




A COMMUNITY TRANSFORMED

WEEK OF PRAYER

MARCH 15-22, 2025



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WELCOME

Created To Bring Change

When a mosquito does what it does best, irritating and sucking our blood, we forget that it is a tiny little creature. Its impact on us is not measured by size but by what it can do. Only one mosquito can keep you awake at night.

The 2025 week of prayer theme is ACT: “A Community Transformed.” The focus is on reaching the challenging territories of this world, the 10/40 window, with the word of God. It is estimated that, out of the eight billion people in this world, Christianity has over three billion followers. The rest of the world subscribes to other religions.

Christian denominations must respond positively to the biblical mandate, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20, NIV).

Seventh-day Adventists have an urgent and solemn duty to share the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14:6-12 with the world. All people groups should hear this message and make their choice. That’s what you are called upon to ponder and respond to during this week of prayer.

God created and chose you to bring about change in your community. Prayerfully identify communities that have not heard the end-time gospel message. When we faithfully adhere to the call to share God’s Word with others, “Communities will be Transformed.” The book of ACTS must be relived in our time.

You are much bigger and more intelligent than a mosquito because you were created in God’s image.

Therefore, go out there and be an influencer for Jesus!

Pr. Busi Khumalo
General Conference
Youth Director



About The AUTHORS



Kleyton Feitosa

Kleyton, a native of Brazil, is passionate about cross-cultural ministry and has served in Brazil, the U.S., Egypt, and Sudan. Fluent in Portuguese, English, Spanish, and some Arabic, he enjoys ministering to diverse communities. His experience includes roles as a teacher, chaplain, youth pastor, associate pastor, senior pastor, Conference Executive Secretary, and Mission President. Kleyton holds a Bachelor's in Theology from the Latin American Theological Seminary and a Master's in Missions and a Doctorate in Evangelism and Church Growth from Andrews University. At the time of this writing he served as the director of the Global Mission Centers at the General Conference. Kleyton Feitosa is now sleeping in the Lord, awaiting the day when “the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16)

Dr. Khamsay Phetchareun is an ordained minister, administrator, and fundraiser, currently serving as the Global Mission Director of the Center for Adventist-Buddhist Relations (CABR) at the General Conference. His pastoral experience includes roles in Australia from 1987 to 1998, and he served as Associate Director of ADRA Myanmar (1998–2000). Dr. Phetchareun also taught Religion at Asia-Pacific International University (2001–2007, 2011–present) and served as Advisor for the Laos Attached Region until 2021. Appointed Global Mission Director in September 2022, he holds degrees from Avondale College and Andrews University, including a Doctor of Ministry (2005).



Khamsay Phetchareun



Cliff Shameerudeen

Dr. Cliff Shameerudeen is currently the director for the Center for South Asian Religions of the General Conference. He is a church planter, who spends his time empowering, coaching and supporting church planters globally.

Hi, I'm Jonathan! I'm a passionate follower of Jesus, a husband, and a proud dad of two amazing kids. I've been involved in church planting in Madrid, working on a project designed to connect with secular audiences, and I'm now serving as a missionary in Geneva, Switzerland, exploring ways to reconnect a post-Christian society with God.

I'm also passionate about football, music, reading, spending time with people, and discovering new cultures and cuisines!



Jonathan Contero



Reinaldo Siqueira

Reinaldo Siqueira has served as dean of the School of Theology at Brazil Adventist University since 2016, where he taught Old Testament languages, theology, and exegesis. Previously, he was dean of the Latin American Theological Seminary and director of Adventist-Jewish relations for the Brazilian Central Union. Siqueira holds a doctorate in Old Testament studies from Andrews University, as well as a master's and bachelor's in theology from Adventist University of France. He is fluent in Portuguese, Spanish, English, and French, with advanced knowledge of Hebrew. He has also been named the Seventh-day Adventist Church's chief liaison to the Jewish community.



Petra Bahadur

Dr. Petras Bahadur serves as the Director of the Global Center for Adventist-Muslim Relations at the Headquarters of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. He served 21 years as a Treasurer, lecturer and Head of the department of Business, and then served 21 years as a Missiologist in the area of Muslim ministry. He trains professionals on building bridges of understanding through the seven books he has authored on understanding the worldviews of people from Muslim background.

Dr Brendan Pratt is the director of the Centre for Secular Post-Christian Mission. He lives in Melbourne Australia. Brendan is married to Amanda, an author, and is dad to Brad, Ben and James – along with a bunch of snakes, lizards, turtles and frogs. His PhD research explores how consumerism impacts faith. Brendan is passionate about what it looks like for the church to be a beautiful picture of God.



Brendan Pratt



Bledi Leno

Bledi Leno is the Director of the Center for Urban Mission at the General Conference, with a passion for connecting people with God in urban settings. His ministry has taken him from Albania to England, Brazil, the U.S., and around the world, broadening his international perspective. Based in New York City, Bledi has focused on urban ministry, establishing centers of influence, and leading church planting and revitalization initiatives. He is committed to creative outreach and evangelism. Bledi is married to Gabriela, and they have two sons, Matthias and Arthur.

Read This FIRST

- 1. Start Your Planning Now:** Start your planning, develop your target, get your team together, and make sure your pastor is a part of that team.
- 2. Global Youth Day Information:** Get information on the Global Youth Day project. This day will be the launch of the Youth Week of Prayer. Please visit our website, gcyouthministries.org, or contact your local youth director to find out how you can participate.
- 3. Commit Your Prayer Warriors:** Get a team of adults together who will commit to praying for you and your ministry on a regular basis. Make sure this is a group with whom you can confidentially share both your personal and ministry prayer needs.
- 4. Choose a Theme Song:** Involve your youth choir/praise team. Pick out songs that you all like and which fit the topic of each evening or choose a song for the entire week.
- 5. Form a Week of Prayer Development Team:** Include on your team only interested and committed young adults and youth ministry leaders (Pathfinder, Sabbath School, etc., your pastor/s); this is important because it gives ownership to the entire group, rather than just you and your assistant. Ask the group to commit to meeting for at least three weeks—at least one week for four lessons, and an extra week to wrap things up. Be sure to identify the goal and direction you want to go, preferably at the first meeting, and choose a young person to speak for each day.
- 6. Day of Fasting:** Pick a day during the week to dedicating to fasting. As a team identify the areas in which you will be petitioning to God for a breakthrough.

How To Use THIS BOOKLET

1. Journal Space: This book is designed to be filled with your thoughts. Use the space provided to: record your reactions to the something you may hear in the sermon and the questions at the end of each day or to write a prayer request or praise to God. Encourage participants to use it anyway they want. It's their journal!

2. Start a Prayer Journal: Nothing is greater for your personal spiritual growth than time spent in prayer. Your youth group will grow as you grow. Prayer journaling will help you encounter God in new and exciting ways. You will be able to “track” your walk with God as you go back, and review answered prayers and see how He has led you step by step each day. New, fresh ideas will come to mind as you spend time in His presence journaling your prayers.

3. Daily Questions: Included with each sermon are questions designed to get you thinking. Form small groups and discuss these questions. Take a moment to really think about the point the question is trying to get across. Listen to the Holy Spirit as He teaches you through Scripture. Encourage participants to record their thoughts in their journals.

EDITORIAL

Bridging the Gap

Jesus never once forced anyone to become a Christian. He simply laid out a powerful two-word invitation: “Follow Me.” And a three-word question, “Will you go?” This is very important for you to remember, because if some of our non-Christian, family members, friends, and associates are to be saved we must realize that if they decline your invitation to attend church, it is not the “end of the world.” There are many other ways to invite someone to experience Jesus besides attending church. And one of the most powerful opportunity is when we invite them to discover God’s heart for the poor, oppressed, and disadvantaged....yes, invite them to participate in your Global Youth Day projects. Invite them to be a Jesus-follower with you.

During this year’s Week of Prayer and spiritual emphasis we will look at six very different spiritual viewpoints, and then ask ourselves which one best describe our friends, co-workers, family, or our neighbors who DO NOT know Jesus?

Weaved throughout these readings is the reminder that we are called to build and maintain strong relationships, built on trust and mutual respect. Also provided are golden nuggets to guide us in understanding a little about the commonalities among us, as they give opportunities and chances—that with the right approach—can be cultivated into encounters and experiences for Jesus that will help them bridge the gap between their current situation and a vibrant relationship with Him.

Yes, God loves and saves Buddhists, Hindus, Post-Christian Secularists, Consumerists, Jews, and Muslims the same way that he loves and saves everyone else—through the miracle of a new birth. We are called to build and maintain strong relationships, built on trust and mutual respect.

Maria Manderson
General Conference Youth Dept.
Editorial Assistant



Global Youth Day 5-MONTH PLAN

From its inception in 2013, Global Youth Day (GYD) had these core aspects: salvation, discipleship, and mission involvement. We are still committed to that vision and hope that all the youth and young adults who participate in this outreach will realize that Global Youth Day is not just about what they are doing but also why they do what they do. Yearly, we are bringing a fresh approach to make Global Youth Day a more mission-focused outreach initiative for young people.

A Five-Month Plan for a Successful GYD

November (Preparation: Prayer and Planning)

1. Unions and Conferences should help churches identify projects aligned with the year's GYD theme.
2. These projects should not be far from most of the youth.
3. The choice and nature of the project will determine a suitable approach.
4. Do area studies to appreciate the size and the scope of the projects.
5. Where possible, divide the youth into small groups of six for effectiveness. But, the nature of the project will determine the size of the group.
6. At the local church level, assign someone to create a list of all the young people who have been missing from church or are coming but are unengaged. Begin calling the missing/inactive young people and invite them to participate in your upcoming projects. Also, begin inviting them to Bible Studies. Visit our website for more tips on doing this.
7. Assign leaders for the small groups: group leader, secretary (to compile reports), spiritual coordinator, media coordinator (permission should be obtained before publishing or sharing any photos and videos), and project coordinator.
8. Youth leaders should share their vision with community authorities to seek permission to do service projects.
9. Churches are encouraged to designate the last Sabbath of November as the day of prayer for the service projects. Dedicate all community projects to the Lord in prayer.

December (Implementation)

1. Young people go out into their communities every Sabbath or Sunday (depending on the project) to participate in projects.
2. After conducting projects, the youth should share weekly testimonies or reports with the church.
3. The secretaries of the small groups should compile records of the people they serve (personal information, with their permission).
4. December to January is a long school break in some parts of the world. We suggest that the third week of December be dedicated to recruiting young people to participate in Caleb Mission (a project where youth utilize their vacation time to do community projects and evangelistic programs).
5. The last part of December is usually the time when families spend time together. We recommend that the youth give special consideration to the lonely, the bereaved, the depressed, the sick, the disabled, the homeless, and the needy.

January (Spiritual and Mission Focus)

1. The global church's Ten Days of Prayer occur every January. Visit our website to download the 10-day Prayer and Devotional book.
2. We encourage the youth to pray for themselves and various projects they are doing.
3. Dedicate January to implement spiritual and evangelistic projects in preparation for Global Youth Day, Week of Prayer, and Homecoming Day. Evangelistic ideas for youth include Bible studies, outreach seminars, evangelistic campaigns (Voice of Youth), and recruiting young people to participate in One Year in Mission (OYiM).
4. By January 31 Conference and Union should receive GYD reports of the project process/work done.

February (Follow-Up)

1. February is the month to revisit those we have been serving over the past months.
2. Those who delayed in doing their service projects can use this month to engage in intensive community work.
3. The unions and conferences should send their reports to the divisions.

March (Celebration)

1. GYD is usually on the third Sabbath in March. Visit our website to see the GYD theme and resources.
2. In the first two weeks of March, we encourage churches to celebrate with the youth what God has accomplished through them.
3. Invite those we have been visiting and providing services to come to church.
4. On GYD, churches may visit communities in the morning and come back to the church to give reports of their visits.
5. On GYD, the GC will be showcasing to the world what young people have been doing for Jesus.
6. GYD is the precursor to the global Youth Week of Prayer. Visit our website to get the resources for the week of prayer.
7. Homecoming Sabbath: baptisms of young people who made this decision because of the direct efforts of their fellow youths.

SAMPLE PROGRAM

Week of Prayer

Welcome

Invocation

AY Pledge, Law and Song

Praise and Worship

Opening Prayer

Special Item (Music or skit)

Scripture Reading

Sermon

Discussion

Theme Song

Prayer

SAMPLE PROGRAM

Homecoming Sabbath

Countdown Video

Processional

Invocation

AY Pledge, Law, Motto and Song

Welcome and Announcements

Praise and Worship

Opening Prayer

Special Item (Music or skit)

Scripture Reading

Intercessory Prayer

Tithes and Offering

Special Music

Sermon

Special Music

Baptism

Closing Song

Closing Prayer

men, marking a stark contrast to the multitudes that usually gathered around Jesus. The tangible absence of a welcoming party highlighted the spiritual desolation of the region, but this is no surprise because this is “the other side.”

Miracle and Rejection:

As they arrive, the picture is disturbing:

Mark 5:2-5 *“ And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains, because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones.”*

This is quite a scene, but in the presence of Jesus nothing stays the same.

Mark 5:6-14

“When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him. And he cried out with a loud voice and said, “What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me.”

For He said to him, “Come out of the man, unclean spirit!” Then He asked him, “What is your name?”

And he answered, saying, “My name is Legion; for we are many.” Also he begged Him earnestly that He would not send them out of the country.

“Now a large herd of swine was feeding there near the mountains. So all the demons begged Him, saying, “Send us to the swine, that we may enter them.” And at once Jesus gave them permission. Then the unclean spirits went out and entered the swine (there were about two thousand); and the herd ran

violently down the steep place into the sea, and drowned in the sea.

“So those who fed the swine fled, and they told it in the city and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that had happened.”

Fear and Rejection

The miracle was amazing. The man was immediately set free! The evil spirits were gone, and the man restored to his right mind. Interesting to note, however that very different from the healings in Galilee, upon healing the demon-possessed this time, instead of celebration, there was fear and rejection.

Mark 4:15-17

“ Then they came to Jesus, and saw the one who had been demon-possessed and had the legion, sitting and clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. And those who saw it told them how it happened to him who had been demon-possessed, and about the swine. Then they began to plead with Him to depart from their region.”

The people of Decapolis were not happy. They did not celebrate this supernatural healing. Blinded by their entrenched worldviews and fears, they could not appreciate the miraculous work of Jesus. Instead of joy, they reacted with fear. They didn't exclaim, “Wow, this is a man with power; this is great.” They didn't think, “I have a sick mother, a tormented child, a troubled friend—this man with power could help them.” Instead, they begged Jesus to leave. He's got power, but he's from the other side. For the people living in Decapolis, somebody who is from the “other side” could hurt them. Somebody who is from the “other side” is going to have an agenda. Somebody who is from the other side is going to have an attitude of superiority or be judgmental or distant. They were afraid of somebody from the “other side”.

Mathew 15:29-31

“Jesus departed from there, skirted the Sea of Galilee, and went up on the mountain and sat down there. Then great multitudes came to Him, having with them the lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others; and they laid them down at Jesus’ feet, and He healed them. So the multitude marveled when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel.”

They praised the God of Israel! The first time Jesus went to the “other side”, nobody was home except one demon-tormented man. And everybody begged him to leave. The second time he comes, he has one of the most dramatic responses to his arrival in all of the gospels. What happened? Well, one man told his story. Mark 5:20 tells us that one man traveled from one town to another, from one neighborhood to another, and said, *“Let me tell you about this man Jesus and what he did for me.”* His testimony transformed entire cities. There was a way that this man could reach people on the “other side” that initially, not even Jesus’ disciples, nor Jesus himself, could.

This transformation showcases the power of personal witness—a testimony that can often penetrate and reach where traditional methods cannot.

Call to Modern Disciples:

What, then, is the ‘other side’ for us today? It may not be a demonic land but could be a foreign country, a different community, or even opposing ideological territories. Our calling is akin to that of the first disciples—to bravely step out of our comfort zones and engage with those who are radically different, carrying the light of Christ into dark corners of misunderstanding and prejudice. Just like the demon-possessed man was changed forever, there are many who are eagerly waiting for us

to share the Good News with them. They are waiting for hope. Longing for love. They are waiting for you, they are waiting for me to reach out to them.

Conclusion:

As we ponder on where our ‘other side’ might be, let us remember that Christ calls us not to comfort but to courage. The global mission field is vast, and it requires us to transcend not only geographical but cultural, linguistic, and ideological borders. Like the disciples and the healed man of Decapolis, we are equipped with the most powerful tool—our testimony and the transformative love of Christ. Let us pray and ask God for the courage and strength to go forth, bearing this light, and watch as the once-impenetrable walls of fear and rejection turn into gates of welcome and acceptance.

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank you for all you do us. Thank you for convicting us to be here today. Thank you for your commission to go to ALL the world and teach others about you. Give us courage and strength, give us the boldness you gave the early apostles to share your world. Let us not be discouraged. We thank you for all things.

Amen

Asia, in countries like Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, and Vietnam. In this region, less than 1% of Buddhists have been reached or have accepted Jesus. You may find it encouraging that around 1.2% of Thailand's population identifies as Christian, but would that truly satisfy you? Out of that 1.2%, only a mere 0.01% come from a Buddhist background. The remainder are from animistic traditions. This represents a minuscule fraction of the overall Buddhist population. Even fewer former Buddhists in Cambodia and Laos have embraced the gospel. Yet, we sometimes convince ourselves that these countries have been sufficiently reached for Christ. This perception is a form of self-deception, allowing us to justify our inaction in going to these nations for the sake of the gospel.

Buddhism is divided into three major branches: Hinayana (or Theravada), Mahayana, and Vajrayana. Theravada, the more conservative branch, is prevalent in Southeast Asia. Mahayana, the more liberal branch, is found in countries like China, Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Vietnam. Much like their Theravada counterparts, very few Mahayana Buddhists have come to know Jesus as their Savior. This means the work of sharing the gospel with Buddhists remains vast and largely undone. Vajrayana, often referred to as Tibetan Buddhism, is the third branch. This mystical form of Buddhism is found in restricted nations such as Tibet, Bhutan, Nepal, Mongolia, and parts of Russia, where evangelism is often illegal, making it even more challenging to reach these Buddhists with the gospel.

When we consider all three branches of Buddhism, the scope of the challenge becomes clear: the Buddhist world remains largely unreached. In fact, there are more Christians converting to Buddhism than there are Buddhists converting to Christianity. Even in countries traditionally associated with Christianity, like Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, Buddhism is one of the fastest-growing religions.

4. **Serve in Simple Ways:** Evangelism doesn't have to be complicated. Help meet basic needs, and people will listen when you share your faith.

Don'ts:

1. **Don't Criticize Their Beliefs:** Avoid debating or attacking Buddhist teachings. Instead, focus on sharing the love of Jesus and your personal testimony.

2. **Don't Expect Immediate Results:** Conversion can take time, especially in cultures with strong religious roots. Be patient and trust that God is working through you.

3. **Don't Go Alone:** Build a support network of fellow believers and a local church community for spiritual and emotional support. Read Mark 6:7

Preaching the Gospel is Simple:

After John the Baptist was imprisoned, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the Good News of God: *"The time has come. The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"* (Mark 1:14-15, NIV)

John the Baptist was the first to preach a message of repentance, and when he was imprisoned, Jesus took up that mantle, proclaiming the Good News of God's Kingdom. Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He gave His disciples a clear directive: continue spreading the gospel throughout the earth.

"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'" (Matthew 28:18-20, NIV)

Even in the final days of his ministry, John, the last of the disciples to remain alive, emphasized the same message, reminding us to carry out Jesus' command.

“Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language, and people.” (Revelation 14:6, NIV)

As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe that God has entrusted us, as His Remnant Church, with the sacred mission of proclaiming the everlasting gospel to every nation, tribe, language, and people, calling all to worship the Creator God. The mandate is clear, and the call is urgent. Let us go forth and fulfill this great commission.

How Can the Lord Return When Only 0.01% of Buddhists Have Been Reached? Do you feel the urgency to respond to Jesus’ command and go to Southeast Asia to preach the gospel to Buddhists? Is Matthew 28:18-20 a call for someone else, or is it meant for you? Should you wait, or is it time to act?

Don’t Repeat the Mistakes of the Past

In the past, your ancestors delayed building the house of the Lord, believing it wasn’t the right time. Are we now making the same mistake by saying it’s not the right time to build the Kingdom of God among Buddhists?

“This is what the LORD of Heaven’s Armies says: The people are saying, ‘The time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD.’” (Haggai 1:2, NLT)

Misplaced Priorities:

It’s easy to understand why the Israelites delayed. They were returning refugees from Babylon, and for seventy years, they had lived in exile. Most of them were not the generation that had left Judah; they were their grandparents. They had no memory of their homeland and had to rebuild their lives from scratch, starting with their own homes. In human terms, this seems reasonable—but not in God’s eyes. For God’s people, putting Him first should always be the priority.

Jesus Himself taught us to seek God’s Kingdom first. Yet, like the Israelites, we often say, “The time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord,” which is another way of saying, “Let me build my own house first, and God’s house can wait.”

What About Us?

What are we focused on today? Many of us are busy building our lives. This focus on education, careers, marriage, and family seems natural. We work to secure a future for ourselves and our children. But are we placing these things above God’s Kingdom? **While there is nothing wrong with education, marriage, or building a family, they become wrong when they take priority over the work of God.**

Shouldn’t God understand? Yes, He knows these things are important, but He calls us to put His Kingdom first. When we do, everything else will fall into place. Let us not repeat the mistake of prioritizing our own lives over God’s mission. **The time to build the Kingdom is now.**

What Went Wrong with the Israelites?

In Haggai 1, we see that the Israelites weren’t just building homes out of necessity—they were seeking prosperity. This is why God became upset. He had blessed them, but instead of honoring Him, they focused on their own comfort and success. As a result, God “turned off the blessing tap,” and the consequences were clear.

“Why are you living in luxurious houses while my house lies in ruins?” God asked them. And then He described the outcome of their misplaced priorities:

You have planted much but harvest little.

You eat but are not satisfied.

You drink but are still thirsty.

You put on clothes but cannot keep warm.

Your wages disappear as though you were putting them in

late September and October, though it doesn't align exactly with September 21st each year.)

This marked a turning point. When the people shifted their focus back to God's priorities, He renewed His blessing. It was a reminder that true prosperity comes only when God is placed first.

Working on the House of God

God often compares His church to His family or His house:

"But if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." (1 Timothy 3:15)

He desires His church to be holy and without blemish:

"That He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish." (Ephesians 5:27)

Building God's house means engaging in mission work. Jesus called fishermen to become fishers of men:

"Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." (Matthew 4:19, NRSV)

What Does This Mean for Us?

Fishing requires preparation. Here are some lessons we can learn from it:

1. **Fish never come to us:** They don't jump into our boats or cooking pots—we have to go to where they are. Likewise, Buddhists won't come to us; we must go to them.

2. **Catching different fish requires different tools and approaches:** Just as each type of fish requires specific bait, reaching different people requires different methods. If you go to a hospital, you'll find the sick—health evangelism will resonate with them. If you go to rural areas, you'll find farmers and the poor—

_____ eastern Thailand, where 23 million Buddhists live. Can we continue to ignore the call to reach these people? Is it because we believe it's too difficult to share the love of God with Buddhists?

_____ **Is the Lord Calling You? The harvest needs young workers.**

_____ Just as the elderly may struggle physically to harvest rice, older generations are not able to reach young Buddhists as effectively.

_____ **God needs young, vibrant missionaries to go to Asia and bring in His harvest. Are you willing to go?**

_____ **Will You Be Like Isaiah or Jonah?**

_____ Isaiah heard God's call and responded, "*Here am I. Send me!*" (Isaiah 6:8). Jonah, on the other hand, ran away from his mission. He eventually went, but unwillingly. Wouldn't it be better to go voluntarily?

_____ The question remains: Will you answer God's call to preach to Buddhists in Southeast Asia? Is now the time, or will you delay, as others have, saying, "It is not the right time to rebuild the house of the Lord?"

_____ **How to Preach to Buddhists:**

_____ Many feel uneasy about reaching Buddhists, given the challenge of converting less than 1%. But God only asks you to go—He will use you.

_____ **1. Acts of Kindness Ministry:** Buddhists are friendly and value relationships. By visiting their homes, offering small gifts, and building friendships, trust grows. When they ask why you are so kind, you will have the chance to share your faith.

_____ **2. Prayer Ministry:** Be open about your faith and offer to pray for their needs. Buddhists don't mind praying to another God, but when they experience answers to prayer, they may give their hearts to Jesus. We have seen sick people healed and alcoholics delivered through prayer, leading many to baptism.

_____ **3. Reaching Buddhists through Food:** Sharing meals is a

be classified as people who worship idols, there are those who do not worship any idols or who worship only one deity. Also, while it is true that Hindus have many rituals that are foreign and probably difficult for Christians to understand, the same can be said of Christian rituals and practices from a Hindu perspective. Hindus in the diaspora seldom interact with Christians on a deep level due to differences in religion, culture, and language. These factors contribute to Hindus' lack of understanding of the worship style, culture, and spirituality of Adventism. In fact, many Hindus have the misconception that the Catholic Church is the entire Christian church and that the Pope is its head. When interacting with Hindus, it would be helpful to explain to them the spiritual journey of Adventism.

Many Hindus are willing to talk about spiritual subjects such as who God is, how one becomes holy, how to overcome bad habits, and what it takes to become a good person. The Hindu view of God is different from the Adventist one, and Hindus are usually surprised to learn that the Bible teaches that God is love, He is powerful, and He cares about the affairs of humanity. Taking time to share your experience of God's love for you is a good place to start when sharing your faith with a Hindu. Hindus are intrigued by the spiritual lifestyle of Adventists, especially the Adventist teachings and practices on forgiveness and living a life of peace, contentment, and happiness in God. The truth is that both Adventists and Hindus strongly desire to have a spiritual walk with God and regard devotion as being integral to their faith.

Salvation

The goal of a Hindu is to achieve moksha or salvation. The basic qualifications for moksha, either in this life or in another reincarnation, is the individual's responsibility. In Adventism, salvation culminates in living together with a personal God,

while in Hinduism, moksha or salvation is when one ceases to exist by becoming one with Eternal Reality. Hindus believe this will happen by following Hinduism's prescribed rituals and teachings. However, Hindus generally struggle with the assurance of moksha.

In comparison, the Bible teaches that Christians may have the assurance of salvation by accepting it as a free gift given by God. The difference between the two systems is that in Hinduism moksha is earned by human effort, while in Christianity, salvation cannot be earned through works. One's actions then demonstrate acceptance of the gift of salvation through submission to God.

When you engage with Hindus, it is helpful to share that Christians have the assurance of salvation and will receive salvation and eternal life. However, you should avoid comparing and contrasting processes of salvation because Hindus have many different processes and methods of obtaining moksha. It is better to state that God longs to reunite with us.

Devotional Life

Both Christianity and Hinduism advocate total devotion to God. The differences between the two religions can be described as the purpose of devotion, the channel to becoming a devotee, the benefits of devotion, and lastly, the believed outcomes of devotion. For example, in Hinduism, devotees are expected to participate in daily spiritual exercises to gain moksha or salvation. The Bhagavad Gita, the Hindu scriptures, states that even the most evil person can be saved by calling on the name of god and acknowledging his or her mistakes (Sarma 2003, 44). Thus, Christianity and Hinduism differ regarding the criteria for salvation. In Christianity, salvation is a free gift, and humans are given the power to choose God. On the other hand, in Hinduism, the emphasis is placed on one's ability to meet basic religious

could be created in many ways, such as through a center of influence in the community; a prayer ministry that focuses on healing—preferably in the homes of Hindus or at the church, as the Holy Spirit leads; or a friendship ministry through invitations to one’s house or invitations to special functions. Whatever the method, the goal is to connect with Hindus in ways that lead them to know Jesus.

Witnessing opportunities

This question is already answered in the Bible. Jesus Christ gave His life for all humanity, including Hindus. Therefore, it is imperative that everyone experience His love. However, the responsibility to witness is not one that makes Adventists better than Hindus. The main principle to remember when sharing your faith with Hindus is that God is and has been at work in the lives of Hindus long before any Adventists came into contact with them. The commonalities noted above indicate that Hindus hold many beliefs that are similar to the teachings of the Bible. Hindus believe in the existence of evil and of evil spirits. What they need is guidance in their spiritual journey with God, an approach that requires humility, patience, and love for your Hindu friends.

Hindus are not familiar with the Christian worldview. For example, they most likely do not know the story of Moses or Adam or understand Christian terms such as sanctification or justification. Therefore, it is best to avoid the proof-text approach when having Bible studies with Hindus. Instead, tell them a story and explain the meaning and teachings of that story. Hindus are familiar with this format of learning. The life of Christ and end-time events are usually appealing to Hindus. The stories of Ruth and the book of John are also good examples of where to start when having a Bible study with Hindus. However, keep in mind that Hindus are confused about the

life, and interference by evil spirits. Hindus have many ways of deciphering dreams, depending on the various Hindu traditions. However, all Hindus seek out religious leaders for guidance regarding their dreams, and they generally pray that god will give them dreams.

Appeal

I am so glad that Jesus loves the 1.2 billion Hindus in the world. God is calling our young people to share His love with the Hindus people. The mandate given to the Adventist Church is to share the “good news” to all the world including the Hindus. Ellen White in her writings has challenged us to cross cultural barriers, and language to reach those who are hungry for “truth”. We can begin by prayer. We invite you to sign up on the Global Mission Center for South Asian Religions website (gmcsar.org) to get a copy of the annual prayer guide. Next, building trust through friendship. Showing sympathy, Helping them with their needs are good next steps. Through the social and spiritual connection, the door can be open to Adventist young people to share their faith with the 1.2 Billion Hindus in the world.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father,
We thank You for the rich culture and traditions of our Hindu brothers and sisters, and for the opportunity to share Your love with them. Guide us to approach them with humility, respect, and genuine compassion. May our words and actions reflect Your grace, and may Your Holy Spirit prepare their hearts to receive the hope we have in Jesus Christ. Help us to build bridges of understanding and trust, so that Your love may reach every corner of the world.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Discussion Questions:

1. How can we share our faith with Hindus in a way that reflects gentleness and respect, as taught in 1 Peter 3:15?

2. How can building trust and relationships with Hindus create opportunities for sharing the gospel?

3. What common values between Adventism and Hinduism can help us share the hope of salvation with Hindus?

came to get me: my older brother (who I looked up to in almost everything...without discrediting my two other older brothers), who looked at me in disbelief. My father, with the same reaction as my brother. And my mother, with an indecipherable expression. I won't lie, I closed my eyes, expecting the biggest slap of my life; I tensed my body and held my breath, ready to take the hit."

His story makes me reflect on a few things. What is our perception of God? What image of God do secular people in the city have? Is the church still today that agent of God that makes His love felt in society? Are we embracing those who need restoration? Do only those who share your faith have the right to God's embrace?

Join me on a journey through the Bible, where we will discover the purpose of the church for the city.

1. What is the nature and purpose of the temple in the Bible?

A. Exodus 25:8, "*And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.*": The sanctuary was a replica of the model shown to Moses. It served pedagogically so that God's followers could understand the plan designed to end suffering and injustice and create a world where humans could live in a state of lasting happiness. However, the most important purpose given by God was that HE WANTED TO DWELL WITH HIS. God wanted to move in with His people. Isn't that amazing? Basically, God was moving into the neighborhood. The Shekinah (God's presence) dwelt in the Tabernacle.

B. Matthew 1:23, "*Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,*" which is translated, "God with us.": One of the most used texts during the Christmas season. But pay closer attention to the name's literal meaning: "God with us". The birth of Jesus, the arrival of

the WORD, God made man, receives a title that aligns with the purpose of the Old Testament: God wants to be with us (John 1:14).

C. John 2:19-2, “*Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ Then the Jews said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?” But He was speaking of the temple of His body.*”: You have probably heard this verse many times. Think for a few moments about the line we’re following. What was the temple in the Old Testament? What was the temple when Jesus lived among us? Is any building that can contain God’s presence better than Jesus of Nazareth? (Colossians 2:9)

D. 1 Corinthians 3:16, “*Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*” and 1 Corinthians 6:19, “*Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?*” : Paul speaks after Jesus’ ascension. This leaves us a bit confused. Where is the temple, where does God’s presence dwell? It no longer made sense to return to the Old Testament system. Jesus could no longer be the temple since He is now in heaven. Yes, dear friend, today, the temple is you. With your flaws and virtues, weaknesses and strengths, God wants to live in your heart, and for that reason, our whole life must be worthy of that.

Some lessons to take away:

- God always takes the initiative.
- God always draws near to humanity: the Tabernacle, Jesus among us, and now our bodies. There is no place closer where God can come to be by your side. That is why Paul reminds us in Acts 17:27 that He is not far from us.
- “Temples” cannot contain God (Acts 17:24). Stones

- The church is about disciples, not programs.
- The church is not an abstract entity; it is a living body, a community of people.

Before starting any venture, the first question we must ask is, “Why should the church exist?”

Take the Bible and let us begin another journey to find the purpose of God’s people: - The importance of being created in His image:

A. Exodus 7:1: What was the role Moses played before Pharaoh? And Aaron? Biblically, we have an example of God’s people as the image for those who do not know Him.

B. 2 Corinthians 3:2-3: We are God’s letters of introduction to society. We are the Bible that secular people will read. Our actions will be the pages they see before they begin to discover Jesus. This aligns with what we discussed yesterday: that they see Jesus in me.

C. 1 Peter 2:9: You are very familiar with this text and its implications. All of us, regardless of our condition, are priests.

D. Exodus 19:6: Maybe you weren’t as familiar with this text. Analyze both and notice what they have in common. We are comparing the Old Testament with the New Testament. And yet, God does not change.

****For reflection:****

1. In both the Old and New Testament, God’s people are a “nation” of priests. In our time, the High Priest is Jesus, to whom everything is pointed. - The priest is the mediator between God and humanity. - His role is not to represent humanity but rather divinity.

2. The people are a reflection of God. We are an example of what it means to be a human restored to God’s image.

3. We are a united and living body (1 Corinthians 12). Let’s return to the quote: “The church is God’s appointed means for

the salvation of men. It was organized to serve, and its mission is to proclaim the Gospel to the world.” (AA 9)

4. So the church is:

a. a means of salvation, as it leads people to Jesus.

b. a purpose of service

c. on a mission to proclaim the Good News. Jesus offers you more than you can imagine! What is God’s church, then? I leave that answer to you in prayer, that God may enlighten you. The Gospel must be relevant to every generation because the Good News is eternal.

d. a group of people who bring the transformative presence of God wherever they go.

Remember the story of my mother? As she was approaching I was expecting the worst. However, what I felt was an embrace. The embrace of that 4-foot-11 woman who saw me born and who could have easily knocked me down. A strong and long embrace, accompanied by tears and suffering. But above all, with an infinite dose of love. Dear friend, I can tell you I felt my mother’s hug. But in my state, far from this God who loves me so much, I felt it was God’s embrace. In that hug, I also felt God telling me: everything would be fine. You are forgiven.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for Your love and the reminder that You desire to dwell with us. Help us to be living temples of Your Spirit, reflecting Your grace and extending Your love to those around us.

May we serve, love, and share Your Good News, bringing Your presence wherever we go. Thank You for forgiving us and calling us to be part of Your mission.

In Jesus’ name, we pray.

Amen.

Some cite the claim “*His blood is on us and on our children!*” (Matthew 27:25) to biblically justify hatred against Jews, asserting that God rejected the Jewish people and subjected them to divine wrath. However, did God truly react this way?

The apostle Paul addresses this in his letter to the Romans, affirming:

“*I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew...*” (Romans 11:1-2).

“*Concerning the gospel they [the Jews] are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.*” (Romans 11:28-29)

As Seventh-day Adventists and believers in the Bible, we recognize that all humanity is guilty of Jesus’ death, for He died on the cross for the sins of all, including ours. He bore our guilt so we—that is, you, me, and everyone else—may be forgiven (Isaiah 53).

Ellen G. White, in her book *The Acts of the Apostles* (Chapter 35: “Salvation to the Jews”), had this to say:

“Even though Israel rejected His Son, God did not reject them. Listen to Paul as he continues the argument: ‘I say then, Hath God cast away His people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew...’ (AA, p. 375)

“Notwithstanding the awful doom pronounced upon the Jews as a nation at the time of their rejection of Jesus of Nazareth, there have lived from age to age many noble, God-fearing

Jewish men and women who have suffered in silence. God has comforted their hearts in affliction and has beheld with pity their terrible situation. He has heard the agonizing prayers of those who have sought Him with all the heart for a right understanding of His word..." (AA, p. 379)

Looking towards the future, she declares:

"In the closing proclamation of the gospel, when special work is to be done for classes of people hitherto neglected, God expects His messengers to take particular interest in the Jewish people whom they find in all parts of the earth. As the Old Testament Scriptures are blended with the New in an explanation of Jehovah's eternal purpose, this will be to many of the Jews as the dawn of a new creation, the resurrection of the soul..." (AA, p. 381)

"When this gospel shall be presented in its fullness to the Jews, many will accept Christ as the Messiah. Among Christian ministers there are only a few who feel called upon to labor for the Jewish people; but to those who have been often passed by, as well as to all others, the message of mercy and hope in Christ is to come." (AA, 380).

To fulfill God's expectations for His Church toward the Jewish people today, start by befriending them with a loving and sincere attitude, so they may see in you the true love of God and of Jesus for every human being.

Identify yourself as a Seventh-day Adventist, not merely as a Christian. Many Jewish people have a limited understanding of Christianity and even less familiarity with Seventh-day Adventists. When they hear that you are a Christian, they might assume you are Catholic, Protestant, or Orthodox, without a clear grasp of what being a Seventh-day Adventist entails. This common misconception can open the way to conversations on the beliefs and practices we share with Judaism, such as observing the Sabbath, adhering to a biblical diet, and valuing the teach-

Let us look at Genesis 25:13: *And these were the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations: The firstborn of Ishmael, Nebajoth; then Kedar...*

Nebaioth and Kedar are the grandsons of Abraham through Ishmael. These are the descendants of Hagar. When was the last time you heard a sermon about Hagar in your Church?

Are you surprised at what is going on here? Isaac was Abraham's son of promise. But these are Abraham's descendants through Hagar and Keturah.

Here is another question? Was Hagar a wife of Abraham?

"And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife" Gen. 16:3 clearly states that Hagar was given to Abraham not as a "wife" in a full legal sense but as a concubine to bear a son, an action that showed Sara's lack of faith in God's promise.

God had promised a special blessing to Abraham found in Gen. 12:3: *"I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

Though Isaac was the promised son of Abraham who was to fulfil God's universal plan and everlasting covenant, yet the other sons of Abraham were also going to receive blessings of God. God was planning to bless all the families of the earth and surely, he would bless Abraham's own descendants too.

Abraham had sent the children of Hagar and Keturah into the East. We see this in Genesis 25:6 (Read). This is why, in the Bible, they are called the People of the East. We also know the story of how Sarah and Abraham expelled Hagar and her son Ishmael, but 1,300 years later, Isaiah 60 verse 6 tells us that Keturah's children (Midian, Ephah, Sheba) are coming. And Isaiah 60:7 is telling us that Hagar's descendants (Kedar and Nebaioth) are also coming. So, though they were sent out from Abraham's home and presence, they were never sent out of the

presence of God. God is prophesying that one day, the children of Keturah and Hagar will be coming back to the land of Israel and the House of God.

Jesus also shared God's plan in Matthew:

24:14 " *And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.*"

God's greatest desire is that the message, as it says in Revelation 14:6, should reach every kindred, tongue, and people. That plan also includes the descendants of Abraham, especially those who are not the descendants of Isaac.

In the Old Testament, after Abraham's death, we notice that Sarah's descendants were called Children of Israel, and Hagar and Keturah's children, since they were sent to the East, were called "People of the East" or "Children of the East". Though God had a cosmic, universal plan of salvation to be fulfilled (and realized) through Isaac and his descendants, God had a plan for the "People of the East" as well.

We know that Isaac's descendants were known for their twelve tribes. How many tribes were there for Ishmael? This is what we read in Genesis 25:13-16: *And these were the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations: The firstborn of Ishmael, Nebajoth; then Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadar, Tema, Jetur, Naphtish, and Kedemah. These were the sons of Ishmael and these were their names...*

So you must be saying that this is good, but how come the children of Ishmael (or better known as the children of the East) were to co-operate with the children of Isaac in God's great plan?

In the line of Isaac, Jacob had a son called Joseph, whom his brothers did not like and planned to kill. We read in Genesis 37:24-28 the following: *Then they took him and cast him into*

a pit. And the pit was empty; there was no water in it. And they sat down to eat a meal. Then they lifted their eyes and looked, and there was a company of Ishmaelites, coming from Gilead with their camels, bearing spices, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry them down to Egypt. 26 So Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? 27 Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh." And his brothers listened. 28 Then Midianite traders passed by; so the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.

Ishmaelites and Midianites saved the life of Joseph by cooperating in the plan of God to preserve the life of Israelites for the future.

Later another descendant of Isaac by the name of Moses, had to run away from the Pharaoh in Egypt. Moses had killed an Egyptian, about which Pharaoh heard, and he wanted to kill Moses. We read in Exodus 2:15: *When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian; and he sat down by a well.*

Moses fled to Midian. Midian was a son of Abraham, whose descendants now saved the life of Moses. They cooperated in the great plan of God to preserve the life of a future greatest leader of the children of Israel and to make possible the greatest and most dramatic exodus that has ever taken place on the face of this earth.

Moses stayed in the house of the priest of Midian, who also happened to be his father-in-law, Jethro. Moses also learnt about a story of God's friendship with Job. It says in Job 1: 1 and 3

1:1 There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil.

So, where would you find a Sabbath celebrating, community where young and old can be together?

What if there were a group of people that had the ingredients to form a countercultural community, one that helps individuals grow beyond consumerism?

Daniel in Babylon

The biblical story of Daniel highlights how we can live, and even thrive, in Babylon – an empire that symbolizes false worship. Daniel purposed in his heart that he belonged to a more significant empire. He prayed with and sought support from friends with similar values. He re-calibrated around God’s purpose for him often (at least formally three times a day). He remembered that everything, including his intellect and ability to interpret dreams, was from God and only God was worthy of ultimate glory.

When we start with knowing we exist for God’s glory we see life and the world differently.

Transformed Community is the Answer

A spiritual community is the opposite of consumerism because consumerism is individualized. Even though brands try to create community, real loving relationships are not easily turned into products.

A genuine relational community is the opposite of Consumerism.

In Romans 12, Paul describes life as being about:

Worshipping [verses 1-3],

Serving [verses 3-8],

Connecting [verses 9-10],

Growing [verses 11-12], and

Sharing [verses 14-21].

Worshipping, serving, connecting, growing, and sharing is the reasons the church is on the planet. These factors all help

shape a community that is counter-cultural while challenging the consumer constructs in culture.

This vision can become a reality within a church community, which is the opposite of consumerism. “Relational community is the answer.”

Tips for Living Beyond Consumer Culture:

- Think about what advertising tells you and why you might choose a particular product.
- Lift your focus on people. Intentionally slow down to spend time with family, church community, and neighbors.
- Lift your capacity to serve in your home, church, and world.
- Be generous with your time, talents, and treasure. Generosity breaks the hold of consumerism. Tithing 10% of your income is a great way to guard against the greed of consumerism and be reminded that your bank account is for God’s glory.
- Celebrate Sabbath. The Sabbath stands as a mark against consumerism. Sabbath reminds me time doesn’t equal money. Sabbath reminds me I exist for a bigger purpose of growing, serving, connecting, sharing and worshipping. On Sabbath I take a break from the consumeristic messages of advertising and shopping and, instead, celebrate life at its best.
- Spend time with older people who know the stories but are often overlooked.
- Spend time in nature. People who spend time in nature are often less consumer-driven and more likely to value creation.
- Take some time to recalibrate around what really matters. Make a plan to be transformed by the renewing of your mind rather than being conformed (Romans 12:6). Put in place some heart-building habits that connect you with God.



Discussion Questions:

1. What practical steps can you take to resist consumerism and focus on eternal values?

2. How can observing the Sabbath help you disconnect from consumer culture and reconnect with God and others?

3. How can being a “living sacrifice” shape your role in building a counter-cultural, Christ-centered community?

ence of the Jewish priesthood acted in concert to kill the Son of God.

- Most of Paul’s letters were written to city churches as primers on how the church can effectively carry on ministry in a city.

If the Bible is such an urban book, why do we not see it that way? It is simply because we approach the Bible from an essentially rural theological perspective. When we read the Bible, we think of “country/ village” instead of “city.” We see what we read through “rural glasses.”

It was not until the twelfth century that European cities began to grow significantly. Even then, they were small in comparison to biblical cities—Paris, France, at 100,000; Florence, Italy, at 45,000; Venice, Italy, at 90,000.²⁰ After Rome’s decline, it would take Europe nearly thirteen hundred years to produce its next city of a million people. That would be London in 1820.

The Bible was written in an urban Middle East, but the main theological formulations of the faith of the church developed in rural Europe. Consider the formative theologians of the early, medieval, and Reformation churches: St. Paul, John of Damascus, Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin.

HOW DOES SCRIPTURE VIEW MY CITY?

The city is the locus of a great and continuing battle between the God of Israel and the church and the god of the world.

Babylon Versus Jerusalem

Babylon is used throughout Scripture as a symbol of a city entirely given over to Satan.

The city is first introduced in Genesis 11 when humanity decides to build a Tower of Babel (the Plain of Shinar, mentioned in the text as the city of the ziggurat, was later the location of Babylon). God confused their languages because the people declared, “*Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower*

whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves..." (Genesis 11:4).

Babylon is painted in Scripture as a bureaucratic, self-serving, and dehumanizing social system with economics geared to benefit its privileged and exploit its poor, with politics of oppression, and with a religion that ignores covenant with God and deifies power and wealth (Isa. 14:5-21; Jer. 50:2-17; 51:6-10; Dan. 3:1-7; Rev. 17:1-6; 18:2-19, 24). Much of what is dark and evil in Babylon is replicated in cities (even Jerusalem) throughout the biblical story.

Jerusalem, by contrast, is seen in its idealized form as the city of God. It, too, is introduced in Genesis 14:17-24 in the figure of Melchizedek, king of Salem (Salem is a former name of Jerusalem).

Jerusalem is celebrated as city as it was meant to be—a city belonging to God. As a social system, it is called to witness to God's shalom, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem..." Psalm 122:6-9, "The Lord builds up Jerusalem; He gathers together the outcasts of Israel." Psalm 147:2. As an economic entity, it is meant to practice equitable stewardship and a communal and just existence in its politics.

Finally, Jerusalem is portrayed as the spiritual center of the world, a model city living in trust and faith under the lordship of God (Isa. 8:18; Mic. 4:1; Deut. 17:14-20).

Every city has both Babylon and Jerusalem in it, for every city is the battleground between the god of Babylon (Baal, Satan) and the God of Jerusalem (Yahweh, the Lord) for domination and control.

Babylon in Jerusalem

Etymology of the word Jerusalem. Biblical scholars such as Millar Burrows have pointed out that the name actually means

“foundation of Shalem.”

In the very name Jerusalem is expressed the tension of every city. It is Je-rusalem—the city of Yahweh, of God. It is Jeru-salem—the city of Baal (or Satan). Jerusalem is the city of Yahweh. Jerusalem is the city of Baal. It is a city that contains the power and influence of both forces within its walls. The very name of Israel’s primary (and idealized) city expresses the foundational urban message of the Bible. Jerusalem—and every city—is the battleground between God and Satan for domination of its people and their structures.

Jerusalem the Bride

Ezekiel 16:1-14

The most moving glimpse into God’s deep love for the city. God, Ezekiel is telling us, fell in love with Jerusalem!

Isaiah 60:1-2, 14-21,

“Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. 2 For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, And deep darkness the people; But the Lord will arise over you, And His glory will be seen upon you.” (Isaiah 60:1-2).

“ Also the sons of those who afflicted you. Shall come bowing to you, And all those who despised you shall fall prostrate at the soles of your feet; And they shall call you The City of the Lord, Zion of the Holy One of Israel. “Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, So that no one went through you, I will make you an eternal excellence, A joy of many generations.” (Isaiah 60 14-15).

God created, loved, preserved, and redeemed the city so that it could be transformed into the city God intends it to be. As that transformed community, the city becomes a lighthouse to the world, the manifestation of God’s handiwork to the nation and the world.

Jonah 3:2 *“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach*

to it the message that I tell you.”

“ But the Lord said, “You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which [a]came up in a night and perished in a night. And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left—and much livestock?” Jonah 4:10-11

Here is God as concerned for a wicked, pagan city as he is for His city, Jerusalem?

Cities mattered to God....but do they matter to you?

Evil: Individual or Corporate?

Evangelical Protestantism tends to center its theology on God’s work of salvation. Particularly in its more popular, non-reflective forms, the evangel has historically been proclaimed in terms of individual salvation—the calling of the sinner to Christ.

The danger with such an approach is that those who stress exclusively the individual dimensions of salvation can neither understand the full extent of evil nor appreciate Christ’s full salvific work.

When we look we see that Scripture presents salvation as both individual and corporate. The biblical writers understood evil this way. Note the broad use of corporate images to describe the saved condition—covenant people, the nation Israel, the people of God, the remnant, the Kingdom of God, the church, the New Jerusalem.

The Systems of a City

It is widely suggested that the systems that order the life of a city are economic, political, and religious.

In his final speech, Moses reminded Israel that he had dreamed a great dream about a new nation, a kingdom living

Discussion Questions:

1. How do you see elements of both Babylon and Jerusalem in the city you live in today?

2. In what ways can Christians engage with cities to reflect God's shalom and justice?

3. How does the concept of salvation as both individual and corporate challenge your understanding of faith and community?

4. What practical steps can you take to contribute to a politics of justice or an economics of stewardship in your local context?

A COMMUNITY TRANSFORMED

GLOBAL YOUTH DAY

MARCH 15TH, 2025



GENERAL
CONFERENCE
YOUTH
MINISTRY
TEAM

