

Explaining God's Special Messages



SABBATH—NOVEMBER 14

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Matthew 5:17–48; Isaiah 65:17–20; 1 Corinthians 16:20; Genesis 3:1–5; Matthew 4:1–11; Luke 10:25–28; Luke 4:16–30; Luke 24:25–27, 44–49.

MEMORY VERSE: “Jesus then began to explain to them what Moses and all God’s prophets [messengers] had taught. He [Jesus] showed them what they wrote in the Bible about himself” (Luke 24:27, EASY).



Jesus helped His two followers correctly understand these special messages.

AFTER JESUS WOKE UP FROM THE DEAD, He appeared to two of His followers. They were sad because they didn’t expect Jesus to die. They said, “ ‘But before that we had hoped that he would save the people of Israel. We hoped that he would make us free again’ ” (Luke 24:21, EASY). The followers expected the Messiah to come save the Jews from the Romans. Their ideas came from a false understanding of special messages about the Savior in the Old Testament.

Jesus helped His two followers correctly understand these special messages. He also explained to them other Bible truth about Himself (Luke 24:25–27). Jesus’ explanation of the Old Testament helped them understand. They got excited when they finally understood these Bible truths about Jesus (Luke 24:31, 32). Later, Jesus appeared to a big group of His followers in Jerusalem. Jesus helped them to understand the special messages about Himself, too (Luke 24:45; also read Luke 24:33, 36, 44–49).

These experiences teach us why we must have a correct understanding of Bible truth. A false understanding can cause spiritual disaster in our lives.

THE BIBLE EXPLAINS ITSELF (Matthew 5:17–48)

How we explain the Bible depends on what we believe about it. Some people think the Bible is a collection of old writings. They don't think these writings agree. Other people believe that "everything that is written in the Bible comes from God's Spirit. It helps us in many ways. The Bible teaches us what is true. It warns us when we are doing wrong things. It shows us what is right. It teaches us how to live good lives" (2 Timothy 3:16, EASY).

Read Matthew 5:17–48. How did Jesus explain the Old Testament teachings in these verses?

Some people may think that Jesus was replacing the Old Testament teachings with new ones. But if we read the verses carefully, we see that Jesus helps us understand the Old Testament teachings more fully. Jesus does what Jeremiah promised the Savior would do (Jeremiah 31:31–33). Jesus puts God's law in the minds and hearts of His people (compare with Hebrews 8:8–10; Hebrews 10:16).

Sometimes the Bible explains a dream or message right away. In Daniel 2, we read about the dream that King Nebuchadnezzar had (Daniel 2:31–35). Then we read Daniel's explanation of the dream (Daniel 2:36–45). Also, in Matthew 13, we read the picture story about the farmer (Matthew 13:1–9). Then Jesus explains that picture-story in Matthew 13:18–23).

Sometimes God gave a message about something many years before it happened. Later, another messenger explained the message. We see that happen in 2 Chronicles 36:22, 23. In these verses, we learn that God kept His promise about the 70 years, just as Jeremiah said He would (Jeremiah 25:11, 12; Jeremiah 29:10). In the same way, a lot of Old Testament symbols show us the things Jesus came to do. The messengers in the New Testament explain these symbols.

"The Old Testament uses symbols to show us God's promises about Jesus. The New Testament shows us how God kept these promises. Both testaments are important."—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 2, page 104, adapted.

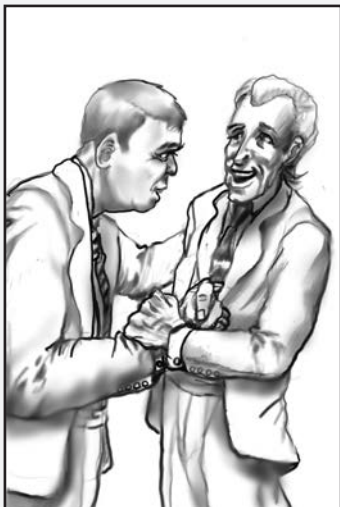
Do you believe that the Bible is God's Written Word? Why is your answer so important when you are studying the Bible? Why must we trust that the Bible is God's Word?



In Daniel 2, we read about the dream that King Nebuchadnezzar had (Daniel 2:31-35). Then we read Daniel's explanation of the dream (Daniel 2:36-45).

HOW HISTORY HELPS US UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE (Isaiah 65:17–20)

In Isaiah 65:17–20, we read about the new heavens and earth. What does Isaiah mean when he says that “the child will die one hundred years old” there (Isaiah 65:20, WEB)?



Paul helps us to understand that Christians must greet each other warmly.

Is Isaiah really saying that there will be death and sinners in heaven and on the new earth? Of course not! This idea goes against the promise in Isaiah that God will wake up His people from the dead (Isaiah 26:19). This idea also goes against the promise that there won't be any more death or sorrow (Isaiah 25:8; Isaiah 65:19).

So, then, how should we understand Isaiah 65:20? First, we must understand that Isaiah is using symbols. When did you see a 100-year-old child? Never, right? Second, Isaiah also uses the beautiful language of poems to help us understand the blessings God will give Israel. But Israel must obey God to get these blessings (compare with Deuteronomy 28). Isaiah does the same thing that Jesus does in Matthew 24. Jesus connected things that were happening in His day with things that would happen later. In Isaiah 65:17–20, Isaiah explains that the things happening in his time showed the things that will happen in the new heavens and new earth.

In the book of Isaiah, the new life is not something that happens only in the future. Isaiah 65:20 announces that God is already destroying death. God makes us new, right here and now. He saves us and forgives us. God also promises us long life and no more death (Isaiah 65:20). These promises show us the wonderful things to come.

Read 1 Corinthians 16:20. What does Paul say to do in this verse? How do we follow this advice today?

In New Testament times, close friends and family greeted each other with a kiss. Paul tells Christians to greet each other this way, too (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; and 1 Thessalonians 5:26). Paul helps us to understand that Christians must greet each other warmly. They must make each other feel welcome and part of the family of God. In some countries today, kissing is not an accepted greeting. But a handshake, a hug, or a bow would be fine. The important idea is that Paul wants us to make church members feel accepted and loved whenever we meet and get together.

**THE WORDS AROUND A WORD OR BIBLE VERSE
(Genesis 3:1–5)**

Preachers tell the story about a man who suffered deeply. The man wanted to know God's plan for his life. So, the man opened his Bible and put his finger on a verse. He read: "So Judas took the money and he threw it down on the floor in the temple. Then he went away. He hung himself from a rope so that he died" (Matthew 27:5, EASY). The sad man was surprised. Did God really want him to hang himself? The man opened the Bible again to be sure. He then read, "Jesus said to him, 'Then go and do the same thing he did!'" (Luke 10:37, ICB). For sure, both verses are Bible truth, but they are talking about separate things. We need to understand the stories and chapters connected to the verses we are studying. Then we can better understand the real meaning of those verses.

Many people don't understand the Bible because they do what the very sad man did. They try to understand a verse without carefully studying the words around it. If we don't study those words, we can't understand the Bible correctly.

Read Satan's words in Genesis 3:1–5 and Matthew 4:1–11. How did Satan give God's words a wrong meaning?

Some people teach false ideas about the Bible because they really don't know any better. Other people know Bible truth. But they teach false ideas, the same as Satan did. In the Garden of Eden, Satan came to Eve as a beautiful talking snake! (Compare Genesis 3:1–5 with Revelation 12:9.) Satan gave God's words a false meaning.

When the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert (Matthew 4:1–11; Luke 4:1–13), "Satan came to trick Jesus. Satan pretended to be an angel from heaven."—Ellen G. White, in *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, December 18, 1888, adapted. In Satan's conversation with Jesus, Satan changed the meaning of God's words in Psalm 91:11, 12. Satan told Jesus that God would protect people who put their own lives in danger. As we can see, Satan tried to make these verses say something that God didn't promise.

If we want to understand a word or a verse, we must first try to understand the verses around it. We also must try to understand the story or chapter it comes from. Why is this advice so important?



In Satan's conversation with Jesus, Satan changed the meaning of God's words in Psalm 91:11, 12.

THE MEANING OF THE VERSE (Luke 10:25–28)



The Bible is the same as an endless treasure. It always has something new to teach us.

Every Christian should understand the Bible. The Bible is plain and simple enough so that each person can understand God's plan to save us. At the same time, the Bible is deep enough to interest the minds of the most intelligent people. The Bible is the same as an endless treasure. It always has something new to teach us.

Read the story about Jesus and the lawyer in Luke 10:25–28. Some people say that the Bible doesn't need to be explained. If that is so, why does Jesus ask the lawyer, "What is written in the law? What do you understand from it?" (Luke 10:26, ERV).

If we want to understand a verse, we should first try to understand what the words in the verse mean. Then we should try to understand how the words are used. What can we learn from ancient history to help us understand the verse? What symbols does the writer use, if any? The understanding we come to should agree with accepted Bible truth. When we compare different verses about the same idea or story, we will better understand the Bible. An easy way to learn how to do that is to compare the Gospels. The Gospels are the first four books of the New Testament.

Compare Matthew 5:43–48 with Luke 6:27–36. How do these verses help us better understand the meaning of the word "perfect" (ERV) in Matthew 5:48?

If we want to understand the Bible, we must empty our hearts of all pride. We also must study the Bible very carefully. Remember, no one owns truth. We all need the Holy Spirit's help to understand it. We always should try to come to a correct understanding of Bible truth. To do that, follow this important rule: start your study with what you understand. Then build from that. Over time, this study plan will help us understand things that might not be so easy right now. Until we get to heaven, we will always have questions about the Bible that we can't answer.

Think of a time when you were bothered by something you didn't understand. Later, you got an explanation that helped. How can that experience help you trust God with the things in the Bible that, for now, you don't understand?

EXPLAINING THE BIBLE (Luke 4:16–30)

When we study the Bible, we should pray for two things: (1) personal spiritual growth and (2) the Holy Spirit's help to lead other people to Jesus. Jesus said that a real Christian lives under the control of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promises us that the Holy Spirit “will help you to understand everything that is true” (John 16:13, EASY). Jesus also said, “Man must not live only on bread. He must also live on every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4, NIV). Jesus' followers also honor His command to teach other people “to obey everything that I have taught you” (Matthew 28:20, EASY).

Read Luke 4:16–30 and Luke 24:25–27, 44–49. What do these verses teach about how Jesus explained the Bible?

Jesus was, is, and always will be “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6, ERV). Jesus' teachings came from the Bible. Mark 1:14, 15 is an example. Mark writes, “After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee. He preached the good news of [about] God. ‘The time has come,’ he said. ‘The kingdom of God has come near’” (NIV). What time is Jesus talking about? Jesus is talking about the time in Daniel 9:24–27. In the sermon on the mountain (Matthew 5–7), Jesus uses quotes from Exodus 20:13, 14 (Matthew 5:21, 27). In Luke 4, Jesus uses quotes from Isaiah 61:1, 2. So, we see that Jesus preaches Bible truth.

In another example, Acts 8 says that a man from Ethiopia traveled “home from Jerusalem. He had been there to worship God” (Acts 8:27, EASY). This information tells us the man knew about the Jewish religion. He even owned a copy of Isaiah's book. The man read it on his way home. But he didn't understand the message about the suffering Savior. The man needed Philip to explain it to him.

This experience teaches us important lessons. First, just because we read a chapter doesn't mean we will always understand it. Second, we can learn from each other. Third, we must share what we know with others. Philip's knowledge about the Bible helped the Ethiopian man get baptized (Acts 8:35–39; compare with Psalm 51:12). Our understanding about the Bible can help people accept Jesus, too (John 17:17).

At times, we may need help understanding the Bible. But why must we know for ourselves what we believe?



Philip's knowledge about the Bible helped the Ethiopian man get baptized (Acts 8:35–39; compare with Psalm 51:12).

READING THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN G. WHITE

How should we read and understand the writings of Ellen G. White? Here are a few rules to help us:

First, start with prayer. Don't read her work with a spirit of doubt. How we think or feel has the power to change what we read, see, or hear. So, the Holy Spirit must control our thinking. As Ellen White said, "If you study the Bible to find proof for your own ideas, you will never learn Bible truth. Study the Bible to learn what the Lord says."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 112, adapted.

Second, make sure you understand fully what you read. Don't take a sentence or part of a paragraph by itself and try to understand it without studying the paragraph or whole chapter it came from. Ellen White wrote, "We must understand when and where something was written. Time and place are important."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, page 57, adapted. Sad to say, some people don't take the time to understand this rule when they read the writings of Ellen White. This problem has caused no end of trouble for some church members.

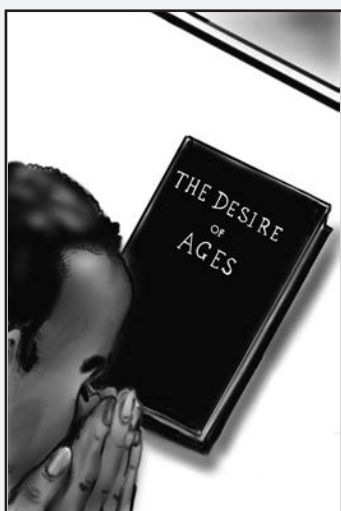
Third, ask yourself: "What important Bible truth or rule does she talk about in the work I am reading?" Here's an example: in 1894, Ellen White wrote to church members in Battle Creek, Michigan. She told them not to buy bicycles (read *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 8, pages 50–53). Ellen White wanted church members to follow an important Bible rule. She wanted them to be good managers of their money. (Back then, bicycles were very expensive.)

Fourth, study everything Ellen White wrote on a topic. Some things she wrote are hard to understand. Her teachings will help you understand her more difficult ideas.

Finally, many people say that Ellen White said things she never said. So, make sure that she really said it. What is the best way to do that? Look for the name of the book that an Ellen White quote comes from. Make sure the quote is really from there. When you see that it is, then you may use the rules above to study and understand her words.

God gave us a wonderful gift in the writings of Ellen G. White. We must follow the above rules to read her writings wisely. Her writings are a blessing to millions of people worldwide. So, we must not use them in the wrong way.

To learn more, visit <https://whiteestate.org/absg/8>.



How should we read and understand the writings of Ellen G. White?
First, start with prayer.

LIGHTING THE FLAME

At the end of the 1800s, the Seventh-day Adventist Church suffered hard times. Many of the church's first Bible workers died. Members fought with each other about Bible truths. Buildings burned down. At the same time, new leaders started to serve. One of these leaders was Elmer Ellsworth Andross.

Andross was born in 1868, in Minnesota. Andross wanted to work for the government. He wanted to make a lot of money and be famous, too. So, he chose to become a lawyer. But then his plans changed. He became a Bible worker. He accepted an invitation in 1899 to share the Seventh-day Adventist message in England. The Foreign Mission Group couldn't promise to support Andross. But Andross and his wife, Sophie, decided to trust God. The Androsses arrived in Liverpool, England, full of hope.

In Liverpool, Andross helped start a new church of about 40 members. In the spring of 1900, Andross preached in the Midlands. Soon after, he preached in Birmingham. At the end of July, the church had 16 new Sabbath keepers. More people were interested in joining the church. In October, Andross was filled with joy. He said, "About 30 people promised to keep the Sabbath. . . . I never saw people who enjoyed Bible truth more! For sure, God's angels went before us and touched people's hearts. The angels got them ready to accept our message."

In 1902, Andross became the president of a group of churches in North England. Under Andross's leadership, the members in North England nearly doubled. The number of churches grew from six to 17.

In 1905, Andross became the president of the British Union. As president, Andross helped the church save a lot of money. Andross announced that soon the church wouldn't need money from the General Conference anymore. Andross started the Stanborough Park headquarters in 1907. He also helped start the church's work in printing, education, and health work. Andross was president of the British Union for three years. During this time, church membership grew 42%. The number of churches also grew, from 31 to 52 churches.

In 1908, sickness forced Andross and his family to go back to the United States. But Andross's work in England continued to grow. Elmer E. Andross was more than a church leader. He was a Bible worker with a pastor's heart. His years in England show how one man's faith can change history. Because of Andross, the Seventh-day Adventist message became the same as a bright flame. This flame continues to shine to this day.

This story is adapted from the Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists, available at encyclopedia.adventist.org.

INSIDE Story



**"For sure, God's angels
went before us and
touched people's hearts."**