SABBATH SCHOOL LESSON QUARTERLY

VANCE LOCKE, ARTIST

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LESSONS FOR TODAY
FROM THE TIMES OF EZRA AND NEHEMIAH

SENIOR DIVISION, NO. 260, SECOND QUARTER 1960

THE BLESSING OF DAILY STUDY

"The beauty and riches of the word have a transforming influence on mind and character."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 132.

"There is nothing more calculated to strengthen the intellect than the study of the Scriptures. No other book is so potent to elevate the thoughts, to give vigor to the faculties, as the broad, ennobling truths of the Bible. If God's word were studied as it should be, men would have a breadth of mind, a nobility of character, and a stability of purpose rarely seen in these times."—*Steps to Christ,* page 90.

"The more you search the Scriptures with humble hearts, the greater will be your interest. . . . Every day you should learn something new from the Scriptures."—*Testimonies,* vol. 5, p. 266.

My Daily Lesson Study Pledge

As one who greatly desires to improve his knowledge of the Scriptures, I pledge myself to the careful and prayerful study of some portion of my Sabbath school lesson each day of the week.

Name .....

LESSON TITLES FOR THE QUARTER

1. The Divine Purpose in the Captivity
2. Deliverance From Captivity
3. The Sacrificial System Restored
4. The Rebuilding Hindered
5. Rebuilding Resumed
6. Zechariah Encourages the Builders
7. Further Messages of Encouragement
8. The Temple Completed
9. The Ministry of Ezra
10. Nehemiah Rebuilds the Walls
11. Reforms Instituted by Nehemiah
12. Failure of Exiles to Fulfill Divine Purpose
13. The Divine Purpose Fulfilled in the Christian Church

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Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly

LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM THE TIMES OF EZRA AND NEHEMIAH

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The times of Ezra and Nehemiah here mean not only the period covered by the lives of these men but also the historical times covered in the books bearing their names. The period thus extends from the return of the exiles under the decree of Cyrus about 537 B.C. to the close of Nehemiah's governorship some time before 407 B.C. Ezra's ministry began in 457 B.C., and Nehemiah's about 444 B.C.

In the ancient Hebrew manuscripts the two books of Ezra and Nehemiah constituted one volume. A division first appeared in the Septuagint and from there was carried over into the Latin Vulgate. About the middle of the fifteenth century the division appeared in a Hebrew manuscript and was subsequently perpetuated in Hebrew printed editions. From these it was carried over into our present versions. Ezra is believed to have been the author of the two books.

The prophets Haggai and Zechariah ministered during the early part of the times of Ezra and Nehemiah, and their writings provide the basis for many of the lessons we may draw from those turbulent times.

Those were the days in which the Lord set His hand the second time to recover the remnant of His people, which had been scattered abroad. But Israel failed to learn God's lessons and to fulfill His purposes after the return from Babylonian captivity, and today He is gathering the spiritual remnant from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. The first remnant failed to fulfill the divine purpose in their gathering. It is for us to learn the cause of their failure and thus avoid a repetition of their blunder. "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." Rom. 15:4.

Lesson 1, for April 2, 1960

The Divine Purpose in the Captivity

MEMORY VERSE: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." Rom. 15:4.

STUDY HELPS: "The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary," vol. 4, pp. 25-33, and on Scripture references; "Christ's Object Lessons," chapter, "The Lord's Vineyard;" Lesson Help in "Review and Herald" of March 17.

DAILY STUDY ASSIGNMENT AND RECORD

	Check Here
Sabbath afternoon: General survey.	☐
Sunday: Introduction; Questions 1-3.	☐
Monday: Questions 4, 5; begin reading Study Helps.	☐
Tuesday: Questions 6-10.	☐
Wednesday: Questions 11-14.	☐
Thursday: Read further from Study Helps.	☐
Friday: Review entire lesson.	☐

Lesson Outline

Introduction

I. God's Original Purpose for Israel

1. Israel's history recorded for our learning. Rom. 15:4.
2. The purpose stated. Ex. 19:5, 6.
3. Extent of failure. 2 Kings 17:7-12, 14-19; Isa. 1:1-4.

II. The Captivity a Last Resort

4. God's reluctance to give up His people. Hosea 11:8; Ezek. 33:11.
5. God's thoughts of peace. Jer. 29: 11-13.

III. Purpose of Captivity for Israel

6. Correction and punishment. Jer. 30:11.
7. Repentance. Jer. 31:18, 19.
8. Consuming of sin. Ezek. 22:15.
9. Vindication of true prophets. Ezek. 33:33; Deut. 18:21, 22.
10. New heart. Ezek. 36:24-31.

IV. Purpose of Israel's Captivity for the Nations

11. A challenge to decide for God. Jer. 12:14-17.
12. Captives spread knowledge of true God. Dan. 2:47; 3:28, 29; 6:25-27.
13. God's name dishonored. Ezek. 36: 19, 20.
14. God's name dishonored today. James 2:7.

THE LESSON

Introduction

In order fully to grasp the significance of the times of Ezra and Nehemiah, it is necessary to understand the historical background of those times. God called Israel to be His representatives in the world, to spread to all nations a true knowledge of God. This purpose they failed to fulfill. As a result they suffered the humiliation of the captivity. However, God did not abandon them in their exile. He had a merciful purpose in their affliction. He promised to bring them back to their own land and to give them another opportunity.

The divine purpose is here presented. The objectives of the captivity are examined to ascertain how the exiles profited from the discipline of the captivity and to what extent they took advantage of their opportunities after their return to Palestine.

God's Original Purpose for Israel

1. For what purpose have the records of Israel's history been preserved for us? Rom. 15:4. Compare 1 Cor. 10:11.

NOTE.—"I was pointed back to ancient Israel. They had great light and exalted privileges; yet they did not live up to the light nor appreciate their advantages, and their light became darkness. They walked in the light of their own eyes instead of following the leadings of God. The history of the children of Israel was written for the benefit of those who live in the last days, that they may avoid following their example of unbelief."—*Testimonies,* vol. 4, p. 43.

2. What was God's original purpose for Israel? Ex. 19:5, 6.

NOTE.—"Through the Jewish nation it was God's purpose to impart rich blessings to all peoples. Through Israel the way was to be prepared for the diffusion of His light to the whole world. The nations of the world, through following corrupt practices, had lost the knowledge of God. Yet in His mercy God did not blot them out of existence. He purposed to give them opportunity for becoming acquainted with Him through His church. He designed that the principles revealed through His people should be the means of restoring the moral image of God in man."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 286.

3. How woefully short of fulfilling the divine purpose did both Israel and Judah fall? 2 Kings 17:7-12, 14-19; Isa. 1:1-4.

NOTE.—"But Israel did not fulfill God's purpose. They forgot God and lost sight of their high privilege as His representatives. The blessings that they had received brought no blessing to the world. All their advantages were appropriated for their own glorification. They robbed God of the service He required of them, and they robbed their fellow men of religious guidance and a holy example. . . .

"Is not the same thing repeated in this generation? Many in our day are keeping back that which the Lord has entrusted to them for the salvation of a world unwarned, unsaved."—*Testimonies,* vol. 8, p. 26.

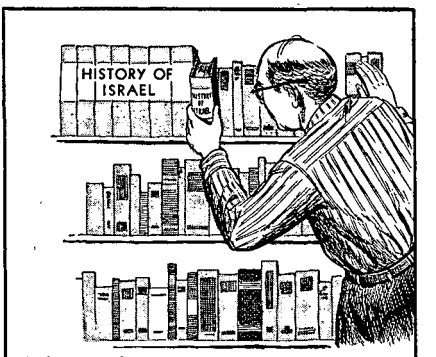
The Captivity a Last Resort

4. How did God feel toward giving up His people? Hosea 11:8; Ezek. 33:11.

NOTE.—"Had Israel heeded the messages of the prophets, they would have been spared the humiliation that followed. It was because they had persisted in turning aside from His law that God was compelled to let them go into captivity. 'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge,' was His message to them through Hosea. 'Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee: . . . seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God.' "—*Prophets and Kings,* page 297.

5. Despite the seeming severity of the affliction, what was God's attitude toward His people? Jer. 29:11-13.

NOTE.—"God permits trials to assail His people, that by their constancy and obedience they themselves may be spiritually enriched, and that their example may be a source of strength to others. 'I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil.' Jeremiah 29:11. The very trials that task our faith most severely and make it seem that God has forsaken us, are to lead us closer to Christ, that we may lay all our burdens at His feet and experience the peace which He will give us in exchange."—*Patriarchs and Prophets,* page 129.



The history of Israel is to benefit Christians today, so that they may avoid the Israelites' example of unbelief.

Purpose of Captivity for Israel

6. What was God's purpose in the captivity? Jer. 30:11.

NOTE.—"God had pleaded with Judah not to provoke Him to anger, but they had hearkened not. Finally sentence was pronounced against them. They were to be led away captive to Babylon. The Chaldeans were to be used as the instrument by which God would chastise His disobedient people. The sufferings of the men of Judah were to be in proportion to the light they had had and to the warnings they had despised and rejected. Long had God delayed His judgments, but now He would visit His displeasure upon them as a last effort to check them in their evil course."—*Prophets and Kings,* page 425.

7. What spirit or attitude were Israel's afflictions intended to produce? Jer. 31:18, 19.

NOTE.—In the prophetic writings "Ephraim" frequently stands for the ten tribes that after the secession in the time of Rehoboam formed the northern kingdom of Israel.

To smite upon the thigh was a token of extreme grief or mourning. See Ezek. 21:12.

8. What were the fires of affliction intended to consume? Ezek. 22:15.

NOTE.—"To sin, wherever found, 'our God is a consuming fire.' Heb. 12:29. In all who submit to His power the Spirit of God will consume sin. But if men cling to sin, they become identified with it. Then the glory of God, which destroys sin, must destroy them."—*The Desire of Ages,* page 107.

9. How would God's prophets be vindicated in the crisis? Ezek. 33:33; Deut. 18:21, 22.

10. What was to be the spiritual experience of those who returned from captivity? Ezek. 36:24-31.

NOTE.—"Every time a soul is converted, and learns to love God and keep His commandments, the promise of God is fulfilled. . . . The change in human hearts, the transformation of human characters, is a miracle that reveals an ever-living Saviour, working to rescue souls. A consistent life in Christ is a great miracle."—*The Desire of Ages,* page 407.

Purpose of Israel's Captivity for the Nations

11. What was God's design for the nations holding His people captive? Jer. 12:14-17.

NOTE.—"God brought the hand of the oppressor upon His people and scattered them as captives among the nations. In affliction many of them repented of their transgressions and sought the Lord. Scattered throughout the countries of the heathen, they spread abroad the knowledge of the true God. The principles of the divine law came in conflict with the customs and practices of the nations. Idolaters endeavored to crush out the true faith. The Lord in His providence brought His servants, Daniel, Nehemiah, Ezra, face to face with kings and rulers, that these idolaters might have an opportunity to receive the light. Thus the work which God had given His people to do in prosperity, in their own borders, but which had been neglected through their unfaithfulness, was done by them in captivity, under great trial and embarrassment."—*Testimonies,* vol. 5, p. 455.

12. As a result of witness borne by the captives of Judah, how was God's name extolled among the heathen? Dan. 2:47; 3:28, 29; 6:25-27.

NOTE.—"Through the Hebrew captives the Lord was made known to the heathen in Babylon. This idolatrous nation was given a knowledge of the kingdom the Lord was to establish, and through His power maintain against all the power and craft of Satan. Daniel and his fellow companions, Ezra and Nehemiah, and many others were witnesses for God in their captivity. The Lord scattered them among the kingdoms of the earth that their light might shine brightly amid the black darkness of heathenism and idolatry."—Ellen G. White supplement in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* vol. 4, p. 1169.

13. What was one of the tragic effects of the captivity? Ezek. 36:19, 20.

NOTE.—"The Israelites had misrepresented God among the nations. They were not merely useless, but a decided hindrance. To a great degree their religion was misleading, and wrought ruin instead of salvation."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* p. 215.

"Their [the Jewish nation's] covetousness and greed caused them to be despised even by the heathen. Thus the Gentile world was given occasion to misinterpret the character of God and the laws of His kingdom." —*Prophets and Kings,* pages 20, 21.

14. How may our failure to live up to light that shines in our pathway result in dishonor to God's name? James 2:7. Compare Rom. 2:23, 24.

Deliverance From Captivity

MEMORY VERSE: "Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this is the time of the Lord's vengeance; He will render unto her a recompense." Jer. 51:6.

STUDY HELPS: "Prophets and Kings," pages 551-560; "The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary," on Scripture references; Lesson Help in "Review and Herald" of March 24.

DAILY STUDY ASSIGNMENT AND RECORD

	Check Here
Sabbath afternoon: General survey.	☐
Sunday: Introduction; Questions 1-3.	☐
Monday: Questions 4, 5; begin reading Study Helps.	☐
Tuesday: Questions 6-8.	☐
Wednesday: Questions 9-12.	☐
Thursday: Read further from Study Helps.	☐
Friday: Review entire lesson.	☐

Lesson Outline

Introduction

I. The Decree

1. The issuance of the decree. Ezra 1:1.
2. Prophecy concerning Cyrus. Isa. 44:28; 45:13.
3. Stipulations of the decree. Ezra 1:3.
4. Cyrus's recognition of divine command. Ezra 1:2.
5. Command to those remaining in Babylon. Ezra 1:4, 6.

II. Prophetic Background of the Decree

6. Prophecy fulfilled. Jer. 25:11, 12; 29:10.
7. Daniel's study of Jeremiah's prophecy. Dan. 9:1, 2.
8. Prayer for fulfillment. Dan. 9: 4-6, 20.

III. The Call to Come Out of Babylon

9. Babylon's fall predicted. Isa. 21:9.
10. God's call to His people. Jer. 51: 6, 8.
11. Response to call. Ezra 1:5; 2:64, 65.
12. The call out of spiritual Babylon. Rev. 18:1-4.

THE LESSON

Introduction

When Cyrus granted permission to the Jews to return to their homeland a number responded, but many more chose to remain in the land of captivity.

Among those who did return there was only a halfhearted attempt to follow the divine plan. The discipline of the captivity had accomplished some good, but it had not produced the thorough reformation that God desired.

Nevertheless He wrought with His people. This was a fresh opportunity to lay hold of the work they had thus far in their history neglected to accomplish.

The Decree

1. What was Cyrus, king of Persia, stirred to do in the first year of his reign? Ezra 1:1.

NOTE.—"The Persian Empire stretched from the desert wastes of Iran in the east to the coast of Asia Minor in the west, and

from the Armenian highlands in the north to the border of Egypt in the south. Cyrus, its founder, was a prudent and humane monarch. In harmony with his policy of appeasing nations subjugated by Babylon, he resettled them in their old homes and restored their places of worship. In accord with this generous policy, the Jews were allowed to return to their old homeland and rebuild their temple. . . .

"When Cyrus took Babylon he became acquainted with the aged Daniel, trusted counselor of the great Nebuchadnezzar of a former era, and learned to appreciate his advice. Through Daniel, Cyrus must have become acquainted with Isaiah's prophecies concerning him and his appointed role in behalf of God's people (Isa. 44:21 to 45: 13), and granted their restoration."—*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* vol. 3, pp. 320, 321.

2. What remarkable prophecy concerning Cyrus was given through Isaiah nearly 200 years previously? Isa. 44:28; 45:13.

NOTE.—"In the unexpected entry of the army of the Persian conqueror into the heart of the Babylonian capital by way of the channel of the river whose waters had been turned aside, and through the inner gates that in careless security had been left open and unprotected, the Jews had abundant evidence of the literal fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy concerning the sudden overthrow of their oppressors. And this should have been to them an unmistakable sign that God was shaping the affairs of nations in their behalf."—*Prophets and Kings,* page 552.

3. What privilege did the decree grant? Ezra 1:3.

4. Who did Cyrus say instructed him to build a house for the Lord? Ezra 1:2.

NOTE.—"The deliverance of Daniel from the den of lions had been used of God to create a favorable impresssion upon the mind of Cyrus the Great. The sterling qualities of the man of God as a statesman of far-seeing ability led the Persian ruler to show him marked respect and to honor his judgment. And now, just at the time God had said He would cause His temple at Jerusalem to be rebuilt, He moved upon Cyrus as His agent to discern the prophecies concerning himself, with which Daniel was so familiar, and to grant the Jewish people their liberty."—*Prophets and Kings,* page 557.

5. What were the Jews who remained in Babylon required to do for those who returned to Jerusalem? Ezra 1:4, 6.

Prophetic Background of the Decree

6. What prophecies of Jeremiah were fulfilled by the issuance of Cyrus's decree? Jer. 25:11, 12; 29:10.

NOTE.—"Since the Babylonian captivity had begun in 605 B.C. (see on Dan. 1:1), the 70 years of Jeremiah's prophecies were due to expire in 536, according to inclusive reckoning (see Vol. II, p. 136). Therefore if the decree of Cyrus was issued in the summer or autumn of 537, and the Jews probably returned to their homeland in the spring of the following year, 536, this would fulfill the prophecies of Jeremiah." —*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* on Ezra 1:1.

7. Shortly before the issuance of the decree, who was studying Jeremiah's prophecies? Dan. 9:1, 2.

NOTE.—"Often had Daniel and his companions gone over these and similar prophecies outlining God's purpose for His people." —*Prophets and Kings,* page 553.

"Still burdened in behalf of Israel, Daniel studied anew the prophecies of Jeremiah. They were very plain—so plain that he understood by these testimonies recorded in books 'the number of the years, where-

Lack of faith in God's promises caused many Jews in Babylon to remain there instead of returning to Jerusalem.

of the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.' "—*Ibid.*, p. 554.

8. In view of the prospect of a speedy fulfillment of God's promise, how did Daniel seek to remove every hindrance to a realization of the promise? Dan. 9:4-6, 20.

NOTE.—"With faith founded on the sure word of prophecy, Daniel pleaded with the Lord for the speedy fulfillment of these promises. He pleaded for the honor of God to be preserved. In his petition he identified himself fully with those who had fallen short of the divine purpose, confessing their sins as his own."—*Prophets and Kings,* pages 554, 555.

The Call to Come Out of Babylon

9. What prediction concerning Babylon's fall had Isaiah made? Isa. 21:9.

10. What message had Jeremiah directed to God's people in view of the ultimate fall of Babylon? Jer. 51:6, 8.

11. How many responded to the decree? Ezra 1:5; 2:64, 65.

NOTE.—"Only a comparative minority of the exiles returned. Even many of the clans of Judah and Benjamin chose to remain in the land of their adoption. Many had come to honor and wealth in Babylonia, as cuneiform records reveal, and were unwilling to forsake all they had acquired by hard labor through the years in exchange for an uncertain future in desolate Judea."—*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* on Ezra 1:5.

"Under the favor shown them by Cyrus, nearly fifty thousand of the children of the captivity had taken advantage of the decree permitting their return. These, however, in comparison with the hundreds of thousands scattered throughout the provinces of Medo-Persia, were but a mere remnant. The great majority of the Israelites had chosen to remain in the land of their exile rather than undergo the hardships of the return journey and the reestablishment of their desolated cities and homes." "It was those 'whose spirit God had raised' who had returned under the decrees of Cyrus."—*Prophets and Kings,* pages 598, 599.

12. How does God apply His call to come out of ancient Babylon to the people in modern Babylon? Rev. 18: 1-4.

NOTE.—"No longer have the hosts of evil power to keep the church captive; for 'Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city,' which hath 'made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication;' and to spiritual Israel is given the message, 'Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.' (Revelation 14: 8; 18:4.) As the captive exiles heeded the message, Flee out of the midst of Babylon,' (Jeremiah 51:6) and were restored to the Land of Promise, so those who fear God today are heeding the message to withdraw from spiritual Babylon, and soon they are to stand as trophies of divine grace in the earth made new, the heavenly Canaan."—*Prophets and Kings,* page 715.

The Sacrificial System Restored

MEMORY VERSE: "And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because He is good, for His mercy endureth forever toward Israel." Ezra 3:11, first part.

STUDY HELPS: "Prophets and Kings," pages 560-566; "The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary," on Scripture references; Lesson Help in "Review and Herald" of March 31.

DAILY STUDY ASSIGNMENT AND RECORD

	Check Here
Sabbath afternoon: General survey.	☐
Sunday: Introduction; Questions 1, 2.	☐
Monday: Questions 3-7.	☐
Tuesday: Questions 8, 9; begin reading from Study Helps.	☐
Wednesday: Questions 10-13.	☐
Thursday: Read further from Study Helps.	☐
Friday: Review entire lesson.	☐

Lesson Outline

Introduction

I. Arrival at Jerusalem

1. Civil and religious leaders named. Ezra 3:2, first part; Haggai 1:14.
2. Thanksgiving service. Ezra 2:68, 69.

II. Offerings and Feasts Reinstated

3. Gathering at Jerusalem. Ezra 3:1.
4. Altar built. Ezra 3:2, second part.
5. Daily sacrifices offered. Ezra 3:3.
6. Feast of Tabernacles observed. Ezra 3:4.
7. Daily sacrifices continued. Ezra 3:5, 6.

III. Foundation of Temple Laid

8. Preparations for rebuilding. Ezra 3:7-9.
9. Foundation laid. Ezra 3:10, 11, first part.

IV. Mixed Reactions

10. People's response to laying of foundation. Ezra 3:11, last part.
11. Response of those who had seen first house. Ezra 3:12.
12. Confusion of mixed reactions. Ezra 3:13.
13. Day of small things. Zech. 4:10.

THE LESSON

Introduction

The long journey of some 1,000 miles from Babylon to Jerusalem was accomplished in safety. "The time of departure was probably the spring of 536 B.C., . . . and perhaps Jerusalem was reached in the summer of the same year. Eighty years later it took Ezra and his caravan almost four months to reach Jerusalem (ch. 7:8, 9; 8:31), and it is reasonable to think that Zerubbabel's journey lasted as long as that of Ezra."—*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* on Ezra 2:68.

With courage the returned exiles set about to establish themselves in their new home. When the seventh month (about October) drew near they assembled at Jerusalem.

Arrival at Jerusalem

1. Who were the civil and religious leaders of the returned exiles? Ezra 3:2, first part; Haggai 1:14.

NOTE.—"*Haggai* (ch. 1:1) speaks of Zerubbabel, a grandson of King Jehoiachin, as governor of Judah. Cyrus thus appointed the descendant of a former king of Judah to rule in the name of the Persian king, a choice with which Cyrus could expect the Jews to be pleased. They would naturally accord more willing service to one of their own princes than to a foreigner.

"*Jeshua* . . . is the Aramaic form of the Hebrew name usually translated 'Joshua.' This Jeshua was the spiritual leader of the returning exiles. . . . He was a direct descendant of Aaron, through his father Jozadak, high priest at the time of Nebuchadnezzar's captivity (1 Chron. 6:3-15; Ezra 3:2). Jeshua was probably born in exile, since he lived to see the completion of the temple 20 years after the return to Jerusalem.

"Thus, two men of the old Jewish nobility led out in the restoration of Judah, one a descendant of the former reigning house as the appointed political leader, and the other a son of the last precaptivity high priest as spiritual head."—*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* on Ezra 2:2.

2. After their arrival at Jerusalem, what did some of the chiefs of the fathers first do? Ezra 2:68, 69.

NOTE.—"Arriving at the site of the former temple, the members of the expedition conducted a thanksgiving service in which the heads of families and the people offered gifts for the planned reconstruction of the temple building to the sum of 61,000 drams of gold (about $300,000) and 5,000 silver minas (about $52,950). This was certainly a remarkable sum for a group of people who had but recently regained liberty. A spirit of liberality must have taken hold of them like that which gripped the people at the building of the tabernacle at Sinai (see Ex. 36:5-7). They knew how God had fulfilled His promises through the prophets, and were willing to make a sacrifice to re-establish the temple and its service.

"God has ever provided His people with opportunities to give of the means entrusted to them. There is no better cure for the spirit of selfishness that naturally infects the human heart than to respond 'freely' to calls to advance the cause of God in the earth and to help their fellow men. Those who truly love God will cultivate the spirit of liberality (see 2 Cor. 9:6, 7)."—*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* on Ezra 2:68.

Offerings and Feasts Reinstated

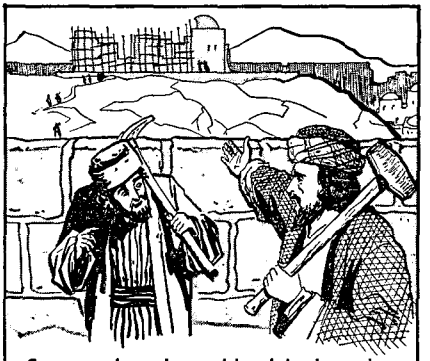
3. What did the children of Israel do when the seventh month drew near? Ezra 3:1.

NOTE.—"Shortly after their arrival in Palestine, probably in the summer of 536 B.C., the newly returned exiles assembled at Jerusalem to inaugurate the new temple service. This gathering took place at the end of the sixth month, as a comparison of v. 1 with v. 6 shows. The 7th month (Tishri) was one of the most sacred months of the entire Jewish religious year. The first day of that month was New Year's Day of the civil calendar (see Vol. II, p. 110). The month began with a blowing of trumpets and a holy convocation (Lev. 23:24; see Vol. II, p. 106). Ten days later came the solemn Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:27), followed almost immediately by the Feast of Tabernacles, from the 15th to the 22nd day of the same month (Lev. 23:34-36)."—*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* on Ezra 3:1.

4. What was the first step in the re-establishment of the sacrificial service? Ezra 3:2, second part.

5. What type of offerings were the first to be presented? Ezra 3:3. Compare Ex. 29:38-42.

NOTE.—One of the most important services of the ancient tabernacle and temple ritual was the daily burnt offering. "Every



Criticism and complaining delayed the divine plan of completing the Lord's house.

2960-3

morning and evening a lamb of a year old was burned upon the altar, with its appropriate meat offering, thus symbolizing the daily consecration of the nation to Jehovah, and their constant dependence upon the atoning blood of Christ."—*Patriarchs and Prophets,* page 352.

6. What feast did they observe? Ezra 3:4. Compare Lev. 23:34-36.

NOTE.—"In the seventh month came the Feast of Tabernacles, or of ingathering. This feast acknowledged God's bounty in the products of the orchard, the olive grove, and the vineyard. It was the crowning festal gathering of the year. The land had yielded its increase, the harvests had been gathered into the granaries, the fruits, the oil, and the wine had been stored, the first fruits had been reserved, and now the people came with their tributes of thanksgiving to God, who had thus richly blessed them. . . .

"Like the Passover, the Feast of Tabernacles was commemorative. In memory of their pilgrim life in the wilderness the people were now to leave their houses, and dwell in booths, or arbors, formed from the green branches."—*Patriarchs and Prophets,* page 540.

7. What sacrifices were continued? Ezra 3:5, 6.

NOTE.—"The setting up of the altar of daily burnt offerings greatly cheered the faithful remnant. Heartily they entered into the preparations necessary for the rebuilding of the temple, gathering courage as these preparations advanced from month to month."—*Prophets and Kings,* page 560.

Foundation of Temple Laid

8. What steps were taken to start the work of rebuilding the temple? Ezra 3:7-9.

NOTE.—"The workmen engaged in the preparation of the building material, found among the ruins some of the immense stones brought to the temple site in the days of Solomon. These were made ready for use, and much new material was provided; and soon the work was advanced to the point where the foundation stone must be laid."—*Prophets and Kings,* page 563.

9. What ceremony accompanied the laying of the foundation of the temple? Ezra 3:10, 11, first part.

Mixed Reactions

10. How did the people respond? Ezra 3:11, last part.

NOTE.—"This praise and thanksgiving, we have no need to say, was entirely appropriate. The house upon which their eyes rested was of sufficient consequence for the Lord to send His word again and again to encourage the builders. The Lord gives His servants words to speak; and this gratitude all should have . . . expressed when they saw that the foundation of the house . . . was laid."—Ellen G. White supplement in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* vol. 3, p. 1133.

11. What mixed reaction came from among those who had seen the first house? Ezra 3:12.

NOTE.—"But there came another difficulty. Lamentation and weeping and mourning were heard because the temple was not outwardly so glorious as the first. There were those who used their conversational powers to talk of the inferiority of the building to the one built by Solomon. Mingled with music and singing, with rejoicing and praise to God, was an inharmonious sound, not of joy or praise or thanksgiving, but of dissatisfaction."—*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* vol. 3, p. 1134.

"It was natural that sadness should fill the hearts of these aged men, as they thought of the results of long-continued impenitence. Had they and their generation obeyed God, and carried out His purpose for Israel, the temple built by Solomon would not have been destroyed and the captivity would not have been necessary. . . .

"God had moved upon the heart of Cyrus to aid them in rebuilding the temple, and this should have called forth expressions of profound gratitude. But some failed of discerning God's opening providences. Instead of rejoicing, they cherished thoughts of discontent and discouragement."—*Prophets and Kings,* page 564.

12. What confusion resulted from this demonstration? Ezra 3:13.

NOTE.—"The murmuring and complaining, and the unfavorable comparisons made, had a depressing influence on the minds of many and weakened the hands of the builders. The workmen were led to question whether they should proceed with the erection of a building that at the beginning was so freely criticized and was the cause of so much lamentation.

"Could those who failed to rejoice at the laying of the foundation stone of the temple have foreseen the results of their lack of faith on that day, they would have been appalled. Little did they realize the weight of their words of disapproval and disappointment; little did they know how much their expressed dissatisfaction would delay the completion of the Lord's house."—*Prophets and Kings,* pages 564, 565.

13. What should the worker for God not despise? Zech. 4:10.

NOTE.—"The way of the world is to begin with pomp and boasting. God's way is to make the day of small things the beginning of the glorious triumph of truth and righteousness."—*Prophets and Kings,* page 595.

Lesson 4, for April 23, 1960

The Rebuilding Hindered

MEMORY VERSE: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways." Haggai 1:7.

STUDY HELPS: "Prophets and Kings," pages 567-574; "The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary," on Scripture references; Lesson Help in "Review and Herald" of April 7.

DAILY STUDY ASSIGNMENT AND RECORD

	Check Here
Sabbath afternoon: General survey.	☐
Sunday: Introduction; Questions 1-3.	☐
Monday: Questions 4-7.	☐
Tuesday: Questions 8-10; begin reading from Study Helps.	☐
Wednesday: Questions 11-13; read further from Study Helps.	☐
Thursday: Finish reading Study Helps.	☐
Friday: Review entire lesson.	☐

Lesson Outline

Introduction

I. The Request of the Samaritans

1. The request presented. Ezra 4:1, 2, first part.
2. The Samaritans identified. Ezra 4: 2, last part; 2 Kings 17:24-29.
3. The request denied. Ezra 4:3.

II. The Rebuilding Halted

4. The work hindered. Ezra 4:4-6.
5. The letter to Artaxerxes. Ezra 4: 7-16.
6. The king's reply. Ezra 4:17-22.
7. The work brought to a standstill. Ezra 4:23, 24.

III. Encouragement Through Prophets

8. Haggai and Zechariah sent. Ezra 5:1; Haggai 1:1; Zech. 1:1.
9. The Jews' false conclusion. Haggai 1:2.
10. God's house neglected. Haggai 1: 3, 4.
11. Impoverishment because of neglect. Haggai 1:6.
12. God's appeal. Haggai 1:5, 7.
13. Purpose of afflictions. Haggai 1:8-11.

THE LESSON

Introduction

The laying of the foundation of the temple aroused the determined opposition of the enemy. "All during the reigns of Cyrus and his successor, Cambyses, the enemies of the Jews endeavored to secure a royal edict to stop this work (Ezra 4:5). However, the Lord interposed in behalf of His people (see on Dan. 10:12, 13), and prevented these enemies from succeeding. The way thus remained open for the returned exiles to press forward in the reconstruction of the house of the Lord.

"However, after such a promising start, work on the second temple gradually slowed down until it virtually ceased, owing mainly to the continued opposition and hindrance of the Samaritans (see Ezra 4:1-5). The discouraged exiles turned to working their own plots of land and to erecting living quarters for themselves. Little did those who mourned when the foundation of the second temple was laid (see on Ezra 3:12), realize how far their example would go in bringing discouragement to all who were endeavoring to restore the house of God." —*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* vol. 4, p. 1073.

The Request of the Samaritans

1. When the adversaries of the Jews heard that the temple was being rebuilt, what request did they make? Ezra 4:1, 2, first part.

NOTE.—"Only a remnant had chosen to return from Babylon; and now, as they undertake a work seemingly beyond their strength, their nearest neighbors come with an offer of help. The Samaritans refer to their worship of the true God, and express a desire to share the privileges and blessings connected with the temple service. 'We seek your God, as ye do,' they declared. 'Let us build with you.' "—*Prophets and Kings,* page 568.

2. Who were these adversaries? Ezra 4:2, last part; 2 Kings 17:24-29.

NOTE.—"Close by the Israelites who had set themselves to the task of rebuilding the temple, dwelt the Samaritans, a mixed race that had sprung up through the intermarriage of heathen colonists from the provinces of Assyria with the remnant of the ten tribes which had been left in Samaria and Galilee. In later years the Samaritans claimed to worship the true God, but in heart and practice they were idolaters. It is true, they held that their idols were but to remind them of the living God, the Ruler of the universe; nevertheless the people were prone to reverence graven images."—*Prophets and Kings,* page 567.

3. How did the Jews respond to the request of the Samaritans? Ezra 4:3.

NOTE.—" 'Thou shalt make no covenant with them,' God had said; and those who had recently rededicated themselves to the Lord at the altar set up before the ruins of His temple, realized that the line of demarcation between His people and the world is ever to be kept unmistakably distinct. They refused to enter into alliance with those who, though familiar with the requirements of God's law, would not yield to its claims.

"The principles set forth in Deuteronomy for the instruction of Israel are to be followed by God's people to the end of time. True prosperity is dependent on the continuance of our covenant relationship with God. Never can we afford to compromise principle by entering into alliance with those who do not fear Him."—*Prophets and Kings,* page 570.

The Rebuilding Halted

4. When refused participation in the rebuilding, what did these adversaries do? Ezra 4:4-6.

5. What were the contents of a letter they wrote to King Artaxerxes? Ezra 4:7-16.

6. What was the king's reply? Ezra 4:17-22.

7. When the adversaries of the Jews received the king's letter, what did they do? What was the effect upon the building program? Ezra 4: 23, 24.

NOTE.—"The opposition of their enemies was strong and determined, and gradually the builders lost heart. Some could not forget the scene at the laying of the cornerstone, when many had given expression to their lack of confidence in the enterprise. And as the Samaritans grew more bold, many of the Jews questioned whether, after all, the time had come to rebuild. The feeling soon became widespread. Many of the workmen, discouraged and disheartened, returned to their homes to take up the ordinary pursuits of life."—*Prophets and Kings,* page 572.

Encouragement Through Prophets

8. In the second year of Darius, what prophets did the Lord raise up to encourage the builders? Ezra 5:1; Haggai 1:1; Zech. 1:1.

NOTE.—"But even this dark hour was not without hope for those whose trust was in God. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah were raised up to meet the crisis. In stirring testimonies these appointed messengers revealed to the people the cause of their troubles. The lack of temporal prosperity was the result of a neglect to put God's interests first, the prophets declared. Had the Israelites honored God, had they shown Him due respect and courtesy, by making the building of His house their first work, they would have invited His presence and blessing."—*Prophets and Kings,* pages 573, 574.

9. Because of continued opposition, to what conclusion had the people come? Haggai 1:2.

NOTE.—"The expression, 'This people say,' is significant. In the hour of their opportunity, the Israelites had not shown themselves willing. Prompt obedience is expected of those whom the Lord chooses and leads. Pleas for delay are a dishonor to God. And yet those who choose to follow their own way, often frame ingenious excuses in self-justification. Thus the Israelites declared that they had begun to rebuild, but that they were broken off in their work because of the hindrances devised by their enemies. These hindrances they reasoned were an indication that it was not the proper time to rebuild. They declared that the Lord had interposed difficulties to reprove their hot haste. This is

why, in a communication through His prophet, He referred to them not as 'My people,' but as 'this people.' "—Ellen G. White supplement in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* vol. 4, p. 1175.

10. Instead of building the Lord's house, what had the people been doing? Haggai 1:3, 4.

NOTE.—"The Israelites had no real excuse for leaving their work on the temple. The time when the most serious objections were raised, was the time for them to persevere in building. . . .

"This history will be repeated. There will be religious failures because men do not have faith. When they look at the things that are seen, impossibilities appear; but God can lead them step by step in the course He desires them to take. His work will advance only as His servants move forward by faith. While they may be called upon to pass through trying times, yet they should ever remember that they are contending with a weakened, beaten foe. God's people will finally triumph over every power of darkness."—Ellen G. White supplement in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* vol. 4, p. 1175.

11. Because of their neglect of the Lord's house, what experience had the Lord permitted to come to them? Haggai 1:6.

NOTE.—"The house where God is worshiped should be in accordance with His character and majesty. There are small churches that ever will be small because they place their own interests above the interests of God's cause. While they have large, convenient houses for themselves, and are constantly improving their premises, they are content to have a most unsuitable place for the worship of God, where His holy presence is to dwell."—*Testimonies,* vol. 5, pp. 268, 269.

12. In view of the situation, what pointed appeal did the Lord make to His people? Haggai 1:5, 7.

Discouragement can stop the progress of God's work today as it stopped the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls.
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NOTE.—"Too often we are prone to make 'all these [material] things' the main object of our search in life, in the vain hope that God will be indulgent with us, and, at the close of life's journey, add to our brief span of threescore and ten years the eternal kingdom."—*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* on Matt. 6:33.

13. Through what means had the Lord sought to arouse the people to a sense of their responsibility? Haggai 1:8-11.

NOTE.—"There are many who urge that they cannot do more for God's cause than they now do; but they do not give according to their ability. The Lord sometimes opens the eyes blinded by selfishness by simply reducing their income to the amount they are willing to give. Horses are found dead in the field or stable, houses or barns are destroyed by fire, or crops fail. In many cases God tests man with blessings, and if unfaithfulness is manifested in rendering to Him tithes and offerings, His blessing is withdrawn. 'He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly.' By the mercies of Christ and the riches of His goodness, and for the honor of truth and religion, we beseech you who are followers of Christ to dedicate yourselves and your property anew to God."—*Testimonies,* vol. 4, p. 484.

Rebuilding Resumed

MEMORY VERSE: "Be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts." Haggai 2:4.

STUDY HELPS: "Prophets and Kings," pages 575-578; "The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary," on Scripture references; Lesson Help in "Review and Herald" of April 14.

DAILY STUDY ASSIGNMENT AND RECORD

	Check Here
Sabbath afternoon: General survey.	☐
Sunday: Introduction; Questions 1-4.	☐
Monday: Questions 5-7; begin reading from Study Helps.	☐
Tuesday: Questions 8-10.	☐
Wednesday: Questions 11-13; read further from Study Helps.	☐
Thursday: Finish reading Study Helps.	☐
Friday: Review entire lesson.	☐

Lesson Outline

Introduction

I. The Work Started Again

1. The Lord's command heeded. Haggai 1:12; Ezra 5:1, 2.
2. Divine promise to rebuilders. Haggai 1:13.
3. The Lord's promise today. Matt. 28:20.
4. Spirit of leaders stirred. Haggai 1: 14, 15.

II. Comparisons With Former House

5. Glory of new house inferior. Haggai 2:1-3.
6. Encouragement despite inferiority. Haggai 2:4, 5.
7. Messiah to come to new temple. Haggai 2:6-9.

III. Correction and Reproof

8. Holiness not transmitted. Haggai 2:11, 12; Ezek. 14:20.
9. Nation unclean. Haggai 2:13, 14.
10. Attempts to arouse nation. Haggai 2:15-17.

IV. Assurance of Blessing

11. Blessing promised. Haggai 2:18, 19.
12. Glorious prospect. Haggai 2:20-22.
13. Promise to Christians. Haggai 2:23.

THE LESSON

Introduction

"In its entirety, the message of Haggai met with a more prompt and eager response on the part of both leaders and people than that of any other prophet. In contrast, that of Jeremiah was utterly and openly repudiated. Most of the prophets, in fact, encountered opposition ranging all the way from apathy through contempt to persecution. But Haggai stands forth as the most successful of the prophets, if immediate compliance with his message may be considered the measure of a prophet's success. The noble example of leaders and people is eminently worthy of emulation today.

"It was the spirit of hearty co-operation that led, within a remarkably short time, to the completion of the Lord's house. The same spirit will, in our day, lead to the completion of the spiritual house of God and to the establishment of His eternal kingdom (1 Peter 2:5; cf. Matt. 24:14). Had the spirit manifested by the Jews in Haggai's day continued, the glorious prom-

ises made to the fathers by the prophets would soon have met their fulfillment and Messiah would have come (PK 703, 704) and died and begun His eternal reign (see Vol. IV, pp. 27-32). Haggai's message to the church today is not only one of warning and admonition but also one of great encouragement."—*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* vol. 4, p. 1074.

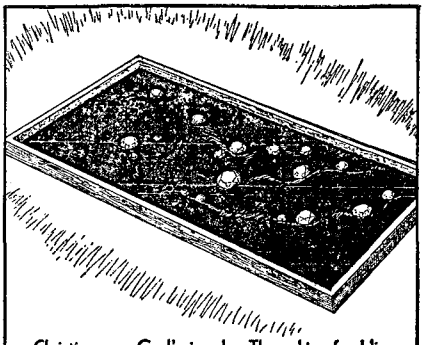
The Work Started Again

1. How did the people respond to Haggai's appeal to build the house of God? Haggai 1:12; Ezra 5:1, 2.

NOTE.—"With fields lying waste, with their scant store of provisions rapidly failing, and surrounded as they were by unfriendly peoples, the Israelites nevertheless moved forward by faith in response to the call of God's messengers, and labored diligently to restore the ruined temple. It was a work requiring firm reliance upon God. As the people endeavored to do their part, and sought for a renewal of God's grace in heart and life, message after message was given them through Haggai and Zechariah, with assurances that their faith would be richly rewarded and that the word of God concerning the future glory of the temple whose walls they were rearing would not fail."—*Prophets and Kings,* page 577.

2. As soon as the people responded, what comforting message did the Lord send them? Haggai 1:13.

NOTE.—"It was after Haggai's second message that the people felt that the Lord was in earnest with them. They dared not disregard the repeated warning that their prosperity and the blessing of God were dependent upon their entire obedience to the instructions given them. As soon as they decided that they would do the words of the Lord, His messages of reproof changed to words of encouragement. O how merciful a God we have!"—Ellen G. White supplement in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* vol. 4, p. 1176.



Christians are God's jewels. They shine for Him with the light of His love.

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3. What similar message of encouragement is given to those who labor in the gospel harvest? Matt. 28:20.

NOTE.—"Christ did not tell His disciples that their work would be easy. He showed them the vast confederacy of evil arrayed against them. They would have to fight 'against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.' Ephesians 6:12. But they would not be left to fight alone. He assured them that He would be with them; and that if they would go forth in faith, they should move under the shield of Omnipotence. He bade them be brave and strong; for One mightier than angels would be in their ranks—the General of the armies of heaven."—*The Acts of the Apostles,* page 29.

4. When the Lord stirred the hearts of the leaders and people, what was the result? Haggai 1:14, 15.

Comparisons With Former House

5. How did the temple then being built compare with Solomon's temple? Haggai 2:1-3.

6. What message of encouragement was given the leaders and people? What would be the basis of their strength? Haggai 2:4, 5.

7. What did Haggai predict concerning the house then under construction? Haggai 2:6-9.

NOTE.—"As the people endeavored to do their part, and sought for a renewal of God's grace in heart and life, message after message was given them through Haggai and Zechariah, with assurances that their faith would be richly rewarded and that the word of God concerning the future glory of the temple whose walls they were rearing would not fail. In this very building would appear, in the fullness of time, the Desire of all nations as the Teacher and Saviour of mankind."—*Prophets and Kings,* page 577.

"The second temple was not honored with the cloud of Jehovah's glory, but with the living presence of One in whom dwelt the fullness of the Godhead bodily—who was God Himself manifest in the flesh. The 'Desire of all nations' had indeed come to His temple when the Man of Nazareth taught and healed in the sacred courts."—*The Great Controversy,* page 24.

Correction and Reproof

8. By what illustration from the ancient Levitical code did Haggai show that mere ritual forms cannot impart holiness? Haggai 2:11, 12. Compare Ezek. 14:20.

NOTE.—The lesson is clear. The offering of sacrifices, such as were then offered on the rebuilt altar, did not effect a cleansing of the soul from sin. Only thorough repentance and renewal by divine grace could accomplish this. The people were not to depend for holiness upon the external ceremonies of the ritual system.

9. By what illustration did Haggai show that the people were sinful? Haggai 2:13, 14.

NOTE.—"In order that the builders of the second temple might make no mistakes, the Lord plainly instructed them, in the form of a parable, regarding the nature of service acceptable in His sight. . . .

"A soul corrupted by sin is represented by the figure of a dead body in a state of putrefaction. All the washings and sprinklings enjoined in the ceremonial law were lessons in parables, teaching the necessity of a work of regeneration in the inward heart for the purification of the soul dead in trespasses and sins, and also the necessity of the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit."—Ellen G. White supplement in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* vol. 4, p. 1176.

10. How did the Lord seek to arouse them to a sense of their true condition? Haggai 2:15-17.

Assurance of Blessing

11. Now that the people had laid hold of the work of God, what did the Lord promise to do? Haggai 2: 18, 19.

NOTE.—"The message of counsel and reproof given through Haggai was taken to heart by the leaders and people of Israel. They felt that God was in earnest with them. They dared not disregard the repeated instruction sent them—that their prosperity, both temporal and spiritual, was dependent on faithful obedience to God's commands."—*Prophets and Kings,* page 575.

12. How would God deal with the heathen nations that would oppose His plan? Haggai 2:20-22.

NOTE.—The prophet envisioned most determined opposition by surrounding nations against the rebuilders. In part this was fulfilled in the opposition of the Samaritans. However, if the Jews had earnestly prosecuted the work of God their obedience would have brought spiritual and temporal

prosperity. Then, should the nations of earth band together to crush the thriving state, God would have mightily intervened.

13. What promise made to Zerubbabel may we apply also to our own experience? Haggai 2:23.

NOTE.—"This personal word to Zerubbabel has been left on record for the encouragement of God's children in every age. God has a purpose in sending trial to His children. He never leads them otherwise than they would choose to be led if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose that they are fulfilling."—*Prophets and Kings,* page 578.

"God will not suffer one of His true-hearted workers to be left alone to struggle against great odds and be overcome. He preserves as a precious jewel everyone whose life is hid with Christ in God. Of every such an one He says, 'I . . . will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee.' "—Ellen G. White supplement in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* vol. 4, p. 1177.

Lesson 6, for May 7, 1960

Zechariah Encourages the Builders

MEMORY VERSE: "The eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they could not cause them to cease." Ezra 5:5.

STUDY HELPS: "Prophets and Kings," pages 578-581; "The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary," on Scripture references; Lesson Help in "Review and Herald" of April 21.

DAILY STUDY ASSIGNMENT AND RECORD

	Check Here
Sabbath afternoon: General survey.	☐
Sunday: Introduction; Questions 1-3.	☐
Monday: Questions 4-6.	☐
Tuesday: Questions 7-9; begin reading from Study Helps.	☐
Wednesday: Questions 10-14.	☐
Thursday: Finish reading Study Helps.	☐
Friday: Review entire lesson.	☐

Lesson Outline

Introduction

I. Attempts to Hinder the Work

1. The enemy investigates the work. Ezra 5:3.
2. Further questioning. Ezra 5:4.
3. The work progresses despite opposition. Ezra 5:5.

II. Zechariah's First Vision

4. The word of the Lord to Zechariah. Zech. 1:7.
5. The rider and the horses. Zech 1:8.
6. Symbolism explained. Zech. 1:9, 10.
7. Report of couriers. Zech. 1:11.
8. God's displeasure at apathy of the nation. Zech. 1:12-15.
9. Promises concerning Jerusalem. Zech. 1:16, 17.

III. Zechariah's Second Vision

10. The four horns. Zech 1:18.
11. The symbolism explained. Zech. 1:19.
12. The four artisans. Zech. 1:20.
13. Symbolism explained. Zech. 1:21.

IV. Final Victory Over Opposition

14. Final victory assured. Matt. 16:18; Rev. 19:19-21.

Introduction

Sacred history reveals that during major epochs and crises, or whenever a particular need arose, God sent a prophet to bring encouragement or rebuke to His people and to tell them specifically what the divine requirements were under the new circumstances that had arisen. Such a prophet was Zechariah, who was sent to minister to the discouraged builders of the temple.

Because many of Zechariah's messages were given in the form of a symbol or prophecy, some have regarded them as being somewhat vague and obscure and consequently have given them little attention.

However, an understanding of the historical background of the messages will remove much of this obscurity. This background has been set forth in our Sabbath school lessons thus far this quarter. Thus, it is clear to whom Zechariah addressed his messages, what their needs and problems were, and what the Lord wished Zechariah to accomplish.

Furthermore, many students of the Bible make the mistake of trying to identify every detail of a parable or symbolic prophecy. Many of these features are needed simply to round out the prophetic narrative. In general, it is a safe rule to attach interpretative significance only to those features that are clearly declared to have such by the divine interpreter of the prophecy or by some other inspired writer. It is important that the central teaching, objective, or purpose of the prophecy or parable be ascertained.

Attempts to Hinder the Work

1. While the work of rebuilding the temple was in progress, what delegation arrived to investigate the work? What inquiry did they make? Ezra 5:3.

NOTE.—"The reason for this visit seems to have been another complaint made by the enemies of the Jews. Tatnai, apparantly a conscientious Persian official, had decided to make a personal investigation before passing on the complaint. It is also possible, however, that Tatnai came to Jerusalem, not as the result of a complaint concerning the renewed building activities at the site of the temple, but on a routine tour of inspection, perhaps his first, following appointment to the office of deputy satrap of 'Beyond the River.' Arriving in Jerusalem and observing the building program in progress, he demanded to know the authority for it. It may seem strange today that he asked for the 'command' for rebuilding the temple rather than the 'permit,' but in the official language of the times a 'permit' was a 'command.' "—*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* on Ezra 5:3.

2. What further inquiry was made? Ezra 5:4 (see Revised Standard Version).

NOTE.—The "we" should most probably read "they," in harmony with the Septuagint, the pre-Christian translation of the Old Testament into Greek, thus making the latter part of the verse a request by the delegation for the names of the builders.

3. Despite these renewed attempts to hinder the work, what did the elders of the Jews do? Ezra 5:5.

NOTE.—"The officers were answered so wisely that they decided to write a letter to Darius Hystaspes, then the ruler of Medo-Persia, directing his attention to the original decree made by Cyrus, which commanded that the house of God at Jerusalem be rebuilt, and that the expenses for the same be paid from the king's treasury."—*Prophets and Kings,* page 578.

"For months before this decree [Darius's] was made, the Israelites had kept on working by faith, the prophets of God still helping them by means of timely messages, through which the divine purpose for Israel was kept before the workers."—*Ibid.,* pp. 579, 580.

Zechariah's First Vision

4. Through whom did the Lord send renewed messages of encouragement? Zech. 1:7.

NOTE.—"Two months after Haggai's last recorded message was delivered, Zechariah had a series of visions regarding the work of God in the earth. These messages, given in the form of parables and symbols, came at a time of great uncertainty and anxiety, and were of peculiar significance to the men who were advancing the name of the God of Israel. It seemed to the leaders as if the permission granted the Jews to rebuild was about to be withdrawn; the future appeared very dark. God saw that His people were in need of being sustained and cheered by a revelation of His infinite compassion and love."—*Prophets and Kings,* page 580.

5. In his first vision what did Zechariah see? Zech. 1:8.

NOTE.—"The first vision was designed to give confidence in God's gracious purpose to restore His people. It gave assurance that the Gentile nations would be overthrown; and that despite the present state of Israel, God's merciful purpose would be carried out on condition the people do their part."—*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* on Zech. 1:8.

6. What were these horses and riders declared to be? Zech 1:9, 10.

NOTE.—"These couriers are represented as giving a report to the great Ruler of the universe concerning affairs on earth, particularly with respect to Israel as God's chosen people suffering captivity and oppression at the hands of the heathen nations round about. They have already accomplished their mission and are ready to report."—*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* on Zech. 1:10.

7. What report did the couriers bring as to conditions in the earth? Zech. 1:11.

As prophets encouraged Israel in building the nation, so the spirit of prophecy is the blueprint to help build the remnant church for God.

NOTE.—"God's program seems to be stalemated. The nations are doing nothing to bring relief and help to the people of God. It appears, in fact, that the permission to rebuild is about to be recalled." —*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* on Zech. 1:11.

8. What was God's attitude toward the nations who did nothing to help forward the work of rehabilitation, but rather added to the affliction? Zech 1:12-15.

NOTE.—"Although God had punished the Israelites because of their sins, He had been only 'a little displeased' and had planned to limit the judgments. On the other hand, the 'heathen,' going further than God intended, essayed to put the Israelites permanently under subjection."—*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* on Zech. 1:15.

9. What comforting promise was made concerning Jerusalem and its temple? Zech. 1:16, 17.

NOTE.—"Verses 16, 17 show God's gracious designs for the remnant. The predictions were fulfilled in part. The temple was rebuilt and Jerusalem restored. But

the prosperity here indicated was never fully realized. The people failed to fulfill the spiritual conditions upon which their temporal prosperity was based. Nevertheless the opportunity was theirs. The vision was designed to offer encouragement and to present a strong inducement to them to take advantage of their neglected privileges. . . . God's plan for Israel, temporarily interrupted by the captivity, was now to go forward again, and Israel was to be restored to the privileges and responsibilities of the covenant relationship."—*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* on Zech. 1:16.

Zechariah's Second Vision

10. In his next vision, what did Zechariah see? Zech. 1:18.

11. What were these horns declared to be? Zech. 1:19.

NOTE.—"The second vision (vs. 18-21; in the Hebrew, ch. 2:1-4) shows the means by which God planned to fulfill His purpose. The horns are clearly defined as the powers that had 'scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem' (v. 19; see PK 581). The number 'four' may denote universality as suggested by the four points of the compass (see Dan. 8:8; 11:4) to which Israel had been scattered."—*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* on Zech. 1:18.

12. What was Zechariah next shown? Zech. 1:20.

13. What were these artisans declared to be? Zech. 1:21.

NOTE.—"Many conjectures have been made as to the identity of these four artisans. The number 'four' may denote simply 'the four corners of the earth' whither the outcasts of Israel had been scattered (Isa. 11:12). The artisans represented 'the agencies used by the Lord in restoring His people and the house of His worship' (PK 581)."—*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* on Zech. 1:20.

Final Victory Over Opposition

14. What assurance is given that the enemy will not be able to prevail in his opposition to the building of the Christian church? Matt. 16:18; Rev. 19:19-21.

Lesson 7, for May 14, 1960

Further Messages of Encouragement

MEMORY VERSE: "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." Zech. 4:6.

STUDY HELPS: "Prophets and Kings," pages 582-592; "Testimonies," vol. 5, pp. 467-476; "The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary," on Scripture references; Lesson Help in "Review and Herald" of April 28.

DAILY STUDY ASSIGNMENT AND RECORD

	Check Here
Sabbath afternoon: General survey.	☐
Sunday: Introduction; Questions 1-3.	☐
Monday: Questions 4-7.	☐
Tuesday: Questions 8-10; begin reading from Study Helps.	☐
Wednesday: Questions 11-13; read further from Study Helps.	☐
Thursday: Finish reading Study Helps.	☐
Friday: Review entire lesson.	☐

Lesson Outline

Introduction

I. The Third Vision

1. The man with a measuring line. Zech. 2:1.
2. The mission of the man. Zech. 2:2.
3. Symbolism explained. Zech. 2:3-5.

II. Appeal to Flee From Babylon

4. Appeal to those still in Babylon. Zech 2:6, 7.
5. God's love for His people. Zech. 2:8.
6. Israel's enemies punished. Zech. 2:9.
7. Israel's glorious future. Zech. 2: 10-13.

III. The Fourth Vision

8. Joshua, the Angel, and Satan. Zech. 3:1.
9. Satan rebuked. Zech. 3:2.
10. Joshua's filthy garments. Zech. 3: 3; Isa. 64:6.
11. Joshua's iniquity removed. Zech. 3:4, 5; Isa. 61:10.
12. Blessing to follow obedience. Zech. 3:6, 7.
13. Importance of robe. Matt. 22: 1-14.

THE LESSON

Introduction

This lesson presents more of Zechariah's prophecies. The principles set forth in the Introduction to Lesson 6 should be reviewed and applied.

One more principle should be noted. It is important to discover first what the prophetic messages meant to the people to whom they were addressed, before we make an application of them to ourselves or to our present time.

Note how this principle is set forth with regard to the instruction in the Sermon on the Mount. "Let us in imagination go back to that scene, and, as we sit with the disciples on the mountainside, enter into the thoughts and feelings that filled their hearts. Understanding what the words of Jesus meant to those who heard them, we may discern in them a new vividness and beauty, and may also gather for ourselves their deeper lessons."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing,* page 1, (1943 ed., p. 10).

The Third Vision

1. In his third vision, what did Zechariah see? Zech. 2:1.

NOTE.—"The third vision shows the triumph of God's plan. The glorious prospect here presented would have been realized by Israel if the people had fully cooperated with the program of heaven. The man with the measuring line is not identified, nor is it necessary to the understanding of the vision that he be."—*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* on Zech. 2:1.

2. What question did he raise, and how was it answered? Zech. 2:2.

3. What was the vision designed to teach? Zech. 2:3-5.

NOTE.—"God had commanded that Jerusalem be rebuilt; the vision of the measuring of the city was an assurance that He would give comfort and strength to His afflicted ones, and fulfill to them the promises of His everlasting covenant. His protecting care, He declared, would be like 'a wall of fire round about;' and through them His glory would be revealed to all the sons of men. That which He was accomplishing for His people was to be known in all the earth."—*Prophets and Kings,* page 581.

Appeal to Flee From Babylon

4. What appeal was made to those still in Babylon? Zech. 2:6, 7.

NOTE.—"How sad it is to contemplate that this touching appeal met with so little response! Had this entreaty to flee from Babylon been heeded, how different might have been the condition of the Jews in the trying times of Mordecai and Esther!"—Ellen G. White supplement in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* vol. 4, p. 1177.

5. By what striking figure did the Lord illustrate His loving solicitude for His children? Zech. 2:8.

NOTE.—"Heaven is very near those who suffer for righteousness' sake. Christ identifies His interests with the interests of His faithful people; He suffers in the person of His saints, and whoever touches His chosen ones touches Him. The power that is near to deliver from physical harm or distress is also near to save from the greater evil, making it possible for the servant of God to maintain his integrity under all circumstances, and to triumph through divine grace."—*Prophets and Kings,* page 545.

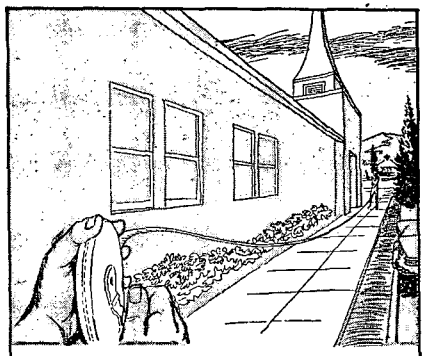
6. What was to be the fate of Israel's enemies? Zech. 2:9.

7. What glorious future did God plan for Israel? Zech. 2:10-13.

NOTE.—"The Lord's purposes for His people have ever been the same. He desires to bestow on the children of men the riches of an eternal inheritance. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. When those who choose to become obedient subjects of the Most High are finally saved in the kingdom of glory, God's purpose for mankind will have been fulfilled."—Ellen G. White supplement in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* vol. 4, p. 1177.

The Fourth Vision

8. In the scene next presented to Zechariah, what was Satan doing? Zech. 3:1.



How will the church stand the test when it is measured by God's standards?

NOTE.—"In the prophecy of Zechariah is brought to view Satan's accusing work, and the work of Christ in resisting the adversary of His people. . . .

"The people of God are here represented as a criminal on trial. Joshua, as high priest, is seeking for a blessing for his people, who are in great affliction. While he is pleading before God, Satan is standing at his right hand as his adversary. He is accusing the children of God, and making their case appear as desperate as possible. He presents before the Lord their evil-doings and their defects. He shows their faults and failures, hoping they will appear of such a character in the eyes of Christ that He will render them no help in their great need. . . .

"The work of Satan as an accuser began in heaven. This has been his work on earth ever since man's fall, and it will be his work in a special sense as we approach nearer to the close of this world's history. As he sees that his time is short, he will work with greater earnestness to deceive and destroy."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* pages 166-168.

9. As the Lord rebuked Satan, what did He declare Joshua to be? Zech. 3:2.

NOTE.—"Then the Angel, who is Christ Himself, the Saviour of sinners, puts to silence the accuser of His people. . . . Is-

rael had long remained in the furnace of affliction. Because of their sins they had been well-nigh consumed in the flame kindled by Satan and his agents for their destruction, but God had now set His hand to bring them forth. In their penitence and humiliation the compassionate Saviour will not leave His people to the cruel power of the heathen."—*Testimonies,* vol. 5, p. 469.

10. What did the condition of Joshua's garments represent? Zech. 3:3; Isa. 64:6.

NOTE.—"In filthy garments, symbolizing the sins of the people, which he [Joshua] bears as their representative, he stands before the Angel, confessing their guilt, yet pointing to their repentance and humiliation, and relying upon the mercy of a sin-pardoning Redeemer. In faith he claims the promises of God."—*Prophets and Kings,* pages 583, 584.

11. What command was given concerning Joshua, and what did it signify? Zech. 3:4, 5; Isa. 61:10.

NOTE.—His [Joshua's] own sins and those of his people were pardoned. Israel were clothed with 'change of raiment'—the righteousness of Christ imputed to them. The miter placed upon Joshua's head was such as was worn by the priests and bore the inscription, 'Holiness to the Lord,' signifying that, notwithstanding his former transgressions, he was now qualified to minister before God in His sanctuary."—*Testimonies,* vol. 5, p. 469.

12. On what conditions were future blessings based? Zech. 3:6, 7.

13. How did Jesus emphasize the importance of the robe of righteousness? Matt. 22:1-14.

NOTE.—"All the hatred and malignity of the archrebel is stirred as he beholds the evidence of Christ's supremacy, and with fiendish power and cunning he works to wrest from Him the remnant of the children of men who have accepted His salvation."—*Testimonies,* vol. 5, p. 470.

Lesson 8, for May 21, 1960

The Temple Completed

MEMORY VERSE: "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Phil. 1:6.

STUDY HELPS: "Prophets and Kings," pages 593-597; "Testimonies to Ministers," pages 509-512; "Testimonies," vol. 6, pp. 11, 12, 459-462; "The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary," on Scripture references; Lesson Help in "Review and Herald" of May 5.

DAILY STUDY ASSIGNMENT AND RECORD

Check Here

Sabbath afternoon: General survey. ☐
Sunday: Introduction; Questions 1-4. ☐
Monday: Questions 5, 6; begin reading from Study Helps. ☐
Tuesday: Questions 7-9; read further from Study helps. ☐
Wednesday: Questions 10-13. ☐
Thursday: Finish reading Study Helps. ☐
Friday: Review entire lesson. ☐

Lesson Outline

Introduction

I. The Fifth Vision

1. The candlestick. Zech. 4:1-3.
2. The symbolism explained. Zech. 4:4-6.
3. Success promised. Zech. 4:7-10.
4. The olive trees. Zech. 4:11-14.

II. The Sixth Vision

5. The flying roll. Zech. 5:1-4.

III. The Seventh Vision

6. The ephah and the woman. Zech. 5:5-11.

IV. The Eighth Vision

7. The chariots. Zech. 6:1-3.
8. The symbolism explained. Zech. 6:4-7.
9. God's will accomplished in the north country. Zech. 6:8.

V. The Temple Completed

10. The time. Ezra 6:14, 15.
11. The celebration. Ezra 6:16, 17.
12. The feasts. Ezra 6:18-22.
13. Work of grace to be completed. Phil. 1:6.

THE LESSON

Introduction

The visions of Zechariah continued to bring inspiration to the builders. They promised success—not by the power of man, but by the power of God. They warned that God would thoroughly search out iniquity and remove it from the people. At the same time He would work on foreign powers, securing their co-operation in the project.

With God thus working for His people, and the people co-operating with the divine program, the temple was completed in a remarkably short time.

The secret of success is still the same today. Trust in God and co-operation with Him bring success—neglect of these brings failure.

The Fifth Vision

1. What vision was Zechariah next shown? Zech. 4:1-3.

2. What was the vision designed to teach? Zech. 4:4-6.

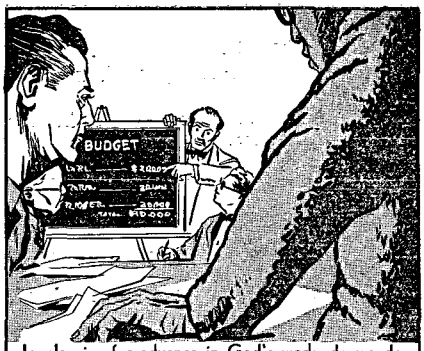
NOTE.—The work of rehabilitation in which Zerubabbel was engaged could be accomplished successfully only by the aid of divine power. The same is true in the work of spiritual rehabilitation and the advance of the gospel.

"To us is committed the arduous, but happy, glorious work of revealing Christ to those who are in darkness. We are called to proclaim the special truths for this time. For all this the outpouring of the Spirit is essential. We should pray for it. The Lord expects us to ask Him. . . .

"We cannot depend upon form or external machinery. What we need is the quickening influence of the Holy Spirit of God. 'Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.' Pray without ceasing, and watch by working in accordance with your prayers. As you pray, believe, trust in God. It is the time of the latter rain, when the Lord will give largely of His Spirit. Be fervent in prayer, and watch in the Spirit."—*Testimonies to Ministers,* pages 511, 512.

3. How were the builders assured of the successful completion of the temple project? Zech. 4:7-10.

NOTE.—"Throughout the history of God's people great mountains of difficulty, apparently insurmountable, have loomed up before those who were trying to carry out the purposes of Heaven. Such obstacles are permitted by the Lord as a test of faith. When we are hedged about on every side, this is the time above all others to



In planning for advance in God's work, do we depend on external machinery and financial gains more than on the Holy Spirit?

trust in God and in the power of His Spirit."—*Prophets and Kings,* pages 594, 595.

4. What further explanation was given of the symbolism of the vision? Zech. 4:11-14.

NOTE.—"From the two olive trees, the golden oil was emptied through golden pipes into the bowl of the candlestick and thence into the golden lamps that gave light to the sanctuary. So from the holy ones that stand in God's presence, His Spirit is imparted to human instrumentalities that are consecrated to His service. The mission of the two anointed ones is to communicate light and power to God's people. It is to receive blessing for us that they stand in God's presence. As the olive trees empty themselves into the golden pipes, so the heavenly messengers seek to communicate all that they receive from God. The whole heavenly treasure awaits our demand and reception; and as we receive the blessing, we in our turn are to impart it. Thus it is that the holy lamps are fed, and the church becomes a light bearer in the world."—*Testimonies to Ministers,* page 510.

The Sixth Vision

5. By what symbolism was the prophet shown how the Lord would search out iniquity? Zech. 5:1-4.

NOTE.—It was necessary that the rebuilders of the temple and of the new state be cleansed from sin. Only thus could Israel successfully fulfill her spiritual role as the representatives of Jehovah. The vision was a warning to those still clinging to sin, that the curse would surely overtake them. This passage is quoted in the book *Education* with the following application:

"Against every evildoer God's law utters condemnation. He may disregard that voice, he may seek to drown its warning, but in vain. It follows him. It makes itself heard. It destroys his peace. If unheeded, it pursues him to the grave. It bears witness against him at the judgment. A quenchless fire, it consumes at last soul and body."—*Education,* pages 144, 145.

The Seventh Vision

6. How was the removal of sin from Israel illustrated? Zech. 5:5-11.

NOTE.—An ephah is a dry measure of about five gallons. However, shape or form rather than capacity may here be intended. The land of Shinar is Babylon.

Though some of the details are not explained, the general teaching seems clear. It was because of iniquity that the people of Judah had been taken captive to Babylon. God had designed that the captivity should cure them of their backsliding, but it was evident that the cure had not been complete. Now in this figurative vision, God tells them that their iniquities should be removed to Babylon, where they should have been left. But even now God was willing to pardon their iniquities. A forsaking of sin was absolutely necessary for the success of the new program.

The Eighth Vision

7. What did Zechariah next see? Zech. 6:1-3.

8. What were the horses declared to be, and what was their mission? Zech. 6:4-7.

9. What did those dispatched to the north country accomplish? Zech. 6:8.

NOTE.—Again, for an understanding of the central objective of the vision it is not necessary that every detail of the picture be explained.

"The chariots 'which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth' (Zech. 6:5) doubtless represent God's agencies operating throughout the earth, 'silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will' (see Ed 173). The delegation to the north country probably symbolized the influence exerted upon the rulers of the Persian realm to further the work of God. It seemed at the time 'as if the permission granted the Jews to rebuild was about to be withdrawn' (PK 580). The vision must have brought great encouragement to the disheartened builders, for it gave them the assurance that the mission to the north country would be successful. 'These that go toward the north country have quieted My Spirit in the north country' (see on v. 8). Darius issued a new decree shortly afterward, permitting the work to go forward, encouraging the enterprise by public funds, and threatening any who might oppose it."—*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* on Zech. 6:6.

The Temple Completed

10. Encouraged by the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah, what were the elders of the Jews able to accomplish? Ezra 6:14, 15.

NOTE.—"The rebuilding of the temple from the time the foundation stone had been laid a second time (Kislev 24, 2d year of Darius) to its completion, had therefore occupied about 4 years and 3 months, some 2 years and 3 months shorter than it had taken Solomon to build his temple. The reason for this difference probably lies in the fact that Solomon had first to prepare a flat surface on which to erect the various buildings belonging to the temple complex, a task of no small size. Although the present substructures of the temple area at Jerusalem date from Herodian times or later, as far as they are visible, they reveal the tremendous efforts that must have been made by the early builders to construct a foundation platform on which the temple and its many auxiliary buildings could be erected. When the exiles returned they probably found that great parts of this substructure were still good enough to use without expensive, time-consuming repair work. Furthermore, the buildings seem to have been less elaborate and numerous than in Solomon's time, and probably much less lavishly decorated."—*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* on Ezra 6:15.

11. How was the completion of the temple celebrated? Ezra 6:16, 17.

12. What feasts were observed the following months? Ezra 6:18-22.

NOTE.—"A number of particularly solemn Passovers were celebrated in Jewish history, and these were accorded special attention by the writers of the Bible. Such are the Passover celebrated by Hezekiah after his cleansing of the temple (2 Chron. 30), and that celebrated by Josiah after the completion of his reform (2 Chron. 35). Both of these Passovers accompanied a revival of temple worship after a period of apostasy. Ezra places in the same category the Passover following the dedication of the new temple. This does not mean that the exiles had not celebrated the Passover prior to the year 515 B.C., since Ezra 3:5 contains the information that they observed 'all the set feasts of the Lord' as soon as they arrived in their homeland. However, this first Passover after the completion of the building of the new temple marked the full re-establishment of the regular ordinances of religion, more or less interrupted from the time of the destruction of the first temple."—*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* on Ezra 6:19.

13. How will the Lord enable us to bring to completion the work of grace in our spiritual temples? Phil. 1:6.

The Ministry of Ezra

MEMORY VERSE: *"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."* Isa. 55:7.

STUDY HELPS: "Prophets and Kings," pages 607-627; "The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary," on Scripture references; Lesson Help in "Review and Herald" of May 12.

DAILY STUDY ASSIGNMENT AND RECORD

Check Here

Sabbath afternoon: General survey. ☐
Sunday: Introduction; Questions 1-3. ☐
Monday: Questions 4, 5; begin reading from Study Helps. ☐
Tuesday: Questions 6-8; read further from Study Helps. ☐
Wednesday: Questions 9-14. ☐
Thursday: Finish reading Study Helps. ☐
Friday: Review entire lesson. ☐

Lesson Outline

Introduction

I. The Journey to Jerusalem

1. Introduction to Ezra. Ezra 7:1-6, 10.
2. Members of party. Ezra 7:7.
3. Artaxerxes' decree. Ezra 7:11-26.
4. Prayer for protection. Ezra 8:21-23.
5. Protection granted. Ezra 8:31, 32; 7:9.

II. Departure From God

6. The evil disclosed. Ezra 9:1-4.
7. Prohibition against intermarriages. Deut. 7:1-4.
8. Prohibition to Christian church. 2 Cor. 6:14.

III. Repentance and Reformation

9. Prayer of confession. Ezra 9:5-15.
10. People's response. Ezra 10:1.
11. Proposal of a covenant. Ezra 10: 2-5.
12. The proclamation and response. Ezra 10:6-9.
13. The situation rectified. Ezra 10: 10-17.
14. God's willingness to forgive the penitent. Isa. 55:7; John 1:9.

THE LESSON

Introduction

Our lessons thus far have traced the history of the postexilic Jews from the decree of Cyrus in about 537 B.C. to the completion of the temple a little more than twenty years later, in the sixth regnal year of Darius, 515 B.C. Concerning events of the next six decades, the sacred record is silent. From secular records the following picture emerges:

"An era of unrest began, however, when late in his reign Darius decided to invade Greece. From that time on the empire experienced repeated reverses in Greece, Egypt, and elsewhere that disturbed the internal peace and stability of the empire. The next two kings, Xerxes and Artaxerxes I, were weaklings, opportunists, and unstable in character, and owed their throne to the strong hand of powerful counselors. Disastrous campaigns in Greece and rebellions in Egypt and other parts of the empire caused great unrest and led to vacillating domestic and foreign policies.

"It was during a serious rebellion in Egypt (462-454 B.C.) that Ezra received major concessions for the Jews whose

good will Artaxerxes needed in this crucial period, since Judea lay athwart the highway into Egypt."—*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* vol. 3, p. 321.

An interval of about fifty-eight years thus lies between chapters 6 and 7 of Ezra. It is this period that is referred to in the phrase, "Now after these things." Ezra 7:1.

The Journey to Jerusalem

1. Who was Ezra, and what were his qualifications? Ezra 7:1-6, 10.

NOTE.—"Born of the sons of Aaron, Ezra had been given a priestly training; and in addition to this he had acquired a familiarity with the writings of the magicians, the astrologers, and the wise men of the Medo-Persian realm. But he was not satisfied with his spiritual condition. He longed to be in full harmony with God; he longed for wisdom to carry out the divine will. And so he 'prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and do it.' Ezra 7:10. This led him to apply himself diligently to a study of the history of God's people, as recorded in the writings of prophets and kings. He searched the historical and poetical books of the Bible to learn why the Lord had permitted Jerusalem to be destroyed and His people carried captive into a heathen land. . . .

"Ezra endeavored to gain a heart preparation for the work he believed was before him. He sought God earnestly, that he might be a wise teacher in Israel. As he learned to yield mind and will to divine control, there were brought into his life the principles of true sanctification, which, in later years, had a molding influence, not only upon the youth who sought his instruction, but upon all others associated with him."—*Prophets and Kings,* pages 608, 609.

2. Who accompanied him to Jerusalem? Ezra 7:7.

NOTE.—"Ezra had expected that a large number would return to Jerusalem, but the number who responded to the call was disappointingly small. Many who had acquired houses and lands had no desire to sacrifice these possessions. They loved ease and comfort and were well satisfied to remain. Their example proved a hindrance to others who otherwise might have chosen to cast in their lot with those who were advancing by faith."—*Prophets and Kings,* page 612.

3. What far-reaching decree did Artaxerxes the Persian king issue? Ezra 7:11-26.

NOTE.—"The angel had been sent to Daniel for the express purpose of explaining to him the point which he had failed to understand in the vision of the eighth chapter, the statement relative to time—'Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.' . . . If the date of this commandment could be found, then the starting point for the great period of 2300 days would be ascertained.

"In the seventh chapter of Ezra the decree is found. Ezra 7:12-26. In its completest form it was issued by Artaxerxes, king of Persia, 457 B.C."—*The Great Controversy,* page 326.

4. Upon whom did Ezra depend for protection on his journey? Ezra 8:21-23.

NOTE.—"Ezra was aware that enemies lay in wait by the way, ready to plunder and destroy him and his company; yet he had asked from the king no armed force for protection. . . .

"In this matter, Ezra and his companions saw an opportunity to magnify the name of God before the heathen. Faith in the power of the living God would be strengthened if the Israelites themselves should now reveal implicit faith in their divine Leader."—*Prophets and Kings,* page 615.

5. How did the Lord honor their request? Ezra 8:31, 32; 7:9.

NOTE.—"About four months were occupied on the journey, the multitude that accompanied Ezra, several thousand in all,

including women and children, necessitating slow progress. But all were preserved in safety. Their enemies were restrained from harming them. Their journey was a prosperous one, and on the first day of the fifth month, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes, they reached Jerusalem."—*Prophets and Kings,* page 617.

Departure From God

6. What evil did Ezra discover among the Jews in Jerusalem, and how did he react to this evil? Ezra 9:1-4.

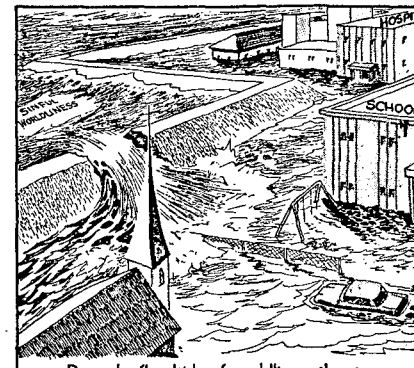
NOTE.—"Now when he learned that notwithstanding the lessons of the past, men of prominence had dared transgress the laws given as a safeguard against apostasy, his heart was stirred within him. He thought of God's goodness in again giving His people a foothold in their native land, and he was overwhelmed with righteous indignation and with grief at their ingratitude."—*Prophets and Kings,* page 620.

7. What command had the Lord given concerning intermarriages with the heathen? Deut. 7:1-4.

NOTE.—"God strictly forbade the intermarrying of His ancient people with other nations. The plea is now offered that this prohibition was made in order to prevent the Hebrews from marrying idolaters, and forming connections with heathen families. But the heathen were in a more favorable condition than are the impenitent in this age, who, having the light of truth, yet persistently refuse to accept it. The sinner of today is far more guilty than the heathen, because the light of the gospel shines clearly all around him. He violates conscience and is a deliberate enemy of God."—*Testimonies,* vol. 4, p. 508.

8. What prohibition is given the Christian church? 2 Cor. 6:14.

NOTE.—"There is no concord between Christ and Belial. The two cannot harmonize. To connect with an unbeliever is



Does the floodtide of worldliness threaten our church and its soul-winning institutions?

to place yourself on Satan's ground. You grieve the Spirit of God and forfeit His protection. Can you afford to have such terrible odds against you in fighting the battle for everlasting life?"—*Testimonies,* vol. 5, pp. 364, 365.

"This [2 Corinthians 6:14, 15] means in a special sense marriage with unbelievers, but it covers more ground than this: it means in our instrumentalities ordained of God, in our institutions for health, in our colleges, in our publishing houses."—*Testimonies to Ministers,* page 271.

Repentance and Reformation

9. What prayer of confession did Ezra offer? Ezra 9:5-15.

NOTE.—"Ezra had the true spirit of prayer. Presenting his petition before God for Israel, when they had sinned grievously in the face of great light and privileges, he exclaimed, 'I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God; for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.' Ezra remembered the goodness of God in again giving his people a foothold in their native land, and he was overwhelmed with indignation and grief at the thought of their ingratitude in return for the divine favor. His language is that of true humiliation of soul, the contrition that prevails with God in prayer. Only the prayer of

the humble enters into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."—Ellen G. White supplement in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* vol 3, p. 1135.

10. What effect did this have on the people? Ezra 10:1.

11. What did one of the Jews suggest, and how did Ezra respond? Ezra 10:2-5.

12. What proclamation was made and how many responded? Ezra 10: 6-9.

NOTE.—"Ezra's motives were high and holy; in all that he did he was actuated by a deep love for souls. The compassion and tenderness that he revealed toward those who had sinned, either willfully or through ignorance, should be an object lesson to all who seek to bring about reforms. The servants of God are to be as firm as a rock where right principles are involved; and yet, withal, they are to manifest sympathy and forbearance. Like Ezra, they are to teach transgressors the way of life by inculcating principles that are the foundation of all rightdoing."—*Prophets and Kings,* page 623.

13. What response and reformation followed? Ezra 10:10-17.

14. How willing is the Lord to hear the prayers of the penitent? Isa. 55:7; 1 John 1:9.

NOTE.—"Arise and go to your Father. He will meet you a great way off. If you take even one step toward Him in repentance, He will hasten to enfold you in His arms of infinite love. His ear is open to the cry of the contrite soul. The very first reaching out of the heart after God is known to Him. Never a prayer is offered, however faltering, never a tear is shed, however secret, never a sincere desire after God is cherished, however feeble, but the Spirit of God goes forth to meet it. Even before the prayer is uttered, or the yearning of the heart made known, grace from Christ goes forth to meet the grace that is working upon the human soul."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 206.

Lesson 10, for June 4, 1960

Nehemiah Rebuilds the Walls

MEMORY VERSE: "And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?" Neh. 6:3.

STUDY HELPS: "Prophets and Kings," pages 628-645; "The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary," on Scripture references; Lesson Help in "Review and Herald" of May 19.

DAILY STUDY ASSIGNMENT AND RECORD

	Check Here
Sabbath afternoon: General survey.	☐
Sunday: Introduction; Questions 1-5.	☐
Monday: Questions 6-9.	☐
Tuesday: Questions 10-14.	☐
Wednesday: Read from Study Helps.	☐
Thursday: Read further from Study Helps.	☐
Friday: Review entire lesson.	☐

Lesson Outline

Introduction

I. Nehemiah Aroused

1. Introduction to Nehemiah. Neh. 1: 1, 11, last part; 2:1, first part.
2. Report from Jerusalem. Neh. 1: 2, 3.
3. Nehemiah's reaction to report. Neh. 1:4-11.
4. The king's inquiry. Neh. 2:1, last part, 4.
5. Nehemiah's request. Neh. 2:5-8.

II. Rebuilding of Walls Begun

6. Encouragement to build. Neh. 2:9, 11-18.
7. Derision from adversaries. Neh. 2: 10, 19.
8. Courageous reply. Neh. 2:20.
9. Walls rebuilt. Neh. 3.

III. Active Opposition

10. Proposed attack. Neh. 4:1-3, 7, 8, 11.
11. Scheme foiled. Neh. 4:9, 13, 16-23.
12. Further schemes. Neh. 6:1, 2, 4, 7, 10.
13. Nehemiah's courage. Neh. 6:3, 8, 9, 11-14.
14. Opposition today. Rev. 12:12, 17.

THE LESSON

Introduction

Nehemiah came upon the scene of action in 444 B.C., about thirteen years after Ezra's journey to Jerusalem and nearly 100 years after the first migration under Zerubbabel.

Because of great opposition, little progress had been made in the work of rebuilding the walls. It appears, too, that in an attack by the Samaritans portions of the rebuilt walls had been destroyed and some of the repaired gates had been burned. News of these conditions greatly saddened Nehemiah, who was a trusted official to the Persian king, Artaxerxes I.

Nehemiah succeeded in securing permission from the king to go to Jerusalem and rebuild its walls. He was appointed its governor, and under his able leadership the walls were eventually completed.

Nehemiah Aroused

1. What is recorded concerning the identity and position of Nehemiah? Neh. 1:1, 11, last part; 2:1, first part.

NOTE.—"Nehemiah, one of the Hebrew exiles, occupied a position of influence and honor in the Persian court. As cupbearer to the king he was admitted freely to the royal presence. By virtue of his position, and because of his abilities and fidelity, he had become the monarch's friend and counselor. The recipient of royal favor, however, though surrounded by pomp and splendor, did not forget his God nor his people. With deepest interest his heart turned toward Jerusalem; his hopes and joys were bound up with her prosperity. Through this man, prepared by his residence in the Persian court for the work to which he was to be called, God purposed to bring blessing to His people in the land of their fathers."—*Prophets and Kings,* page 628.

2. What report did he receive? Neh. 1:2, 3.

NOTE.—"The arrival of Hanani and other Jews from the homeland seems to have been the first contact Nehemiah had been able to make with the returned exiles in Judea since the beginning of hostilities between Artaxerxes and Megabyzos, the satrap of the province called 'Beyond the River,' of which Judea was a part (see on Ezra 4:10). During the period of Megabyzos' rebellion very little reliable news from Judea seems to have reached Nehemiah, though he may have heard rumors of a Samaritan attack on Jerusalem and the destruction by them of a part of the recently rebuilt city wall."—*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* on Neh. 1:2.

3. For what did Nehemiah pray? Neh. 1:4-11.

"Toilers in the busy walks of life, crowded and almost overwhelmed with perplexity, can send up a petition to God for divine guidance."—Ellen G. White.

NOTE.—"Not only did Nehemiah say that Israel had sinned. He acknowledged with penitence that he and his father's house had sinned. 'We have dealt corruptly against Thee,' he says, placing himself among those who had dishonored God by not standing stiffly for the truth. . . .

"We all need to draw near to God. He will draw near to those who approach Him in humility, filled with a holy awe for His sacred majesty, and standing before Him separate from the world."—Ellen G. White supplement in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* vol. 3, p. 1136.

4. How was the attention of the king drawn to Nehemiah's problem? Neh. 2:1, last part, 4.

5. What request did Nehemiah make to the king, and how did the king respond? Neh. 2:5-8.

NOTE.—"The recital of the condition of Jerusalem awakened the sympathy of the monarch without arousing his prejudices. Another question gave the opportunity for which Nehemiah had long waited: 'For what dost thou make request?' But the man of God did not venture to reply till he had sought direction from One higher than Artaxerxes. He had a sacred trust to fulfill, in which he required help from the king; and he realized that much depended upon his presenting the matter in such a way as to win his approval and enlist his aid. 'I prayed,' he said, 'to the God of heaven.' In that brief prayer Nehemiah pressed into the presence of the King of kings and won to his side a power that can turn hearts as the rivers of waters are turned.

"To pray as Nehemiah prayed in his hour of need is a resource at the command of the Christian under circumstances when other forms of prayer may be impossible. Toilers in the busy walks of life, crowded and almost overwhelmed with perplexity, can send up a petition to God for divine guidance."—*Prophets and Kings,* page 631.

Rebuilding of Walls Begun

6. Arriving at Jerusalem and noting the condition of its walls, what did Nehemiah encourage Jerusalem's inhabitants to do? Neh. 2:9, 11-18.

7. What reaction did Nehemiah's arrival and plans arouse? Neh. 2: 10, 19.

8. How did Nehemiah meet this opposition? Neh. 2:20.

9. Encouraged by Nehemiah's enthusiastic leadership, to what task did the people set themselves? Neh. 3.

NOTE.—"The special purpose of this chapter seems to be the rendering of honor where honor was due—the placing on record of the names of the men who nobly came to the front on this important occasion, sacrificed ease to duty, and thereby exposed themselves to a threatened hostile attack."—*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* on Neh. 3:1.

Active Opposition

10. What did the enemies of the Jews propose to do? Neh. 4:1-3, 7, 8, 11.

11. How was the plan foiled? Neh. 4:9, 13, 16-23.

NOTE.—"Satan takes advantage of every unconsecrated element for the accomplishment of his purposes. Among those who profess to be the supporters of God's cause there are those who unite with His enemies and thus lay His cause open to the attacks of His bitterest foes. Even some who desire the work of God to prosper will yet weaken the hands of His servants by hearing, reporting, and half believing the slanders, boasts, and menaces of His adversaries. Satan works with marvelous success through his agents, and all who yield to their influence are subject to a bewitching power that destroys the wisdom of the wise and the understanding of the prudent. But, like Nehemiah, God's people are neither to fear nor to despise their enemies. Putting their trust in God, they are to go steadily forward, doing His work with unselfishness, and committing to His providence the cause for which they stand."—*Prophets and Kings,* page 645.

12. What further schemes to intimidate Nehemiah did the enemy devise? Neh. 6:1, 2, 4, 7, 10.

NOTE.—"The opposition and discouragement that the builders in Nehemiah's day met from open enemies and pretended friends is typical of the experience that those today will have who work for God. Christians are tried, not only by the anger, contempt, and cruelty of enemies, but by the indolence, inconsistency, lukewarmness, and treachery of avowed friends and helpers."—*Prophets and Kings,* page 644.

"If we feel our dangers we shall feel the need of prayer, as did Nehemiah, and like him we shall obtain that sure defense that will give us security in peril. If we are careless and indifferent, we shall surely be overcome by Satan's devices. We must be vigilant. While, like Nehemiah, we resort to prayer, taking all our perplexities and burdens to God, we should not feel that we have nothing to do. We are to watch as well as pray. We should watch the work of our adversaries, lest they gain advantage in deceiving souls. We should, in the wisdom of Christ, make efforts to defeat their purposes, while, at the same time, we do not suffer them to call us from our great work. Truth is stronger than error." —*Testimonies,* vol. 3, p. 572.

13. How did Nehemiah show his trust in God? Neh. 6:3, 8, 9, 11-14.

14. What similar opposition may the people of God expect today? Rev. 12:12, 17.

NOTE.—"Satanic agencies have been moved from beneath, and they have inspired men to unite in a confederacy of evil, that they may perplex, harass, and cause the people of God great distress. The whole world is to be stirred with enmity against Seventh-day Adventists, because they will not yield homage to the papacy, by honoring Sunday, the institution of this antichristian power. It is the purpose of Satan to cause them to be blotted from the earth, in order that his supremacy of the world may not be disputed."—*Testimonies to Ministers,* page 37.

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Reforms Instituted by Nehemiah

MEMORY VERSE: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Micah 6:8.

STUDY HELPS: "Prophets and Kings," pages 646-668; "The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary," on Scripture references; Lesson Help in "Review and Herald" of May 26.

DAILY STUDY ASSIGNMENT AND RECORD

Check Here

Sabbath afternoon: General survey. ☐
Sunday: Introduction; Questions 1-3. ☐
Monday: Questions 4-7.
Tuesday: Questions 8-10; begin reading from Study Helps. ☐
Wednesday: Questions 11-14. ☐
Thursday: Read from Study Helps. ☐
Friday: Review entire lesson. ☐

Lesson Outline

Introduction

I. Social Evil

1. The complaint. Neh. 5:1-5.
2. Rebuke and correction. Neh. 5:6-13.
3. Nehemiah's example. Neh. 5:14-19.

II. The Walls Rebuilt

4. The work completed. Neh. 6:15; 7:1.

III. The Reading of the Law

5. Law read and explained. Neh. 8:1-8.
6. The people's response. Neh. 8:9-12.
7. The Feast of Booths. Neh. 8:13-18.

IV. Rededication

8. Special service. Neh. 9:1-3.
9. Review of past history. Neh. 9:4, 5.
10. Covenant entered into. Neh. 9:38; 10:1, 28, 29.

V. Terms of Covenant

11. Regarding intermarriage. Neh. 10:30.
12. Regarding Sabbath observance. Neh. 10:31.
13. Regarding offerings. Neh. 10:32-39.
14. Warning to Christians. Heb. 10:28, 29.

THE LESSON

Introduction

The work of rehabilitation was not without difficulties. Serious social evils arose, which required prompt attention. God could not bless His people so long as they walked contrary to His commands. Nehemiah was the man of the hour.

Under his efficient and courageous leadership and through the wholehearted cooperation of the people, the walls were completed in an amazingly short time. Fifty-two days saw the last break repaired and the last gate installed.

But spiritual rehabilitation was the chief concern of Ezra and of Nehemiah. Impressive services were held at which the reading of the law and a review of Israel's past history brought conviction of sin and rededication of life. The people entered into a covenant to obey God. The outlook appeared bright.

Social Evil

1. What complaints did the people bring to Nehemiah? Neh. 5:1-5.

2. What rebuke was given and what result followed? Neh. 5:6-13.

3. What example of unselfish service had Nehemiah given the people? Neh. 5:14-19.

NOTE.—"The customs of the world are no criterion for the Christian. He is not to imitate its sharp practices, its overreaching, its extortion. Every unjust act toward a fellow being is a violation of the golden rule. Every wrong done to the children of God is done to Christ Himself in the person of His saints. Every attempt to take advantage of the ignorance, weakness, or misfortune of another is registered as fraud in the ledger of heaven. He who truly fears God, would rather toil day and night, and eat the bread of poverty, than to indulge the passion for gain that oppresses the widow and fatherless or turns the stranger from his right. . . .

"We were all debtors to divine justice, but we had nothing with which to pay the debt. Then the Son of God, who pitied us, paid the price of our redemption. He became poor that through His poverty we might be rich. By deeds of liberality toward His poor we may prove the sincerity of our gratitude for the mercy extended to us."—*Prophets and Kings,* pages 651, 652.

The Walls Rebuilt

4. What work was finally accomplished? Neh. 6:15; 7:1.

NOTE.—"Notwithstanding the plots of enemies, open and secret, the work of building went steadily forward, and in less than two months from the time of Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem the city was girded with its defences and the builders could walk upon the walls, and look down upon their defeated and astonished foes." —*Prophets and Kings,* page 657.

The Reading of the Law

5. At the gathering at Jerusalem in the seventh month, what did Ezra and his associates do? Neh. 8:1-8.

NOTE.—"On a platform of wood, erected in one of the broadest streets, and surrounded on every hand by the sad reminders of Judah's departed glory, stood Ezra, now an aged man. At his right and left were gathered his brother Levites. Looking down from the platform, their eyes swept over a sea of heads. From all the surrounding country the children of the covenant had assembled. 'And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen.' . . .

"Yet even here was evidence of the sin of Israel. Through the intermarriage of the people with other nations, the Hebrew language had become corrupted, and great care was necessary on the part of the speakers to explain the law in the language of the people, that it might be understood by all."—*Prophets and Kings,* pages 661, 662.

6. How were the people affected? Neh. 8:9-12.

NOTE.—"As the law was explained, they were convinced of their guilt, and they mourned because of their transgressions. But this day was a festival, a day of rejoicing, a holy convocation, a day which the Lord had commanded the people to keep with joy and gladness; and in view of this they were bidden to restrain their grief and to rejoice because of God's great mercy toward them. . . .

"There was great rejoicing because the words of the law had been read and understood."—*Prophets and Kings,* page 662.

7. What feast was observed? Neh. 8:13-18.

The Christian is honest in all his dealings. He refuses to imitate the sharp practices, fraud, or extortion of the world.

Rededication

8. What special service was held on the twenty-fourth day of the month? Neh. 9:1-3.

NOTE.—"As they had listened from day to day to the words of the law, the people had been convicted of their transgressions, and of the sins of their nation in past generations. They saw that it was because of a departure from God that His protecting care had been withdrawn and that the children of Abraham had been scattered in foreign lands, and they determined to seek His mercy and to pledge themselves to walk in His commandments. Before entering upon this solemn service, held on the second day after the close of the Feast of Tabernacles, they separated themselves from the heathen among them." —*Prophets and Kings,* page 665.

9. What did certain of the Levites do, and what were the people instructed to do? Neh. 9:4, 5.

NOTE.—"As the people prostrated themselves before the Lord, confessing their sins and pleading for pardon, their leaders encouraged them to believe that God, according to His promise, heard their prayers. They must not only mourn and weep, and repent, but they must believe that God pardoned them. They must show their faith by recounting His mercies and praising Him for His goodness."—*Prophets and Kings,* pages 665, 666.

The people blessed the name of God in the form of a song of praise. Neh. 9:6. Following this, the leaders recounted Israel's past history, stressing particularly Israel's ingratitude, and acknowledging God's justice in the punishments He had allowed to come upon His people. Neh. 9:7-37. Read the whole passage to catch the spirit of repentance and of praise to God for His justice and mercy. May every child of God who reads this passage review his own past experience and see in it the hand of a merciful and loving heavenly Father.

10. Stirred by the confessions of the Levites, what did the leaders and people do? Neh. 9:38; 10:1, 28, 29.

NOTE.—"Israel had returned to God with deep sorrow for backsliding. They had made confession with mourning and lamentation. They had acknowledged the righteousness of God's dealings with them, and had covenanted to obey His law. Now they must manifest faith in His promises. God had accepted their repentance; they were now to rejoice in the assurance of sins forgiven and their restoration to divine favor."—*Prophets and Kings,* pages 667, 668.

Terms of Covenant

11. What reform was undertaken regarding intermarriages with the heathen? Neh. 10:30.

12. What promises were made with respect to Sabbath observance? Neh. 10:31.

13. What provisions were made for the payment of tithes and offerings? Neh. 10:32-39.

14. What warning is given to those who enter into solemn covenant with Christ? Heb. 10:28, 29.

NOTE.—"Every child and youth, every man and woman, has Jesus rescued by His own blood from the abyss of ruin to which Satan was compelling them to go. Because sinners will not accept of the salvation freely offered them, are they released from their obligations? Their choosing to remain in sin and bold transgression does not lessen their guilt. Jesus paid a price for them, and they belong to Him. They are His property; and if they will not yield obedience to Him who has given His life for them, but devote their time and strength and talents to the service of Satan, they are earning their wages, which is death. . . .

"Those who have once rejoiced in the evidence of sins forgiven, who have tasted a Saviour's love and who then persist in uniting with the foes of Christ, rejecting the perfect righteousness that Jesus offers them and choosing the ways that He has condemned, will be more severely judged than the heathen who have never had the light and have never known God or His law."—*Testimonies,* vol. 3, pp. 365, 366.

Lesson 12, for June 18, 1960

Failure of Exiles to Fulfill Divine Purpose

MEMORY VERSE: "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." Jude 24.

STUDY HELPS: "Prophets and Kings," pages 669-678; "The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary," on Scripture references; Lesson Help in "Review and Herald" of June 2.

DAILY STUDY ASSIGNMENT AND RECORD

	Check Here
Sabbath afternoon: General survey.	☐
Sunday: Introduction; Questions 1-3.	☐
Monday: Questions 4-7.	☐
Tuesday: Questions 8-11.	☐
Wednesday: Questions 12-14; read from Study Helps.	☐
Thursday: Read Study Helps.	☐
Friday: Review entire lesson.	☐

Lesson Outline

Introduction

I. Nehemiah's Return to Jerusalem

1. Nehemiah's absence. Neh. 13:6.
2. Temple profaned. Neh. 13:1-5, 7; Deut. 23:3-5.
3. Temple cleansed. Neh. 13:8, 9.

II. God's Laws Broken

4. Levites neglected. Neh. 13:10.
5. Neglect corrected. Neh. 13:11-14.
6. Sabbath broken. Neh. 13:15, 16.
7. Situation corrected. Neh. 13:17-22.

III. Heathen Alliances

8. Foreign marriages. Neh. 13:23, 24.
9. Sinners upbraided. Neh. 13:25-29.
10. Reformation. Neh. 13:30, 31.
11. Reform temporary. Mal. 1:6-10; 3:7.

IV. Final Victory Assured

12. Final purification. Mal. 3:1-6.
13. Secret of victory. 2 Peter 1:5-10.
14. Victory promised. Jude 24.

Introduction

Soon after entering upon this solemn covenant to serve the Lord, the Jews again lapsed into apostasy. Nehemiah was absent for a brief period; and being left without strong leadership, they seemed powerless against Satan's devices.

What was the reason for their failure? They had no life and root in themselves. Their spiritual experiences seemed to be principally influenced by their leader. This had been the situation ever since they left Egypt. When a leader ardent in the service of God arose, the people followed the Lord. When one with idolatrous tendencies came upon the scene, large numbers drifted into apostasy. They lacked a personal religious experience.

Nehemiah's Return to Jerusalem

1. Where did Nehemiah go for a time? Neh. 13:6.

NOTE.—"It is from this passage only that we know of Nehemiah's two terms as governor. His first term was for 12 years (ch. 5:14), but no indication is given of the length of his second term. It must have ended before 407 B.C., when, we know from an Elephantine letter, the governor of Judea was Bigvai."—*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* on Neh. 13:6.

2. What profanation of the house of God had taken place during Nehemiah's absence? Neh. 13:1-5, 7; Deut. 23:3-5.

NOTE.—"During his [Nehemiah's] absence from Jerusalem, evils crept in that threatened to pervert the nation. Idolaters not only gained a foothold in the city, but contaminated by their presence the very precincts of the temple. Through intermarriage, a friendship had been brought about between Eliashib the high priest and Tobiah the Ammonite, Israel's bitter enemy. As a result of this unhallowed alliance, Eliashib had permitted Tobiah to occupy an apartment connected with the temple, which heretofore had been used as a storeroom for tithes and offerings of the people.

"Because of the cruelty and treachery of the Ammonites and Moabites toward Israel, God had declared through Moses that they should be forever shut out from the congregation of His people. See Deuteronomy 23:3-6. In defiance of this word, the high priest had cast out the offerings stored in the chamber of God's house, to make a place for this representative of a proscribed race. Greater contempt for God could not have been shown than to confer such a favor on this enemy of God and His truth."—*Prophets and Kings,* pages 669, 670.

3. How did Nehemiah meet this situation? Neh. 13:8, 9.

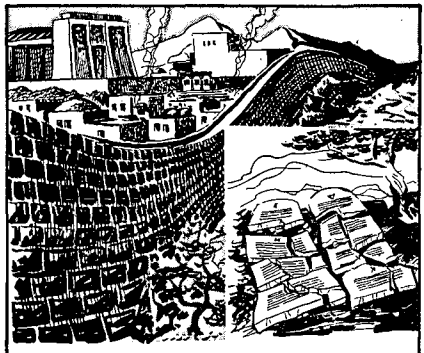
God's Laws Broken

4. What responsibility to the Levites had the people neglected? Neh. 13:10.

NOTE.—"What Nehemiah saw was that the Levites were absent, and that the temple service was neglected. On inquiry, he ascertained the reason for their absence—tithe had not been paid. Since the Levites lived from the tithe and the first fruits, and these were held back, they had to earn a living from the fields surrounding the towns and the villages where they lived."—*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* on Neh. 13:10.

5. How was the evil rectified? Neh. 13:11-14.

NOTE.—"Of the four treasurers, one was priest, one a Levite, one a secretary, and one a layman of rank. In this way the main classes of the population were represented. The individuals mentioned cannot be identified, though several of the names occur elsewhere in Nehemiah."—*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* on Neh. 13:13.



What shall it profit to build a city and a temple, but break God's holy law and apostatize?

6. How far had the people departed from the Lord in the matter of Sabbath observance? Neh. 13:15, 16.

NOTE.—"Another result of intercourse with idolaters was a disregard of the Sabbath, the sign distinguishing the Israelites from all other nations as worshipers of the true God. Nehemiah found that heathen merchants and traders from the surrounding country, coming to Jerusalem, had induced many among the Israelites to engage in traffic on the Sabbath."—*Prophets and Kings,* page 671.

7. What definite steps in reform were taken? Neh. 13:17-22.

Heathen Alliances

8. Into what other error had the people again fallen? Neh. 13:23, 24.

9. In correcting this situation, what drastic course did Nehemiah pursue to meet the problem? Neh. 13:25-29.

NOTE.—"There were some in sacred office who pleaded for their heathen wives, declaring that they could not bring themselves to separate from them. But no distinction was made; no respect was shown for rank or position. . . .

"Many who had married idolaters chose to go with them into exile, and these, with those who had been expelled from the congregation, joined the Samaritans. Hither some who had occupied high positions in the work of God found their way and after a time cast in their lot fully with them. Desiring to strengthen this alliance, the Samaritans promised to adopt more fully the Jewish faith and customs, and the apostates, determined to outdo their former brethren, erected a temple on Mount Gerizim in opposition to the house of God at Jerusalem. Their religion continued to be a mixture of Judaism and heathenism, and their claim to be the people of God was the source of schism, emulation, and enmity between the two nations, from generation to generation."—*Prophets and Kings,* pages 674, 675.

10. What success followed Nehemiah's reform measures? Neh. 13: 30, 31.

NOTE.—"The success attending Nehemiah's efforts shows what prayer, faith, and wise, energetic action will accomplish. Nehemiah was not a priest; he was not a prophet; he made no pretension to high title. He was a reformer raised up for an important time. It was his aim to set his people right with God. Inspired with a great purpose, he bent every energy of his being to its accomplishment. High, unbending integrity marked his efforts. As he came into contact with evil and opposition to right he took so determined a stand that the people were roused to labor with fresh zeal and courage. They could not but recognize his loyalty, his patriotism, and his deep love for God; and, seeing this, they were willing to follow where he led." —*Prophets and Kings,* pages 675, 676.

11. What subsequent record reveals the temporary nature of this reformation? Mal. 1:6-10; 3:7.

NOTE.—"Under the leadership of Zerubbabel, of Ezra, and of Nehemiah they repeatedly covenanted to keep all the commandments and ordinances of Jehovah. The

seasons of prosperity that followed gave ample evidence of God's willingness to accept and forgive, and yet with fatal shortsightedness they turned again and again from their glorious destiny and selfishly appropriated to themselves that which would have brought healing and spiritual life to countless multitudes.

"This failure to fulfill the divine purpose was very apparent in Malachi's day. Sternly the Lord's messenger dealt with the evils that were robbing Israel of temporal prosperity and spiritual power. In his rebuke against transgressors the prophet spared neither priests nor people. 'The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel' through Malachi was that the lessons of the past be not forgotten, and that the covenant made by Jehovah with the house of Israel be kept with fidelity. Only by heartfelt repentance could the blessing of God be realized."—*Prophets and Kings,* page 705.

Final Victory Assured

12. How did the Lord say He would eventually purify the sons of Levi? Mal. 3:1-6.

NOTE.—"When the promised Messiah was about to appear, the message of the forerunner of Christ was: Repent, publicans and sinners; repent, Pharisees and Sadducees; 'for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

"Today, in the spirit and power of Elias and of John the Baptist, messengers of God's appointment are calling the attention of a judgment-bound world to the solemn events soon to take place in connection with the closing hours of probation and the appearance of Christ Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords. Soon every man is to be judged for the deeds done in the body. The hour of God's judgment has come, and upon the members of His church on earth rests the solemn responsibility of giving warning to those who are standing as it were on the very brink of eternal ruin." —*Prophets and Kings,* pages 715, 716.

13. How only can the Christian keep from falling into repeated errors? 2 Peter 1:5-10.

NOTE.—"Christ, who connects earth with heaven, is the ladder. The base is planted firmly on the earth in His humanity; the topmost round reaches to the throne of God in His divinity. The humanity of Christ embraces fallen humanity, while His divinity lays hold upon the throne of God. We are saved by climbing round after round of the ladder, looking to Christ, clinging to Christ, mounting step by step to the height of Christ, so that He is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption."—*Testimonies,* vol. 6, p. 147.

14. What power for victory is promised? Jude 24.

Lesson 13, for June 25, 1960

The Divine Purpose Fulfilled in the Christian Church

MEMORY VERSE: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" Heb. 2:1-3.

STUDY HELPS: "The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary," vol. 4, pp. 34-38; "Prophets and Kings," pages 703-733; "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 296-306; "Testimonies," vol. 6, pp. 9-13; Lesson Help in "Review and Herald" of June 9.

DAILY STUDY ASSIGNMENT AND RECORD

	Check Here		Check Here
Sabbath afternoon: General survey.	☐	Tuesday: Questions 6-9.	☐
Sunday: Introduction; Questions 1-3.	☐	Wednesday: Questions 10-13.	☐
Monday: Questions 4, 5; begin reading from Study Helps.	☐	Thursday: Read from Study Helps.	☐
		Friday: Review entire lesson.	☐

Lesson Outline

Introduction

I. Israel's Failures Illustrated

1. Record for our learning. Rom. 15:4.
2. The vineyard and the husbandmen. Matt. 21:33.
3. Failure of repeated efforts. Matt. 21:34-36.

II. Israel's Last Opportunity

4. Final effort. Matt. 21:37-39.
5. Status as chosen people removed. Matt. 21:43, first part.

III. Privileges Transferred to the Christian Church

6. Another nation chosen. Matt. 21:43, last part.
7. New nation identified. 1 Peter 2:9.
8. Individuals not rejected. Rom. 11:1, 5.
9. Abraham's spiritual descendants. Gal. 3:29.

IV. Responsibilities

10. World missionaries. Mark 16:15.

V. Warnings

11. Danger of coming short. Heb. 4:1, 2.
12. Failure through lack of knowledge. Hosea 4:6.
13. The church triumphant. John 14:3; Rev. 7:9, 14-17; 21:3; 22:1-4.

THE LESSON

Introduction

As a people, the Jews in the times of Ezra and Nehemiah failed to fulfill the divine purpose. So did their descendants in the period between the Testaments. But God offered them one last opportunity. He sent to them His Son. Glorious would have been Israel's future if she had accepted her Saviour. See *The Desire of Ages,* page 577. When the nation rejected Him it lost its status as God's representative in the world. That privilege was transferred to the Christian church.

Today the remnant church in a special sense is the inheritor of the privileges and responsibilities of ancient Israel. Already there has been a measure of failure. "Had the church of Christ done her appointed work as the Lord ordained, the whole world would before this have been warned, and the Lord Jesus would have come to our earth in power and great glory."—*The Desire of Ages,* pages 633, 634.

"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning." Rom. 15:4. It is important that we heed the lessons of Israel's failure and avoid her mistakes.

Israel's Failures Illustrated

1. For what purpose have the records of Israel's history in the times of Ezra and Nehemiah been preserved? Rom. 15:4.

NOTE.—"I was pointed back to ancient Israel. They had great light and exalted privileges; yet they did not live up to the light nor appreciate their advantages, and

their light became darkness. They walked in the light of their own eyes instead of following the leadings of God. The history of the children of Israel was written for the benefit of those who live in the last days, that they may avoid following their example of unbelief."—*Testimonies,* vol. 4, p. 43.

2. In His parable showing the rejection of the chosen people, to what did Jesus liken Israel? Matt. 21:33. Compare Isa. 5:1.

3. How does the parable illustrate God's repeated efforts to secure Israel's co-operation? Matt. 21:34-36. Compare Isa. 5:2, 4.

NOTE.—"With a father's heart, God bore with His people. He pleaded with them by mercies given and mercies withdrawn. Patiently He set their sins before them, and in forbearance waited for their acknowledgment. Prophets and messengers were sent to urge God's claim upon the husbandmen; but instead of being welcomed, they were treated as enemies. The husbandmen persecuted and killed them."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 293.

Israel's Last Opportunity

4. What final effort did God make, and what was the response? Matt. 21:37-39.

NOTE.—"Christ, the Beloved of God, came to assert the claims of the Owner of the vineyard; but the husbandmen treated Him with marked contempt, saying, We will not have this man to rule over us. They envied Christ's beauty of character. His manner of teaching was far superior to theirs, and they dreaded His success. He remonstrated with them, unveiling their hypocrisy, and showing them the sure results of their course of action. This stirred them to madness. . . . His whole life was a reproof to their selfishness, and when the final test came, the test which meant obedi-

ence unto eternal life or disobedience unto eternal death, they rejected the Holy One of Israel."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* pages 293, 294.

5. As a result, what privilege was taken from Israel? Matt. 21:43, first part.

NOTE.—"Christ designed that the Pharisees should answer as they did. He designed that they should condemn themselves. His warnings, failing to arouse them to repentance, would seal their doom, and He wished them to see that they had brought ruin on themselves. He designed to show them the justice of God in the withdrawal of their national privileges, which had already begun, and which would end, not only in the destruction of their temple and their city, but in the dispersion of the nation."—*The Desire of Ages,* page 597.

Privileges Transferred to the Christian Church

6. To whom was the kingdom of God to be given? Matt. 21:43, last part.

NOTE.—"That which God purposed to do for the world through Israel, the chosen nation, He will finally accomplish through

His church on earth today. He has 'let out His vineyard unto other husbandmen,' even to His covenant-keeping people, who faithfully 'render Him the fruits in their seasons.' Never has the Lord been without true representatives on this earth who have made His interests their own. These witnesses for God are numbered among the spiritual Israel, and to them will be fulfilled all the covenant promises made by Jehovah to His ancient people."—*Prophets and Kings,* pages 713, 714.

7. Who constitutes this new nation? 1 Peter 2:9.

NOTE.—"I was shown that those who are trying to obey God and purify their souls through obedience to the truth are God's chosen people, His modern Israel."—*Testimonies,* vol. 2, p. 109.

8. What shows that the Jews as individuals were not rejected? Rom. 11:1, 5.

NOTE.—"Through unbelief and the rejection of Heaven's purpose for her, Israel as a nation had lost her connection with God. But the branches that had been separated from the parent stock God was able to reunite with the true stock of Israel—the remnant who had remained true to the God of their fathers."—*The Acts of the Apostles,* pages 377, 378.

9. To whom do the promises to Abraham now apply? Gal. 3:29.

NOTE.—"As spiritual children of Abraham, Christians become 'joint heirs with Christ' (Rom. 8:17). As Son of God, Christ is likewise heir to the honor and glory of heaven, and those who believe in Him fall heir to a position of honor in the universe that would never have been possible for created beings to enjoy had the Word not become flesh (John 1:1, 14). At the Incarnation, divinity and humanity were united by ties never to be broken (DA 21, 25, 26). As heirs with Abraham to the covenant promises, all who emulate his lofty example of faith will enter the 'city which hath foundations,' to which he himself ever looked forward in faith (Heb. 11:10)."—*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary,* on Gal. 3:29.

Responsibilities

10. What work that Israel failed to do has the Christian church been called to perform? Mark 16:15.

NOTE.—"All who are ordained unto the life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellow men. Their hearts will throb in unison with the heart of Christ. The same longing for souls that He has felt will be manifest in them. Not all can fill the same place in the work, but there is a place and a work for all."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 301.

Warnings

11. In view of Israel's failure, what is the church of God to fear? Heb. 4:1, 2. Compare Heb. 2:1-3.

NOTE.—"The same disobedience and failure which were seen in the Jewish church have characterized in a greater degree the people who have had this great light from heaven in the last messages of warning. Shall we, like them, squander our opportunities and privileges until God shall permit oppression and persecution to come upon us? Will the work which might be performed in peace and comparative prosperity be left undone until it must be performed in days of darkness, under the pressure of trial and persecution?"—*Testimonies,* vol. 5, pp. 456, 457.

12. Through what lack was Israel destroyed? Hosea 4:6.

13. What glorious future awaits the church triumphant? John 14:3; Rev. 7:9, 14-17; 21:3; 22:1-4.

NOTE.—"There, immortal minds will contemplate with never-failing delight the wonders of creative power, the mysteries of redeeming love. There will be no cruel, deceiving foe to tempt to forgetfulness of God. Every faculty will be developed, every capacity increased. The acquirement of knowledge will not weary the mind or exhaust the energies. There the grandest enterprises may be carried forward, the loftiest aspirations reached, the highest ambitions realized; and still there will arise new heights to surmount, new wonders to admire, new truths to comprehend, fresh objects to call forth the powers of mind and soul and body. And the years of eternity, as they roll, will bring riches and still more glorious revelations of God and of Christ." —*The Great Controversy,* pages 677, 678.

THIRTEENTH SABBATH OFFERING

June 25, 1960, Southern European Division

This quarter the overflow of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering goes to the Southern European Division, which extends into three continents: Europe, Africa, and Asia, where nearly 300,000,000 souls are to be evangelized. What a challenge!

Our projects for the offering overflow this quarter will strengthen our evangelistic program. Two chapels are to be built—one in Novi Sad, Yugoslavia, and the other in Lourenço Marques, Mozambique, Africa. They are to be used as evangelistic centers for these two cities. At our Munguluni Mission in Mozambique the water supply is insufficient and unhealthful. It is with a sense of urgency, therefore, that we provide a proper water supply for this mission, where also a new mission home must be built. Let us sustain the work of God in these areas by a splendid offering on June 25.

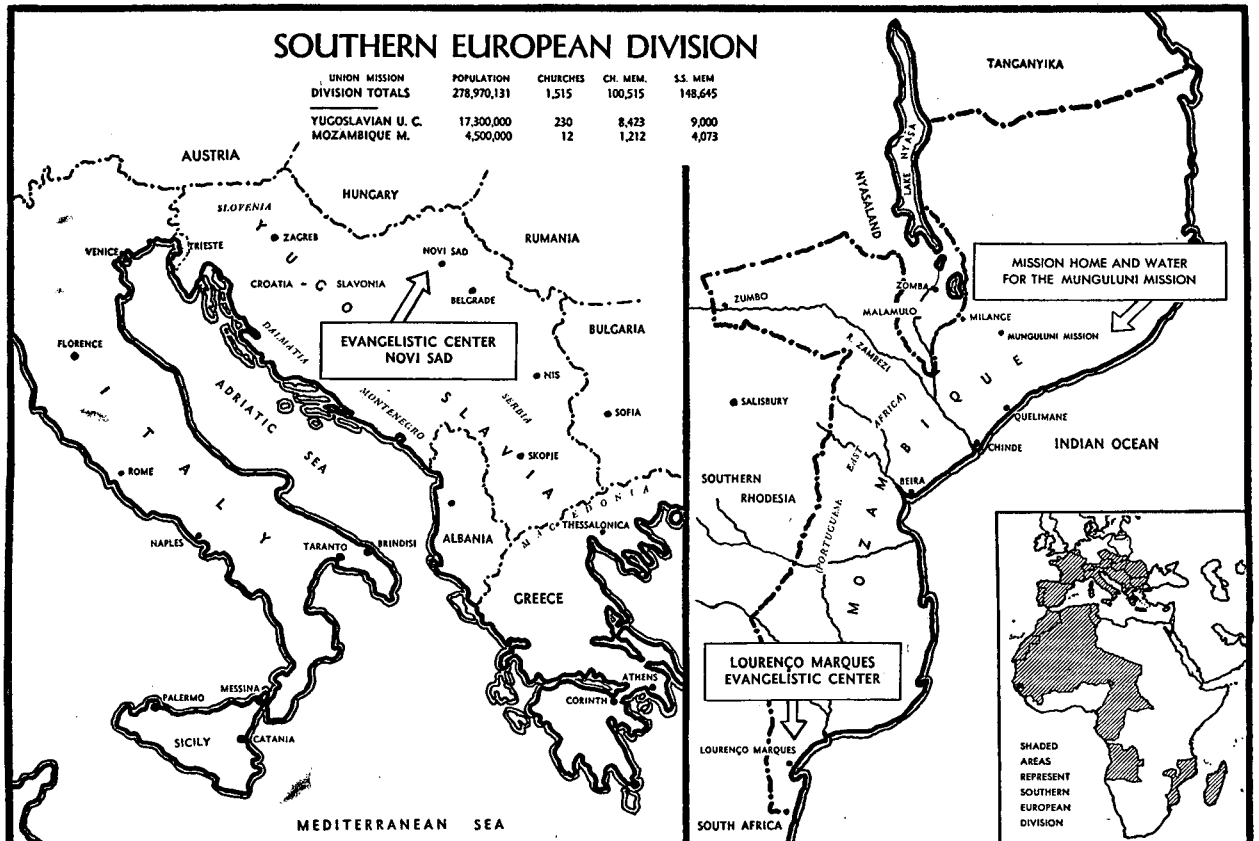
The fields to benefit from the overflow for the next four quarters are:

Third quarter—Australasian Division
Fourth quarter—Inter-American Division
First quarter, 1961—Middle East Division
Second quarter—Southern African Division

LESSONS FOR THE THIRD QUARTER, 1960

Sabbath school members who have failed to receive a senior *Lesson Quarterly* for the third quarter of 1960 will be helped by the following outline in studying the first lesson. The title of the first lesson is "The Law and the Gospel." The Memory Verse is Rom. 8:3, 4. The texts to be studied are:

Ques. 1. Heb. 11:3; Isa. 40:26.
Ques. 2. Acts 17:28; Deut. 30:19.
Ques. 3. Ps. 119:104; Rom. 3:20.
Ques. 4. John 8:9; 1 John 3:21.
Ques. 5. Prov. 15:9; Ps. 37:38.
Ques. 6. Rom. 5:12; 3:23.
Ques. 7. Rom. 3:24-26.
Ques. 8. Rom. 5:18, 19; 1 John 1:9.
Ques. 9. Rom. 8:3, 4.
Ques. 10. Heb. 11:8; Acts 6:7; Rev. 14:12.
Ques. 11. Acts 17:31.
Ques. 12. John 3:18.
Ques. 13. Rom. 6:22.
Ques. 14. Heb. 10:15, 16.

SOUTHERN EUROPEAN DIVISION

UNION MISSION	POPULATION	CHURCHES	CH. MEM.	S.S. MEM
DIVISION TOTALS	278,970,131	1,515	100,515	148,645
YUGOSLAVIAN U. C.	17,300,000	230	8,423	9,000
MOZAMBIQUE M.	4,500,000	12	1,212	4,073