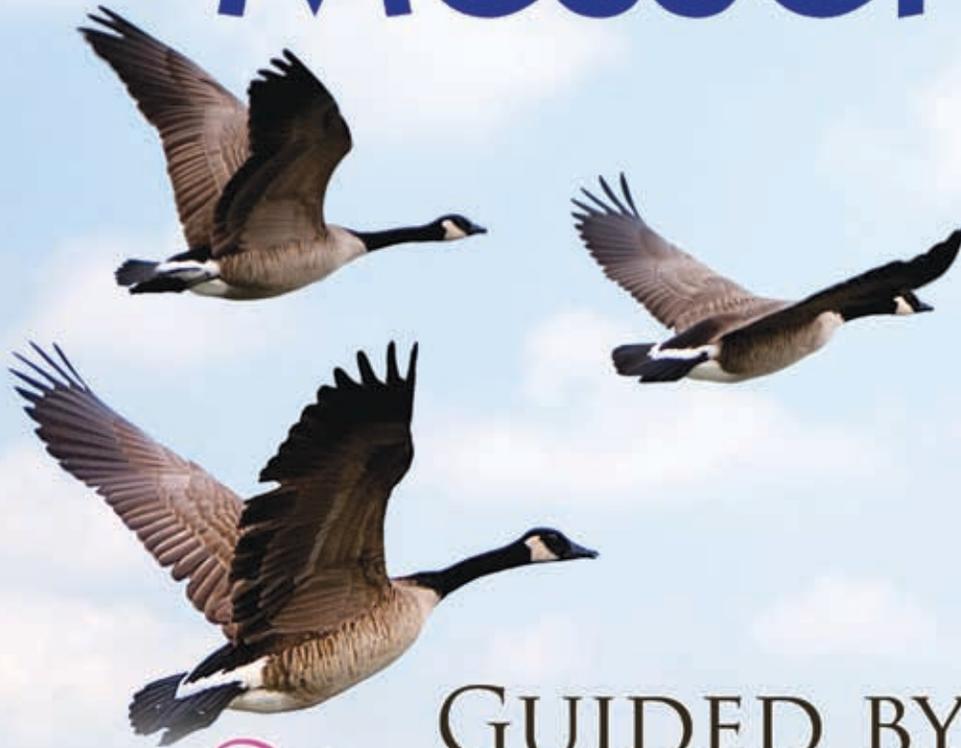


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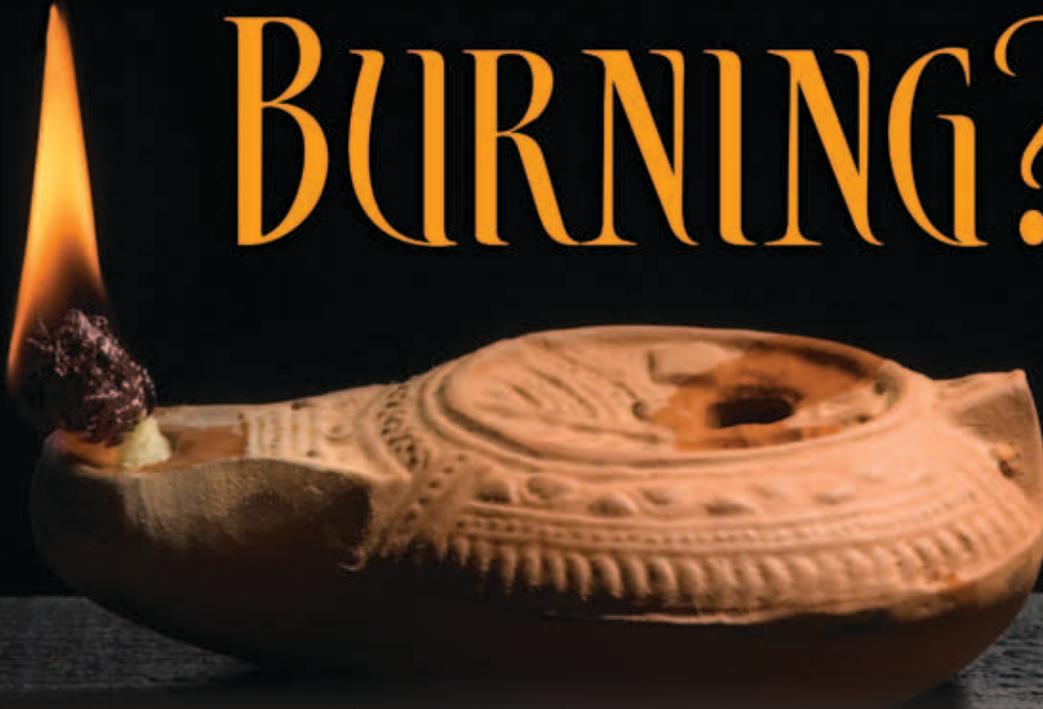


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IS YOUR LAMP BURNING?



A Bible and Spirit of Prophecy compilation, with comments by
DANIEL LEE

[Emphasis supplied throughout]

As Christ sat looking upon the party that waited for the bridegroom, He told His disciples the story of the ten virgins, **by their experience illustrating the experience of the church that shall live just before His second coming.**

This parable (Matthew 25:1–13) invites us to search our heart and examine our Christian experience to see whether our lamp is burning brightly, and whether we still have a reserve of oil for the days or years to come.

Matthew chapters 24 and 25 focus on last-day events, including the destruction of Jerusalem, the signs of Christ’s coming, and the Judgment. The prophecies pointing to these events are some of the most important truths shared by

the Son of man during His earthly ministry.

The parable of the ten virgins describes the duty of all to watch and prepare for the great day of God.

Marriage customs of the Jews

On an appointed day, the bridegroom and his friends would go to the bride’s house and escort her and her attendants either to his own house or to that of his parents. In the parable, this particular bridegroom lives far away, so the exact hour of his arrival is uncertain. He will arrive sometime in the night. The young maidens who are to meet him have assembled near the bride’s house waiting for him, so that together they may go to the wedding place. When they see that he

is coming, they go out to meet him, each bearing her lamp.

The number “ten”

The Bible uses the number “ten” in significant ways: ten commandments, tithe, ten horns, ten toes, ten nations. According to Jewish authorities, ten lamps were used, as a rule, in bridal processions.

Virgins

Scripture emphasizes the need for purity in our Christian faith (2 Corinthians 11:2).

“These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb” (Revelation 14:4).

“There is not one in twenty of the youth who knows what experimental religion is. They serve themselves and yet profess to be servants of Christ.”

In the parable, “the two classes of watchers represent the two classes who profess to be waiting for their Lord [Advent believers]. **They are called virgins because they profess a pure faith**” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 406).

And they all had a lamp which represents the Word of God and the knowledge of it.

They went forth

As the virgins left their own homes to unite in celebrating the wedding, we Adventists separated ourselves from the world in expectation of the second Advent of Christ.

To meet the bridegroom

The going forth of the virgins to meet the bridegroom symbolizes the second advent of Jesus Christ.

In Matthew 25:2, we read that “five of them were wise, and five were foolish.”

Outwardly, they all seemed the same. They were given the same lamps to perform the same task, yet five were foolish. “Foolish” is here translated from the Greek word *moros*, meaning godless, impious, not showing respect or reverence, especially for God. They did not have the fear of God in their heart.

Yet, “the class represented by the foolish virgins are not hypocrites. They have a regard for the truth, they have advocated the truth, they are attracted to those who believe the truth; but they have not yielded themselves to the Holy Spirit’s working.” (*Ibid.*, p. 411).

“Without the Spirit of God a knowledge of His word is of no avail. The theory of truth, unaccompanied by the Holy Spirit, cannot quicken the soul or sanctify the heart. One

may be familiar with the commands and promises of the Bible; but unless the Spirit of God sets the truth home, the character will not be transformed. Without the enlightenment of the Spirit, men will not be able to distinguish truth from error, and they will fall under the masterful temptations of Satan.” —*Ibid.*, p. 408.

Shocking statistics

“It is a solemn statement that I make to the church, that **not one in twenty whose names are registered upon the church books are prepared to close their earthly history**, and would be as verily without God and without hope in the world as the common sinner.”—*The General Conference Daily Bulletin* (1893), pp. 132, 133.

“**Not one in twenty** of those who have a **good standing with Seventh-day Adventists** is living out the self-sacrificing principles of the word of God.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 632.

“The time is not far off when the people of God will be called upon to give their testimony before the rulers of the earth. **Not one in twenty has a realization of what rapid strides we are making toward the great crisis in our history.** . . . There is no time for vanity, for trifling, for engaging the mind in unimportant matters.”—*Maranatha*, p. 253.

“We need also much more knowledge; we need to be enlightened in regard to the plan of salvation. **There is not one in one hundred who understands for himself the Bible truth on this subject [justification by faith] that is so necessary to our present and eternal welfare.**”—*The Review and Herald*, September 3, 1889.

How about our youth? We grew up in the church and say we have kept all the “commandments.” In what are we still lacking?

What does Inspiration say about the Adventist youth today?

“The young want just what they have not; namely, *religion*. Nothing can take the place of this. Profession alone is nothing. Names are registered upon the church books upon earth, but not in the book of life. I saw that **there is not one in twenty of the youth who knows what experimental religion is.** They serve themselves and yet profess to be servants of Christ; but unless the spell which is upon them be broken, they will soon realize that the portion of the transgressor is theirs.”—*Messages to Young People*, pp. 383, 384.

“**Young Sabbathkeepers** are given to pleasure seeking. . . . **There is not one in twenty who knows what experimental religion is.** They are constantly grasping after something to satisfy their desire for change, for amusement; and unless they are undeceived and their sensibilities aroused so that they can say from the heart, ‘I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord;’ they are not worthy of Him and will come short of everlasting life.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 496.

Not one in twenty? That is less than 5%! Why is this? The more factual statistics are even more startling:

“**Not one in a hundred among us is doing anything beyond engaging in common, worldly enterprises.** We are not half awake to the worth of the souls for whom Christ died.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 148.



“The foolish virgins have been content with a superficial work. They do not know God. They have not studied His character.”

“Not one in a hundred knows the value of eating the bread of life.” —
Manuscript Releases, vol. 21, p. 44.

What did the foolish virgins lack?

“They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them” (verse 3).

Oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit; it also symbolizes the graces of God.

“All [the ten virgins] had lamps and vessels for oil. For a time there was seen no difference between them. So with the church that lives just before Christ’s second coming. All have a knowledge of the Scriptures. All have heard the message of Christ’s near approach, and confidently expect His appearing. But as in the parable, so it is now. A time of waiting intervenes, faith is tried; and when the cry is heard, ‘Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him,’ many are unready. They have no oil in their vessels with their lamps. They are destitute of the Holy Spirit.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 408.

They took no oil with them

The foolish were satisfied with their spiritual virgins state. They took no pains to keep their spiritual life healthy and active. They

did not have the Holy Spirit in their heart. They retained the outward show and form of faith but neglected the true inward life of faith. They had the appearance without the reality.

“The class represented by the foolish virgins have been content with a superficial work. They do not know God. They have not studied His character; they have not held communion with Him; therefore they do not know how to trust, how to look and live. Their service to God degenerates into a form.”—*Ibid.*, p. 411.

The difference

1. The foolish virgins seemed to be living a Christian life; they had made some real progress. But they acted as if the lamps, once lighted, would burn on forever; they had no oil in store for future use.
2. They delighted in their past experience and trusted in it as if they had all that was needed for their spiritual life. They had not the renewing of the Holy Ghost.
3. Their lamps burned brightly for a time; all seemed well, but they neglected to obtain a continual supply of oil for their lamps.
4. They forgot that there was need of daily preparation, of constant watchfulness, for His coming.

“But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps” (verse

4). This oil must be bought with persevering, faithful prayer; it must be treasured in the heart; it must be assimilated by the character of those who want to be among the redeemed.

Says Jesus: “I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, . . . and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed. . . ; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see” (Revelation 3:18).

“Very many [who profess the truth] follow on in their own ways and indulge their sinful desires and yet profess to be disciples of Christ. They have never submitted their hearts to God. Like the foolish virgins they have neglected to obtain the oil of grace in their vessels with their lamps.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 220.

“While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept” (verse 5).

At midnight

The bridal party was awakened at midnight when sleep is deepest, and to be awakened abruptly is most unwelcome. Yet we “know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night” (1 Thessalonians 5:2–7).

“The coming of the bridegroom was at midnight—the darkest hour. So the coming of Christ will take place in the darkest period of this earth’s history. The days of Noah and Lot pictured the condition of the world just before the coming of the Son of man. The Scriptures

pointing forward to this time declare that Satan will work with all power and ‘with all deceivableness of unrighteousness’ (2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10). His working is plainly revealed by the rapidly increasing darkness, the multitudinous errors, heresies, and delusions of these last days. Not only is Satan leading the world captive, but his deceptions are leavening the professed churches of our Lord Jesus Christ. The great apostasy will develop into darkness deep as midnight, impenetrable as sackcloth of hair. To God’s people it will be a night of trial, a night of weeping, a night of persecution for the truth’s sake. But out of that night of darkness God’s light will shine.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 414.

There was a cry, “Behold, the bridegroom cometh”

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first” (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

“Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps” (Matthew 25:7).

“It is in a crisis that character is revealed”

“A sudden and unlooked-for calamity, something that brings the soul face to face with death, will show whether there is any real faith in the promises of God. It will show whether the soul is sustained by grace. The great final test comes at the close of human probation, when it will be too late for the soul’s need to be supplied.

“The ten virgins are watching in the evening of this earth’s history. All claim to be Christians. All have a call, a name, a lamp, and all profess to be doing God’s service. All apparently wait for Christ’s appearing. But five are unready. Five will be found surprised, dismayed, outside the banquet hall.”—*Ibid.*, p. 412.

“Character is not transferable. No man can believe for another. No man can receive the Spirit for another.”

“And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves” (Matthew 25:8, 9).

The wise virgins were not selfish; they simply could not help their companions. “Character is not transferable. No man can believe for another. No man can receive the Spirit for another.”—*Ibid.*, p. 412.

“Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in [the land], as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness” (Ezekiel 14:20).

“And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut” (Matthew 25:10).

The door was shut

The door is open now; penitent sinners may enter in . . . but the time will come when it must be shut.

“Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2, last part).

“Afterward came also the other [foolish] virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.” “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?” (Matthew 25:11; 7:22).

“But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not” (Matthew 25:12).

“Saddest of all words that ever fell on mortal ear are those words of

doom, ‘I know you not.’ The fellowship of the Spirit, which you have slighted, could alone make you one with the joyous throng at the marriage feast.”—*Ibid.*, p. 413.

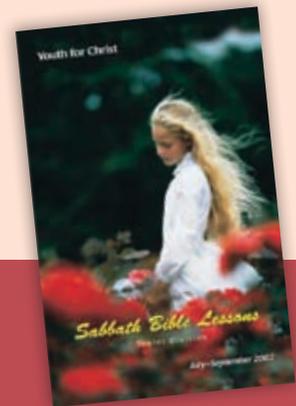
“Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh” (verse 13).

Is your lamp burning?

It is not enough to belong to the visible church. We must grow in grace.

We must examine ourselves daily; we must not leave our preparation till tomorrow.

My sincere prayer is that my lamp and your lamp will be burning brightly, having the oil supplied by the Holy Spirit. 



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AMAZING ANTS!

BY MICHEL-ANGE F. DUCHEINE

There be . . . things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise: The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer” (Proverbs 30:24, 25).

Ants live in highly organized societies called colonies; their family numbers some 11,000 species, and they are among the smallest and wisest creatures on earth (Proverbs 30:24–28). Ants belong to an order of insects called Hymenoptera, and they play a tremendous role in the ecosystem of our planet.

These tiny creatures are also known for their ability to convey practical instruction.

“The ants teach lessons of patient industry, of perseverance in surmount-

ing obstacles, of providence for the future” (*Child Guidance*, p. 59). Solomon, the wisest monarch of all time (1 Kings 4:29–34), said, “Go to the ant; . . . consider her ways, and be wise” (Proverbs 6:6). Please join me on a visit to an ant colony in an attempt to get a bit of their proverbial wisdom.

Order

Our God is a God of order (1 Corinthians 14:40), and all His creatures from the tiny ants to the giant galaxies reveal how orderly He is in all His ways. “Order is heaven’s first law” (*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 201), and it seems to be also the first law of the ant colonies. Outstanding models of administration, ants labor in a manner which is really marvelous.

Ant colonies vary from a few members to many millions of members, called super colonies. The members of an ant colony fall into categories known as castes, each with a different role such as searching for food, nursing the young, and defending the colony against predators. The queen distinguishes herself from the regular ants (the workers) by birth: born with wings, they have a larger body than the worker ants and are the only females of the colony capable of mating.

Although each ant plays a distinct role, all harmoniously cooperate with one another to realize a perfect teamwork for the wellbeing of their colony. How spectacular it

is to see these tiny creatures so well organized as to self-manage their million-member societies!

Industry

The members of an ant colony are known as workers. They were just born to work and they live performing the task for which they were created. Ants play crucial roles in their ecosystems. They recycle organic matter, they turn the soil by moving organic matter and soil nutrients, they reduce insect populations, they serve as food for other animals, they disperse seeds, and they sometimes pollinate flowers. Most species dig underground nests that have numerous openings and tunnels. Air and water pass into the soil through these passageways, making oxygen and moisture available to the roots of plants.

The Word of God admonishes us thus: “Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord” (Romans 12:11). “Solomon presents to the world the industry of the ant as a reproach to those who waste their hours in sinful idleness, in practices which corrupt soul and body” (*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E.G. White Comments], vol. 3, p. 1158).

Faithfulness

“The wise man calls our attention to the small things of the earth: ‘Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise; which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provi-



deth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.' 'The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer' (Proverbs 6:6-8; 30:25). We may learn from these little teachers a lesson of faithfulness. Should we improve with the same diligence the faculties which an all-wise Creator has bestowed upon us, how greatly would our capacities for usefulness be increased. God's eye is upon the smallest of His creatures; does He not, then, regard man formed in His image, and require of him corresponding returns for all the advantages He has given him?"—*Child Guidance*, pp. 59, 60.

The Bible enjoins us, "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much" (Luke 16:10). When a task is entrusted to us, let us faithfully execute it just as the faithful ants carry out their activities.

Perseverance

"The habitations that the ants build for themselves show wonderful skill and perseverance. Only one little grain at a time can they handle, but by diligence and perseverance they accomplish wonders" (*The Youth's Instructor*, September 14, 1899).

Like the ants, we have also to build, and

our buildings could well last forever if we diligently add to our character-building grace upon grace: "Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (2 Peter 1:5-10).

Provision

"The ant prepares for future seasons. This is a lesson which many gifted with reasoning powers disregard. They fail entirely to prepare for the future immortal life which God has in His providence secured for the fallen race."—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E.G. White Comments], vol. 3, p. 1158.

The Holy Writ says, "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due sea-

son? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods" (Matthew 24:44-47).

Conclusion

This timeless advice from Inspiration is for the youth of today, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest" (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

The word "whatsoever" in this Bible verse means anything that must be done: "But all the work we do that is necessary to be done, be it washing dishes, setting tables, waiting upon the sick, cooking, or washing, is of moral importance; and until you can cheerfully and happily take up these duties you are not fitted for greater and higher duties. The humble tasks before us are to be taken up by someone; and those who do them should feel that they are doing a necessary and honorable work, and that in their mission, humble though it may be, they are doing the work of God just as surely as was Gabriel when sent to the prophets. All are working in their order in their respective spheres" (*Testimonies*, vol. 3, pp. 79, 80).

Dear youth, may the Lord give us the diligence of the ants to faithfully perform the charge that has been entrusted to us that we might be given more in the kingdom to come! 



Lost in the Mountains!

BY STEFANIE ROJAS, LEONARDO TITO ROJAS, FRANCISCO ROJAS,
MELISSA SANCHEZ, AND RADU C. ILIE

At the International Youth Congress recently held in Huesca, Spain, we were enjoying a special outing in the Pyrenean mountains. In that beautiful setting a baptism was held in a sparkling mountain lake. . . . Then we began to descend from the peak.

A group of us—five youth, all underage—decided to go ahead of the main group. We were a good distance from the rest of the people and soon arrived at a fork in the pathway. One of the trails led to the top of the mountain and the other went to the lakes. We decided to go to the summit with the idea in mind that we would keep an eye on the brethren and

would return if they would choose the other route.

The path on which we were walking was very narrow and often we could not even detect exactly where the trail was. We ascended to quite a height before eventually deciding to go back since the rest of the group had evidently not taken this trail.

As our little group descended, we arrived at a spot where the vegetation had been mowed and we could not see where the path continued. Instead of going to the left, we went to the right—to a path that seemed to be the correct one but actually was not. After walking for quite a long while, we arrived at a point where only trees covered the pathway. The tree branches became so dense that they utterly blocked the light of the sky.

The only things we could see were tree trunks, shrubs, and brush.

We were now lost in a kind of jungle

without anything to guide us, since everywhere we looked appeared to be the same. Instead of going back the same way we had come, we assumed that we knew where we were, so we decided just to go according to our own instincts, convincing ourselves that a little farther ahead we would somehow find the right way.

Soon we came to a waterfall. This, we thought, must be the highest part of the river where the baptism had been held. Surely, if we just went a little bit higher, the pathway could be found. As we jumped from rock to rock across the water, one of us lost his shoe, almost falling in the river. (Thankfully, he had another pair of shoes in his backpack.) After this hurdle, we suddenly realized that this was not even the same river we had thought it was, so we pressed onward.

Next we came to a place where only leaves were on the ground. There were no large sticks available to help us walk on the steep terrain. One of our group slid down a bank and the rest of us saw only a cloud of dust. Thankfully, he was not hurt.

Finally, after being lost for three hours, we became very frightened. At this point, some panicked and



Our last hopes were fixed on the success of making this emergency call. Grabbing a cell phone, one of us dialed the number. No service. . . !

could no longer reason properly. Seeing our situation, the two girls were not even able to speak. We also realized that by this time the main group would be worried about us, so we decided to call the emergency number.

Looking for an area without trees that was close to the waterfall, we made a plan for the boys to take their shirts off and spread them on the ground so that a rescue helicopter could easily locate us. We were already confidently dreaming of telling our mothers about the exciting experience of seeing a rescue rope descend for us and of getting a chance to ride in a helicopter for the first time.

So we made our little preparation to be picked up. Our last hopes were fixed on the success of making this emergency call. Grabbing a cell phone, one of us dialed the number. No service. . . ! In desperation we tried again and again. It was true—there really was no service in that area! To get cellular service, we figured, we would probably have to be on the top of the mountain. Reassessing our situation, we then came to the conclusion that we were totally lost—there really was no solution to the problem! Now we were **really** scared. Some were crying, others were trembling. At this point we started to bicker and blame one another. Some would point to one direction, others to another, and the others to still another. We were in total disagreement about which direction to take. Now we were completely divided except on one point: To

go back across the waterfall. There we finally reunited on an even more important point: To appeal to God, our only hope.

We decided that each one of us would pray. Since God created the earth, He knew where we were and which way we should go. Everyone prayed wholeheartedly and in deep earnest—and such prayers have power, as it is written:

“They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses. And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!” (Psalm 107:4–8).

After praying, by the miraculous grace and mercy of God, we suddenly saw the right way unfold before our eyes. Isn't our God marvelous?

In considering this experience, all of us that were lost learned two things:

1 If you lose your way in life and are headed in a wrong direction, please stop and go back! Do not think that you will find the right way later! It is a great mistake to think that you will somehow stumble across the right path later on.



2 For prayer to work, you do not need to worry about whether or not you are beyond the range of cellular service. The King of the universe has universal coverage.

“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore“ (Psalm 121). 

Heavenly Clothing or

BY JONATHAN TYLER

And the dragon was wroth.” Now, why would the old devil be mad? Well, the rest of the verse says, “with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 12:17). So, a woman had him all “out of sorts”? I guess we had better find out what kind of woman this was!

A woman at times was used in scripture to symbolize God’s people as a spouse or bride. Now, as much as the devil hates Christ, he surely would hate His lovely bride—but there must be more to the picture. There must be something about this woman that enrages him more than usual. At the beginning of the chapter [Revelation 12], it gives a description of this lovely woman. “And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars” (verse 1). The first thing that John observes is her clothing! Notice that he does not say “behold a woman,” but “a woman clothed with the sun.” In other words she was clothed, point number one; and number two, her clothing was shining like the sun.

In another vision John sees a different woman, but this time the first thing that he notices is that she is proud and controlling. “So [an angel] carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns” (Revelation 17:3).

The fact that this woman is able to sit and ride on the beast implies that she is in control of this terrible creature. Next John mentions her

clothing. “And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication” (verse 4).

Historically, purple and scarlet were the rarest and most expensive of dyes. So, here we find that this woman is arrayed as a harlot wearing expensive clothing and decked out with lots of “bling,” as modern slang would put it. Harlots in the time of the Roman Empire and the dark ages advertised their occupation by wearing provocative clothing. This is still true today.

We conclude that this Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots was not modest. Though the apostle John spares us the details of her appearance, we can get some idea from the provocative fashions of his day. In that time long slits, sometimes as high as the waist, and minimal covering of the upper body were common forms of provocative wear.

So the contrast becomes a little clearer between these two women. There is one with which the devil is pleased, and there is another that makes him angry. The modest woman, representing God’s people, and the brilliant white clothing illustrated her purity and moral excellence. The harlot covered in scarlet and decked with jewelry represented moral corruption and pollution.

The modest woman represents God’s faithful people from the birth of Christ through the Dark Ages. During this time when it seemed the devil had complete control of the world, there were few people who, by faith in the sacrifice of Christ, wore His pure robes of righteousness. These few souls resisted the moral corruption of the great harlot that swept the land and intoxicated kings. Her cup of forni-

cation, in which she mingled truth and error, was deadly to the soul.

After the Dark Ages came to a close and the renaissance was in full swing, fashion experienced a rebirth. Extravagance was the name of the game, with everyone trying to outdo his or her neighbor. Rich costumes of many varieties abounded with lace and furs. Women's clothing—other than being for pure show—often was not modest or healthful, even though full-length dresses which hung to the floor were worn. The thing that made them so immodest was the low necklines that revealed generous amounts of cleavage, and the corset that squeezed the internal organs and lifted the breasts.

In striking contrast to the overwhelming displays of extravagance were the Puritans. These people of strong moral principles adopted a very simple modest form of dress that was not only pleasant but practical. The Puritans were among the first successful colonists of an area known as New England, in North America. The reason for their courageous adventure was the desire to be free from persecution and the ability to establish a society of high moral standards. This, along with the Quakers and other religiously conservative groups, helped to establish a nation with noble principles and high moral standards.

The big hoop dresses that came from the Renaissance did not go out of style till late in the 1800's. The concept that dresses should drag on the floor started fading as well. From that time on dress lengths climbed upward. By the early nineteenth hundreds, the dresses had risen to about ankle length, and by the early twenties they were reaching mid calf. Toward the late nineteen twenties dresses and skirts were reaching just below the knee, and in the sixties came the mini-skirt. Unable to shorten the skirt any more,

styles went back to about knee length and have stayed there with some variation ever since.

It was during the World Wars that the idea of wearing pants (without a dress over them) caught on—though not as part of fashion right away. During this time, while millions of men were fighting the war, women took to the factories and fields to do the work left by men. In the newly found liberation from the restrictions of society, women began wearing pants, going without sleeves and bobbing their hair to look more masculine. Things would never be the same again.

In our modern world fashion seems to hold millions in captivity, and it is no longer women who are mostly involved. Both men and women today are seemingly completely enslaved by fashion. Looking sloppy is not good either, but a neat appearance is sufficient. The aim and goal of fashion is to catch the attention and make people think “wow.” Without even mentioning all the money wasted on the newest fashions, thousands are then spent on accessories like watches, purses, rings, and other jewelry. What is it that causes people to spend so much just so others will admire their appearance? We can get the answer straight from the Bible.

“Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. . . . Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee” (Ezekiel 28:14, 17). Pride in his own appearance caused the fall of Lucifer, and it leads millions today away from God to worship themselves. Dear friend, who owns your heart? 

a Harlot's Raiment?

GUIDED BY THE *Creator's Hand*

BY A. BALBACH

Those who live without God and without hope in this world—those who question whether God exists instead of questioning their ability to see His working in their life—often hear a challenge in their conscience:

“Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the Lord” (Jeremiah 29:13, 14).

Many times, former atheists have to blame themselves for having been afraid to meet this challenge much earlier. And some are honest enough to confess that, on certain occasions, they were tormented by serious doubts concerning their position.

From what they tell us, much more faith is required to disbelieve than to believe, because an unbeliever must put his or her trust in a number of impossibilities. Disbelief is only an opinion, while belief in God is much more than an opinion; it is a firm conviction based on personal experiences, innumerable observations, and many facts that cannot be denied.



Intuitive knowledge, which is often ignored by skeptics, cannot be brushed aside. Common human insight is a fact. In this field, let us first learn a lesson from the animal kingdom.

Sea turtles

“Young [sea] turtles, when hatched from the eggs, scratch their way out of the sand and may be seen with their mouths full of grit as they march to the water. Instinct is strong and overmastering with them. No matter what barrier is interposed, no matter how many times they may be diverted or even turned around and forced in an opposite direction,

they make for the sea as a magnetic needle points to the north.”—*The Book of Knowledge*, vol. 14, p. 5232.

In the Orinoco and the Amazon Rivers in South America, there are fresh water turtles which leave the water only to lay their eggs. In the dry season, when the rivers have subsided and the banks are dry, they come out of the water to lay their eggs on the sandbars. As soon as the young ones are ready to come forth from the eggs, countless numbers of mother turtles suddenly crawl onto the land, early in the morning, to dig up their nests. Then the newly hatched turtles rush toward the water. They are instinctively guided to hurry in the right direction. If this were not the case, they would scatter in all directions. Very few, nonetheless, seem to be deficient as far as the sense of direction is concerned. These few are snatched by large birds of prey such as the eagles and vultures.

Migratory birds

Migratory birds also have an instinctive sense of direction.

“What strange power impels a tiny winged creature to leave its summer home within two or three weeks of the same day each





year and fly thousands of miles to a winter home [which could be on a small island] it has never seen? What then drives it to return to the same part of the United States or Canada where it has been raised and to arrive so punctually that the date of its return can often be predicted to within a single week? How, year after year, does it find its way back to the identical field, or wood, [or nest], where it raised its first young?”—*Ibid.*, vol. 14, p. 5027.

The power of God’s guidance

“Who taught the raven in drought to throw pebbles into a hollow tree where she espied water, that the water might rise so that she might come to it? Who taught the bee to sail through such a vast sea of air and to find the way from a flower in a field [back] to her hive?”—Francis Bacon, English scientist and philosopher.

“Beasts, birds, and insects . . . act with unerring providence of instinct. Man, the while, who possesses a higher faculty, abuses [his intuition], and therefore goes blundering on. . . . He, in willing neglect of the laws of God, loses sight of the [purpose] of his [existence].” —Robert Southey, English poet laureate.

In the essential things of their existence, as we have seen, turtles, birds, bees, and other creatures, are led by natural impulse and move instinctively in the right direction, toward their vital object. Based on inborn “knowledge” and without any previous learning, a newborn

mammal feels dependent on its mother and finds its way, instinctively and immediately, to the mother’s milk.

Humans are also led to act by intuition in the most important things of life. As soon as faith in God—this universal human insight—begins to dawn in the conscience, the person realizes his or her dependence on the Creator and Keeper, to whom to look up to through the eyes of innate awareness. We do not need philosophical or scientific arguments to see the hand of God. We see it in our daily experiences; in special providences sometimes called “miracles”, in prayers answered, in the fulfillment of Bible prophecy, in the history of the world, in the course of nature, in the order of the universe, and so forth. And in the supernatural (for example, paranormal manifestations) we see that we are not the only intelligent beings in the universe.

“Every human being knows by intuition that God exists. This is an insight inherent in man. . . . Faith in God could not have begun through a fancied philosophy, because more often than not it flashes upon the mind as a direct insight and not as a process of reason. . . . Many an atheist cannot find God for the same reason that a burglar cannot locate a policeman. . . . Intellectual pride and moral disobedience quench the common insight of faith.”—J.

Edwin Orr, *100 Questions About God*, pp. 14, 17, 22.

Intuitively known truths are

self-evident insights, inborn in the unconscious mind. Self-evident principles have always existed and have always been recognized.

“Thomas Jefferson assumed such principles when he wrote the Declaration of Independence: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.’” —Eugene and Fanchon Mead, *Man Among Men*, pp. 25, 26.

Deep-down, even atheists believe

Belief in God is so firmly grounded in the rational nature of humans, who feel indisputably dependent upon an omniscient and omnipotent Being, that even those who declare themselves atheists— are actually not atheists all the time—pray to Him when in serious trouble. Richard Wurmbrand, one of the most widely known authors of Romania, and at the same time a former atheist, gives us an example to confirm this undeniable fact.

“On a train,” he says, “a Russian officer sat in front of me. I had spoken to him about Christ for only a few minutes, when he broke out with a wave of atheistic arguments. Marx, Stalin, Voltaire, Darwin, and other quotations against the Bible just flew from his mouth. . . . He spoke for nearly an hour to convince me that there is no God. When he finished, I asked him: ‘If there is no God, why do you pray when you are in trouble?’ Like a thief surprised while stealing, he replied: ‘How do you know that I





pray?’ . . . He bowed his head and acknowledged: ‘On the front, when we were encircled by the Germans, we all prayed.’” —*Tortured for Christ*, p. 26.

Wurmbrand suffered in Communist prisons for many years, because of his Christian faith, until he had to be transferred to a prison hospital. The doctor said to him: “You have about two weeks to live. . . . I’m sorry, but they insist on putting you in room number 4.” The prisoner asked what was going on in that room, and someone explained to him: “That’s where they put those who are beyond hope of recovery.” Wurmbrand wrote:

“During the thirty months that I spent in that room, many individuals died there and left their beds for others. I noticed something remarkable: None of those miserable men died as unbelievers. . . . Many of them were brought into room 4 as convinced infidels, but their skepticism left them at the approach of death.” —*Mes Prisons Avec Dieu*, p. 76.

Seek to be led by the Spirit of God

For some reason, not all creatures which are endowed with a sense of direction reach their intended destination. There are exceptions which seem to be due to some impediment. Even in a flawless compass, the needle may not faithfully point north and south. And among human beings, we have a similar problem. A man who was born blind, for example, cannot see the colors of the rainbow. If you try to describe to him this beautiful natural phenomenon—the spectrum produced by the dispersion of sunlight by spherical raindrops—he may listen in silence but he does not understand what you are saying.

There is still another form of blindness, known as “spiritual blindness,” which prevents a person from seeing God. The apostle Paul refers to this unfortunate condition, saying:

“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: nei-

ther can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

“In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2 Corinthians 4:4).

People who are born blind are not guilty for not being able to see (John 9:41), but those who are spiritually blind and choose to remain in that condition are not innocent before God. Jesus said:

“This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved” (John 3:19, 20).

The preventive medicine for this type of blindness was pointed out by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount:

“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8).

“The pure in heart discern the Creator in the works of His mighty hand, in the things of beauty that comprise the universe. In His written word they read in clearer lines the revelation of His mercy, His goodness, and His grace. The truths that are hidden from the wise and prudent are revealed to babes. The beauty and preciousness of truth, which are undiscerned by the worldly-wise, are constantly unfolding to those who have a . . . desire to know and to do the will of God.” —*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 26, 27.

In the light of these considerations, former atheists—who know both sides of the controverted question—say that arguments will seldom change anyone. But those who have the “eyes of” their “understanding” wide open and well “enlightened” can see in many facts all the evidence that they need for themselves (Ephesians 1:18). 

YOUTH Messenger®

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Sometimes we are disturbed by urban noise, and it becomes a nuisance. But scientific research shows that for birds, urban noise is not only disturbing—it is actually a question of life and death.

Male birds that use their songs to attract mates and mark their territory have to sing louder in order to be successful. They also have to do this if they live near waterfalls and river torrents—otherwise they will not be heard.

We are living in a time when there are many distractions. People can hardly hear our voices when we try to share the gospel with them. Why? Worldly attractions, all kinds of amusements, and media productions are speaking loudly to the heart of our friends and neighbors. Yet we love them and want them to enjoy the true happiness that only Jesus can give, so we have to speak louder. How can we?

Inspiration tells us how: “Actions speak louder than the most positive profession of godliness” (*The Adventist Home*, p. 32).

Our relatives, friends, and neighbors can hear the love of Jesus in our life. This is the voice they can really hear: Love towards them and towards the truth in which we believe. When they see that we care for them, that we are patient with them even when they don't deserve it, then they will hear the message of love in our actions.

Each of us has a small but very important world around us, and people are influenced also when they see that we love the church of which we are a part. For example, when we make the church activities and church needs a priority in our life, being willing to sacrifice some of our time and desires for the sake of the prosperity of our church, people see that we love what we believe and that makes a difference in the way they see our beliefs.

We want to be heard. So we have to speak louder. We **can** speak louder! How? By showing love to those around us by the way we speak, by responding to their needs, by doing business with them, and also by the way we respond to the needs of the church and by the way we live what we preach. Oh, what a loud sermon you can preach!

The angels in Revelation are shown as speaking loudly, and Isaiah exhorts us to cry aloud. And through the events that are happening around us, God is speaking to us louder than ever before in words that cannot be mistaken. I hope this *Youth Messenger* edition also speaks loudly to your heart, that it may help you grasp more of the wisdom God has available for you. May it help each of us to follow God's instructions instead of worldly fashions, so while we go around doing our daily chores, may we, through our actions, be speaking louder than the world.

May the grace and love of Jesus be abundant in your life. **YM**

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My Picture Gallery

I cannot boast of riches,
I care not for their power,
When nature's choicest treasures
Are with me every hour.
True, wealth may purchase beauty,
The art of every land,
But what is art to nature
Direct from God's own hand?

For, from my eastern window,
I see a picture grow—
Aurora's rosy fingers
Tint all the clouds of snow;
And Sol's most glorious colors
He dons afresh each day,
As in a march triumphal,
He takes his royal way.

The graceful, flowing river
Hath music in its voice;
The sunlight on its ripples
Makes every heart rejoice.

The cattle on the hillsides
In sweet contentment rove,
And crop the tender herbage—
A picture that I love.

The snowcapped range beyond them,
With cloudlets lying low,
And filling wooded gulches,
All bathed in sunset glow,
Is background for my picture,
Fit theme for artist's brush.
And now the moon's soft radiance
Succeeds the twilight hush.

As in my open doorway
I pause for moment's rest
And gaze from stretch of valley
To tip of mountain crest,
I think, with grateful rev'rence,
Of Artist all divine,
Who every day, in kindness,
Has made His pictures mine.

—F. A. Reynolds