

God's Messengers: Serving Him at Important Times in History



SABBATH—DECEMBER 5

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Hebrews 11:7; Judges 4:4–16; Judges 2:16–19; Isaiah 59:1–4; Revelation 1:1–3.

MEMORY VERSE: “Before the Lord God decides to send trouble, he first tells his prophets [messengers] about it” (Amos 3:7, EASY).

SINCE ADAM AND EVE SINNED, our hearts want to do evil. Without Jesus' help, we would choose sin and pleasure over everlasting life. God knows this sad truth about us. But He loves us anyway. He works to save us from ourselves.

That's why the Lord sends His messengers to help His people at important times in history. Sad to say, God's people rejected His offer of help again and again. So, God sent them warnings that He would punish them.

God always communicates His plans to His messengers before He acts or does anything (Amos 3:7). If people confess their sins, God is ready to forgive.

God continues to communicate with us in the same way today. Just as God had messages for His people in the past, He has messages for us today.

In this week's lesson, we will look at important times in Bible history when God used His messengers to share His plans with His church and with other people worldwide. We also will talk about the work of Ellen G. White. We will look at how she served God at important times in the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.



Since Adam and Eve sinned, our hearts want to do evil.

A WARNING ABOUT COMING DISASTER (Hebrews 11:7)

God wants to save us. Even after Adam and Eve sinned, God wanted to heal His relationship with them. After the Fall, the people on the earth followed God for a time (Genesis 4:26). But as time passed, very few people followed God. God's loyal followers praised Him for His love. They also warned the people around them about God's punishment for sin.

By Noah's time, the people on the earth were very evil. So, God chose to destroy them (Genesis 6:5–7). "Noah preached about the right way to live" (2 Peter 2:5, NlrV). Noah warned everyone who would pay attention to him about the coming Flood. God told Noah to build a lifeboat (the ark) to save everyone who believed the warnings.

Read Hebrews 11:7; 2 Peter 2:5; and Genesis 6:9. In what ways did Noah preach "about the right way to live" (2 Peter 2:5, NlrV)?

The Flood was an important happening in human history. The Flood shows us what happens when evil controls the human heart. The Flood also shows us God's love and forgiveness. God punished sinners with the Flood. He saved everyone who accepted His invitation to enter the ark.

"The people on the earth were very evil. Methuselah, Noah, and many other people believed in God. They stood against the evil of their time. 120 years before the Flood, the Lord sent a holy angel to Noah. The angel told Noah to build a boat. The angel told Noah to preach, too. Noah must warn everyone that God would destroy evil people with a Flood. The people who believed the message must get ready for what was coming. They must stop sinning. They must change their lives for the better. They must ask God for forgiveness. Then God would save them."—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 92, adapted.

God told Noah about the Flood and saved him and his family. God also made a promise with Noah and all living things on the earth. God promised never to destroy the earth again with water (Genesis 9:8–17). Every rainbow helps us remember this promise. The rainbow also gives us hope that God will save us.

Next time you see a rainbow, think about the promise God gave to Noah. Why should this promise give you hope?



God punished sinners with the Flood. He saved everyone who accepted His invitation to enter the ark.

A MOTHER IN ISRAEL (Judges 4:4–16)

After God led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt, He gave them the land of Canaan. God promised to bless His people very much. But they must promise to obey His law. God warned the Israelites about breaking their promise. If they did, they would suffer and be destroyed (Deuteronomy 27–30). After Joshua died, the Israelites stopped following God. Soon the people from nearby countries started to fight against the Israelites and hurt them. The Israelites cried to God for help. God sent judges to His people to save them from their enemies (Judges 2:16). God also sent His messengers to encourage the Israelites to be loyal to God.

Read Judges 4:4–16 and Judges 5:1–5. What did Deborah do for Israel?

Deborah had an important part in Israel's history. Deborah shared God's message with Israel and Barak. Barak was the leader of Israel's army. Deborah gave Barak the signal to start the battle: "Then Deborah said to Barak, 'Get ready! This [today] is the day that the LORD will put Sisera under your power [control]! The LORD will lead you into battle!' " (Judges 4:14, EASY).

Deborah was an important leader in Israel. Her leadership and faith in God's promise to fight for Israel gave the people hope and the courage to fight. Barak was a skilled war commander. But his skill wasn't the thing that helped Israel win. At first, he was afraid to lead Israel's army. But then Deborah promised to go with him.

The story of Deborah and Barak teaches us an important lesson about success. Together, Deborah and Barak led Israel into battle. After they won, Deborah and Barak invited everyone to join them in praising God. That's what real leaders do when they win. They give God all the praise and honor for their success.

Deborah's work as God's messenger shows His love for us in times of suffering. When God gave Deborah the message for Barak, she didn't question how they would win. She didn't argue that the Israelites were too weak to win. Deborah believed God's promise and encouraged Barak to trust in Him, too.

How can we learn to trust God when things don't always look encouraging or fill us with hope?



Together, Deborah and Barak led Israel into battle.

COMING BACK TO GOD (JUDGES 2:16–19)

Read Judges 2:16–19. What is happening in these verses? What do the Israelites keep doing again and again?

Soon the time of the judges ended. Then Israel wanted a king (1 Samuel 8). God's people needed His messengers more than ever at this time. The messengers gave advice to the king, the leaders, and the people.

During King Ahab's time, Israel stopped following God and started worshiping the Baals (1 King 18:18). So, God sent Elijah with a special message: there would be no rain. But Ahab didn't stop worshiping false gods. He hunted for Elijah to kill him. But God kept Elijah safe (1 Kings 18:10–12). During the third year of the food shortage, Elijah went to talk to the king. Ahab blamed him because there was no rain (1 Kings 18:17).

Read Elijah's announcement to Israel. How did Israel answer? What happened? Read 1 Kings 18:21, 38, 39 for the answers.

Fire came down from heaven. Elijah's powerful message touched the hearts of the people. Both the fire and the message helped the people to come back to God. Today, we live in communities that don't honor God as their Savior. The people in these communities are the same as the Israelites. They don't want to give their lives fully to the Lord. Many of us often want to make ourselves happy and not God.

God warns us that living to make ourselves happy will cause pain and suffering to us and other people. This self-ish wish to live for ourselves will end in death. So, we must obey God and follow His voice. Then God will keep this promise to us in Isaiah 58:11:

"The Lord will always lead you.

He will satisfy your needs in dry lands.

He will give strength to your bones.

You will be like [the same as] a garden that has much water.

You will be like [the same as] a spring that never runs dry" (ICB).

As sinners, we have a natural wish to do things that are wrong and evil. What choices do we need to make to help us not give in to the evil in our hearts?



Fire came down from heaven. Elijah's powerful message touched the hearts of the people.

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE (Isaiah 59:1–4)

“The LORD sent his servants many times to warn his people. He wanted to be kind to them. He wanted to keep his temple safe” (2 Chronicles 36:15, EASY).

God sent many messengers to His people after Elijah. The messengers warned, taught, and brought hope to God’s people. But the kingdoms of Israel and Judah sinned against God. God compared these kingdoms to Sodom and Gomorrah (Isaiah 1:9, 10). God’s people were selfish, filled with pride, and worshiped false gods. They hurt their workers, widows, orphans, and the strangers who asked them for help. (Read Isaiah 58 to learn what God thought about Israel’s sins.) Finally, God punished Israel. The Assyrians carried the Israelites away from their land. Later, the Babylonians carried the people of Judah to Babylon (2 Kings 24, 25).

God punished His people but gave them encouragement, too. He sent them messengers, including Ezekiel and Daniel. These men gave God’s people hope for the future.

Read Isaiah 59:1–4 and Nehemiah 9:30. What helpful advice in these verses does God give to His people? How is this advice helpful to us today?



God kept trying to save the people and their leaders. Again and again, He sent His messengers to them with warnings.

When the kingdoms of Judah and Israel sinned, God didn’t judge them right away. He sent His messengers to warn them. The messengers told the people to confess their sins and come back to God. But the people and their leaders refused to obey. God kept trying to save them. Again and again, He sent His messengers to them with warnings.

Jesus said these words about the Jewish leaders: “‘Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You kill the prophets [God’s messengers] and kill with stones those men God sent to you. Many times I wanted to help your people! . . . But you did not let me’ ” (Matthew 23:37, ICB).

God never left His people without hope. Even when they were carried far away from home, God promised: “A Redeemer [Savior] will come to Zion. He will come to save Jacob’s people who turn away from [stop doing] their sins” (Isaiah 59:20, EASY).

Where would you be in life if God were not so patient and loving with you?

**MESSENGERS FOR THE WAITING TIME
(Revelation 1:1–3)**

What task did God give to John? Read Revelation 1:1–3 for the answer.

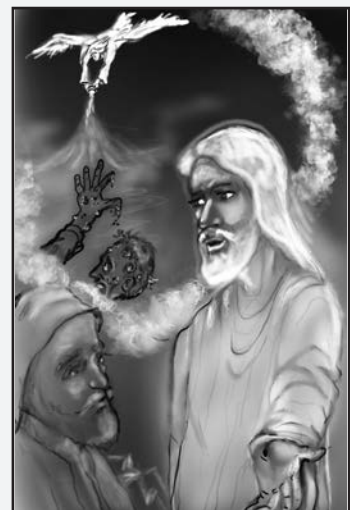
The first Christians hoped to see Jesus come back in their lifetime. John saw Jesus go up in the clouds. The angel explained that Jesus would come back the same way (Acts 1:10, 11). Jesus didn't come back right away. Then many Christians died. Now the church faced an important question. Yes, they believed Jesus would come back. But when?

While John was on Patmos Island, God talked with him about the Second Coming. John wrote, "Look, Jesus is coming with the clouds! Everyone will see him, even those [people] who stabbed him. And all peoples of [on] the earth will cry loudly because of him. Yes, this [promise] will happen! Amen" (Revelation 1:7, ICB). Jesus showed John the things that would happen in the end-times. God asked John to encourage and warn the seven churches in Asia Minor, too (Revelation 2, 3). John also warned that God would punish evil (Revelation 14:6–12). John wrote about the end of the earth (Revelation 20), the Second Coming (Revelation 14:14–16), and the new earth (Revelation 21, 22).

John wrote, "I am John. I am a believer [follower of Jesus], as you are. I am like [the same as] your brother and your friend. Because we belong to Jesus' kingdom, we are having trouble and pain. So we all need to be strong and patient, as Jesus helps us. The Roman leaders punished me because I taught God's message. I told people the true message about Jesus. That is why they sent me to Patmos island" (Revelation 1:9, EASY). For sure, John understood what it meant to suffer for his faith.

Jesus told John many times to write down what he saw. Jesus told John to share these things with the seven churches (Revelation 22:16). John is much the same as John the Baptist, who announced Jesus' first coming (John 1:6–8). Jesus wants us to tell other people about Him, too. We also must keep God's Words about Himself in our hearts. God gave these words to His messengers to give to us (Revelation 19:10). Maybe we aren't messengers. But we may work for God while we wait.

Think about all the Bible truth God gave us. What does God ask us to do with all this light?



Jesus showed John the things that would happen in the end-times.

THE POWER OF GOD'S END-TIME MESSENGER

God always sent His messengers to communicate with His people at important times in history. We also should expect that God will talk with His people in the end-times, too.

When Jesus didn't come back on October 22, 1844, the Millerites were disappointed. God chose Ellen Harmon (White) to be His messenger. God gave her a message for the disappointed group of Millerites. Ellen White's first vision gave them hope.

Soon the Adventists started printing books. In the 1860s, the Adventists grew to several thousand members. Now they needed to become a worldwide church so that they could announce the three angels' messages with power. Some people were against the idea of becoming a worldwide church. So, God used Ellen White to encourage the Adventists to start the Seventh-day Adventist Church. On May 21, 1863, the Seventh-day Adventist Church was born.

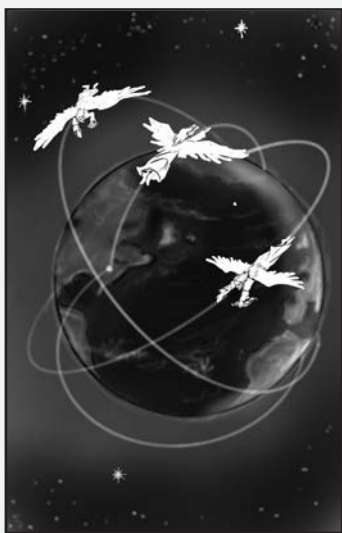
That same year, God used the gift of special messages to encourage Seventh-day Adventists to be healthy. Most church members weren't healthy at all. They also didn't live healthy lives. So, God gave Ellen White two special messages. The first message was in 1863. The second message was in 1865. These messages changed the lives of many church members. Then Seventh-day Adventists started to support good health and healthful living.

From the 1870s to 1890s, Ellen White developed an education plan for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. She wrote: "Real education means more than studying a topic or just getting ready for this life now. Real education is about the whole person and what he can become. Real education develops the body, mind, and spirit."—*Education*, page 13, adapted.

In the 1880s, Ellen White helped the church to understand better God's plan to save sinners. She explained that God's love and forgiveness were important to this plan. Ellen White helped the church to better understand the connection between God's love and His law. From 1901 to 1903, Ellen White suggested changes that helped the church to do God's work better.

In short, there would be no Seventh-day Adventist Church as we know it today without Ellen White. She was God's messenger at an important time in history.

To learn more, visit <https://whiteestate.org/absg/11>.



Now the Adventists needed to become a worldwide church so that they could announce the three angels' messages with power.

DEMONS AND DEATH: PART 1

Leena and her friends, Anneli and Timo, were studying the Bible in her apartment. Leena lived in a Finnish town a few hundred miles north of the capital, Helsinki.

Leena said, "I have a feeling that something bad is about to happen. Let's pray."

The three university students knelt in prayer. Just then, a tall dark figure ran into the living room. The figure came near Anneli and tried to grab her.

Timo and Leena started to pray harder.

Then a bright figure entered the room. The bright figure chased out the dark figure. The dark figure stood at the door and tried to reenter. But the bright figure blocked every move that the dark figure made. After about 10 minutes, the dark figure gave up and left.

After that, the students talked about what happened. Leena said she saw a fight between two figures. One was bright and filled with light. The other figure was dark. Timo hadn't seen figures. He saw only what looked the same as light and dark shadows that ran past him across the floor. Anneli didn't want to talk about what she saw. Later on, the students learned that the strange attack in Leena's apartment happened at the same time that someone killed himself in a nearby home.

Leena said, "That's why I had the bad feeling."

Then Anneli told her friends something they didn't know about her. She did witchcraft in the past. Evil spirits still attacked her. But Anneli said that God was way more powerful than the evil spirits. After the attack, Anneli went home and lay down on her bed. The bright figure came into her room, sat down on the end of her bed, and stayed with her until morning.

The demon attacks stopped after Anneli was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. That was the first experience Timo had up close with the war between Jesus and Satan. But that was not Timo's last. Timo was a deep sleeper. He hardly ever woke up at night after he fell asleep. But soon after the attack in the apartment, Timo woke up when he felt someone was staring at him in the dark. Then he heard a voice.

The voice said, "Don't get baptized."

Timo was a computer engineering student. He was about to be baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Timo looked into the dark room. He couldn't see anything. But he could tell someone was there. Timo prayed, and the figure left.

The next day, Leena told Timo that someone killed herself near his home last night.

Timo asked, "Do you know what time that happened?"

Leena did. The person died the exact time Timo woke up.

INSIDE
Story
by MISSION EDITOR



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