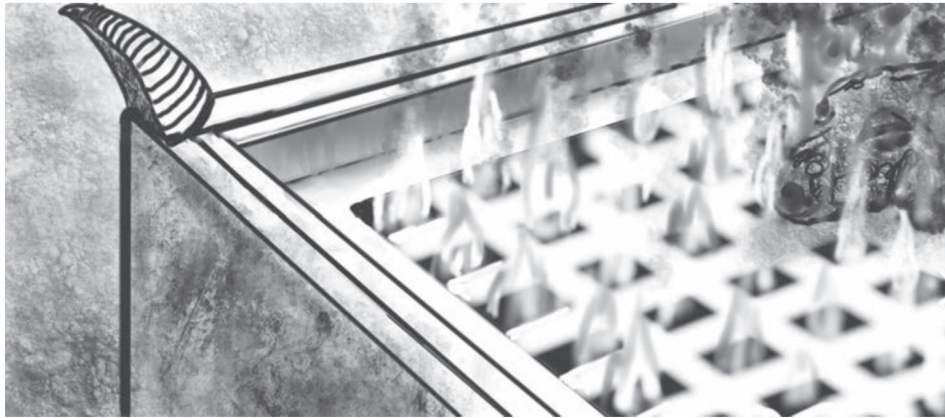


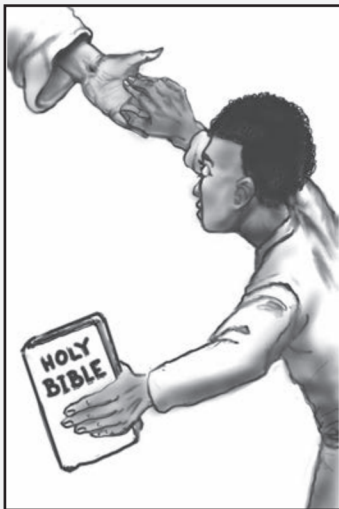
The Promise and the Building Plan



SABBATH—AUGUST 30

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Exodus 24:1–8; Exodus 24:9–18; Ezekiel 36:26–28; Exodus 25:1–9; Exodus 31:1–18.

MEMORY VERSE: “Moses told the people all the rules and commands from the Lord. Then all the people said, ‘We will obey all the commands that the Lord has spoken’ ” (Exodus 24:3, ERV).



We must keep looking to Jesus, not ourselves (Hebrews 12:1, 2). When we connect with Him, God can give us the strength to follow His teachings and obey Bible truth.

THE LORD was Israel's God and Savior. The Lord made them and gave them life. As their God, the Lord wanted to be with His people and to live among them. The Lord made us for close fellowship with Him. We know that strong relationships with other people take time and effort. The same is true with our relationship with God. Our relationship with God can be a growth-filled experience that makes us a better person. But we must spend time with Him. So how do we do that? We must study the Bible to learn what God wants to say to us. We must pray. When we pray, we open our hearts to God. We must share with other people the Good News that Jesus saves us from our sins. As God blesses us, we will bring blessings into the lives of other people.

We must keep looking to Jesus, not ourselves (Hebrews 12:1, 2). When we connect with Him, God can give us the strength to follow His teachings and obey Bible truth. End-time Christians will keep the commandments of God and have “the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12, NKJV).

So, what we must do is simple, really: we love God. Because we love Him, we obey Him.

THE BOOK AND THE BLOOD (Exodus 24:1–8)

God made a Promise with His people. To show the people that God accepted the Promise, Moses did two things: (1) he read from the book of God's Promise, and (2) he splashed some of the blood on the people. Why are these two things so important? How do they help show the special relationship that God wants with His people? Read Exodus 24:1–8 for the answers.

The living God of the Bible is the God of relationships. God cares more about people than anything else. So, God pays close attention to people. The reason for the things that God does is so that He can build a personal relationship with us. God is love. So, He must care about relationships, right? How can there be love without relationships?

Jesus said, “ ‘I will be lifted up [nailed to a cross and lifted up to die] from the earth. When that happens, I will draw [lead] all people to myself’ ” (John 12:32, ERV). God wants us to have good behavior, the correct teachings, and right actions. Above all these things, God wants us to have a personal and close relationship with Him. We can see this important Bible truth in the two things God gave us when He made the earth and skies in a week: God gave us the Sabbath and marriage (Genesis 1–2). The Sabbath is about our spiritual relationship with God. Marriage is about our relationship with our husband or wife. So, both the Sabbath and marriage are really about relationships.

God agreed to the Promise and accepted it at Sinai to show His people the special relationship that He wanted with them. The people shouted two times that they would obey God: “ ‘We will do everything that the Lord has said. We will obey’ ” (Exodus 24:7, ICB). The people meant what they said. But they didn't know that they were weak and broken. So, they had no strength to obey. But Moses did something to give them hope. Moses splashed some of the blood on the people. The blood showed that Israel could obey God, but only with Jesus' help.

We don't want to accept that we are weak and broken sinners. We want to do evil. To do good, we must have help from outside ourselves. This help comes only from God, His mercy, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit. Even with all this help, we want to do evil so easily, right?

That's why a close personal relationship with God was as important to the people at Sinai as it is to us today.



Moses splashed some of the blood on the people. The blood showed that Israel could obey God, but only with Jesus' help.

SEEING GOD (Exodus 24:9–18)

Read Exodus 24:9–18. What amazing experience did God give the Israelites here?



When Christians celebrate the Lord's Supper, they also make a close connection with other Christians, who are sinners the same as they are.

After God accepted the Promise with His people, Moses again climbed Sinai. At the start of this climb, Moses wasn't alone. He had the company of 73 Israelite leaders. The leaders had an amazing experience: they saw God. The leaders ate together. The meal showed that they accepted God's Promise. The meal was a special feast or banquet. The God of Israel was their Host. God deeply honored these leaders when He invited them to the banquet.

In the Middle East during Bible times, eating together was an important experience and a big honor. People who ate together offered each other the gifts of forgiveness and friendship. People who ate together were there for each other and stayed together in hard times. When people ate together, they made a promise without words. They promised that if something should happen later to any one of them, they would come and help. So, to be invited to a meal was a special honor that wasn't given to everyone.

What if a guest said no to a dinner invitation? Then he insulted the host of the dinner. To reject an invitation was one of the worst insults in Bible times. This information helps us understand the New Testament stories about Jesus who ate with sinners. The Jewish leaders scolded Jesus for eating with them (Luke 5:30). When Christians celebrate the Lord's Supper, they also make a close connection with other Christians, who are sinners the same as they are. During the Lord's Supper, we celebrate the forgiveness Jesus gives us. We celebrate His saving mercy (read Matthew 26:26–30; Mark 14:22–25; 1 Corinthians 11:23–29).

Some of the men who went up the mountain with Moses later fell into sin and lost their lives (read Leviticus 10:1, 2, 9). Yes, these men had a deep experience with God on the mountain and at the feast. But their lives weren't changed for the better because of that experience. This story teaches us a powerful lesson. Just because we have Bible truth doesn't mean we are saved.

Think more about what happened to these men. Now think about how God has honored our church with so much Bible truth. What warning should this sad story give to us as Adventists?

POWER TO OBEY (Ezekiel 36:26–28)

How do we become obedient? Read Ezekiel 36:26–28 for the answer.

Three times, the Israelites announce that they will obey God (Exodus 19:8; Exodus 24:3, 7). Obedience is important, even if we are weak, broken sinners, as the Bible teaches.

So how, then, can we obey God?

The good news is that when God commands us to do something, He gives us the power to do it. The help that is not inside of us comes from outside us and gives us strength to do everything God asks. God does the work in us. The prophet Ezekiel, God's special messenger, says that only God can change our hearts (Ezekiel 36:26, 27). As Joshua told God's people: " 'You will not be able to serve the Lord well enough' " (Joshua 24:19, ICB). So, we must allow God to remove our stubborn heart of stone and replace it with a tender heart of flesh. This new heart is loving and gentle and can obey Him.

But first, we must decide to follow God. We must choose with our free will to give ourselves to God every moment of our lives. We don't have the power to serve Him without His help. But when we give our weakness to God, He will make us strong. As Paul says, "When I am weak, then I am truly [really] strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10, ICB).

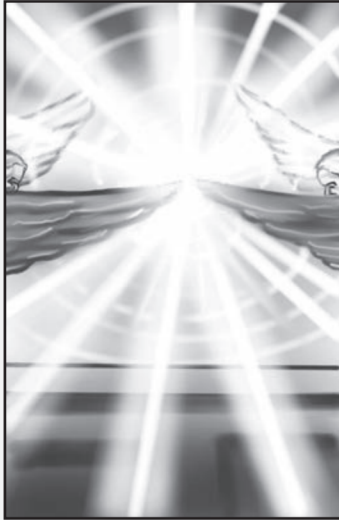
Now let's look at Ezekiel 36 again, this time at verses 24–30. Do you see all the work that God does? God gathers, cleans, removes, gives, puts, and moves you to carefully keep His law. What God is doing, you will do. God understands you. If you stay close to Him in your heart, His actions will become yours. Then you and God will become so alike that all your thoughts, feelings, behavior, and actions will come from Him. The agreement between God and you will be powerful and full of life and energy.

In Ezekiel 36:27, the Lord says, " 'I will put my Spirit inside you and change you so that you will obey my laws. You will carefully obey my commands' " (ERV). Again, do you see how God does the work? God commands people to obey Him and then gives them the power to obey. God always helps His people to do what He asks. Obedience is God's gift to us, the same as His forgiveness and saving mercy are (Philippians 2:13).



We must allow God to remove our stubborn heart of stone and replace it with a tender heart of flesh. This new heart is loving and gentle and can obey Him.

AMONG HIS PEOPLE (Exodus 25:1–9)



The Holy Tent was the place where God planned to make Himself known to His people.

God used many different things to teach His people Bible truth. One of the things God used was the Holy Tent. The work done in the Holy Tent taught the Israelites about Jesus and His plan to save them. Jesus would come hundreds of years later and do everything the Holy Tent showed He would do.

Read Exodus 25:1–9. What important Bible truths do you see in these verses?

God led His people out of Egypt and was already close to them in His heart. But He wanted Moses to build Him a Holy Tent for a special reason: “ ‘The people must build a holy place for me. Then I can live among them’ ” (Exodus 25:8, ICB). God wanted to show His people that He was really among them. Yes, the people sinned many times. But God never gave up on His people. “After the people confessed their sins, God forgave them and accepted them again.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 343. Then God gave the people the command to build Him a special place to live among them.

The Bible tells us that God made the skies and the earth and doesn't live in man-made temples and buildings: “ ‘But the Most High God does not live in houses built by [with] human hands. This is what the prophet [special messenger] writes: ‘The Lord says, Heaven is my throne, and the earth is where I rest my feet. So do you think you can build a house for me?’ ” (Acts 7:47–50, ERV; also read Acts 17:24). Also, King Solomon says: “ ‘But, God, can you really live here on the earth? Even the sky and the highest place in heaven cannot contain you. Certainly this house which I have built cannot contain you either [also]’ ” (1 Kings 8:27, ICB). The Holy Tent was the place where God planned to make Himself known to His people.

The Israelites brought free-will offerings to Moses to build the Holy Tent. The people brought precious and expensive gifts, including gold, silver, brass, wood, fine cloth, olive oil, and spices. In Exodus 25:10–27:21, Moses gives us much information about the Holy Tent. God gave Moses a building plan with important information about how to build and furnish the Holy Tent. Moses had to follow God's plan exactly (Exodus 25:9, 40; Exodus 26:30). The Holy Tent on earth was an exact copy of the temple in heaven (Hebrews 8:1, 2; Hebrews 9:11).

FILLED WITH GOD'S SPIRIT (Exodus 31:1–18)

God told Moses what His people needed to do to get ready to worship Him. Priests or spiritual leaders must wear special clothes. The high priest or top spiritual leader wore a special piece of clothing named an ephod. The ephod contained the names of the sons of Israel. The high priest also wore a special chest covering over his heart (Exodus 28). All the priests must be given to God to serve Him in His holy work. God also told Moses how to carefully get other things ready that would be used in worshiping Him: the altar for burning sweet-smelling perfume, the bowl for washing, and the holy oil (Exodus 30).

Read Exodus 31:1–18. What special help did God give Moses so that all the Holy Tent's furniture and objects would be made and built in a beautiful and correct way?

For the first time in the Bible, we read that God will fill a person with His Spirit. What does that mean? God gave Bezalel power to work on the Holy Tent. God filled Bezalel with knowledge. God gave Bezalel the skills and the know-how needed to do the work. Also, God gave Aholiab and many other skilled workers the same Spirit to help in this work.

During this time, God also announces that His Sabbath is an agreement between Him and His people. The Sabbath shows that He makes them holy. Later, the Lord shares this same idea with Ezekiel: “I also gave them my Sabbaths. They were to be a sign between us. Then they would know that I am the Lord. I make them holy” (Ezekiel 20:12, ICB).

The Sabbath helps us remember that the Lord made us (Genesis 2:2, 3) and saves us. He is our God (Deuteronomy 5:15; Mark 2:27, 28). Our God is holy. He changes people for the better. His Holy Spirit and Bible truth cause people to become loving, kind, unselfish, and forgiving.

The most precious gift God gave to Moses was the Ten Commandments (Exodus 31:18). God wrote the law on two pieces of stone and gave them to Moses (Exodus 31:18; Deuteronomy 9:9–11). These two pieces of stone were put inside the holy box in the Most Holy Room of the Holy Tent. Another name for the holy box was the ark of the Promise. A lid sat on top of the holy box (Exodus 25:21). Another name for this lid was the mercy cover or mercy seat.



The two pieces of stone were put inside the holy box in the Most Holy Room of the Holy Tent.



Every animal offering showed the death of Jesus, the forgiveness of sins, and God's final work to remove all sin from heaven and earth.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, "The Tabernacle and Its Services," pages 343–353, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

The Holy Tent was a special place where God forgave His people and made them clean from all their sins. The Holy Tent showed God's whole plan to save people. God showed this plan to His people in the desert. The Holy Tent taught the Israelites about forgiveness, being made holy, and God's work as Judge. Every animal offering showed the death of Jesus, the forgiveness of sins, and God's final work to remove all sin from heaven and earth. The Holy Tent also contained God's law. His law shows us how to be holy.

"The law of God was put inside the holy box or ark of the Promise. God's law was both holy and fair. His law said that the sinner must die. But above the law was the cover or mercy seat. God appeared above the mercy seat. He gave pardon to the sinner who confessed his sins. The Holy Tent and all its offerings showed the work that Jesus did to save us. In Jesus' work, 'God's truth and faithful love join together. His peace and holiness [being holy] kiss each other.' Psalm 85:10 [NIRV]."—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 349, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① How many times did you say, "I will do everything the Lord tells me to do"? How much success did you have?
- ② The Sabbath was a sign between God and His people that the Lord would make them holy. How are being holy and obedient connected with Sabbath keeping?
- ③ The Holy Tent showed God's saving plan in symbols. What do these symbols tell us about why we must depend completely on God to save us?
- ④ The top religious leader or high priest brought the blood of an animal offering into the Most Holy Room of the Holy Tent on one day each year. This blood was a word picture for the people's sins. How does this amazing Bible truth show us what Jesus did on the cross for us? How does the blood show what He does for us now in heaven?

KNOWING AN ALL-GOD

Iqbal didn't know anything about Jesus when he traveled more 600 miles to go to a Seventh-day Adventist school in southern Asia.

Iqbal grew up in a non-Christian family. His parents sent him at the age of 20 to join his sister at the school. Iqbal was studying there and doing well in his English classes.

Iqbal went to every morning and evening worship program at the school. Iqbal wanted to know Jesus with all his heart. He read the Bible to learn more about Him. Soon he read Jeremiah 1:5: " 'Before I made you in your mother's womb [body], I knew you. Before you were born, I chose you for a special work. I chose you to be a prophet [special messenger] to the nations [people from different countries]' " (ERV).

Iqbal thought, "I want to know Jesus because He knew me before He made me in my mother's body."

Weeks passed, then months. Iqbal continued to learn more about Jesus. Iqbal thought, "Could it be that Jesus brought me more than 600 miles from my home to learn English and about Jesus' love?"

Iqbal started to know Jesus' love in his own life. Then 2 1/2 years after arriving at the school, he decided to give his heart to Jesus. Iqbal got baptized.

After Iqbal finished school, he went to college. Iqbal studied computer science at Lowry Adventist College in Bengaluru, India. He got a job on campus after he finished college. Jesus is his whole life.

Iqbal says, "Now, I'm happy to live with Jesus. Day by day, Jesus leads me. He takes care of me. Whenever I have a problem, I go to Jesus. He helps me solve all of my problems."

Iqbal is amazed that Jesus knows everything. Jesus knew him before he was in his mother's belly. Jesus also knows everything that Iqbal needs before Iqbal knows what those things are!

Iqbal says, "I thank Jesus for taking care of my needs long before I know about them. Before I ask, He knows what to give and the best way to give it to me. That's why I trust in Jesus and love Him more each day."

Lowry Adventist College got part of a 13th Sabbath Offering in 2024 to open an English language church. Thank you for your offerings this quarter that support important programs in our worldwide church.

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



**"Before I made you
in your mother's womb
[body], I knew you. Before
you were born, I chose you
for a special work."**



Iqbal Husensab