

Special Messages for the End-Times



SABBATH—DECEMBER 12

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Joel 2:28–32; Acts 2:1–21; Ephesians 4:11–14; Revelation 12:17; Acts 2:36–42.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘In the last days [end-times] I will send [pour] My Spirit on all men [people]. Then your sons and daughters will speak [communicate] God’s Word. Your old men will dream dreams. Your young men will see special dreams. Yes, on My servants, both men and women, I will pour out My Spirit in those days’ ” (Joel 2:28, 29, NLV).



What part does the gift of special messages have in the end-times.

SOME GOVERNMENTS make special laws named “sunset rules.” (No, sunset rules are **not** about the time when the sun sets!) Sunset rules help protect citizens. Sometimes a government will make strict laws during a time of war, a natural disaster, or an emergency. These strict laws remove certain freedoms from citizens during dark and difficult times. Some governments will include sunset rules to end these strict laws after a certain time. The sunset rules give the people back their freedoms.

Did God include a sunset rule with the gift of special messages? Is there a time before Jesus comes back when God will stop pouring this gift on His people? Last week, we learned that God communicated to His people with His messengers. This week, we will study the topic of the gift of special messages in the end-times. What part does the gift of special messages have in the end-times? What part does Ellen G. White have in earth’s final history?

A PROMISE IN THE BOOK OF JOEL (Joel 2:28–32)

Read Joel 2:28–32. What does God promise to do in the end-times?

Joel was a messenger for God during Old Testament times. Joel lived many hundred years before Jesus was born. When we read Joel's writings, we can learn important information about the future. When we read Joel 2:28–32, we may ask, "Is Joel talking about his own time? Or is he talking about things far in the future?"

Bible thinkers teach us that there are two types of special messages: (1) classical messages and (2) apocalyptic messages. Classical messages are messages for people, countries, and leaders. They use real numbers and real names. (Read Jeremiah 25:1–11 for an example.) Apocalyptic messages use symbols and signs. They use numbers as symbols, too, to explain when something will happen in the future. (Read Daniel 7 for an example.) Sometimes God's messengers will mix the two types of messages together. (Read Matthew 24 for an example.)

What about Joel 2:28–31? Is this a message about things happening in Joel's time only? Or is this a special message about the future? Joel 2:28–31 is a message about the future. So, we should not expect this promise to happen in Joel's lifetime. We also shouldn't expect this promise to happen in the years right after Joel dies. We should look for this promise to happen in the end-times. Notice the time when Joel says that God will keep this promise. The Lord tells Joel: "The sun will become dark and the moon will become red. Then the great [powerful] and frightening day of the Lord will come" (Joel 2:31, EASY).

Elsewhere, the Bible talks about the sun becoming dark and the moon becoming red. In His sermon about the end-times, Jesus talked about signs in the sun, moon, and stars (Matthew 24:29). Also, John talks about the same signs (Revelation 6:12, 13). Both Jesus and John talk about the final signs that will happen before the Second Coming. So, Jesus and John help us to understand that Joel's message also must be about the end-times, too.

Think about the messages that happened just as the Bible promised. Why should they help us to trust God about His future promises, including the Second Coming?



The Bible talks about the sun becoming dark and the moon becoming red.

GOD POURS HIS SPIRIT ON HIS CHURCH (Acts 2:1–21)

John the Baptist warned the people to stop sinning.

Read Peter's sermon in Acts 2:1–21. Why did Peter use a quote from Joel when he talked about Jesus' first coming? How does Peter use special messages from God in his sermon?

In Acts 2:1–21, we read a quote from the book of Joel. This quote is one of the longest quotes from the Old Testament. Peter uses this quote when he preaches to the people in Jerusalem. When we read what Peter says, we may wonder, "Peter, what about the signs of the dark sun and the red moon? We can't see them happening in your time." Peter might answer, "The signs happened in my time. When Jesus hung on the cross a few days ago, the sun became dark for three hours" (see Mark 15:33).

What was proof to Peter back then may not convince us today. In these end-times, we expect God to more fully keep the promise He made to Joel. What proof do we have that God will keep this promise more fully in our time? The answer is in Joel 2:23. In this verse, Joel talks about the early and the late rains. Acts 2 shows us when the first part of this promise from Joel happens. The final promise will happen when God pours His Spirit on people just before the end of human history. This time is named the Latter Rain.

Often people think special messengers from God preached only about the future. But Bible messengers did more than that. Often, Bible messengers asked people to stop sinning and come back to God. We see the people feeling guilty for their sins while Peter is preaching to them (Acts 2:37–39).

John the Baptist warned the people to stop sinning, too. As God's messenger, John announced the first coming of Jesus. While John preached this message, he also warned, " 'Stop doing wrong things and turn [come] back to God! The kingdom of heaven is almost here' " (Matthew 3:2, WE).

When God pours His Spirit on all people in the end-times, He fully will keep the promise He made in Joel 2. God's messengers in the end-times will also warn people, as John the Baptist and Peter did. God's end-time messengers will warn people to stop sinning and come back to God. God's end-time messengers also will tell people to look to Jesus to save them. These messengers will help God's church to understand and follow Bible truth.

GIFTS FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT (Ephesians 4:11–14)

God gave the church many gifts. These gifts help the church to serve Him better. In the New Testament, we read many lists of spiritual gifts (Romans 12:6–8; 1 Corinthians 12:8–10; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11).

Read about spiritual gifts in Ephesians 4:11–14. Why does God give these gifts to His church? How does the gift of prophecy, or special messages, help the church do God's work?

Spiritual gifts help the church to grow and to preach Bible truth. Paul included the gift of prophecy, or special messages, in all four lists. That tells us that the gift of prophecy, or special messages, is one of the most important gifts.

Let's look at some Bible truth about God's messengers:

1. God chooses His messengers and gives them their work (read 1 Kings 19:16, 19–21 and Isaiah 6). Often, God's messengers don't feel worthy to serve Him. But in the end, they obey.

2. God talks to His messengers in dreams. Or He speaks to them so that they can hear His voice and words. Sometimes God tells His messengers what will happen in the future (Daniel 2). At other times, God tells His messengers about what is happening in the countries or with the leaders of that time.

3. The Bible talks about things that happen to God's messengers when He talks with them or gives them a message. Some messengers lose strength. Or they may stop breathing. Other times, the experience with God may fill the messenger with new strength or power (Daniel 10:8–10, 18, 19).

4. Messengers communicate their messages in different ways: (1) with words or sermons (Acts 21:10–12); with their behavior or actions (Ezekiel 4), or with writing letters (Revelation 2, 3). Some messengers used secretaries or assistants. Baruch helped Jeremiah (Jeremiah 36:1–4).

5. A messenger's words must agree with Bible truth (Isaiah 8:20).

6. A messenger's behavior and message will show that God chose him to serve Him (Matthew 7:15–20).

7. Satan always tries to copy God's work. The same is true for the gift of prophecy. In the end-time, there will be false messengers (Matthew 24:24; 2 Peter 2:1).



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GOD'S END-TIME PEOPLE (Revelation 12:17)

Revelation 12 talks about the history of the war between good and evil. This chapter shows us how the war started in heaven and what will happen in the end-times.

What is “the truth that Jesus taught” (Revelation 12:17, ERV)? Compare Revelation 19:10 with Revelation 22:8, 9.

In Revelation 12:17, we read about God's end-time church. We will know the end-time church because of two things: (1) this church obeys God's Ten Commandments and (2) it has “the truth that Jesus taught” (ERV). What is this truth?

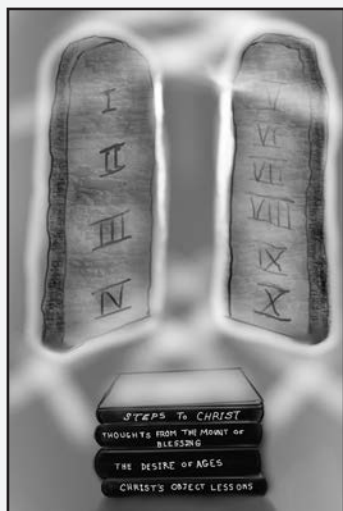
Some Bible thinkers say that “the truth that Jesus taught” means our belief in Jesus. Other Bible thinkers give this verse a different meaning. They say that Revelation 12:17 means that Jesus Himself gives a special message to His end-time church (also read Revelation 19:10). The Greek language of the Bible verse allows for both explanations. So, which one did John really mean?

If we compare the two things about the end-time church, we see that both things are said or written in much the same way. So, just as the commandments of God come **from** God, the truth that Jesus taught comes **from** Jesus, too. Jesus gives the message. So, He shows us who is His real church. How does Jesus do that? He shares this important information with John to give to us.

The Bible gives us proof in Revelation 19:10 and Revelation 22:9. These verses show us that “the truth that Jesus taught” (Revelation 12:17, ERV) is the same as the gift of special messages. As we already saw, God's messengers tell God's people to come back to Him. Or they show us what will happen in the future.

In Revelation 12:17, Jesus shows us who is His real church in the end-times. His end-time church will keep His commandments and have the gift of special messages. God sent messengers to the people in Old and New Testament times. In the same way, God will send His messengers to His people in the end-times.

What proof do we have that God gave to Ellen G. White the gift of special messages? (Read Revelation 19:10.)



Jesus' end-time church will keep His commandments and have the gift of special messages.

MODERN MESSENGERS (Acts 2:36–42)

Most Christians today believe that God gave men and women His messages in Bible times. But do they really believe that the same thing can happen today? If the promise in Joel 2:28–31 is real, then how will God give us the gift of special messages in the end-times? What will this look the same as?

Read Acts 2:36–42. What was the message of Peter’s sermon in these verses? How did Peter’s audience answer?

God first poured His Spirit on His church in A.D. 31. This experience is an excellent picture of what will happen during the end-times. God will pour His Spirit on His end-time church, too. But He will pour out much more of His Spirit at that time. When God first poured His Spirit on His church, the church preached about Jesus. They also told people to stop sinning and to come back to God. God’s Spirit helped the church to do this work. The Holy Spirit gave Peter the power to preach about Jesus. Peter’s sermon caused 3,000 people to give their hearts to Jesus and to get baptized. This time was named Pentecost and the “early rain.”

God gave the early rain or the Holy Spirit to help the church to grow. In the same way, God will pour “ ‘the latter rain’ on the church in the end-times to finish His work on earth.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 611, adapted. So, we can see, the gift of special messages in the end-times will look much the same as it did in Acts 2.

As we already saw in Joel 2:28–31, God will pour His gift of special messages on His church in the end-times. He will pour this gift on young and old people, and on men and women. God will talk with them. When the Holy Spirit chooses an end-time messenger, the messenger will praise and honor Jesus. The messenger will ask people to come back to God and help them to finish God’s work on earth. Ellen G. White did all these things. During her life, she honored Jesus and the Bible above everything else in her work. She told people to come back to God. She invited everyone to help God save lost people.

How grateful are you for the gift of Ellen G. White’s writings in our church?



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ALL ABOUT SERVING GOD



“At the cross, Jesus joined mercy with truth, and obedience with peace.”

In Ephesians 4, Paul says that God gave the church spiritual gifts to help us do His work. That’s the reason God gave Ellen G. White the gift of prophecy, or special messages. Her messages help people to have a strong relationship with God and to share His love with other people.

Ellen White wrote, “More than any other Christian group, Seventh-day Adventists should honor and praise Jesus. We must announce the Sabbath truth along with the third angel’s message. The most important part of this message is Jesus. We must not leave Him out. At the cross, Jesus joined mercy with truth, and obedience with peace. So, the sinner must look to Calvary. He must have the simple faith of a child. He must trust in Jesus’ love and forgiveness to save him. The sinner must accept Jesus’ perfect life.”—*Gospel Workers*, pages 156, 157, adapted.

Ellen White taught that God invites each Christian to join Him in His work to save people. “The Lord wants His people to do far more than they are doing now to save sinners.”—*Evangelism*, page 113, adapted.

“We must not be lazy. Let us work together to bring sinners to Jesus and His love.”—*Evangelism*, page 115, adapted. Ellen G. White was a Bible worker in Europe in the 1880s. During the 1890s, she worked for God in Australia.

Satan is angry in the end-times because God commands His people to serve Him (Revelation 12:17). God’s end-time followers have a message for their time. God leads them and gives them understanding. “The Lord shows us the dangers that are around us and ahead. With the gift of prophecy, or special messages, God shows us the lies that will trick people in the end-times and make them slaves. God tells His people, ‘This is the right way. Walk in it.’ ” [Isaiah 30:21, EASY]. . . . *The Great Controversy* shows us Satan’s lies.”—Ellen G. White, *Manuscript 31*, 1890, adapted.

Satan is angry when people give their lives to Jesus. So, Satan does everything to cause people to doubt the gift of prophecy and Ellen G. White’s writings. Satan causes people to believe that her writings are not important for our time. Satan also causes people to believe she is a false messenger. But Satan succeeds the most when he causes young people today not to read her writings.

To learn more, visit <https://whiteestate.org/absg/12>.

DEMONS AND DEATH: PART 2

Timo and his friends, Leena and Anneli, had a frightening experience during a Bible study in Leena's apartment. Anneli later explained that she used to do witchcraft. Even now, evil spirits tried to hurt her. But after Anneli was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the demons stopped hurting her. Timo was a computer engineering student. He also was getting ready for baptism. He woke up at night when he heard a scary voice tell him, "Don't get baptized."

The scary warning didn't stop Timo from getting baptized. He later became a Seventh-day Adventist pastor. But his experiences with demons and people who tried to end their own lives didn't stop.

After Timo became a pastor, he and some other pastors got on a boat. They were on their way to a meeting in Sweden.

That night, Timo couldn't sleep. He felt a strong need to pray. As soon as he started to pray, Timo heard an evil laugh. Timo knew something bad was happening. But he didn't know what it was. He prayed hard for the next two hours.

At breakfast, an older pastor came to Timo. Something woke the pastor up in the middle of the night.

The pastor said, "What was happening with you last night? The Holy Spirit told me to pray for you."

Then another pastor came to the breakfast table.

The pastor said, "Last night, I woke up and felt the need to go outside for some fresh air. When I got to the boat deck, I saw a man about to jump into the sea."

The pastor talked with the man for an hour. The pastor told the man not to kill himself. The man came back to the deck.

Then Timo and the other two pastors compared their experiences. They discovered that everything happened to them last night at the same time! Timo knew God woke him up to pray, even if he didn't know who or what he was praying for. God woke up the older pastor to pray for Timo. The older pastor's prayers gave Timo the strength to keep praying. Timo and the old pastor were the same as Aaron and Hur, who held up Moses' arms when the Israelites went to fight (Exodus 17:8–12). As long as Moses' arms stayed up, the Israelites won (verse 11). In the same way, God used the prayers of Timo and the older pastor to help their friend fight against evil and save a man's life.

Timo is now 45. He is the communication director for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Finland. Timo's experience showed him that the war between good and evil is very real.

Timo said, "This war is happening all around us. Jesus already won the fight. So, we don't need to be afraid. Jesus will protect us. Satan can't hurt us when we trust in Jesus."

INSIDE
Story
by MISSION EDITOR



**The pastor told the man
not to kill himself.**