. United with him, they will be united with one another in the most holy faith. When we strive for this unity as God desires us to strive for it, It will come to us." – *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 243

#### NO NATION IS PERFECT

"That they all maybe one." John 17:21. "The Jewish temple was built of hewn stones quarried out of the mountains; and every stone was fitted for its place in the temple, hewed, polished, and tested before it was brought to Jerusalem. And when all were brought to the ground, the building went together without the sound of ax or hammer. This building represents God's spiritual temple, which is composed of material gathered out of every nation, and tongue, and people, of all grades, high and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned. . . . When completed, this temple will be perfect in all its parts, the admiration of angels and of men; for its Builder and Maker is God." – *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 180

May the Lord help us to humble ourselves before Him, as clay in the hand of the Potter, that we may show unselfish love to all, in Christ Jesus' name. Amen.

#### Jenifer Akello, Uganda







**HEALTH MATTERS:**

## **Cholesterol—The Good And The Bad, Part 2**

In the last article we learned that cholesterol is not only good, but is an essential substance that we need for our health; however, in large amounts it becomes deadly, causing disease and death. To summarize what we learned previously, our bodies need cholesterol for various vital body functions. Our own bodies synthesize all the cholesterol we need; we do not need to get any from our diets. We learned that LDL is known as the “bad” cholesterol, because too much of it is unhealthy. Excess LDL contributes to cholesterol plaques on the blood vessel walls; whereas, HDL is referred to as the “good” cholesterol, because higher levels of this lipoprotein is protective of health. HDL cholesterol absorbs excess LDL cholesterol and carries it back to the liver, which flushes it from the body. Having high levels of HDL can reduce the risk for heart disease and stroke.

Atherosclerosis, the disease in which cholesterol plaques are deposited on the walls of the arteries, narrowing the arteries, is progressive, meaning that it gets worse with time. It can make it more difficult for blood to flow through your heart and body, putting you at increased risk of circulatory problems, heart disease and stroke. Some factors that affect your LDL and HDL levels are uncontrollable, such as family history and age. Cholesterol levels naturally increase as we get older. Some people have a genetic condition that predisposes them to high cholesterol levels. Having high cholesterol does not produce any symptoms in itself. Therefore blood cholesterol levels should be checked regularly through blood tests.

But there are other factors you can control. Diet and lifestyle can affect the amount of fat in our blood and the way it circulates around the body. These risk factors are to blame for up to 90% of all heart attacks from cholesterol build-up. They either increase your total cholesterol level, or affect the ratio of good to bad cholesterol. Not all of these apply to us as health reformers, however knowing all the risk factors can help us when we are counselling

people about their lifestyle habits which could lead to heart disease. These include:

### **GENETIC SUSCEPTIBILITY**

Since our bodies make cholesterol, some people produce more cholesterol than can be safely handled, causing a buildup of fat and plaque in their arteries. This is a genetic condition known as Familial Hypercholesterolemia (FH). It affects 1 in 400 people in the general population. Their genetic condition makes the liver incapable of removing excess LDL. This causes their LDL cholesterol levels to be three to six times higher than normal. Because these cholesterol readings are so excessive and the cause is genetic, lifestyle modifications cannot lower them enough to fall within a safe range.

For the majority of people, there are no symptoms until they have a heart attack. Patients may have bumps [deposits of cholesterol] around the eyes, or bumps on the tendons. A white ring around the cornea of the eye is sometimes seen in patients even under the age of 45. The main symptoms are high cholesterol levels and a family history of high cholesterol. Everyone should have their cholesterol levels tested, even if they are eating a healthy diet, as they may have the inherited form of high cholesterol. Lifetime risk of a heart attack or stroke is 20 times greater for someone with this susceptibility. For women in the age group of 20 to 39, there is 125 times greater risk. Men tend to have heart attacks or strokes 10 years earlier, in their thirties and forties, and women in their fifties and sixties. Since this condition starts at birth, cholesterol is high from day one. By ages 9 to 11, all children should get screened for cholesterol levels. Then if they have the genetic form of high cholesterol, they can institute diet and exercise early on as lifestyle changes. Unfortunately, most times, lifestyle changes alone are not enough and cholesterol levels must be controlled by medication. A diet high in saturated fat or being overweight can also “switch on” certain genes which increase cholesterol levels.

## **AGE/GENDER**

Blood cholesterol begins to rise around age 20 and continues to go up until about age 60 or 65. Before age 50, men's total cholesterol levels tend to be higher than those of women of the same age—after age 50, the opposite happens, as with menopause, women's LDL levels often rise.

## **FATS IN THE DIET**

The American Heart Association reports that eating a diet high in saturated fats can drive up total cholesterol, and increase the amount of LDL cholesterol in the body. For that reason, most nutrition experts recommend limiting saturated fat to under 10% of the daily calories. Saturated fats include fats found in meat, full-fat dairy, butter, and palm oil. However, a handful of recent studies have questioned the link between saturated fat and heart disease. Their conclusion is that there was not enough evidence to conclude that saturated fat increases the risk of heart disease; however they also conclude that replacing saturated fats with healthy fats may reduce the risk of heart disease. Therefore, the consensus still swings towards reducing saturated fats.

Trans fats are the worst offenders and are found in many processed foods. Because the amount of trans fats must be listed on the package's nutrition label, the amount of trans fats in food has greatly decreased. Eating foods rich in trans fats increases the amount of harmful LDL cholesterol in the bloodstream and reduces the amount of beneficial HDL cholesterol. Part of the problem with reducing unhealthy fats, is that people replace those calories with highly processed carbohydrates (sugars).

## **TOBACCO**

Tobacco smoking will raise the levels of LDL "bad" cholesterol and reduce the levels of HDL ("good") cholesterol. Quitting smoking can improve both LDL and HDL levels.

## **EXCESSIVE ALCOHOL**

Both occasional heavy drinkers and regular heavy drinkers have significantly higher levels of LDL cholesterol and significantly lower levels of HDL cholesterol than non-drinkers.

## **HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE**

Long-term exposure to the forces of higher blood pressures can cause damage to the inner lining of arterial blood vessels. The damage can attract the accumulation of cholesterol that can form plaques and clots within the arteries that block blood flow.

## **DIABETES**

Diabetes tends to lower "good" cholesterol lev-

els and raise "bad" cholesterol levels, which increases the risk for heart disease and stroke. This common condition is called diabetic dyslipidemia, which means your cholesterol is going in the wrong direction.

## **OBESITY**

Generally, decreasing saturated fats and cholesterol in one's diet works to decrease cholesterol levels; however, research shows that dietary changes are less effective at improving cholesterol levels in obese people. The body's normal process that adjusts LDL production and removal based on the fats that are consumed does not work. Obesity increases the amount of LDL cholesterol the liver makes. It also decreases removal of LDL cholesterol from the blood. Inflammation throughout the body is a common complication of obesity. This constant inflammation decreases the body's response to changes in dietary fat intake. Insulin resistance, common in obesity, causes changes in the enzymes that the body needs to handle cholesterol normally. The condition is worse in people who have excess fat in the abdominal area.

The eyeball test is sufficient—if someone looks fat, they are fat. Not only do extra pounds make a person more likely to get high cholesterol, they are also more prone to high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes, which affect the lining of the arteries, making them more likely to collect plaque from cholesterol. Losing weight, especially belly fat, raises your good and lowers your bad cholesterol. Gaining body fat will increase blood cholesterol. If body fat decreases, cholesterol will too. Maintaining a healthy weight will balance HDL and LDL levels.

## **STRESS**

Over time, out-of-control stress becomes a problem. Studies have shown that stress increases cholesterol not only in the short-term but can also affect cholesterol levels even years down the road. Other studies have shown that the amount of stress itself is not as important as how an individual reacts to and manages stress. Those who manage stress in unhealthy ways (via hostility, social isolation, or self-blame, for example) tend to have lower levels of HDL (good) cholesterol and higher levels of LDL (bad) cholesterol. The more anger and hostility that stress produces, the higher (and worse) the LDL tends to be. Stress encourages the body to produce more energy, which cause the liver to produce and secrete more of the bad cholesterol, LDL. Also, stress may interfere with the body's ability to remove LDL cholesterol.

## **SEDENTARY LIFESTYLE**

The World Health Organization reports that 60–85% of the population worldwide does not get enough physical activity, making it the fourth leading risk factor for disease and



death. A sedentary lifestyle is a product of increased technology. Not only is the lack of exercise harmful, but the extended periods of time that people sit without moving. Even exercising for 30 minutes a day may not be able to counteract the effects brought on by a lack of activity throughout the rest of the day. Lack of physical activity has shown to increase levels of LDL cholesterol.

### **MEDICAL CONDITIONS**

Some medical conditions and prescribed medicines can affect your cholesterol levels also. In addition to the ones already mentioned, the following are a common cause of unhealthy cholesterol levels and should be looked into and ruled out: underactive thyroid gland (hypothyroid); kidney problems; liver problems. The liver is central to the regulation of cholesterol levels in the body. Not only does it synthesize cholesterol for export to other cells, but it also removes cholesterol from the body by converting it to bile salts and putting it into the bile where it can be eliminated in the feces.

Drugs which most commonly raise cholesterol include some diuretics, steroid hormones, immuno-suppressants, beta blockers and antidepressants. If you are on any of these drugs your doctor will monitor your cholesterol and may have to adjust your treatment to help keep your cholesterol under control. If lifestyle changes are unsuccessful or cholesterol levels are very high, cholesterol-lowering drugs may be prescribed.

### **WHAT YOU CAN DO TO REDUCE CHOLESTEROL LEVELS**

In reviewing the list of risk factors that increase bad cholesterol while decreasing good cholesterol, almost all of these have something in common: you can do something about them. Experts agree that making a conscious effort to reduce your risk factors leads to a lower risk of heart disease from improvements in cholesterol levels.

Estimates state that by the year 2030, 86.3 percent of American adults will be overweight or obese, the prevalence of childhood obesity will double, and one out of every six health care dollars will go toward overweight and obesity-related costs. Exercising for at least 30 minutes most days of the week can help you both lower your LDL levels and increase your HDL levels. In fact, exercise is one of the few ways to actually boost the good HDL cholesterol. More exercise is even better. Being active also helps you reach and keep a healthy weight, which cuts your chance of developing blocked arteries. It is not necessary to exercise for 30 minutes straight. Exercise can be broken up into 10-minute sessions. Aerobic exercise (cardio) such as brisk walking lowers the chance of stroke and heart disease, helps you lose weight, keeps bones strong, and is great for your mood and stress man-

agement. You can be active anywhere. Garden, play with your kids, hike, walk your dog. Even housework goes on the list if it gets your heart rate up. Do as much as possible, as often as you can, wherever your day takes you. To be effective, you should raise a sweat while exercising. Because of the negative effects of sitting for long periods of time, taking short walks frequently during the day is vital. Aim for 10,000 steps per day.

To reduce stress, make it a priority to relax. It can be as simple as taking some slow, deep breaths. You can also meditate, pray, socialize with people you enjoy, and exercise. Attend church and put your trust in God. And if some of the things that stress you out are things you can change, go for it!

You need some fat in your diet, as fats are necessary for many vital functions. However, the type of fat matters. Unsaturated fats -- like those found in olive and safflower oils -- lower LDL "bad" cholesterol levels and may help raise HDL "good" cholesterol. Almonds, pecans, pistachios, walnuts, or other nuts are a tasty treat. They are high in monounsaturated fat, which lowers LDL "bad" cholesterol but leaves HDL "good" cholesterol alone. Studies show that people who eat about an ounce of nuts a day are less likely to get heart disease. Keep the portion small, so you limit fat and calories. Ensure that Omega-3s, found in flaxseed, are a part of your diet. They are a type of fat your body needs; they also help lower levels of LDL cholesterol, slowing the growth of plaque in arteries.

Soluble fiber slows the absorption of cholesterol, and reduces the amount of cholesterol the liver produces. Every 10 grams of fiber per day reduces the risk of dying by 10 percent, Oats, barley, beans, and some fruits and vegetables are all good sources of soluble fiber. Oats and barley especially are rich in a form of soluble fibre called beta glucan. Once eaten, beta glucan forms a gel which helps bind cholesterol in the intestines and prevent it from being absorbed. Filling your diet with fiber-rich foods, such as fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds can help decrease your LDL levels. Fiber binds to cholesterol in the digestive tract and prevents it from entering into the bloodstream. Eating whole grain foods is associated with a 15 to 25% reduction in premature death from all causes. In fact, researchers found that those who ate six or more servings of whole grains a week had less plaque in their arteries than those who ate whole grains less often. Eating three or more serving of whole grains each day means a 30% lower risk of atherosclerotic disease. However, avoid processed carbohydrates which will cause your HDL to take a nose dive. An average American eats 10 to 15 grams of fiber per day. The recommended daily amount is 20–35 grams per day. Load your plate with fruits and vegetables—aim for

five to nine servings each day—to bring down your LDL level. They contain large amounts of fiber. Many of the antioxidants contained in fruits and vegetables also reduce cholesterol levels.

Excess salt intake can raise blood pressure, and increase cholesterol build up in the arteries. Dietary Guidelines state that daily sodium intake should be less than 2,300 mg a day. Numerous studies have shown that vegetarians have lower blood pressure than non-vegetarians. A low-fat, high-fiber vegetarian diet, even without reduced salt intake, can lower blood pressure by as much as 10 percent.

Watch the amount of calories that you consume, to prevent weight gain and higher cholesterol levels. To measure portion sizes, there is a “handy” way to tell. One serving of fresh fruit is about the size of your fist. And a snack of nuts or serving of cooked vegetables, rice, or pasta should fit in your cupped hand.

Overall, a diet to lower cholesterol based on plant foods—grains, beans, vegetables, and fruits—is the best way to keep saturated fat intake low and to avoid cholesterol completely. A vegan diet is free of all animal products and yields the lowest risk of heart disease. Studies show that replacing animal protein with soy protein reduces blood cholesterol levels even when the total amount of fat and saturated fat in the diet remains the same. The special proteins in soy also appear to influence how the body regulates cholesterol. Studies show you can lower your cholesterol by around 6% by including as little as 15g of soy protein per day.

A recent study showed that when participants switched to a strict low-fat vegetarian diet for about two weeks, they lowered their total cholesterol and blood pressure by 11 percent and 6 percent respectively, and men lost an average of 5.5 pounds and women an average of 2.2 pounds.

If you really want to make a dent in your cholesterol, aim for about 90% of your food intake each day to be from vegetables, fruits, beans, whole grains and nuts/seeds. By making significant changes to your diet, you should see at least a modest reduction in your cholesterol levels within 3-4 weeks. It is important to stick to these initial changes and perhaps build on

them in order to keep your cholesterol low. It can take up to 3 or even 6 months to establish new dietary habits. But, over time, you will reduce the risk of diabetes, high blood pressure, and obesity, all which lead to higher cholesterol levels.

Herbs such as ginger, garlic, and curcumin will help with preventing plaque buildup. Ginger can increase circulation and curcumin can block cholesterol from being absorbed by the body.

The following supplements can assist in reducing cholesterol levels: Red rice yeast extract; Omega-3 oils; niacin; plant sterols.

Some experts claim that nearly all people over the age of 40 who are sedentary and eat a Standard American Diet are found to have a significant amount of atherosclerosis in their coronary arteries. In 2007, More than one million coronary angioplasties to open up blocked arteries were performed in the U.S. More than 400,000 coronary bypass operations were performed in the U.S. The cost was more than \$100 billion to combat disease related to high cholesterol. However, even small reductions in LDL and small increases in HDL cholesterol can reduce the risk of heart disease, plaque buildup, and strokes.



We are responsible for obtaining knowledge on how to take care of our physical bodies. We then must choose whether we use that knowledge to improve our health. Much of what we learned about maintaining healthy levels of cholesterol is that it is within our control. Once we have knowledge, we either suffer the consequences of ignoring that knowledge, or we reap the benefits of adhering to that knowledge. The choice is ours. We are not protected from ill health if we choose to ignore God's laws of health. Prayers for healing are only answered by God if we live up to the light that we have on health reform. Each day, knowledge about the human body increases, and we need to keep up with the most current research to have the latest information and then apply it. Missionary work in the closing scenes of earth's history will focus on the health message. Let us all be scholars when it comes to health, not only to save ourselves, but to inform others of God's immutable law, which includes health reform.







# A Light in Darkness



Annie and Max excitedly ran off the school bus that left them in front of their home, not noticing how muddy their boots were getting as they ran through the puddles of rain. It was a very grey and foggy afternoon, and thunder seemed to be approaching.

“Grandpa! Grandpa!” they both shouted as they came in through the door. Mother came out of the kitchen to meet them.

“Mother, mother, will Grandpa still come today?” they both eagerly asked.

“Hello my sweet little peas.” Mother kindly smiled and gave each a kiss. “Unfortunately, he won’t make it this time, it is very difficult for Grandpa to come today; the weather is quite bad and it’s unsafe for Grandpa to drive in these conditions.”

“Oh no!” the children sadly replied, “What will we do now?”

“Well, why don’t we have our prayer and supper, and after I’m sure we will find something to do,” mother said, as she started to make her way to the living room, the children following.

After supper, as Annie and Max helped clear the table, the lights suddenly went out and the house went dark. Annie and Max both gasped.

“Annie! I can’t see anything!” Max cried out.

“Don’t worry, I’m right here, try to hold my hand,” Annie said as she stretched her arm out for Max.

“Oh no,” said mother as she came into the kitchen holding a candle, “seems like there has been a

blackout, it’s a good thing we have candles. Follow me, children, this reminds me of something Jesus once said.”

“Yes!” shouted the children excitedly as they held onto their mother and made their way to the living room.

Mother reached for her Bible as they sat on the floor carpet. She gently opened it to Matthew 5:14–16.

“Listen to this, children,” she said, “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

“So. . . Jesus is comparing us to the light, like the light that’s coming from the candle?” asked Max, scratching his head.

“Yes Max,” answered Annie, “look how nice it is to have light in the darkness, it allows us to see clearly. The same happens when we do good to others, people are able to see Jesus in us and have a clear example of His love.”

“I understand now,” said Max with a smile, “we are to guide others to Jesus just as this light guides us in times of darkness.”

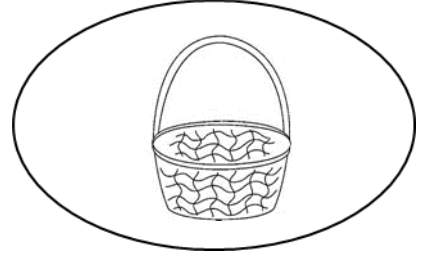
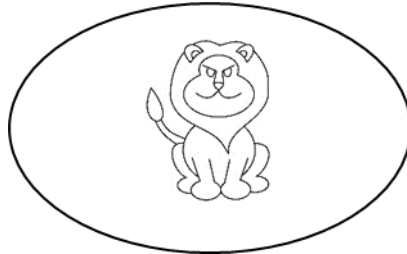
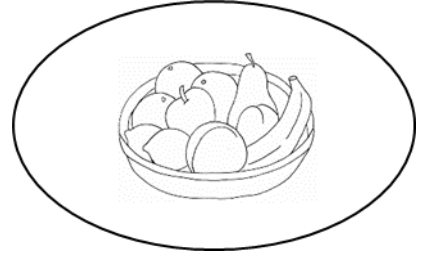
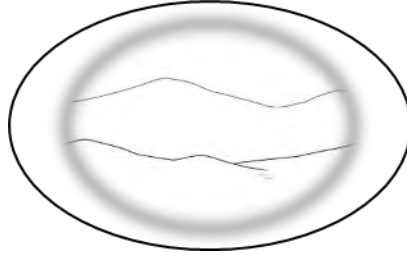
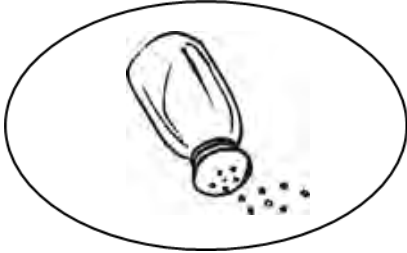
“Exactly,” affirmed mother, and just then, the house lights came back on.

“Hurray!” the children shouted happily.



## Challenge Two

**Activity 1:** Colour in the images that make part of the Bible verse Matthew 5: 14-16



**Activity 2:** Find another Bible verse that mentions us being the light and write it on the following lines:

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**Complete all 15 Challenges**

Send in your answers by email:

veronicoemigarcia@gmail.com

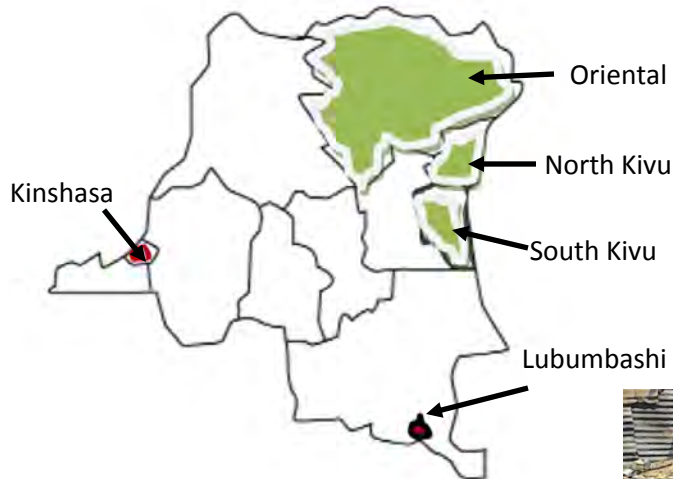
Veronica Garcia

Don't miss Grandpa's  
next visit to Annie and  
Max's home!!





# EXPERIENCES IN EAST CONGO FIELD: GOD'S FLOCK IN NORTH AND SOUTH KIVU



**East Congo Field is composed of three large provinces:**

North Kivu province (provincial capital: Bukavu)  
South Kivu Province (provincial capital: Goma)  
Oriental Province (provincial capital: Kisangani)

The different groups of believers I visited were in Masisi (Katoyi, Muheto, Rubaya), Goma, Nyabiwe, Mudaka

I (Victor Shumbushu) left Lubumbashi on Tuesday August 23, 2016 at 6:00 in the morning. The journey was hard and the road in poor condition. Since it was not safe to travel by night due to the insecurity along the way, we, therefore, travelled only during the day. It took us four days to reach Bukavu.

Right: Panzi Church in Bukavu in North Kivu province.



## South Kivu province

Mudaka church near Bukavu town.



Believers in Goma





## Masisi - Katoyi



Katoyi is a well known village about 385 km from Coma. We have four baptized members and one young man ready for baptism. They are few in number, but strong in the Lord.

Sabbath Services (left): This is their place of worship since they have no house of worship



Believers from different places in Masisi came together here. It was a blessed Sabbath in Katoyi village.

In every church and group, (Bukavu- Mudaka, Goma , Masisi and Nyabibwe) a seminar was conducted.

The following subjects were discussed in the seminar:

Authenticity of God's church (the church in prophecy, its origin and fundamental doctrines, the Ten Commandments, the pillars of the faith, etc.)

Unity in the family and the church (Sanctity of marriage, proper family relationships)

Proper Christian behaviour and attitude

Evangelism and Missionary work: "let one win one"

## Nyabibwe – a new group

Nyabibwe is between Goma and Bukavu. (100 km away from Bukavu

and 100 km from Goma).



In Nyabibwe, we also participated in the Lord's Supper with the two new souls who were just baptized.



The baptismal ceremony took place in the clear waters of Kivu Lake. Two candidates who, were happy to be added to God's flock by baptism after giving their baptismal vows, were Brother Kamungo Chimorho and Sister Stephania (66 years old)

We were with several leading brethren to strengthen that new group. The Baptism and Lord's Supper was officiated by Brother Floribert, Vice President of the East Congo Field. We shared wonderful fellowship and enjoyed much friendliness and happiness.



# North Malawi Field conference 2016



## Uganda



**Above and Above right:  
IMS Ramah Teaching staff,  
and their children**

**Left and Right:  
Church members of  
Rushango IMS,  
Uganda celebrating  
the Lord's Supper**





# Western Canadian Field Conference, October 2016



## Togo



## New Members in Western Canada



## Cameroon





# AUTUMN

Awake! and see the time of day,  
And gird thyself in haste;  
For harvest time is fleeting now,  
No precious moments waste.  
Contentment's sun has dulled thy sight,  
And drowsiness crept in,  
And idleness has spun the cord  
That kept thee bound in sin.  
For see you not the grain is ripe,  
And gold and brown the leaves?  
O shake off sleep, and do thy part  
In bringing in the sheaves;  
For soon the Master of the field  
Will come to claim His own,  
And those who in the harvest toiled  
Shall wear the glorious crown.  
Then let us up, and watch with prayer  
And work while yet 'tis day;  
For when the grain is gathered home,  
The chaff will burn away.

*Gertrude Dorsey*

*—The Review and Herald, October 8, 1895*