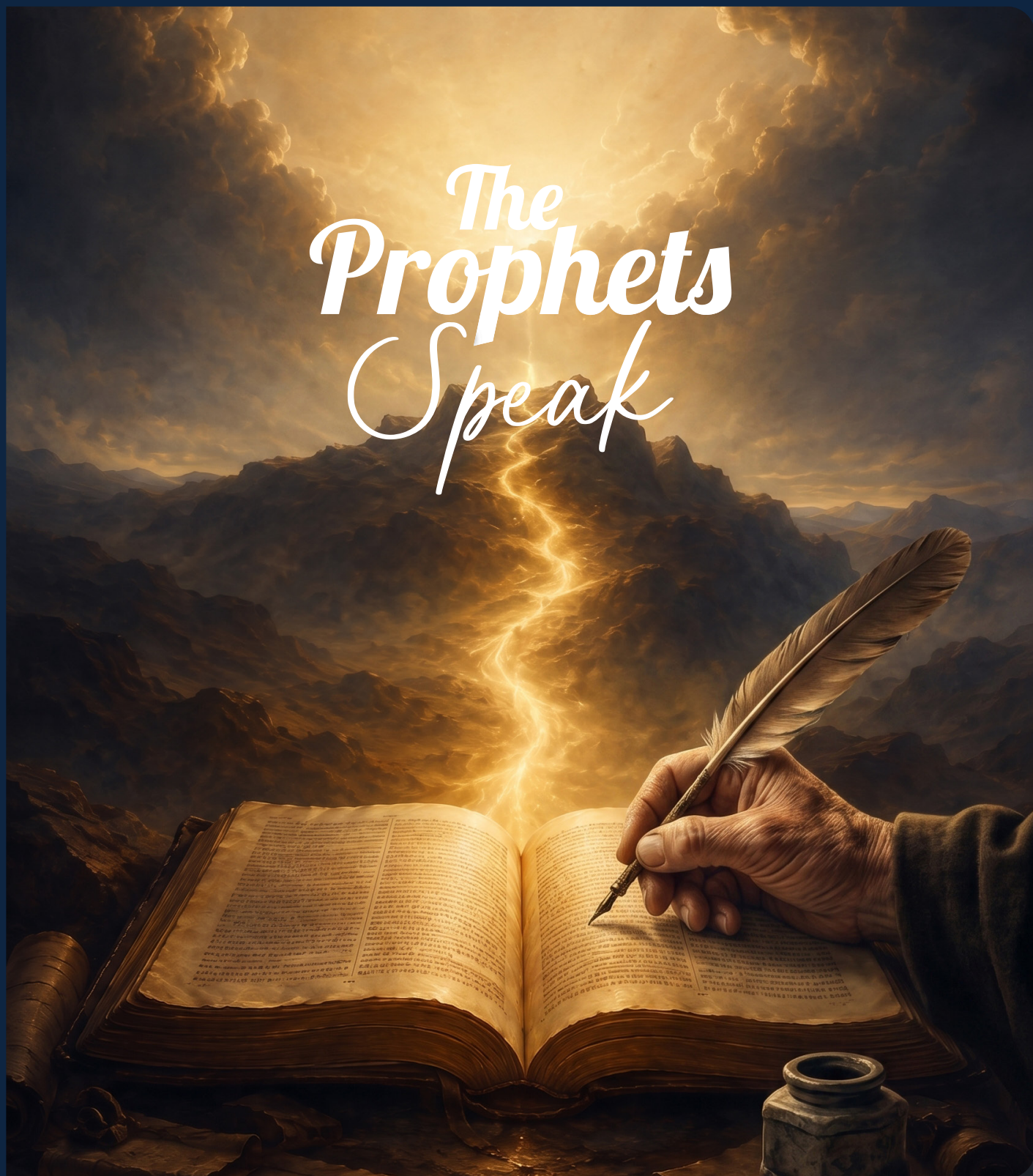


READINGS FOR THE WEEK OF PRAYER

DECEMBER 4-12, 2026

The Prophets Speak



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Introduction

Every year, as we approach the end of an old year and the threshold of a new one, God's people throughout the world unite in prayer, reflection, and consecration. It is not just any week. It is a divine call to pause, listen, and strengthen our connections with God.

The theme that unites us on this occasion is profoundly significant: *"The Prophets Speak."* God has never left humanity alone without direction. From the dawn of history, despite apostasy, idolatry, violence, and spiritual indifference, the Lord has continually raised up prophets to correct and comfort His people and to inform them of what is coming. Scripture declares: "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets." Amos 3:7. This text is one of the most powerful affirmations in the entire Bible. It teaches us that God does not act in history without first warning, speaking, and giving a message of mercy. The prophets are, in simple words, God's megaphone in the midst of a world that does not want to hear about divine justice nor submit to His will.

In this Week of Prayer, we will move through a sacred gallery of messages from heaven as proclaimed by the prophets Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and John the Baptist. Each one lived under unique circumstances, but they all shared the same mission—to speak when no one wanted to listen, to denounce sin, to call to repentance, to announce judgment and mercy, and to prepare the people for God to act among the nations.

The Bible tells us: "For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not." "God ... at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,..." Job 33:14; Hebrews 1:1. The prophets' messages were not only for their time. They spoke for our time. Their messages find exact fulfillment today, as we see the nations in crisis, the church in danger of spiritual lukewarmness, and a world rushing toward its final destiny.

"The last books of the Old Testament show us workers taken from the laborers in the field. Others were men of high ability and extensive learning, but the Lord gave them visions and messages. These men of the Old Testament spoke of things transpiring in their day, and Daniel, Isaiah, and Ezekiel not only spoke of things that concerned them as present truth, but their sights reached down to the future, and to what should occur in these last days." —*Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 419.

What was the purpose of the prophetic messages? To prepare a people to meet their God. Especially in this final time, the prophets are not merely

historical figures. They are also living instruments of God to waken consciences, to shake off spiritual indifference, and to warn the world that Christ is coming soon. Peter declared: "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place." 2 Peter 1:19. The prophets are still that light in the midst of the moral darkness of this age. They are the voice that says: "This is the way, walk ye in it,..." Isaiah 30:21.

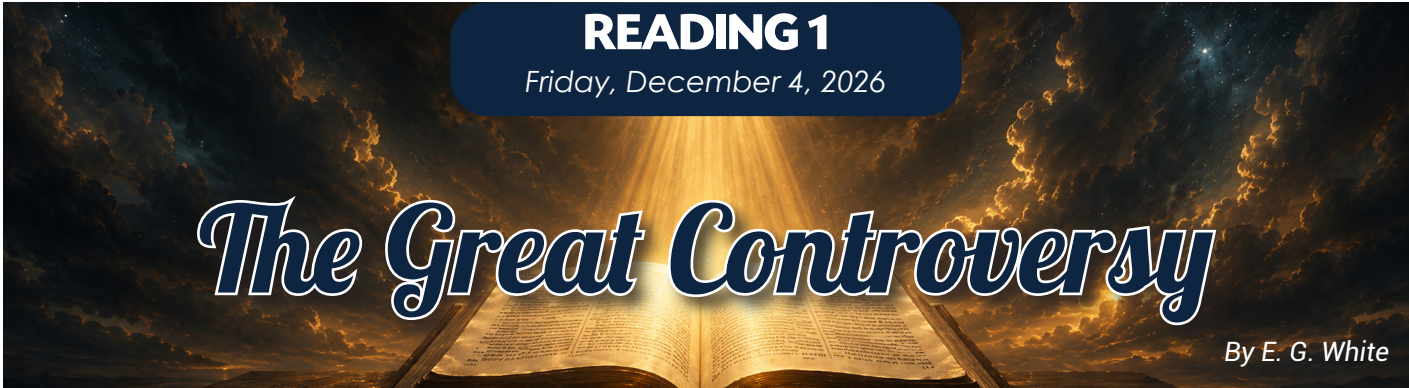
This week will end with a special worldwide Sabbath of fasting, prayer, and giving of the annual offering for the work of the General Conference, reflecting our gratitude, surrender, dependence, and commitment to God in the prophetic mission of the church throughout the world.

It should be very clear to all that it is not enough to listen to the prophets. It is necessary to believe them, be guided by them, and live out their messages. The Scriptures contain a powerful promise: "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper." 2 Chronicles 20:20.

"It is the voice of Christ that speaks through patriarchs and prophets, from the days of Adam even to the closing scenes of time. The Saviour is revealed in the Old Testament as clearly as in the New. It is the light from the prophetic past that brings out the life of Christ and the teachings of the New Testament with clearness and beauty. The miracles of Christ are a proof of His divinity; but a stronger proof that He is the world's Redeemer is found in comparing the prophecies of the Old Testament with the history of the New." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 799.

In this Week of Prayer, we need to ask ourselves a solemn question: Are we truly listening to the voice of God, not the voices of the world, social media, or Babylon? We need to focus on the messages of God that come from His prophets. As we study about Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and John the Baptist, let us see them, not just as characters of the past, but also as living messengers for our time. God is still speaking today. God is still warning today. God is still calling today. In all of that, it would be the greatest tragedy if His people did not want to hear Him. Let us, in this Week of Prayer, be ready to say, as did Samuel, "Speak; for Thy servant heareth." 1 Samuel 3:10. And may we believe the prophets so that we will be prepared, transformed, and spiritually fortified to glorify Jesus at His coming. May God bless His people at the close of this year is our heartfelt prayer.

—General Conference Ministerial Department



READING 1

Friday, December 4, 2026

The Great Controversy

By E. G. White

Before the entrance of sin, Adam enjoyed open communion with his Maker; but since man separated himself from God by transgression, the human race has been cut off from this high privilege. By the plan of redemption, however, a way has been opened whereby the inhabitants of the earth may still have connection with heaven. God has communicated with men by His Spirit, and divine light has been imparted to the world by revelations to His chosen servants. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Peter 1:21.

During the first twenty-five hundred years of human history, there was no written revelation. Those who had been taught of God, communicated their knowledge to others, and it was handed down from father to son, through successive generations. The preparation of the written word began in the time of Moses. Inspired revelations were then embodied in an inspired book. This work continued during the long period of sixteen hundred years—from Moses, the historian of creation and the law, to John, the recorder of the most sublime truths of the gospel.

The Bible points to God as its author; yet it was written by human hands; and in the varied style of its different books it presents the characteristics of the several writers. The truths revealed are all "given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16); yet they are expressed in the words of men. The Infinite One by His Holy Spirit has shed light into the minds and hearts of His servants. He has given dreams and visions, symbols and figures; and those to whom the truth was thus revealed have themselves embodied the thought in human language.

The Ten Commandments were spoken by God Himself, and were written by His own hand. They are of divine, and not of human composition. But the Bible, with its God-given truths expressed in the language of men, presents a union of the divine and the human. Such a union existed in the nature of Christ, who was the Son of God and the Son of man. Thus it is true of

the Bible, as it was of Christ, that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." John 1:14.

Written in different ages, by men who differed widely in rank and occupation, and in mental and spiritual endowments, the books of the Bible present a wide contrast in style, as well as a diversity in the nature of the subjects unfolded. Different forms of expression are employed by different writers; often the same truth is more strikingly presented by one than by another. And as several writers present a subject under varied aspects and relations, there may appear, to the superficial, careless, or prejudiced reader, to be discrepancy or contradiction, where the thoughtful, reverent student, with clearer insight, discerns the underlying harmony.

As presented through different individuals, the truth is brought out in its varied aspects. One writer is more strongly impressed with one phase of the subject; he grasps those points that harmonize with his experience or with his power of perception and appreciation; another seizes upon a different phase; and each, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, presents what is most forcibly impressed upon his own mind—a different aspect of the truth in each, but a perfect harmony through all. And the truths thus revealed unite to form a perfect whole, adapted to meet the wants of men in all the circumstances and experiences of life.

God has been pleased to communicate His truth to the world by human agencies, and He Himself, by His Holy Spirit, qualified men and enabled them to do this work. He guided the mind in the selection of what to speak and what to write. The treasure was entrusted to earthen vessels, yet it is, nonetheless, from Heaven. The testimony is conveyed through the imperfect expression of human language, yet it is the testimony of God; and the obedient, believing child of God beholds in it the glory of a divine power, full of grace and truth.

In His word, God has committed to men the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation

of His will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience. "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16–17.

Yet the fact that God has revealed His will to men through His word, has not rendered needless the continued presence and guiding of the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, the Spirit was promised by our Saviour, to open the word to His servants, to illuminate and apply its teachings. And since it was the Spirit of God that inspired the Bible, it is impossible that the teaching of the Spirit should ever be contrary to that of the word.

The Spirit was not given—nor can It ever be bestowed—to supersede the Bible; for the Scriptures explicitly state that the word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. Says the apostle John, "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." 1 John 4:1. And Isaiah declares, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isaiah 8:20.



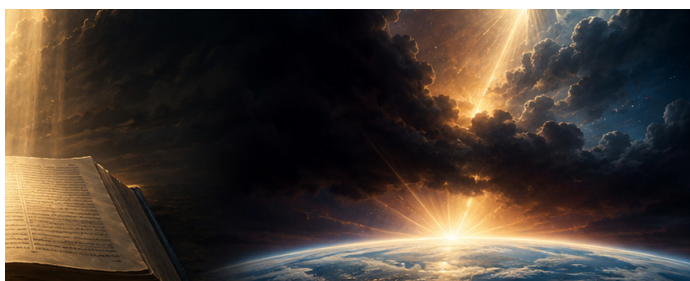
Great reproach has been cast upon the work of the Holy Spirit by the errors of a class that, claiming its enlightenment, profess to have no further need of guidance from the word of God. They are governed by impressions which they regard as the voice of God in the soul. But the spirit that controls them is not the Spirit of God. This following of impressions, to the neglect of the Scriptures, can lead only to confusion, to deception and ruin. It serves only to further the designs of the evil one. Since the ministry of the Holy Spirit is of vital importance to the church of Christ, it is one of the devices of Satan, through the errors of extremists and fanatics, to cast contempt upon the work of the Spirit and cause the people of God to neglect this source of strength which our Lord Himself has provided.

In harmony with the word of God, His Spirit was to continue Its work throughout the period of the gospel dispensation. During the ages while the Scriptures of both the Old and the New Testament were being given, the Holy Spirit did not cease to communicate light to individual minds, apart from the revelations to be embodied in the Sacred Canon. The Bible itself relates how, through the Holy Spirit, men received warning, reproof, counsel, and instruction, in matters in no way relating to the giving of the Scriptures. And mention is made of prophets in different ages, of whose utterances nothing is recorded. In like manner, after the close of the canon of the Scripture, the Holy Spirit was still to continue Its work, to enlighten, warn, and comfort the children of God.

Jesus promised His disciples, "The Comforter which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth:... and He will show you things to come." John 14:26; 16:13. Scripture plainly teaches that these promises, so far from being limited to apostolic days, extend to the church of Christ in all ages. The Saviour assures His followers, "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Matthew 28:20. And Paul declares that the gifts and manifestations of the Spirit were set in the church "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Ephesians 4:12–13.

For the believers at Ephesus the apostle prayed, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and ... what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe." Ephesians 1:17–19. The ministry of the divine Spirit in enlightening the understanding and opening to the mind the deep things of God's holy word, was the blessing which Paul thus besought for the Ephesian church.

After the wonderful manifestation of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, Peter exhorted the people to repentance and baptism in the name of Christ, for the



remission of their sins; and he said: "Ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Acts 2:38–39.

In immediate connection with the scenes of the great day of God, the Lord by the prophet Joel has promised a special manifestation of His Spirit. Joel 2:28. This prophecy received a partial fulfillment in the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost; but it will reach its full accomplishment in the manifestation of divine grace which will attend the closing work of the gospel.

The great controversy between good and evil will increase in intensity to the very close of time. In all ages the wrath of Satan has been manifested against the church of Christ; and God has bestowed His grace and Spirit upon His people to strengthen them to stand against the power of the evil one. When the apostles of Christ were to bear His gospel to the world and to record it for all future ages, they were especially endowed with the enlightenment of the Spirit. But as the church approaches her final deliverance, Satan is to work with greater power. He comes down "having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." Revelation 12:12. He will work "with all power and signs and lying wonders." 2 Thessalonians 2:9. For six thousand years that mastermind that once was highest among the angels of God has been wholly bent to the work of deception and ruin. And all the depths of satanic skill and subtlety acquired, all the cruelty developed, during these struggles of the ages, will be brought to bear against God's people in the final conflict. And in this time of peril the followers of Christ are to bear to the world the warning of the Lord's second advent; and a people are to be prepared to stand before Him at His coming, "without spot, and blameless." 2 Peter 3:14. At this time the special endowment of divine grace and power is not less needful to the church than in apostolic days.

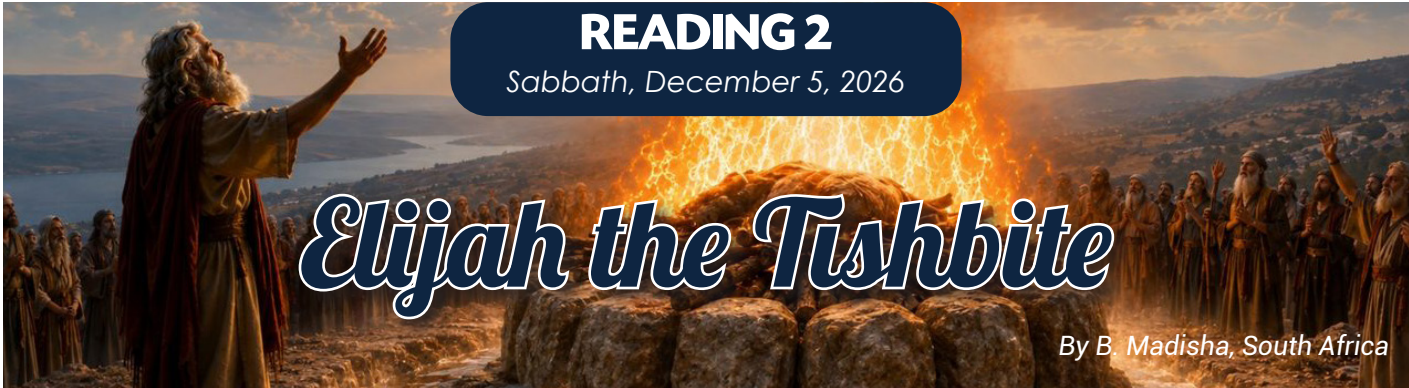
Through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the scenes of the long-continued conflict between good and evil have been opened to the writer of these pages. From time to time I have been permitted to behold

the working, in different ages, of the great controversy between Christ, the Prince of life, the Author of our salvation, and Satan, the prince of evil, the author of sin, the first transgressor of God's holy law. Satan's enmity against Christ has been manifested against His followers. The same hatred of the principles of God's law, the same policy of deception, by which error is made to appear as truth, by which human laws are substituted for the law of God, and men are led to worship the creature rather than the Creator, may be traced in all the history of the past. Satan's efforts to misrepresent the character of God, to cause men to cherish a false conception of the Creator, and thus to regard Him with fear and hate rather than with love; his endeavors to set aside the divine law, leading the people to think themselves free from its requirements; and his persecution of those who dare to resist his deceptions, have been steadfastly pursued in all ages. They may be traced in the history of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, of martyrs and reformers.

In the great final conflict, Satan will employ the same policy, manifest the same spirit, and work for the same end as in all preceding ages. That which has been, will be, except that the coming struggle will be marked with a terrible intensity such as the world has never witnessed. Satan's deceptions will be more subtle, his assaults more determined. If it were possible, he would lead astray the elect. Mark 13:22.

As the Spirit of God has opened to my mind the great truths of His word, and the scenes of the past and the future, I have been bidden to make known to others that which has thus been revealed—to trace the history of the controversy in past ages, and especially so to present it as to shed a light on the fast-approaching struggle of the future. In pursuance of this purpose, I have endeavored to select and group together events in the history of the church in such a manner as to trace the unfolding of the great testing truths that at different periods have been given to the world, that have excited the wrath of Satan, and the enmity of a world-loving church, and that have been maintained by the witness of those who "loved not their lives unto the death."

In these records we may see a foreshadowing of the conflict before us. Regarding them in the light of God's word, and by the illumination of His Spirit, we may see unveiled the devices of the wicked one, and the dangers which they must shun who would be found "without fault" before the Lord at His coming.—*The Great Controversy*, pp. v–xii.



READING 2

Sabbath, December 5, 2026

Elijah the Tishbite

By B. Madisha, South Africa

As we await the second coming of Christ, this is a very important time for believers to unite, share thoughts from the Readings for the Week of Prayer, and strengthen each other's faith. We welcome everyone and hope our fellowship will deepen our connection to God and one another.

INVITATION TO ENGAGE WITH ELIJAH THE TISHBITE

"With the word of God in his hands, every human being, wherever his lot in life may be cast, may have such companionship as he shall choose. In its pages he may hold converse with the noblest and best of the human race, and may listen to the voice of the Eternal as He speaks with men. As he studies and meditates upon the themes into which 'the angels desire to look' (1 Peter 1:12), he may have their companionship." —*Education*, p. 127.

During this Week of Prayer, I encourage you to reflect on Elijah the Tishbite's story. His life offers lessons and guidance that can inspire and support our spiritual journeys.

BACKGROUND AND CALL OF ELIJAH THE TISHBITE

Elijah, also known as Elia, Elias, or Eliyahu in Hebrew, came from the town of Tishbi in Gilead, which is located east of the Jordan River. He was a fervent preacher devoted to monotheism, proclaiming the belief in one God.

Elijah's prophetic mission began during a time when Israel, the northern kingdom, was falling into deep idolatry. "As Elijah saw Israel going deeper and deeper into idolatry, his soul was distressed and his indignation aroused.... Viewing this apostasy from his mountain retreat, Elijah was overwhelmed with sorrow. In anguish of soul he besought God to arrest the once-favored people in their wicked course, to visit them with judgments, if need be, that they might be led to see in its true light their departure

from Heaven. He longed to see them brought to repentance before they should go to such lengths in evil-doing as to provoke the Lord to destroy them utterly.

"Elijah's prayer was answered.... The time had come when God must speak to them by means of judgments....

"To Elijah was entrusted the mission of delivering to Ahab Heaven's message of judgment. He did not seek to be the Lord's messenger; the word of the Lord came to him. And jealous for the honor of God's cause, he did not hesitate to obey the divine summons, though to obey seemed to invite swift destruction at the hand of the wicked king." —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 119–120.

SELECTION OF GOD'S SERVANTS

How God chooses His servants is clearly outlined in the Scriptures. In Ezekiel 9:4, the Lord gave the instruction, "... Set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof." God selects those who are deeply troubled by wrongdoing and injustice and who earnestly mourn over the moral decline around them.

We should examine our motives for leadership, excluding those that are driven by ambition or desire for status. True leaders in God's service are chosen for their humility and genuine concern for others' spiritual wellbeing, not self-interest. Let us strive to serve sincerely and with devotion.

FAITH IN GOD'S WORD AND JUDGMENT

"The prophet set out at once and traveled night and day until he reached Samaria....

"On his way to Samaria, Elijah had passed by ever-flowing streams, hills covered with verdure, and stately forests that seemed beyond the reach of drought. Everything on which the eye rested was clothed with beauty. The prophet might have won-

dered how the streams that had never ceased their flow could become dry, or how those hills and valleys could be burned with drought. But he gave no place to unbelief. He fully believed that God would humble apostate Israel, and that through judgments they would be brought to repentance....” —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 120–121.

“And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.” 1 Kings 17:1. The phrase, “according to my word,” reflected Elijah’s strong faith in God’s promises, not his own authority. His unwavering trust enabled him to speak with conviction, knowing that God would fulfill every promise. The prophet’s example showed that true faith is rooted in God’s dependability and spiritual courage comes from trusting His word.

“Had he not possessed implicit confidence in the One whom he served, he would never have appeared before Ahab.... The fiat of Heaven had gone forth; God’s word could not fail; and at the peril of his life Elijah fearlessly fulfilled his commission.” —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 120–121.



There should fall upon the land neither dew nor rain. This judgement was appropriate, because it demonstrated the folly of believing a false doctrine that ascribed to a false god and to nature what belonged to God. It showed how far they had fallen. “Inasmuch as the worshipers of Baal claimed that the treasures of heaven, the dew and the rain, came not from Jehovah, but from the ruling forces of nature, and that it was through the creative energy of the sun that the earth was enriched and made to bring forth abundantly, the curse of God was to rest heavily upon the polluted land....

“The prophet’s words went into immediate effect.... Yet the people were urged by their leaders to have confidence in the power of Baal and to set aside as idle words the prophecy of Elijah. The priests still insisted that it was through the power of Baal that the showers of rain fell. Fear not the God of Elijah, nor tremble at His word, they urged, it is Baal that brings

forth the harvest in its season and provides for man and beast.” —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 120, 123.

“Before he [Ahab] could recover from his astonishment or frame a reply, Elijah disappeared, taking with him the key of heaven.... His word had locked up the treasures of heaven, and his word only could open them again....” —*Review and Herald*, August 14, 1913.

GOD PROTECTS THE FAITHFUL

“Elijah disappeared as abruptly as he had come, without waiting to witness the effect of his message. And the Lord went before him, making plain the way. ‘Turn thee eastward,’ the prophet was bidden, ‘and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; I have commanded the ravens to feed thee.’...

“There for many months he was miraculously provided with food. Later on, when, because of the continued drought, the brook became dry, God bade His servant find refuge in a heathen land. ‘Arise,’ He bade him, ‘get thee to Zarephath [known in New Testament times as Sarepta], which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.’” —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 121, 129.

LESSONS FROM THE WIDOW OF ZAREPHATH

The example of the widow of Zarephath highlighted the important truth that God does not show partiality toward individuals based on their status or nationality. Although there were many widows in Israel, none were found to be faithful during that time, whereas the faith of this heathen widow was recognized and rewarded by God. In a period of great hardship, she received grace from the Lord, demonstrating that sincere faith transcends boundaries and is honored by God regardless of one’s heritage. Her experience presented a valuable lesson: God’s favor rests upon those who trust in Him, regardless of where they come from. “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” “He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward;...” Hebrews 13:2; Matthew 10:41.

“The coming of Elijah on the very day when the widow feared that she must give up the struggle to sustain life tested to the utmost her faith in the power of the living God to provide for her necessities. But even in her dire extremity she bore witness to her faith by a compliance with the request of the stranger who was asking her to share her last morsel with him....

"No greater test of faith than this could have been required. The widow had hitherto treated all strangers with kindness and liberality. Now, regardless of the suffering that might result to herself and child, and trusting in the God of Israel to supply her need, she met this supreme test of hospitality by doing 'according to the saying of Elijah.'" —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 130.

DESTRUCTION AND DIVINE BENEVOLENCE

"A year passes, and yet there is no rain. The earth is parched as if with fire. The scorching heat of the sun destroys what little vegetation has survived. Streams dry up, and lowing herds and bleating flocks wander hither and thither in distress. Once-flourishing fields have become like burning desert sands, a desolate waste. The groves dedicated to idol worship are leafless; the forest trees, gaunt skeletons of nature, afford no shade. The air is dry and suffocating; dust storms blind the eyes and nearly stop the breath....

"The second year of famine passed, and still the pitiless heavens gave no sign of rain. Drought and famine continued...." —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 124, 127.

"Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? Saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?... " Ezekiel 18:23. God's intention was not to wipe Israel out of existence but to show them how He perceived apostasy. "The apostasy of Israel was an evil more dreadful than all the multiplied horrors of famine. God was seeking to free the people from their delusion and lead them to understand their accountability to the One to whom they owed their life and all things." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 127.

LESSONS FOR GOD'S REMNANT DURING APOSTASY

As God's remnant people, called to stand before the world as reformers, we are directly challenged by the prevailing apostasy and rebellion. In such circumstances, the example of Elijah shows what our attitude and duty should be. "Through the long years of drought and famine, Elijah prayed earnestly that the hearts of Israel might be turned from idolatry to allegiance to God.... As he saw evidences of suffering and want multiplying on every side, his heart was wrung with sorrow, and he longed for power to bring about a reformation quickly." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 133.

As reformers, we, too, are called to respond to spiritual crisis, not with condemnation, but with heartfelt prayer and commitment to God's purposes. In



the face of widespread unfaithfulness, our first duty is to seek God's intervention, trusting that through earnest prayer and steadfastness, hearts will be reclaimed and restored to Him.

THE KING AND PROPHET FACE TO FACE

"And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth." "And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him:... Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here." "So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him: and Ahab went to meet Elijah." 1 Kings 18:1, 7–8, 16.

"The king and the prophet stand face to face.... In his first faltering words, 'Art thou he that troubleth Israel?' he unconsciously reveals the inmost feelings of his heart....

"Those who place themselves in Satan's power are unable to see things as God sees them. When the mirror of truth is held up before them, they become indignant at the thought of receiving reproof....

"'I have not troubled Israel,' Elijah boldly asserts, 'but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim.'" —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 139–140.

"Those who refuse to receive reproof and to be corrected ... feel as did Ahab towards Elijah." —*Review and Herald*, January 8, 1884.

"Infidelity is fast becoming fashionable....

"When will the voice of faithful rebuke be heard once more in the church?" —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 140–141.

A CALL FOR SPIRITUAL REFORMATION

"Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table." 1 Kings 18:19–20. "The command was issued by one who seemed to stand in the very presence of Jehovah;

and Ahab obeyed at once, as if the prophet were monarch, and the king a subject....

"Carmel overlooked a wide expanse of country; its heights were visible from many parts of the kingdom of Israel....

"He whom the whole kingdom has charged with its weight of woe is now before them, apparently defenseless in the presence of the monarch of Israel, the prophets of Baal, the men of war, and the surrounding thousands....

"Looking first upon the broken-down altar of Jehovah, and then upon the multitude, Elijah cries out in clear, trumpetlike tones, 'How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him.'

"The people answer him not a word. Not one in that vast assembly dare reveal loyalty to Jehovah. Like a dark cloud, deception and blindness had overspread Israel." —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 143–144, 147.

"Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken." 1 Kings 18:23–24.

After everything was prepared, the prophets of Baal began their incantations. They gathered around their altar, calling out, "O Baal, hear us." Verse 26. "... With leaping and writhing and screaming, with tearing of hair and cutting of flesh, they beseech their god to help them." They spent the whole day doing this and even tried to devise some way to kindle the fire on the altar, hoping for an opportunity to deceive.

"It is the hour of the evening sacrifice, and Elijah bids the people, 'Come near unto me.' As they tremblingly draw near, he turns to the broken-down altar ... and repairs it....

"In the reconstruction of this ancient altar,... 'twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob,... he built an altar in the name of the Lord." —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 149, 151. Elijah's rebuilding the altar where men once worshipped the God of heaven is very significant. It teaches us that reformation consists of repairing the original, not casting it off and starting with something brand new.

ELIJAH'S FAITH

To eliminate any possibility of doubt regarding the miraculous power of God, Elijah took deliberate steps

to ensure that the altar was thoroughly saturated. He instructed those present to dig a trench around the altar and pour water over the burnt sacrifice and wood not once, but three times. This act filled the trench with water, making it abundantly clear that only divine intervention could ignite the offering.

"Then, bowing reverently before the unseen God, he raises his hands toward heaven and offers a simple prayer....

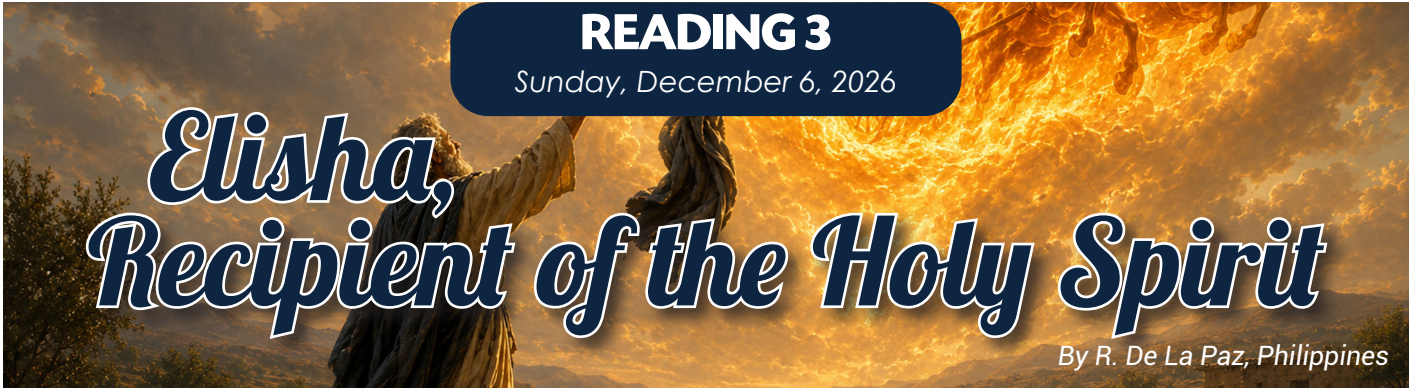
"No sooner is the prayer of Elijah ended than flames of fire, like brilliant flashes of lightning, descend from heaven upon the upreared altar, consuming the sacrifice, licking up the water in the trench, and consuming even the stones of the altar. The brilliancy of the blaze illumines the mountain and dazzles the eyes of the multitude." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 152.

ELIJAH IN THE END TIME

"For years the Lord has been calling the attention of His people to health reform. This is one of the greatest branches of the work of preparation for the coming of the Son of man. John the Baptist went forth in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the way of the Lord and to turn the people to the wisdom of the just. He was a representative of those living in these last days to whom God has entrusted sacred truths to present before the people to prepare the way for the second appearing of Christ. John was a reformer....

"The simplicity of his dress,... His diet, purely vegetable, of locusts and wild honey,... 'Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers.' Here the prophet describes the character of the work. Those who are to prepare the way for the second coming of Christ are represented by faithful Elijah, as John came in the spirit of Elijah to prepare the way for Christ's first advent." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 61–62. May God abundantly bless His faithful people! Amen!





READING 3

Sunday, December 6, 2026

Elisha, Recipient of the Holy Spirit

By R. De La Paz, Philippines

"Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah." 2 Kings 3:11.

The Bible states that at sundry times and in divers manners God has communicated with His people through His servants, the prophets. Hebrews 1:1. One of those prophets was Elisha, the successor of Elijah. He was from Abel-meholah, an ancient city near the Jordan River, known for its fertile ground, which supported agriculture for centuries. Historically, it was part of the territory of the tribe of Issachar. His father was Shaphat, "a tiller of the soil, a farmer," a God-fearing man, firm in faith and diligent. He was numbered among the faithful in Israel. "... During the captivity there were souls who had not degenerated and gone into apostasy, and this family was included in the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal." —*Christ Triumphant*, p. 166.

HIS EDUCATION

When one applies for a job in the world, the requirements generally include one's educational background or attainments, skills, and experience. But in God's employment, special characteristics are required to fulfill His work. Far from city and court dissipation, Elisha had received his education. He had been trained in habits of simplicity, of obedience to his parents and to God.... But though of a meek and quiet spirit, Elisha had no changeable character." This, we may say, differed from his predecessor, for there was a time when Elijah wanted to end his service to God. "Integrity and fidelity and the love and fear of God were his [Elisha's]. He had the characteristics of a ruler, but with it all was the meekness of one who would serve. His mind had been exercised to be faithful in the little things, to be faithful in whatever he should do, so that if God should call him to act more directly for Him, he would be prepared to hear His voice." —*Christ Triumphant*, p. 166.

Elisha's example in learning leadership is worthy to be studied and imitated by every aspiring servant

of God. Although he came from a prominent family, he endeavored to obtain an all-around education by learning to do every line of work that needed to be done. He learned every skill that was needed by his father's servants. Through his earnestness and humble, teachable spirit, "he would learn how to serve first, that he might know how to lead and instruct and command. While doing all that he possibly could do with his God-entrusted capabilities in cooperating with his father in the home firm, he was doing God service." —*Letter 12*, 1897. This virtue is worthwhile, especially in the Lord's vineyard, where a person meets all kinds of people from all walks of life. We see the best example in the life of our Lord Jesus, including His childhood, youth, and ministry.

ELIJAH FOUND ELISHA

When Elijah was about to close his earthly labors, another person was to be chosen to carry forward the work to be done in the time when Israel was in severe apostasy. In his course of travel, Elijah was directed northward. Wherever he looked, the land he saw was owned by Shaphat, whose heart had remained undivided in the service of God. Everyone who worked for this man was very busy, and Elijah's attention was attracted to Elisha. "So he ... found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him." 1 Kings 19:19. Thus, Elisha was called directly from the plow to prophetic ministry for God.

HUMBLE TASKS PREPARE FOR HIGHER SERVICE

The New Testament contains instructions on stewardship. In the parable of the talents, the Lord emphasized the need to be responsible and reliable. We quote from the Scriptures, "His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

Matthew 25:23. It is necessary to combine hands-on service with good knowledge and understanding of the Bible, with patience, perseverance, and self-sacrifice, learning from Christ and His delegated servants as did Elisha. "And what was the first work of Elisha? It was to take up the little things, and do them with heartiness. He is spoken of as pouring water on the hands of Elijah his master. He was the prophet's personal attendant." —*Christ Triumphant*, p. 168.

No matter how insignificant the work may appear, whatever is done for the Lord with self-surrender and willingness is as acceptable to Jesus as the best service.

"He who feels that it is of no consequence how he performs the smaller tasks proves himself unfit for a more honored position. He may think himself fully competent to take up the larger duties; but God looks deeper than the surface....

"For several years after the call of Elisha, Elijah and Elisha labored together, the younger man daily gaining greater preparedness for his work. Elijah had been God's instrument for the overthrow of gigantic evils." —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 218, 224. It was not an easy task for Elijah to rebuke King Ahab and Jezebel, the king's wicked wife; but he nevertheless did it with courage, according to the instructions from God. Elisha learned lessons from Elijah's faithfulness and courage in doing God's work and gained experience to deal with every challenging task. When he was plowing in the field, Elisha had learned the lesson of not allowing failure or discouragement to be entertained. He now set his hand to the plow in another line of work, and he would not fail or be discouraged. Every time he was invited to turn back, he declared, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee."

ELISHA'S ZEAL AND TEST

Elisha's zeal, enthusiasm, and dedication were remarkable as for several years after his call, he labored with Elijah to do the work that God entrusted to him. He gained the best preparation as Elijah's daily attendant. After Samuel's death, the schools of the prophets that he had established to train young people for God's work fell into decay. During Israel's great apostasy as King Ahab departed from God, the training of these young people was very much affected. Elijah re-established the schools to give the young men an education that would lead them to glorify God by magnifying His law and making it honorable, thus recovering the sacred work. In those days, there

were three schools of the prophets—in Gilgal, Bethel, and Jericho—and Elijah wanted to visit the students to motivate and instruct them in the high privilege of maintaining their loyalty to God. From Gilgal, Elijah planned to go to Bethel. He told Elisha to tarry there, but he refused. The same thing happened when Elijah told him that he was going to go to Jericho and Jordan. Elisha and the students in the schools knew that their master was going to be taken by God, although Elijah seemed to be unaware of it, and Elisha cherished the remaining time that he could be with him. Whenever Elijah told him to wait where he was, Elisha replied, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." 2 Kings 2:2. These words reflected the zeal, preparation, and desire of Elisha to serve God faithfully regardless of the circumstances. "As Elisha accompanied the prophet on his round of service from school to school, his faith and resolution were once more tested.... He would not be parted from his master, so long as opportunity remained for gaining a further fitting up for service." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 225.

MIRACLES PERFORMED BY THE PROPHET

The Bible gives numerous stories about miracles. In the Old Testament and the New, they were recounted as proof of God's power and divinity. Jesus performed the most miracles ever in this world, followed by Elisha. Following is a list of the most notable miracles done and the prophecies given by the prophet, in chronological order:

- Smiting and parting the waters of the Jordan River: Immediately after Elijah was translated, Elisha struck the waters of the Jordan River after catching Elijah's mantle, parting the river so that he could cross it. 2 Kings 2:14.
- Healing the waters of Jericho: Elisha healed the waters of Jericho by putting salt into the spring, making the water healthful and restoring life to the area. 2 Kings 2:19–22.



- The mocking of Elisha and God's punishment: When forty-two young people mocked Elisha, he cursed them in the name of the Lord, and two she-bears came out of the forest and attacked them. 2 Kings 2:23–25.
- Filling the valley with water: Elisha prophesied that God would provide water for the armies of Israel, Judah, and Edom without rain, by miraculously filling the valley, which was done; and they overcame the Moabites. 2 Kings 3:16–20.
- Oil for the widow and her family: Elisha helped a widow of one of the sons of the prophets by multiplying her small amount of oil so she could sell it to pay her debts and save her two sons from slavery to a creditor. 2 Kings 4:1–7.
- Prophecy of the Shunammite woman's conception and child: Elisha foretold that a wealthy, hospitable Shunammite woman would have a son, which came to pass. 2 Kings 4:16.
- Restoration of life to the Shunammite's son: After her son died, the woman called for Elisha to help. The prophet prayed to the Lord, lay on the child's body, and raised him back to life. 2 Kings 4:32–37.
- Cleansing of the poisonous stew served to the sons of the prophets: Elisha cleansed a pot of stew that had been accidentally poisoned when flour from wild gourds was put into the pot. 2 Kings 4:38–41.
- Feeding of a hundred men: Through Elisha the Lord multiplied twenty loaves of barley and full ears of corn in the husk to feed a hundred men, with food left over. 2 Kings 4:42–44.
- Healing Naaman from leprosy: Elisha healed Naaman, a captain of the Syrian king's army, of leprosy by advising him to wash seven times in the Jordan River. 2 Kings 5:10–14.
- Gehazi's punishment: Elisha discerned Gehazi's deceit in obtaining two talents of silver and two changes of garments from Naaman and then cursed him with officer's leprosy. 2 Kings 5:20–27.
- Floating axe head: Elisha miraculously made an iron axe head float on the water after it fell into the river by throwing a stick on the water, demonstrating God's power over nature. 2 Kings 6:1–7.
- Blinding of the Syrian army: Elisha prayed to the Lord to smite the Syrian army with blindness and then led it to Samaria, where the entire force was taken captive. Instead of advising

that they be destroyed, the prophet instructed the king of Israel to give them bread and water and send them back to their master, illustrating God's mercy. 2 Kings 6:18–23.

- Siege of Samaria and the prophecy of abundance: Elisha prophesied that Syria would besiege Samaria and the famine would be ended, which came to pass the following day. 2 Kings 6:24; 7:18.
- Restoration of the Shunammite woman's land: Elisha told the Shunammite woman that there would be a famine of seven years and that she should go somewhere else; she went to the land of the Philistines and after seven years returned to claim her property. 2 Kings 8:1–6.

These miracles not only demonstrated Elisha's role as a prophet but also highlighted God's power, blessing His people with mercy, providence, and love. It is remarkable that some of the miracles that the prophet Elisha performed were included in Jesus' ministry, including healing the sick, resurrecting the dead, feeding a large number of people with scant resources, exercising compassion and mercy, and weeping for His peoples' suffering because of sin and apostasy.

ELISHA'S REBUKE OF DISRESPECT

God's authority may not be taken lightly even if it relates to His servant and not to Him directly. God instructed His people, "Touch not Mine anointed, and do My prophets no harm," and "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine." 1 Chronicles 16:22; 1 Timothy 5:17. These verses show that, regardless of their age, God's representatives are to be respected by the people. This was revealed when Elisha was mocked by the youth. The inspired pen states that "the idea that we must submit to ways of perverse children is a mistake. Elisha, at the very commencement of his work, was mocked and derided by the youth of Bethel. He was a man of great mildness, but the Spirit of God impelled him



to pronounce a curse upon those railers. They had heard of Elijah's ascension, and they made this solemn event the subject of jeers. Elisha evinced that he was not to be trifled with, by old or young, in his sacred calling. When they told him he had better go up, as Elijah had done before him, he cursed them in the name of the Lord. The awful judgment that came upon them was of God.

"After this, Elisha had no further trouble in his mission. For fifty years he passed in and out of the gate of Bethel, and went to and fro from city to city, passing through crowds of the worst and rudest of idle, dissolute youth; but no one ever mocked him or made light of his qualifications as the prophet of the Most High." —*Child Guidance*, pp. 272–273.

ADAPT THE INSTRUCTION

God's workers in the present time, including future collaborators in God's vineyard, should learn how God will choose compliant, zealous servants to meet His requirements. We may possess the necessary talents, but the way that God makes this selection must not be overlooked. Notable experiences of the prophets were recorded for the edification of the church. "How many useful and honored workers in God's cause have received a training amid the humble duties of the most lowly positions in life! Moses was the prospective ruler of Egypt, but God could not take him from the king's court to do the work appointed him. Only when he had been for forty years a faithful shepherd was he sent to be the deliverer of his people. Gideon was taken from the threshing floor to be the instrument in the hands of God for delivering the armies of Israel. Elisha was called to leave the plow and do the bidding of God. Amos was a husbandman, a tiller of the soil, when God gave him a message to proclaim. All who become co-workers with Christ will have a great deal of hard, uncongenial labor to perform, and their lessons of instruction should be wisely chosen, and adapted to their peculiarities of character, and the work which they are to pursue." —*Christian Service*, p. 60.

A DOUBLE PORTION OF ELIJAH'S SPIRIT

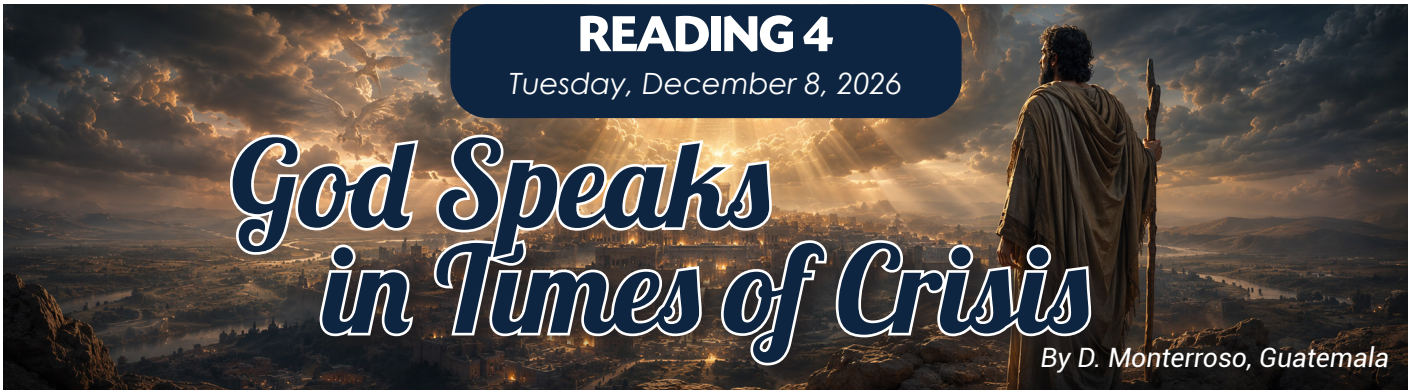
"And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." 2 Kings 2:9. When Elijah was about to leave his faithful servant and disciple, he gave Elisha the privilege of asking for whatever was in his heart. Elisha might have asked for temporal or ma-

terial favor—riches, fame, wisdom, worldly honor and glory, a place among the great leaders of earth, or a life of ease and pleasure as contrasted with Elijah's life of hardship and privation. But he asked for none of these. What he wanted most was to carry on the same work that Elijah had carried on, and in the same spirit and power. To do that he would need the same grace and the same support from God's Spirit.

The request of Elisha reminds us of Solomon's request. He asked for no worldly advantage, position, or gain, but for the spiritual power necessary to perform the solemn responsibilities to which he had been called. By asking for a "double portion" of the spirit of Elijah, Elisha was not asking for double the power of Elijah. He was not asking for more than had been given to the older prophet, nor was he asking for a higher position or more ability than had been given to Elijah. So, the request of Elisha was only that he might be treated as the eldest son of the departing prophet, and that he might receive a double portion of Elijah's spirit as compared with that which would be given to any others of the sons of the prophets. What he was asking for was the acknowledgment of a spiritual birthright, that he might be regarded as the firstborn spiritual son of the elder prophet and thus be enabled to continue the work begun by Elijah. Thus, the inspired pen wrote, "Elisha received a double portion of the spirit that had rested on Elijah. In him the power of Elijah's spirit was united with the gentleness, mercy, and tender compassion of the Spirit of Christ." —*Letter 93*, 1902.

Dear brothers, sisters, and friends, as we approach the end of 2026 and begin a new year walking with God, may the lives of the prophets and faithful servants of the Lord be an inspiration and motivation for us. Year after year, we receive abundant providence, mercy, and love from God. Let us thank Him by showing our appreciation for His great goodness and reciprocate by demonstrating our obedience, service, love, and faith in preparation for the soon coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the clouds of heaven. Amen!





READING 4

Tuesday, December 8, 2026

God Speaks in Times of Crisis

By D. Monterroso, Guatemala

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord....” Isaiah 6:1. Isaiah began his ministry at a time of national transition. The death of King Uzziah brought political uncertainty, and the expansion of the Assyrian empire threatened the stability of Judah. Material prosperity concealed a deep spiritual decay. In that context, God did not send a military strategy, but a vision of His holiness.

The prophet saw the Lord “high and lifted up,” heard the song of the seraphim, and was broken by the awareness of his sin. The external crisis was answered with an internal revelation. This order is fundamental. Before denouncing the sin of the people, Isaiah was confronted with his own need of purification.

Our time is no less critical. We live amid geopolitical tensions, moral collapse, superficial religiosity, and a culture that exalts self-sufficiency. As in the 8th century B.C., Heaven is still seeking men and women who have seen the Lord, who have been touched by the coal from the altar, and who are willing to say: “Here am I; send me.”

HISTORICAL, BIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

Isaiah exercised his prophetic office between approximately B.C. 740 and 680, during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Jerusalem was the center of his prophetic activity. Probably of royal lineage, he had access to the court and was able to provide counsel in decisive moments, such as in the crisis before the Assyrian invasion in the time of Hezekiah. Historically, the prophet faced the threat of the Assyrian empire, whose military might was relentless. Spiritually, he confronted idolatry, social injustice, and religious formalism that emptied worship of its moral content. His name—“Jehovah is salvation”—summarized his message. Isaiah was not only a proclaimer of calamities; he was the great messianic prophet. In his writings, we find the proc-

lamation of Emmanuel (Isaiah 7:14), the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), the suffering Servant (Isaiah 53), and the final restoration. Isaiah 65–66.

The book that bears his name has been considered by many scholars as a kind of “miniature Bible.” Just as the Bible is composed of 66 books, the book of Isaiah contains 66 chapters. The first 39 chapters present primarily messages of warning, judgment, and calls to repentance directed at God’s people and the nations, which are parallel with the 39 books of the Old Testament. And the last 27 chapters highlight more clearly the messages of hope, restoration, redemption, and the future glory of God’s people, similar to the 27 books of the New Testament.

In fact, many have called Isaiah “the messianic prophet,” since his writings resound with the hope of the Saviour who will come to give salvation and restoration to the world. The vision of Isaiah 6 depicts the holiness that transforms; it is the heart of his experience: Revelation of divine holiness: “Holy, holy, holy.” Isaiah 6:3. The triple repetition underscores the absolute purity of God. Conviction of sin: “Woe is me!” Isaiah 6:5. Before pronouncing “woe” on others, Isaiah pronounced it upon himself. Purification: A live coal from the altar was placed on his lips, symbolizing atonement and consecration. Commission: “Whom shall I send?” Isaiah 6:8. “Here am I; send me.”

“As the prophet Isaiah beheld the glory of the Lord, he was amazed, and, overwhelmed with a sense of his own weakness and unworthiness, he cried, ‘Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips,... for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.’ Isaiah 6:5.” —*In Heavenly Places*, p. 186. He was deeply affected by with his own unworthiness. Only after experiencing that was he prepared for service. “The vision given to Isaiah represents the condition of God’s people in the last days.... As they look

by faith into the holy of holies,... they perceive that they are a people of unclean lips.... If they will humble their souls before God, there is hope for them." —*In Heavenly Places*, p. 188.

THE SINS HE DENOUNCED AND THEIR PRESENT ECHO

Isaiah clearly pointed out the people's sins: Social injustice: "Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." Isaiah 1:17. Corruption of rulers: "Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves." Isaiah 1:23. Idolatry: "Their land also is full of idols." Isaiah 2:8. Pride: "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled." Isaiah 2:11. Materialism: "Woe unto them that join house to house." Isaiah 5:8. Religious hypocrisy: "This people draw near Me with their mouth." Isaiah 29:13. Trust in human alliances: "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help." Isaiah 31:1. God did not point out these sins to destroy the people, but to call them to repentance.

THE PROPHET OF THE MESSIAH—REDEMPTIVE CENTER

Isaiah 53 contains one of the clearest revelations of Christ's sacrifice: "But He was wounded for our transgressions,..." Isaiah 53:5. "Christ would have averted the doom of the Jewish nation if the people had received Him.... They rejected the light of the world...." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 295, 296. Isaiah highlighted the messianic hope. The faithful remnant, restoration, and the promise of the new heavens and the new earth show that God's final purpose is not to destroy, but to redeem.

"COME, MY PEOPLE": REFUGE IN TIMES OF INDIGNATION

"Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers." Isaiah 26:20. "What are the chambers in which they are to hide? They are the protection of Christ and holy angels. The people of God are not at this time all in one place. They are in different companies and in all parts of the earth, and they will be tried singly, not in groups. Everyone must stand the test for himself." —*In Heavenly Places*, p. 269. This call has special meaning for the last days. The refuge is not cowardly escape, but trust in God. Psalm 91 complements this image: The secret place of the Most High is the believer's protection.

A STORY THAT ILLUSTRATES THE MESSAGE

During World War II, many Londoners ignored air-raid sirens. Those who heeded the warnings and went to the bomb shelters for safety preserved their lives. Similarly, "The exhortations of the prophet to Judah to behold the living God, and to accept His gracious offers, were not in vain. There were some who gave earnest heed, and who turned from their idols to the worship of Jehovah. They learned to see in their Maker love and mercy and tender compassion." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 320. Isaiah was a spiritual siren. The problem was not lack of warning, but lack of response.

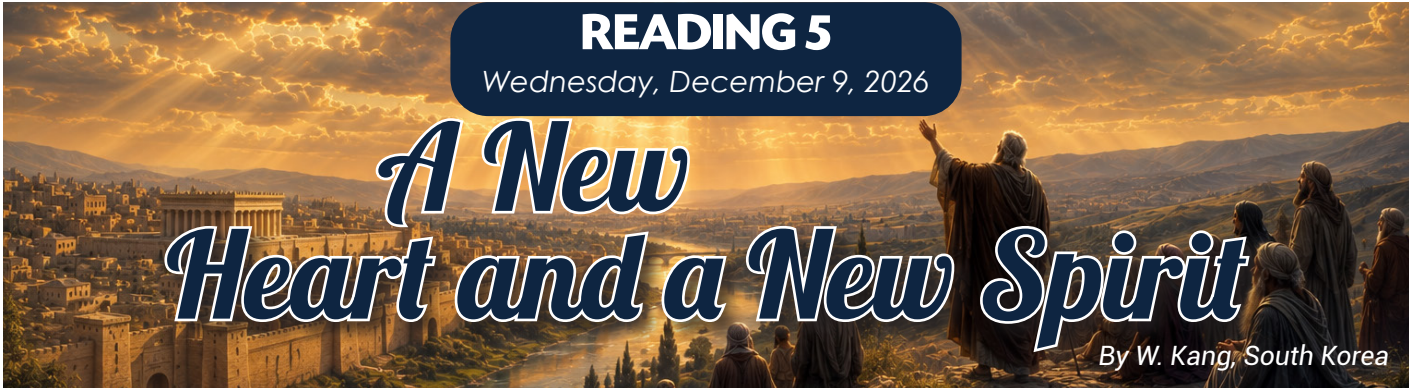
The prophet's end was faithfulness unto death. Tradition indicates that Isaiah was martyred during the reign of Manasseh. "Manasseh shed innocent blood very much,..." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 381. "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder,..." Hebrews 11:37. If that tradition is correct, the prophet who saw divine glory ended his life under persecution. His death confirms an eternal principle—prophetic faithfulness may cost the Christian his life, but it secures eternity.

CONCLUSION

Dear brothers and sisters, the prophet Isaiah's message is threefold: God is holy, sin brings judgment and salvation is in the Messiah. We live in perilous times. The solution is not fear, but spiritual preparation. "Here am I; send me." Isaiah 6:8. The call remains clear: Personal reformation. Faithfulness to Biblical truth. A deep life of prayer. The bold proclamation of God's message: "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found,..." Isaiah 55:6.

Let every home become a spiritual chamber. Let every believer see the Lord "high and lifted up." Let every heart be touched by the live coal from the altar. And when the indignation passes, he will be hidden in Christ. This is my desire and prayer for all of the believers. Amen!





READING 5

Wednesday, December 9, 2026

A New Heart and a New Spirit

By W. Kang, South Korea

Around B.C. 593, Ezekiel saw the heavens opened and beheld a great storm coming from the north, with flashing fire and radiant light. In the midst of it were four living creatures and wheels within wheels, and above them was a throne. On the throne was a figure like that of a man, surrounded by a brilliant radiance like a rainbow. "Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God." Ezekiel 1:1.

Israel mistakenly believed that they were secure simply because the temple stood among them. However, through the scene in Ezekiel 10, in which the glory of the Lord departed from the temple, the prophet Ezekiel made it clear that God's presence is not guaranteed by any outward form or religious structure, but is inseparably connected to holiness and obedience.

As we come to the end of 2026, we desire to reflect once again on the message of warning, restoration, and hope that began with Ezekiel's vision and was proclaimed to the people of Israel. This experience will help us greatly to prepare for Jesus Christ's second coming.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND REALITY

Ezekiel began his ministry around B.C. 593 in the land of the Babylonian captivity. He was from a priestly family and had been taken to Babylon during the first deportation in B.C. 597. Politically, Judah had already been greatly weakened and was under the control of the Babylonian Empire. Ultimately, in

B.C. 586, Jerusalem was completely destroyed, and the temple was burned. In the midst of these devastating circumstances, Ezekiel ministered not in Jerusalem but in Babylon, by the Chebar River. Ezekiel 1:1. In other words, he was a prophet who proclaimed God's message to a people who had lost their position as a nation.

At that time, the people of Israel were trapped in a false sense of spiritual security. They thought, Since the temple stands among us, God will protect us, and, We are the chosen nation; we will not be destroyed. However, their lives were filled with idolatry and disobedience. Outwardly, they maintained religious forms, but inwardly they had departed from God. They were also spiritually insensitive and did not take personal responsibility for their actions. In Ezekiel 18, the people said, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." This reflected their attitude of shifting the blame for sin onto previous generations. They chose excuses over repentance and complaints over responsibility. Finally, the people of Israel came to the point of deep despair and discouragement. After the destruction of Jerusalem, they said, "Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost...." Ezekiel 37:11. Such words revealed a condition of complete spiritual collapse.

GOD'S HOLINESS AND GLORY

"In Ezekiel's vision, God had His hand beneath the wings of the cherubim. This is to teach His servants that it is divine power that gives them success. He will work with them if they will put away iniquity, and become pure in heart and life. The heavenly messen-

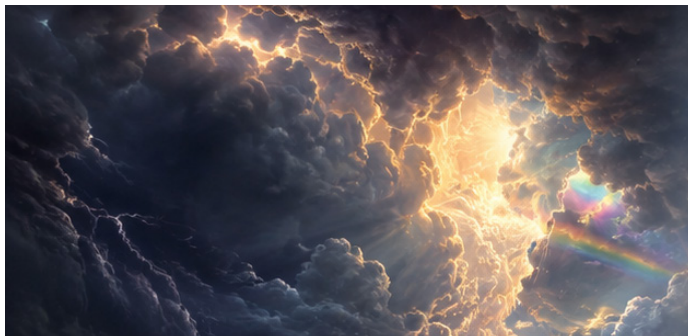
gers seen by Ezekiel, like a bright light going among the living creatures with the swiftness of lightning, represent the speed with which this work will finally go forward to completion. He who slumbers not, who is continually at work for the accomplishment of His designs, can carry forward His great work harmoniously. That which appears to finite minds entangled and complicated, the Lord's hand can keep in perfect order. He can devise ways and means to thwart the purposes of wicked counselors, and those who plot out mischief." —*Review and Herald*, January 11, 1887.

Ezekiel first sought to teach the people of Israel—who had fallen into corruption and disobedience—who God truly is. The Israelites needed to understand that God is holy and that His glory does not compromise with sin.

JUDGMENT IN JUSTICE AND WARNING

Ezekiel proclaimed that the fall of Jerusalem was not merely a political failure, but the result of spiritual corruption. Idolatry, social injustice, and formalistic worship had called forth God's judgment. Yet that judgment was not meant for destruction alone, but as a warning leading to restoration. Again and again, God declared, "Then you will know that I am the Lord."

The people of Israel turned away from God's teachings and fell into idolatry, and their sins became full and overflowing. "Then shall ye know that I am the Lord, when their slain men shall be among their idols round about their altars, upon every high hill, in all the tops of the mountains, and under every green tree, and under every thick oak, the place where they did offer sweet savour to all their idols." Ezekiel 6:13. Ezekiel



reminded Israel of his calling as a watchman appointed for them, and he delivered a message of warning.

"Unless we understand the importance of the moments that are swiftly passing into eternity, and make ready to stand in the great day of God, we shall be unfaithful stewards. The watchman is to know the time of night. Everything is now clothed with a solemnity that all who believe the truth for this time should realize. They should act in reference to the day of God. The judgments of God are about to fall upon the world, and we need to be preparing for that great day.

"Our time is precious. We have but few, very few days of probation in which to make ready for the future, immortal life." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 407.

The purpose of judgment is not merely punishment, but to lead people to recognize the sovereignty of God. "Within a few short years the king of Babylon was to be used as the instrument of God's wrath upon impenitent Judah. Again and again Jerusalem was to be invested and entered by the besieging armies of Nebuchadnezzar. Company after company—at first a few only, but later on thousands and tens of thousands—were to be taken captive to the land of Shinar, there to dwell in enforced exile." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 422.

The core messages Ezekiel proclaimed were: "Sin inevitably brings consequences," "God's judgment is righteous love," and "God desires repentance." Ezekiel 8 contains the record of how the prophet, while in exile in Babylon, was taken in vision to Jerusalem and shown the detestable practices taking place inside the temple. He first saw the "idol that provokes jealousy" set up at the north gate of the temple. Then he was shown a hidden chamber where seventy elders of Israel were secretly burning incense to various idols, believing that the Lord did not see them. He also witnessed women weeping for the pagan god Tammuz and, finally, twenty-five men in the inner court of the temple bowing down to worship the sun toward the east. This chapter reveals that although the temple still stood outwardly, it had been spiritually corrupted



by idolatry and rebellion. It explains why God's judgments were inevitable and anticipates the departure of His glory from the temple.

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

Ezekiel taught that the corruption and disobedience of the people of Israel must not be understood merely in terms of collective responsibility, but also in terms of the importance of personal repentance and individual choice. At that time, the people of Israel were using the proverb, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Ezekiel 18:2), claiming that their suffering was the result of their ancestors' sins. However, God clearly declares that each person is responsible for his own sin. The righteous will live by their righteousness, and the wicked will die because of their wickedness. Furthermore, God proclaimed that if a wicked person turned away from his sin and repented, he would live; but if a righteous person turned away from righteousness and committed evil, he would face judgment. The central message of Ezekiel 18 is that God does not take pleasure in the death of the wicked but desires that they turn from their evil ways and live. Ultimately, this chapter emphasizes God's justice, His mercy, and the possibility of repentance.

Brothers and sisters, we must understand that we who are living in the last days are likewise personally responsible. Of course, the collective responsibility that we share together is also important. However, our personal salvation is ultimately an individual responsibility. This means that our salvation is determined by our own actions and choices, and it is something deeply personal.

A LAMENT OVER THE KINGS OF ISRAEL

Ezekiel emphasized, in the form of a lament over the kings of Israel, the corruption of the leaders and the resulting national downfall. The parable of the lioness and her cubs portrays the power and ambition of the kings of Judah, as well as their tragic fate in being taken into captivity. Likewise, the image of the vine once planted by abundant waters, flourishing but eventually uprooted and consumed by fire, symbolizes the fall of the Davidic dynasty and the complete destruction of Judah. "Thy mother is like a vine in thy blood, planted by the waters: she was fruitful and full of branches by reason of many waters." Ezekiel 19:10. The key emphases of this chapter are as follows: First, the spiritual condition of a leader determines the destiny of the community. Second, the privileges and positions given by God are not guaranteed forever. Third, pride and disobedience ultimately lead to ruin.

The modern implications are very clear. Leaders in today's church and society are not free from responsibility. Position and influence are not privileges to be enjoyed, but stewardships to be faithfully carried out. Past glory or tradition cannot substitute for present obedience. When holiness and humility before God disappear, no community can remain secure. Ezekiel asks us today, Will you be like the once-flourishing vine that was uprooted, or will you be a tree that continues to bear fruit to the end? As leaders, will we follow the will of God, or will we rely on our own strength and ultimately fall? This lament is not merely a historical record, but a solemn song of warning directed to us who live today.

VISION OF THE DRY BONES

"The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones." Ezekiel 37:1. The dry bones symbolized Israel, whose hope had been completely cut off. Yet when the word of God was spoken and the breath of the Spirit came upon them, the bones came together, life entered into them, and they became a vast army. This scene goes beyond national restoration; it carries a powerful message of spiritual revival.

God brought Ezekiel to a valley filled with bones and showed him that they were very many and completely dry. When God asked, "Can these bones live?" Ezekiel entrusted the matter to God's sovereignty. As he prophesied according to the word of the Lord, the bones came together, were covered with tendons and flesh, and were clothed with skin. However, there was still no breath in them. When he prophesied again, the breath—the Spirit of God—entered them, and they came to life and stood up as a vast army. This vision symbolized that Israel, which seemed utterly hopeless and spiritually dead, would be restored to life through God's power and Spirit.

"The souls of those whom we desire to save are like the representation which Ezekiel saw in vision—a valley of dry bones. They are dead in trespasses and sins, but God would have us deal with them as though they were living. Were the question put to us, 'Son of man, can these bones live?' our answer would be only the confession of ignorance, 'O Lord, Thou knowest.' Ezekiel 37:3. To all appearance there is nothing to lead us to hope for their restoration. Yet nevertheless the word of the prophecy must be spoken even to those who are like the dry bones in the valley. We are in no wise to be deterred from fulfilling our commission by the listlessness, the dullness, the lack of spiritual perception, in those upon whom the word of God is brought to bear. We are to preach the word of life to those whom we may judge to be as hopeless subjects as though they were in their graves." —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1165.

A NEW HEART AND A NEW SPIRIT

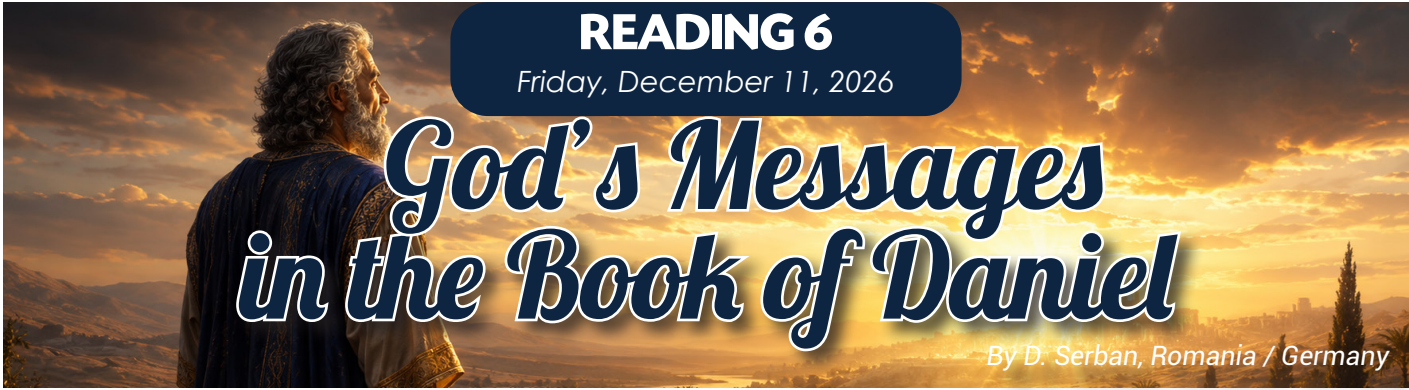
"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." Ezekiel 36:25–26. God does not promise merely outward restoration. He promises inner transformation and renewal of the heart. The God who removes a heart of stone and gives a heart of flesh is the God of true restoration. Ezekiel 36 centered on God's promise of restoration

for Israel. First, the Lord spoke to the mountains of Israel, declaring that although the land had been mocked and plundered by the nations, it would once again be restored and become fruitful. This restoration was not merely a national or political renewal, but one undertaken for the sake of God's holy name. God made it clear that Israel was scattered because of sin and idolatry; yet He would gather them again not because of their merit, but in order to vindicate and sanctify His name, which had been profaned among the nations. God then promised to sprinkle clean water upon them and cleanse them from all their impurities. He declared that He would remove their heart of stone, give them a heart of flesh, and put a new spirit within them. Moreover, He promised to place His Spirit within them so that they would follow His statutes and keep His commandments.

"When Jesus speaks of the new heart, He means the mind, the life, the whole being. To have a change of heart is to withdraw the affections from the world, and fasten them upon Christ. To have a new heart is to have a new mind, new purposes, new motives. What is the sign of a new heart? A changed life. There is a daily, hourly dying to selfishness and pride." —*The Youth's Instructor*, September 26, 1901. We must understand that what we truly need is not merely outward restoration, but inward transformation through a new heart and a new spirit—spiritual renewal. We must personally experience this grace of God and His sovereign promise of restoration.

"Behold, I, even I, will both search My sheep, and seek them out." Ezekiel 34:11. Amen!





READING 6

Friday, December 11, 2026

God's Messages in the Book of Daniel

By D. Serban, Romania / Germany

"But you, Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase." Daniel 12:4, English Standard Version. Dear brothers, sisters, and friends of the present truth, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we have reached the end of 2026. We have countless reasons to approach the throne of mercy with hearts full of praise, gratitude, and thanksgiving to our God for all that He has done for us. As this year draws to a close and a new one begins, it is our great privilege to come before the Lord with sincere reflection and earnest prayer. Let us seek a renewed spirit and a fresh beginning, and let us live each day in the light of eternity, guided by new values and priorities, and noble goals and purposes.

The purpose of this short article, which is divided into four sections, is, on one hand, to encourage each of us to study the book of Daniel, which is one of the 66 books of the "holy library" that has been translated into almost 800 languages. On the other hand, we want to understand and implement God's plans in our lives in these solemn times, because "knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now, is our salvation nearer than when we believed." Romans 13:11. The Spirit of prophecy states: "When the books of Daniel and Revelation are better understood, believers will have an entirely different religious experience. They will be given such glimpses of the open gates of heaven that heart and mind will be impressed with the character that all must develop in order to realize the blessedness which is to be the reward of the pure in heart." —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 114.

Daniel, whose name means "God is my Judge," or "Judge of God," is the central figure and author of the

book that bears his name. Like Joseph in Egypt, Daniel spent a significant portion of his life within pagan societies. Despite this, his integrity and impeccable character earned him high-ranking positions in government for over seventy years as he served under five kings across two kingdoms. His book portrays God as the Sovereign Master, Owner, and Ruler of the universe, regarding Him as the all-powerful One whose will is absolute and unchallenged. During Daniel's Babylonian exile, the character of God was revealed in such way through the prophet that King Nebuchadnezzar declared: "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" Daniel 4:35.

LIVING WITHOUT COMPROMISE IN THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY AND CULTURE

"But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore, he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself." Daniel 1:8. During the Babylonian captivity, Daniel and his friends faced significant and unexpected changes. Their role was to assimilate into Babylonian culture. Almost everything was different in Babylon—language, food and drink, religion, society, and even their names. Babylon did not begin by openly attacking faith; it worked through gradual assimilation. But the captives had the power to say "no" to the worldly standards.

In our time, the spiritual Babylonian empire dominates the world. Babylonian culture symbolizes the gradual, often invisible influence that can lead indi-

viduals away from their faith. In today's world, such influences can be subtle and pervasive. Today, we are more affected by an unhealthy diet, sedentary lifestyle, digital overload, negative or difficult relationships, consumerism, materialism, etc., than was the case 2,600 years ago.

Do we realize that idolatry today is greater than it was in ancient Babylon? What decisions do we have to make today to avoid being defiled by the Babylonian lifestyle and idols?

The apostle Paul invited his readers to consider offering a positive response. "I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Romans 12:1–2, English Standard Version. To face temptations and challenges from within and without, the only sure way is to place our hearts into God's hands. "My son, give Me your heart, and let your eyes observe My ways." Proverbs 23:26, English Standard Version. We must ask ourselves: Where do I still allow compromise in my life? How can I replace harmful habits with faithful ones? Let us remember that faithfulness to God begins with the quiet decision to say "no" to what slowly pulls the heart away from Him. When Daniel chose faithfulness in Babylon, God showed him something greater than he had ever known before.

"THE STONE"—BEING READY FOR GOD'S ETERNAL KINGDOM

"And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed,



nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold." Daniel 2:44–45, English Standard Version. After Daniel had proven faithful in Babylon, God entrusted him with a revelation that reached far beyond his own generation. This revelation came in a moment of deep crisis. King Nebuchadnezzar received a special dream, and he demanded that his wise men tell him not only the meaning of his dream but the dream itself, for he could no longer recall it. When they failed, a death sentence was issued. In the dream that God gave to Nebuchadnezzar, a great statue represented the succession of earthly kingdoms. Empires would rise, flourish, and disappear. Human power, no matter how impressive, would not last. Biblical prophecy is history written beforehand, and history is prophecy fulfilled. When the king demanded what was humanly impossible, Daniel did not react with fear or panic. He did not try to save himself through human strategy. Instead, he turned immediately to God, not only alone but in union with others.

How do prayer meetings in times of crisis help? "Then Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven." Daniel 2:17–19, English Standard Version. After earnest prayer to God, the impossible was made possible.

Within approximately 200 words, Daniel traced the course of more than 2,600 years of future history. In an attitude of humility, he acknowledged God as the source of wisdom, for which he bowed before Him with thanksgiving, honor, and praise: "Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are His: And He changeth the times and the seasons: He removeth kings, and setteth up kings: He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding." "I thank Thee, and praise Thee, O Thou

God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of Thee: for Thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter." Daniel 2:20–21, 23.

In the same prophecy, we read: "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed." Daniel 2:44. In the dream, a stone cut without human hands struck the statue at its feet, demolishing the kingdoms of this world, and then grew to become a mountain that filled the whole earth. The meaning is clear. History is not ultimately directed by human rulers but by God Himself. The stone represented His eternal kingdom, established not by human strength or political power, but by divine authority.

This vision held both warning and hope. Christ is both, the foundation stone and the chief cornerstone. Those who build on Him stand on what cannot be shaken, while everything founded on human pride will pass away. As the apostle Paul wrote: "This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone." Acts 4:11, English Standard Version. The stone actually becomes a point of decision. "Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him." Luke 20:18, English Standard Version.

The issue is not simply prophecy but response. The stone does not describe only future events; it confronts every heart with a choice. Am I willing to let my "personal self" be broken on the rock of salvation? Am I building my character on the solid Rock, Jesus Christ? Let us keep in mind that every human kingdom will fall, but the kingdom built on the Rock will stand forever.

THE FIERY TRIAL—WORSHIPING GOD UNDER PERSECUTION IN THE FINAL TEST

"If we are thrown into the flaming furnace, our God is able to deliver us; and He will deliver us out of your hand, Your Majesty. But if He doesn't, please understand, sir, that even then we will never under any circumstance serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have erected." Daniel 3:17–18, Living Bible. The story of the three young men who were cast into the fiery furnace is well known. The next test in Bab-

ylon was about worship. "Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits." Daniel 3:1. And commanded all of the people to bow down to it. The issue was clear: obedience to human authority is an act of worship. Refusal meant death in the fiery furnace. According to Daniel 3:17–18, the position of Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah was firm. God did not prevent the trial, but He joined them in it. "But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods." Daniel 3:25, English Standard Version. The fire revealed that God honors those who choose obedience to Him over compromise and circumstances. Their deliverance became a public testimony that the Most High alone deserves worship. We know that this event was more than just history. Daniel chapter 3 is clear. It set out a prophetic pattern that points unmistakably to the final conflict described in Revelation chapter 13. In both cases, worship is the core of the issue. The image is established, worship is enforced, and those who remain loyal to God are persecuted. This experience in Babylon clearly foreshadowed the final crisis that the world will face before Christ's return.

The Scriptures present two opposing signs of loyalty. The seal of God identifies those who worship the Creator and keep His commandments. The Sabbath, placed at the center of God's holy Ten Commandments, points to Him as the Creator of heaven and earth and stands as a sign of covenant loyalty. Ezekiel 20:20. In contrast, the mark of the beast represents human authority attempting to place itself above God's authority and obedience to manmade commandments put in place of those given by God. Thus, the final crisis will not be primarily political or technological. It will be a question of worship and al-



legiance. As in Babylon, God's people will be called to stand faithfully even when obedience appears to result in pressure or loss.

Let us not look to the intensity of the fire but trust that the same God who walked with His servants then will sustain His people in the last days. Let us be loyal to Him even if it appears that He might not intervene. The fire will reveal true worship, and the final crisis will reveal whether one's loyalty belongs to God or to human authority. How aware are we that the true relationship with God involves trial? If my worship and obedience were to be tested today, would my life reflect the seal of loyalty to God? The wonderful promise given to Daniel is valid today; namely, "Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried." Daniel 12:10.

FUTURE GLORY—THE FINAL HOPE

"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." Daniel 12:3–4. Daniel received a final message of hope and comfort, telling of the last time of trouble, as follows: "... And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time:..." Daniel 12:1. But God promises to deliver those whose names are written in the book. The faithful remnant is called to stand firm through the last crisis, trusting God completely. The focus of prophecy is not fear but preparation, people transformed in character, loyal to God, and ready for the return of Christ.

Daniel 12 also contains one of the Scriptures' clearest promises of resurrection, telling that the family of God who were separated by death will be united, never to be separated again. "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Daniel 12:2. This points to the blessed hope—the resurrection of the righteous and the final restoration of God's people when Christ returns. History does not end in crisis but in redemption. Daniel was told to seal the book until the time of the end. This shows that the message is especially relevant for those living near the close of earth's his-

tory. Knowledge will increase, and God's people will be called to understand prophecy.

The "wise" people in Daniel 12:3 are those who understand God's ways and live in faithful obedience to Him. Their wisdom is seen in character rather than in information. Because their lives reflect God's truth, they are said to shine like the brightness of the heavens. Their incorruptible characters are not temporary but eternal, like the stars that continue to shine long after the darkness is gone. How can we use the "increasing knowledge" to come into a closer relationship with Jesus Christ? Do we belong to those who "shall be purified, and made white, and tried" by accepting the fire of trials? How do we express the joy of salvation, knowing that our names are written in the book of life?

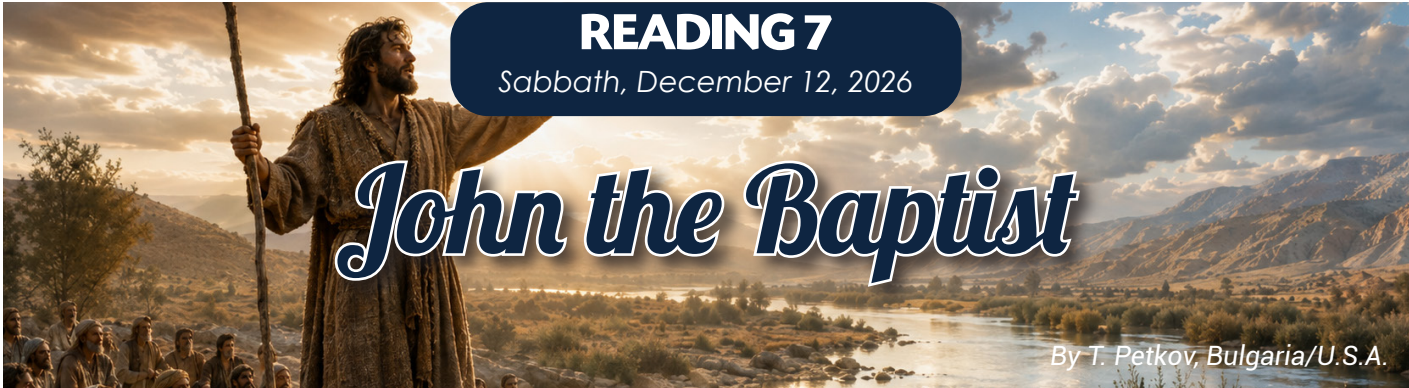
From the first decision of Daniel and his friends to remain undefiled in Babylon to the promise of resurrection and eternal life, his message calls everyone to faithful living now while waiting for Christ's soon return.

CONCLUSION

Daniel built his character on the Rock of Ages and was an example of uncompromising integrity and faithfulness in the service of God and humanity. The story of the three young men who were cast into the fiery furnace teaches us that, in the furnace or outside of it, God is with His faithful children. The rest does not matter. The final message of the book is a motivational one that produces joy in the manifestation of God's glorious character in human lives.

The good news and the final promise is: "At that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." Daniel 12:1. Let us move forward with watchful hearts, for our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. God bless us! Amen!





READING 7

Sabbath, December 12, 2026

John the Baptist

By T. Petkov, Bulgaria/U.S.A.

"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come." Matthew 11:12-14.

The character of John the Baptist serves as an important symbol and example for God's people in their ministry at the end of time. In several places, the gospels mention that Jesus Christ was mistaken for the resurrected John the Baptist or Elijah. This confusion arose from the prophecy of Malachi and the general belief that Elijah would return, as well as from Jesus' own words that, in the work of John the Baptist, Elijah had already returned. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." Malachi 4:5-6. The connection between the lives and messages of Elijah and John the Baptist and the three angels' messages is unmistakable. In studying the life and ministry of John the Baptist, we gain valuable insights into how the Lord views His people and how He is preparing them for the final events.

BIRTH

The origin and birth of John the Baptist was miraculous. The evangelist Luke wrote: "There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. And they had no child, because

that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years." Luke 1:5-7. Like Samson, Samuel, and Jesus Himself, John the Baptist was born through the miraculous intervention of God. His birth was foretold by an angel who appeared to his father in the temple. "And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense." Luke 1:11.

Even before John's birth, the Lord foretold the greatness of his mission in the plan of salvation. "For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb." Luke 1:15. Furthermore, the angel described his ministry: "And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Highest: for you shall go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways; To give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high has visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing to Israel." Luke 1:76-80.

Considering the spiritual significance of John the Baptist's birth, one sees remarkable parallels between it and the origin of the prophesied Reform Movement in the end times. Miraculously, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, a group of people was inspired and set apart, motivated by a deep desire to serve God and reflect the fullness of Christ's character. The Spirit of prophecy described this as the beginning of a revival and reformation: "A revival and a reformation must take place, under the ministration of the Holy Spirit. Revival and reformation

are two different things. Revival signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from spiritual death. Reformation signifies a reorganization, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices. Reformation will not bring forth the good fruit of righteousness unless it is connected with the revival of the Spirit. Revival and reformation are to do their appointed work, and in doing this work they must blend." —(*Review and Herald*, February 25, 1902) *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 128.

The Holy Spirit brings one into a close relationship with Christ. This was seen in the amazing reaction of the baby John even before he was born. "And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: And she spoke out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb." "For, see, as soon as the voice of your salutation sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy." Luke 1:40–42, 44.

Similarly, no genuine revival or reformation can take place without a spiritual connection with Jesus Christ. In the time of the end, God's people will have His law written in their hearts. They will choose to face martyrdom rather than be separated from Christ or transgress His commandments. This was the spirit and experience of the reformers whom the Lord called in Germany and other European countries in 1914. They left behind a powerful example and legacy, facing the trials of World Wars I and II and remaining faithful to the end. "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers." *Romans* 8:29.



REFORMATION

"A great work was before John, and in order for him to have a sound physical constitution, and mental and moral power, to do this work, he must control appetite and passion. John was to lead out as a reformer, and by his abstemious life, and plain dress, rebuke the intemperate habits, and the sinful extravagance, of the people." —*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, p. 43. Likewise, the prophesied reform movement, called in the time of the end, received the light of a vegetarian diet and health reform, which help the remnant of God's church to endure. By combating sickness and temptation and maintaining sound physical and mental strength, God's people become a light that shines in the darkness of the world.

"As the right arm is connected with the body, so the health reform and medical missionary work is connected with the third angel's message, and is to work efficiently as the right arm, for the defense of the body of truth." —*The Review and Herald*, June 20, 1899. Health reform was given not only to strengthen one's physical and mental wellbeing but also to safeguard the mind against sinful tendencies and the world's influence. "The indulgence of appetite in luxurious food, and the use of wine, were lessening physical strength, and weakening the intellect, so that crime and grievous sins did not appear sinful. The angel Gabriel gave special directions to the parents of John in regard to temperance. A lesson was given upon health reform by one of the exalted angels from the throne of Heaven." —*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, p. 43.

The remnant that endures in the time of the end will be distinguished from the rest of Christianity by their deep spiritual experience, genuine conversion, and wholehearted dedication to God's cause. The Spirit of prophecy says: "Many have a nominal faith in Christ, but they know nothing of that vital dependence upon Him which appropriates the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour. Of this nominal faith James says: 'Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?' James 2:19–20." —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 389.

THE TIME OF THE END

The prophesied reformation will restore and bring believers back to the original, primitive Christianity and the first love. "In the time of the end every divine institution is to be restored. The breach made in the law at the time the Sabbath was changed by man, is to be repaired. God's remnant people, standing before the world as reformers, are to show that the law of God is the foundation of all enduring reform and that the Sabbath of the fourth commandment is to stand as a memorial of creation, a constant reminder of the power of God." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 678.

The seal of God and the mark of the beast will determine every believer's final destiny. The people of God will proclaim to the world that the end is at hand. The judgment will separate the righteous from the unrighteous, and God will pay the wages of sin and transgression. This important knowledge will be preached to the world in the power of the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist suffered imprisonment and a martyr's death for condemning the moral apostasy of his time, and God's servants will face similar consequences when they give the final warning to the world. "Babylon is fallen, is fallen," will be proclaimed to the ends of the world. "Come out of her, My people" is the warning message that will come from heaven, calling God's people from the different denominations to unite under the banner of Christ, acknowledging and defending His holy commandments.

Salvation is by faith and by grace. Therefore, all who experience the miracle of salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ will be willing to make any sacrifice and discard anything that may separate them from the love of Christ. "'As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.' Those who consent to be led by the Spirit of God will be illuminated and sanctified. They will discern the hatefulness of sin and the beauty of holiness. They will esteem it a great honor to be called the sons of God, knowing that they are wholly unworthy to be associated with Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father." —*The Youth's Instructor*, December 8, 1892.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Matthew 11:12. "Christ took upon Him our nature, that He might associate us with Himself. He suffered in the flesh, suffered like a man, suffered with humanity, that He might be fully able to become the Captain of our salvation, being made a perfect Saviour through His sufferings, that He might bring many sons and daughters to God. 'For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren.'" —*The Youth's Instructor*, December 8, 1892.

"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." John 3:5–6. "Christ sent His disciples forth with the message, 'The kingdom of God is at hand.' Matthew 10:7. John the Baptist had given this message, and today the proclamation of this message is our work. When this gospel shall be preached in all the world, then shall the end come. Upon all who receive and believe in Christ rests a great responsibility. All are to work for the enlargement of His church on earth. Let us hold up before the world the 'Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' John 1:29. This will hasten the coming of our Lord and Saviour." —*Manuscript 34*, 1903.

A SENSE OF IDENTITY

"The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteneth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress,



a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers." Zephaniah 1:14–16. After studying the prophecy of Zephaniah concerning the end times, it is clear that only those who are determined and well prepared will endure the pressures of natural disasters, persecution from the world, and devastation of the environment. Survival will require a strong, distinct sense of spiritual identity. In this regard, the example of John the Baptist is truly remarkable. When he was asked: "... Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias." John 1:22–23. John's answer was not tied to his family lineage but to his spiritual, prophetic mission. The words of the prophet Isaiah held such deep meaning for the servant of the Lord that he fully identified with the voice crying in the wilderness. In the same way, the remnant of God's church must live the truth and reflect the character of Christ as their own sacred identity. The three angels' messages will become the very purpose of their existence. As the apostle Paul declared, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ" (Romans 1:16), so too we should rejoice, not be ashamed, that we are privileged to take part in the final warning ministry.

The beast will do everything in its power to destroy God's people. "And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men...." Revelation 13:13. Only those who are deeply convicted and have established an immovable personal identity with the message of Christ will remain unmoved by Satan's attacks. At the same time, John's ministry was characterized by an extraordinarily humble desire to serve. Rather than seeking honor or glory for himself, he directed every-

one's attention to the coming Messiah, the true remedy for sin and death. "John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom you know not:..." John 1:26. When Jesus was baptized and began His ministry, John declared his own mission completed. He stated: "He must increase, but I must decrease." John 3:30. Similarly, true reformers never seek attention for themselves but preach Christ as the only solution for the world. They are not motivated by position or personal gain. They do not advocate separation or the formation of a new organization, but follow the line of the only one prophesied church of God. Just as the apostle Paul, who was sent to the servants of the Lord, joined the persecuted, humble Christian movement after his vision of Jesus, so the prophesied end-time movement will reflect Christ's meek and humble character to the apostatized world.

"I have a message for you. Christ speaks to you, saying, look away from every human being to the great Teacher. The message that rang through Judea in the time of John the Baptist, 'Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,' is the message for today. Matthew 3:2. Repentance means a change of heart, a change of mind." –*Letter 277*, 1904.

EDUCATION

Preparation for John's special mission included special care for his education. The religious schools of the day, and especially those preparing the priests, were contaminated with human traditions and wrong interpretations of the Scriptures. "That prophet was led by the Spirit of God into the wilderness, away from the contaminating influences of the city, to obtain an education that would qualify him to receive instruction from God rather than from any of the learned scribes. He was not to connect himself with the rabbis; the less he became acquainted with their teachings, their maxims, and traditions, the more easily could the Lord impress his mind and heart, and give him the pure mold of truth that was to be given to the people to prepare the way of the Lord. The teachings of the scribes and Pharisees were of a character to turn the people away from the unadulterated truth that was to be presented by the Great Teacher when He should enter upon His mission. The only hope of the people was to open their hearts and minds to the



light sent from heaven by His prophet, the forerunner of Christ." —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 310.

John's example is deeply significant in our day. He was wary of secular education, not in areas such as reading, writing, mathematics, or languages, but in the realm of religious influence. In the same manner, at the time of the end, false christs and teachers and false prophecies and interpretations will darken the religious world. The apostasy of the Catholic and Protestant churches will permeate the world and will deceive even the very elect, if possible. Special caution is needed for believers to protect their minds and spiritual understanding so they will be prepared to be faithful messengers.

THE MARTYRDOM OF JOHN

"Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also." John 15:20. The ministry of John the Baptist ended in prison and ultimately with a martyr's death. While many of the Lord's servants—such as Daniel and his friends—were protected by God's mighty hand from death and persecution, John the Baptist was not spared. His martyrdom serves as a prophetic warning of the severe trials and persecution that will accompany the message of reformation at the end of time. "... And cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed." Revelation 13:15.

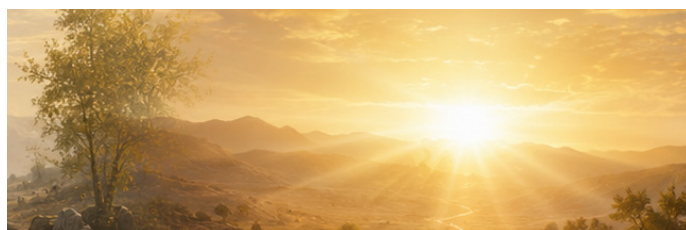
More than a century ago, reformed Seventh-day Adventists faced the same destiny as John the Baptist. History tells us that they were put in prison for refusing military service, and some of them died for their faith.

In *The Sabbath Watchman*, an amazing account was published of a miracle that occurred in a prison in the Czech Republic. A faithful brother was put in prison and condemned to death by starvation. However, twenty days after the brother was incarcerated, when the prison officials opened his cell, they were astonished and frightened to see that he was alive and well. The brother testified in the Sabbath service that a rat brought pieces of bread to his cell every day, and this was how he survived. We have historical documents and personal letters from mar-

tyrs such as Brother Anton Brugger, who was guillotined in Berlin, Germany, in 1943 at the age of 32. He wrote to his fiancée, Sister Esther: "When you receive these lines, I most likely will no longer be among the living.... Yes, there was no other way open to me if I wanted to remain faithful to my convictions.... Therefore, my dear, do not be sad about this hard trial, but look joyfully and with confidence into the everlasting glory. Even if all this is so bitter, yet we must accept it all patiently from the hand of the Lord, for the way He guides and leads will finally serve for our best. If we want to be with our Saviour in His glory, we must also be willing to suffer here with Him.... How astonished and frightened the poor people will be when the Saviour appears in majesty in the heavens at the judgment." —*And Follow Their Faith*, compiled by Hans Fleschutz, Centennial Edition, 2014, p. 90.

Dear brother and sister in the Lord, are you preparing to take part in the prophesied end-time ministry? The remnant will be composed of those only who are willing to set aside everything but their service to Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul reminds us of God's calling—of election and predestination—to salvation. However, "The predestination, or election, of which God speaks, includes all who will accept Christ as a personal Saviour, who will return to their loyalty, to perfect obedience to all God's commandments. This is the effectual salvation of a peculiar people, chosen by God from among men. All who are willing to be saved by Christ are the elect of God. It is the obedient who are predestinated from the foundation of the world. 'To as many as received Him, to them He gave power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on Him.'" —*The Gospel Herald*, June 11, 1902.

Let us pray that God will bless His people and prepare them for His service. As John the Baptist and Elijah prepared the way for Jesus' first coming and reformation, now is the time to prepare the way for the second coming of our Lord. May God be with His church. Amen.



READINGS FOR THE WEEK OF PRAYER

December 4-12, 2026

The Prophets Speak

“The last books of the Old Testament show us workers taken from the laborers in the field. Others were men of high ability and extensive learning, but the Lord gave them visions and messages. These men of the Old Testament spoke of things transpiring in their day, and Daniel, Isaiah, and Ezekiel not only spoke of things that concerned them as present truth, but their sights reached down to the future, and to what should occur in these last days.”

—*Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 419.



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