

People From Every Country: Part 1



SABBATH—APRIL 19

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 10:1–12; Genesis 12:1–9; 1 Samuel 8:4–18; Matthew 20:25–28; Isaiah 42:6.

MEMORY VERSE: “And He was given power and shining-greatness [glory and honor], and was made King, so that all the people of every nation [country] and language would serve Him. His rule [kingdom] lasts [continues] forever. It [His kingdom] will never pass away. And His nation will never be destroyed” (Daniel 7:14, NLV).



So much of the sad history of humans is stories about the terrible things that their leaders did.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION shows us how God will solve the problem of sin and evil. In the last few chapters of Revelation, God allows the saved to eat from the tree of life. God removes the curse. Then we can live with God and see Him face-to-face. The book of Revelation is, in some ways, the book of Genesis in reverse. Genesis is important because it helps us understand how the problems on earth started in the first place. The book of Revelation shows us how God gives us back the things that we lost in Eden.

One of the most important topics in the books of Daniel and Revelation is human government. Daniel and Revelation show how humans try to control a planet that belongs to God. God will control the earth again when sin and evil end. But thousands of years must pass, and many things must happen first. Human government is not perfect. The best human government fails to do all that it promises to do. So much of the sad history of humans is stories about the terrible things that their leaders did. Sad to say, things will get worse until God's kingdom starts (Daniel 7:27). His kingdom will never be destroyed.

NIMROD AND NINEVEH (Genesis 10:1–12)

God made the Garden of Eden for the human family. Eden was the perfect home for us. Then Adam and Eve sinned. God had no choice. He had to separate humans from both the Garden of Eden and the tree of life, at least for now.

Outside the Garden, people worked hard to live. Life became difficult. We suffered, felt pain, and worked hard to make a living (Genesis 3:16–19). Our first parents believed that the true King (Jesus) would open the gates of Eden to them again. Adam and his sons brought offerings to the gates of Eden to worship. Their offerings showed that they believed in God’s plan to save them from sin.

“The Garden of Eden stayed on the earth long after God commanded Adam and Eve to leave it. . . . Adam and his sons came to the Garden of Eden to worship God. They again promised to obey the law they broke. When they broke this law, God commanded them to leave Eden. After a while, sin filled the whole earth. God sent a Flood to destroy the earth. Before the Flood, God removed from the earth the Garden that He planted. But some day there will be ‘a new heaven and a new earth’ (Revelation 21:1 [ERV]). Then God will put Eden back on the earth again. He will make it more beautiful than before when He first planted it.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 62, adapted.

But some people didn’t trust in God’s promise to bring them back to Eden or to save them. They tried to solve problems their own way. They hoped for an easier life. They started cities. Maybe they thought their cities could give them the perfect life they lost in Eden.

Read Genesis 10:1–12. In these verses, the Bible talks about many important cities, including Nineveh and Babylon. We read a lot more about these cities in the rest of the Bible. What do you remember reading in the Bible about these cities? How does that help you understand what Genesis 10:1–12 is saying about these cities.

Some people think Nimrod is a hero. The Bible says that Nimrod “was a mighty hunter in the LORD’s eyes” (Genesis 10:9, NIV). These words aren’t praise. Nimrod stands against the Lord, and not for Him. Nimrod fights against God and causes other people to join his fight. This fight won’t end until God destroys sin and evil forever.



Adam and his sons brought offerings to the gates of Eden to worship.

ABRAHAM (Genesis 12:1–9)

In Genesis 10, we read about the start of the different people groups on the earth. Genesis 10 also tells us that humans separated into different groups. These groups went to different lands, languages, and families (Genesis 10:5; also read Revelation 14:6).

Then the Bible talks about how God commands Abraham to leave one of those people groups. God has a special plan for Abraham's life. But Abraham must leave the country he lives in and its people first. He must become different from them so that God's plan for his life can happen.

Read Genesis 12:1–9. Why did God tell Abram (later, God changed his name to Abraham) to leave the country where he was born?



God gave Israel wonderful Bible truths. But Israel didn't live these truths or obey them.

God wanted to use Abraham to start a people group, Israel, that would be different from all other human kingdoms. Israel didn't have a human king. That's because God Himself was their King. God wanted Israel to be an example to everyone on earth. He wanted Israel to show what happens when humans follow God. God wanted Israel to be a blessing to all the families on the earth (Genesis 12:3). God gave Israel wonderful Bible truth and blessings that no one on the earth saw since before the Flood.

What did the Lord tell Israel in Deuteronomy 4:5–9?

Israel wasn't just one person. Israel was a big people group. God wanted them to work together with Him to show everyone on earth His love and mercy. God gave Israel many things to show other people that they were special to Him. God gave Israel special laws. But Israel needed to obey these laws. Their obedience would cause the people from other countries to say, " 'This great [mighty] nation of Israel is wise and understanding' " (Deuteronomy 4:6, ICB). Yes, God gave Israel wonderful Bible truths. But Israel didn't live these truths or obey them. So, God couldn't bless them as much as He wanted to. God wanted to bless them with life. But Israel chose sin and death.

We must obey Bible truth, and not just believe it. Why is this rule important for us today, as Adventists?

GETTING WHAT WE ASK FOR (1 Samuel 8:4–18)

In the beginning, Israel didn't have a king the same as other countries did. But after a while, Israel's faith grew weak. Then the Israelites wanted the same things that other countries had.

Why do you think the Israelite leaders wanted a king? Read 1 Samuel 8:4–18 for the answer. In what ways do we also want things that God doesn't want us to have?

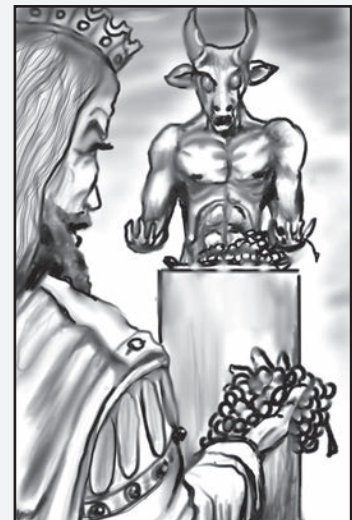
Israel's wish for a king showed that they refused God as their Leader. When Israel asked for a king, they suffered the same things that the other countries around them suffered. They were forced to fight the king's wars. The king could take their property and tax them. Israel soon learned that a king put himself first, ahead of his own people. But God put His people first.

God gave His people what they asked for: a human king. Soon, Israel understood they made a mistake. Now they were stuck with their decision forever. The Bible says, "When that time comes, you will cry out for help because of the king you have chosen. But the LORD won't answer you at that time" (1 Samuel 8:18, NIV).

God knew His people were weak. He knew that they would want a human king. They asked for one, and so much of Bible history is about what happened because of their poor choice. Read Deuteronomy 17:14–20. Notice that God doesn't say, "I will give them a king." God says that His people decided that they wanted one. In spite of their choice, God shows His people mercy. He gives them laws to protect them from some of the evils of human government. As the history of Israel shows us, many of the kings and leaders paid no attention to these laws.

Look at the history of Israel after they decided they wanted a king. You will see just how bad things went for them under these kings. Some kings were better than other kings. But even the "good" kings did bad things (think of King David and his sin against Bathsheba). Often Israel lived under the control of one king after another who "did what the LORD said was wrong" (1 Kings 11:6, ERV; also read 1 Kings 15:26; 1 Kings 16:30; 2 Kings 3:2, and so on).

Back then, or today, all human governments show the same thing: their leaders are sinners who lead other sinners. **What can possibly go wrong?!**



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KINGS OF THE NON-JEWISH PEOPLE (Matthew 20:25–28)

God's relationship with Israel gives us important information that helps us better understand His relationship with the New Testament church. In many ways, the history of Israel's mistakes showed us what would happen in the church during New Testament times. Christians are no better than the Jews during Old Testament times. Many Christians are as weak as the Jews were and do some of the very same sins.

What mistake did Jesus warn His followers not to make when they started the Christian church? Read Matthew 20:25–28 for the answer.



When the church allowed the government of Rome to solve its problems, things went from bad to worse.

Israel asked for a human king. Their wish ruined their happiness and hurt their chances for success. Each king was worse than the one before him. Finally, God allowed the Babylonians to carry His people away from their land. This punishment helped Israel come back to God and serve Him.

The same thing happened in the Christian church. When Constantine became the leader of Rome, he became a Christian. Christians everywhere were so happy. Now Rome would stop hurting them for their faith! For sure, that was a blessing. But then church leaders started to wonder how Constantine could use his power to make them a success.

Many big fights between Christians happened in the A.D. 300s. When the church couldn't solve its problems, its leaders allowed Constantine to help. Constantine was the king of Rome. At that time, the top leaders for each church had the same power. But after that, the leader of the church in Rome became the most powerful leader in the Christian church. So, when the church allowed the government of Rome to solve its problems, things went from bad to worse.

Many of the worst chapters in Christian history happened because the church followed man-made rules instead of God's law. Israel started to worship false gods. Israel's kings wanted more and more control. The people started to offer their children to the statues of false gods. The church also followed the laws of a kingdom that didn't believe in God. Christians who stayed loyal to God were killed because Rome saw them as enemies.

In your own community, what are some of the things that could cause you to lose your faith or trust in God?

A LIGHT TO THE NON-JEWS (Isaiah 42:6)

During Old Testament times, God started the people group of Israel for a very important reason: God wanted to save everyone on earth, and not punish them. For sure, most of us feel guilty when we see the behavior of someone who follows God. In the same way, God wanted Israel to be holy. Then their holy lives would help the people around them to see their sins. When we live holy lives, the people around us see an example of Jesus. Then they feel a need in their hearts to change their lives. So, the lives of God's people, who keep His law (Revelation 14:12), show God's love and His mercy to everyone around them.

What if the Israelites behaved the way that God asked them to and did what He told them? Then people from other countries would have come to them in peace. These non-Jewish people would have asked to know more about Israel and their God. Sad to say, as the story about Israel and Babylon shows, these non-Jewish people came to make war, not peace.

Jesus was the most perfect example of God's love and mercy. Jesus is the only person who showed us this love. Jesus' perfect example was meant to be an invitation to come to God (read John 3:16–21).

God started the Christian church for the same reason He started Israel: God wants to use His people to lead sinners to Jesus. God's people do this work with the Three Angels' Messages. These messages will go to "every nation [country] and to every family group and to the people of every language and to all the people of [on] the earth" (Revelation 14:6, NLV).

What do the verses below teach us about God's work for His people on this earth? How can we follow these important rules in our own lives?

Numbers 14:17–21 _____

Isaiah 42:6; Isaiah 49:6; Isaiah 60:3 _____

Revelation 18:1–4 _____

How will God use us to invite His people to come out of Babylon (read Revelation 18:1–4)?



When we live holy lives, the people around us see an example of Jesus. Then they feel a need in their hearts to change their lives.



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ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Sin is a mystery. “More and more, this mystery did its evil work in the Christian church. At first, this mystery worked in a sneaky way to get control of men’s minds. Then, as this mystery grew stronger, it no longer tried to hide what it was doing. False beliefs came into the church. The attacks on Christians kept the evil out of the church for a time. But then the attacks stopped. Kings joined the church. The church stopped being the same as Jesus in her heart and became filled with pride. The church replaced the laws of God with man-made rules and ideas. Many people were happy when Constantine became a Christian. Many non-Christian people joined the church at that time. Now evil grew strong in the church. The worship of false gods controlled the church. False teachings, celebrations, and ideas were mixed with the Christian faith and the worship of those people who said they were followers of Jesus.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pages 49, 50, adapted.

Read, again, the question at the end of Wednesday’s study. Aren’t we as Christians in danger of becoming filled with pride? If we think we aren’t, we are lying to ourselves.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① When the Babylonians took God’s people away, the Israelites felt a lot of pain and loss. God commanded Abraham to leave Babylon (Chaldea) to start a people group, Israel. Israel’s job was to show God’s love to everyone on earth. Now God let the Babylonians carry them away in chains. While the Israelites were in Babylon, God showed Israel how things would have been different if they had obeyed Him. King Nebuchadnezzar gave his life to Jesus (Daniel 4). At the end of their time in Babylon, God used a Persian king, Cyrus, to serve as a type of Savior. Cyrus released God’s people from Babylon and sent them back to the Promised Land. Cyrus wasn’t a Jew. But God chose him to show His plan to save sinners. What lessons do all of these things teach us about God and how He views the human family?
- ② We may not be in Babylon. But how much of Babylon is in us? What can we do about this problem?

UNLIKELY CHURCH PLANTER

When Sunita got married, her new family thought she would become a Seventh-day Adventist. In her Asian country, the wife does whatever the husband says. So, her husband, Manoj, and his parents thought Sunita would accept his faith as her own.

But Sunita didn't.

Sunita's in-laws saw that she continued to worship false gods of stone and wood. So, they tried their best to tell her about Jesus. Sunita and her in-laws lived in the same house, so they invited her to family worship. But she wasn't interested. No one forced Sunita to join. She stayed away from the meetings.

A year and a half later, Sunita and Manoj moved from their small town to a big city. Now Manoj tried to convince his wife to stop worshiping statues. Manoj said, "We as a family don't believe in bowing down to worship statues. It's not right. We shouldn't do it."

But Sunita didn't know any other way of life. Manoj didn't try to force her to stop. As time passed, Sunita had two sons. Then she became very ill. Manoj said, "Let's go to the Adventist church. You've tried so many pills and other things. But nothing helps. Let's go just this one time."

Sunita didn't see any way out. She had no hope. So, she agreed to go. She entered an Adventist church for the first time. Really, it was the first time Sunita entered any church.

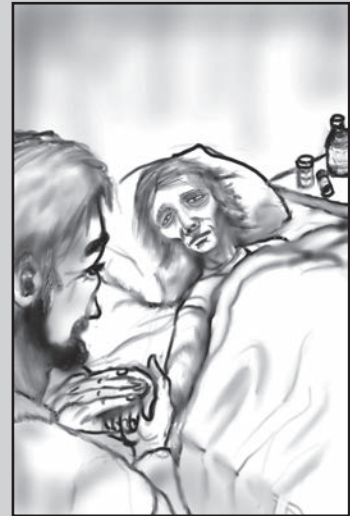
Sunita felt very good inside the church. She didn't understand much of the sermon because the pastor preached in the English language. But Sunita thought that the church members were very loving and kind. The next week, Sunita came back to church and asked the pastor to add her name to his prayer list. The pastor prayed for her during church. After the prayer, Sunita started to feel better. Her health slowly improved. After a while, Sunita got well.

Sunita went to church every week for the next four years. Then a new assistant pastor joined the church. This pastor spoke Sunita's language. Sunita studied the Bible with him and was baptized. From that time, she started to pray, "Let me serve You."

A few years later, Global Mission invited Sunita to start new churches. She was happy to accept the work. Today, Sunita is starting a new church in a poor area of her city. She started the church with prayers for people. As God answered her prayers, other people came to her to ask for prayers. Fifteen people have been baptized. Sunita says, "I never thought I would come out of my religion and get to know the true God. It was His plan to bring me out. He is using me for His glory."

INSIDE
Story

by ANDREW MCCHESENY



"Let's go to the Adventist church. You've tried so many pills and other things. But nothing helps."