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In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews



It was at church when he first saw her. He was running an errand, absorbed in his thoughts, when the sight hit him. The painting was a little less than two meters high and three meters wide, but the girl portrayed in it exerted a strange captivating force over the young man. Why could he not take his eyes off of her? What was it? After some reflection, he realized that it was her eyes. The painting portrayed only her face, and she was looking at something intently. But what, and why was she so absorbed in it? For a long time afterward, he couldn't get the painting out of his head.

Several years later, the painter, Arnold Jiménez, revealed some of its secrets to him. The painting was made to attract viewers to her eyes, but the real secret was in her pupils. If you looked closely, you would find out that they reflected what she was looking at. Her eyes were fixed on Jesus on the cross.

The portrait of Jesus in the Letter to the Hebrews can exert a similar captivating force upon us. Jesus is described, first of all, as the ruler of the universe enthroned at God's right hand. Innumerable angels celebrate Him, worship Him, and serve Him (*Heb. 1:5–14, Heb. 12:22–24*). He has won the right to rule because He has ensured the destruction of the devil (*Heb. 2:14–16*) through His own death. Jesus also is the exalted High Priest. Sinless and perfectly holy, He lives forever to minister in our behalf in the heavenly sanctuary (*Heb. 7:26–8:5*). He has won the right to do so because He offered Himself as a perfect, once-for-all sacrifice, effective for everyone

and forever (*Heb. 10:1–14*). Jesus also has mediated a new covenant between God and His people that will stand forever (*Heb. 8:6–13*).

What captivates readers about the portrait of Jesus, however, is not simply what Jesus has done but who He is. He was born from a woman, as we were, and He has been tempted and ridiculed, as we have been. Yet, still, He sits at the center of power in the universe. When we gaze at the heavenly scene, with its diverse and fantastic celestial beings, our eyes are attracted to the One in the center of it all, who, amazingly enough, looks like us because He has become one of us. Jesus, our Brother, is there, in heaven, representing us, despite the shame of our sin and fallenness.

Jesus . . . has mediated a new covenant between God and His people that will stand forever (Heb. 8:6–13).

In the person of Jesus, three dimensions of the story of Redemption intersect. The first is the local, personal dimension. For readers tired of the reproaches and hardships of Christian life (*Heb. 10:32–34*), Jesus is the author and perfecter of faith. They need to look to Him, who also suffered at the hands of sinners (*Heb. 10:32–34, Heb. 12:1–4*). The second is the corporate, national dimension. For the people of God, who are traveling toward God's Promised Land, Jesus is the new Joshua. They need to follow His lead (*Hebrews 3, Hebrews 4, Hebrews 11, Hebrews 12*). The third is the universal dimension. Jesus is the new Adam, the Son of man, in whom God's purposes for humanity are fulfilled (*Heb. 2:5–10, Heb. 12:22–28*).

The portrait of Jesus, who captures the breadth and length and height and depth of God's love for us, is our subject this quarter. And just as the image of Jesus in the eyes of the girl in the painting captured the young man's gaze, may the image of Jesus as portrayed in Hebrews capture not just our gaze but our love and admiration for, yes, Jesus, our Brother in heaven.

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How to Use This Teachers Edition

“The true teacher is not content with dull thoughts, an indolent mind, or a loose memory. He constantly seeks higher attainments and better methods. His life is one of continual growth. In the work of such a teacher there is a freshness, a quickening power, that awakens and inspires his [class].”

—Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 103.

To be a Sabbath School teacher is both a privilege and a responsibility. A privilege because it offers the teacher the unique opportunity to lead and guide in the study and discussion of the week’s lesson so as to enable the class to have both a personal appreciation for God’s Word and a collective experience of spiritual fellowship with class members. When the class concludes, members should leave with a sense of having tasted the goodness of God’s Word and having been strengthened by its enduring power. The responsibility of teaching demands that the teacher is fully aware of the Scripture to be studied, the flow of the lesson through the week, the interlinking of the lessons to the theme of the quarter, and the lesson’s application to life and witness.

This guide is to help teachers to fulfill their responsibility adequately. It has three segments:

- 1. Overview** introduces the lesson topic, key texts, links with the previous lesson, and the lesson’s theme. This segment deals with such questions as Why is this lesson important? What does the Bible say about this subject? What are some major themes covered in the lesson? How does this subject affect my personal life?
- 2. Commentary** is the chief segment in the Teachers Edition. It may have two or more sections, each one dealing with the theme introduced in the Overview segment. The Commentary may include several in-depth discussions that enlarge the themes outlined in the Overview. The Commentary provides an in-depth study of the themes and offers scriptural, exegetic, illustrative discussion material that leads to a better understanding of the themes. The Commentary also may have scriptural word study or exegesis appropriate to the lesson. On a participatory mode, the Commentary segment may have discussion leads, illustrations appropriate to the study, and thought questions.
- 3. Life Application** is the final segment of the Teachers Edition for each lesson. This section leads the class to discuss what was presented in the Commentary segment as it impacts Christian life. The application may involve discussion, further probing of what the lesson under study is all about, or perhaps personal testimony on how one may feel the impact of the lesson on one’s life.

Final thought: What is mentioned above is only suggestive of the many possibilities available for presenting the lesson and is not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive in its scope. Teaching should not become monotonous, repetitious, or speculative. Good Sabbath School teaching should be Bible-based, Christ-centered, faith-strengthening, and fellowship-building.