

## Sabbath School Lesson #2 – The Central Issue: Love or Selfishness? – 6-12 April 2024

**C**hrist is with us, for the Lord said through Isaiah, “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness” (Isaiah 41:10). We may be sure that Christ is with us, for He says, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Hebrews 13:5).

**Sunday: A Broken-hearted Saviour** – Read Matthew 24:15–20. How does Jesus’ instruction to His disciples to save them from the coming destruction of Jerusalem apply to us as Seventh-day Adventists? The Roman armies came to Jerusalem in AD66, and they compassed around Jerusalem. For some reasons, they withdraw, which made it possible for God’s people to flee. The Judean Christians who heeded what Christ had said, left the city and went to live in the country. In AD70 the Romans returned and destroyed the city. “Not one Christian perished in the destruction of Jerusalem. Christ had given His disciples warning, and all who believed His words watched for the promised sign” {GC 30.2}. “As the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman armies was the signal for flight to the Judean Christians, so the assumption of power on the part of our nation in the decree enforcing the papal sabbath will be a warning to us. It will then be time to leave the large cities, preparatory to leaving the smaller ones for retired homes in secluded places among the mountains” – EG White, 1885 {T32 220.3}. The United States, a lamb-like beast (Revelation 13:11), is to pass a national Sunday Law in honour of the Papacy, a leopard-like beast (Revelation 13:2). An attempt to pass a Sunday Law in the United States was made in 1888 when “senator HW Blair, of New Hampshire, introduced into the United States congress a Bill that, if passed, would have enforced in all federal territories the observance of Sunday as a day of worship” {3BIO 376.4}. Just less than a year after the 1888 Sunday Bill failed, in 1889, Ellen White wrote: “prophecy represents Protestantism as having lamb-like horns, but speaking like a dragon. Already we are beginning to hear the voice of the dragon. There is a satanic force propelling the Sunday movement, but it is concealed” {RH, January 1, 1889 par. 4}. Prior to the failed 1888 Sunday Bill there had been State ‘blue laws’ (Sunday closing laws), to which the United States Supreme Court in *Hennington v Georgia* (163 US 299, 1896) affirmed and gave some ‘teeth’ to future Sunday Law. Less than a year after the Supreme Court gave some ‘teeth’ to Sunday ‘blue’ laws, in 1897, Ellen White wrote: “the protestant world have set up an idol sabbath in the place where God’s Sabbath should be, and they are treading in the footsteps of the Papacy. For this reason I see the necessity of the people of God moving out of the cities into retired country places” {12LtMs, Lt 90, 1897, par. 16}. In the disciples’ time, Rome “set up idolatrous standards” in AD66 which was to the disciples a signal to leave the city, after 1888 when the protestant world honouring Rome “set up an idol sabbath” that was a signal for us to leave the cities. For the disciples: “When the idolatrous standards of the Romans should be set up in the holy ground, which extended some furlongs outside the city walls, then the followers of Christ were to find safety in flight” {GC 25.4}. For Adventists: “The protestant world have set up an idol sabbath in the place where God’s Sabbath should be, and they are treading in the footsteps of the Papacy. For this reason I see the necessity of the people of God moving out of the cities into retired country places” {12LtMs, Lt 90, 1897, par. 16}. At Sunday Law, it will be too late to leave the cities: “But ere long there will be such strife and confusion in the cities that those who wish to leave them will not be able. We must be preparing for these issues. This is the light that is given me” {GCB April 6, 1903}.

**Monday: Christians Providentially Preserved** – Did all the true Christians heed the sign to leave the city in AD66 before it was destroyed in AD70? When the Christians saw the AD66 sign, they did not dismiss it as not actual destruction, they flee from the city: “Not one Christian perished in the destruction of Jerusalem” {GC 30.2}. The presumptuous Jews who waited for the desolation of the city to come in AD70, perished in the city: “Terrible were the calamities that fell upon Jerusalem when the siege was resumed by Titus” {GC 30.2}. Is there more evidence that the failed 1888 Sunday Bill was equivalent to the AD66, such as a call for Adventists to leave the cities? Here is a chronology of calls for true Seventh-day Adventists to leave the cities, as given by Ellen White: In 1897, “I see the necessity of the people of God moving out of the cities” {12LtMs, Lt 90, 1897, par. 16}; In 1898, “Get out of

the cities as soon as possible" {13LtMs, Lt 58, 1898, par. 17}; In 1899: "As God's commandment-keeping people, we must leave the cities. As did Enoch, we must work in the cities, but not dwell in them" {14LtMs, Ms 85, 1899, par. 21}; In 1900, "I was pleading with some families to avail themselves of God's appointed means, and get away from the cities to save their children" {RH December 11, 1900, Art. B, par. 10}; In 1901, "It is a mistake to call families into the city where children and youth breathe an atmosphere of corruption and crime, sin and violence, intemperance and ungodliness" {16LtMs, Ms 67, 1901, par. 23}; In 1902, "Leave the cities, and like Enoch come from your retirement to warn the people of the cities" {17LtMs, Lt 182, 1902, par. 2}, "The cities are to be worked from outposts. Said the messenger of God, 'Shall not the cities be warned? Yes; not by God's people living in them, but by their visiting them, to warn them of what is coming upon the earth'." {par. 15}; In 1903, "Keep out of the cities" {GCB April 6, 1903, p 87.12}; In 1904, "Get out of the cities into rural districts, where the houses are not crowded closely together, and where you will be free from the interference of enemies" {19LtMs, Lt 5, 1904, par. 3}; In 1905, "The Lord has sent us warning and counsel to get out of the cities" {20LTMs, Ms 78, 1905, par. 6}; In 1906, "Out of the cities; out of the cities!" {RH July 5, 1906, par. 10}, "Out of the cities, is my message at this time" {21LtMs, Lt 158, 1906, par. 1}, "Be assured that the call is for our people to locate miles away from the large cities" {21LtMs, Lt 158, 1906, par. 2}, "The Lord calls for His people to locate away from the cities" {21LtMs, .... par. 3}; In 1907, "Move out of the cities" {22LtMs, Lt 26, 1907, par. 2}; In 1908, "Out of the cities" {23LtMs, Ms 85, 1908, par. 16}.

**Tuesday: Faithful Amid Persecution** – What can we learn from the early church that could help us, the end-time church? When persecution comes, if not already, we should see it as providence for spreading the truth. Because of persecution the believers at Jerusalem "were scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria" (Acts 8:1). In thus scattering they only obeyed the injunction of the Master, "But when they persecute you in this city, flee into another" (Matthew 10:23). Their religious principles would not allow them to resist, and nothing would be gained for the cause of God if they should remain and submit to a wholesale massacre. We can see the hand of providence in allowing this persecution, for it was the means of spreading the truth throughout all the regions. Their persecutions did not quench their love of the truth. The wicked Jews thought to root out the hated religion of Jesus, but instead of that they caused the seed to be sown broadcast. Thus, persecution did only prove that man "can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth" (2 Corinthians 13:8).

**Wednesday: Caring for the Community** – How can we, like the early church, follow the example that, "Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people" (Matthew 4:23)? "In every sense of the word Christ was a medical missionary" {RH July 23, 1914, par. 8}. "The day of the Lord's reckoning is approaching. Seventh-day Adventists are not to colonize. We are to work as Jesus has given us an example" {MTC 146.2}. Jesus healed by miracles, but "God's servants today could not work by means of miracles, because spurious works of healing, claiming to be divine, will be wrought" {19LtMs, Lt 53, 1904, par. 11}; "He has commissioned us to carry forward the medical missionary work that he began; and in this work we are to do our very best. Institutions for the care of the sick are to be established, where men and women may be placed under the care of God-fearing medical missionaries, and be treated without drugs" {RH March 23, 1905, par. 6}. We note that, "It is the Lord's purpose that His method of healing without drugs shall be brought into prominence in every large city through our medical institutions" {20LtMs, Lt 203, 1905}.

**Thursday: A Legacy of Love** – How can we be united in love? By the life of God in us. "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5:11-12). God's life of keeps us separate from the world. "If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight? Is it not in that Thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and Thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth" (Exodus 33:15-66). "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). The love of God shed abroad in the heart by His Spirit, is a mark that cannot be successfully counterfeited.