




New
American
Union
Website
sda1888.org



SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
REFORM MOVEMENT
INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY SOCIETY
AMERICAN UNION

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God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Welcome!

The American Union is glad to present its new website, sda1888.org.

We would not have chosen to lose the previous website, but that made it advantageous to expand the site and make it more dynamic. God blessed with the direction and assistance of Michael Mitov of Deon Designs. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28.

You will find here all of the main features of the previous site and more. Some features are new, and we look forward to the direction that their development will take. This is true especially of the Blog.

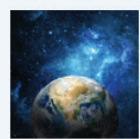

Changes are occurring rapidly in every part of the world. The old scourges of war, pollution, corruption, and hypocrisy remain, while sudden economic upheavals follow political malfeasance, greed, and system collapse. This was prophesied. "The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet,... are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all." Revelation 18:12, 14.

We do not know how much time is left for people to worship God freely according to their consciences, but we want to use carefully the time that is given to us.

You will find perspectives from Scripture, inspiration, and information sources that we pray will be a blessing. May God guide this site and bless you!

For Inspiration ...

"I AM means an eternal presence; the past, present, and future are alike to God. He sees the most remote events of past history, and the far distant future with as clear a vision as we do those things that are transpiring daily. We know not what is before us, and if we did, it would not contribute to our eternal welfare. God give us an opportunity to exercise faith and trust in the great I AM." – *Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1099



SUMMARY

American Union Conference

December 20-24, 2023

"Behold the Man"

HISTORICAL FIGURES AND
JESUS' SAYINGS ON THE CROSS

Barbara Watts
Norman Park, Georgia

Gathering in Hope Chapel, the believers who had arrived for the American Union Conference were greeted with joy as **Elder Idel Suarez, Jr.**, opened the conference on Wednesday evening and presented the first topic, **Barabbas**, found in Mark 15:7.

Jesus was brought before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, after enduring the suffering and arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, the first examination by Pilate, and his referral of Jesus to King Herod. At every step, the high priest and Jewish elders clamored for Jesus to be crucified. But both Pilate and Herod said that the Prisoner was innocent. And Pilate's wife even sent the governor a message, "Have thou nothing to do with that just Man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him." Matthew 27:19.

But Pilate was looking for a way out of his dilemma, so he drew on an ancient custom that gave him the right to free a prisoner during the Passover. He thought that the crowd would immediately see the contrast between Jesus and Barabbas and release Jesus; but Satan was controlling especially Annas and Caiaphas to demand that Jesus be crucified. It was clear who Barabbas

was—a notorious insurrectionist, rebel, murderer, robber, thief, and terrorist who claimed to be the Messiah. He believed in using violence to overthrow the government and establish a different order.

Masses of people today behave in the very same way as they did in Jesus' day. One week before, they had proclaimed Jesus King, the Son of David. Now they were impelled by satanic forces to scream, "Crucify Him!" Every person must make the choice between Jesus and the world. Those who have apostatized will choose the wicked one. Let us wholeheartedly choose Jesus, our Redeemer, who carried the cross of Barabbas and made atonement for the sin of the world. Jesus died so that every person could freely choose to be part of the first resurrection and inherit eternal life.

Thursday

The morning worship service was conducted by **Elder Samuel Alejos**, titled **Annas and Caiaphas**, as found in Matthew 26:67. These two men were both

considered high priests, Caiaphas being Annas' son in law. As most others in that day—and also today—they were motivated by politics and self-interest, not divine principle. They sought their own power. They were not of the priestly line of Aaron and were appointed by the Romans, to whom they were beholden.

Jesus read their hearts. Caiaphas feared the Saviour's influence, which caused him to say, "... It is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." John 11:50. Human perspectives rule in politics. Contrast this to Jesus. He is the Giver of life, not of death. He never spent time disputing with the "authorities" of His day. In persecuting Him—and later His followers—the Jews followed their own human inclinations and desires to deliver Jesus into the hands of the Romans. But in the kingdom of heaven, force is never exercised; there are no politics. The heart of the gospel is free will, so let us cherish that and have a sense of urgency in uplifting Jesus and His message.

There were four workshops on Thursday, four workshops on Friday, and one workshop on Sunday. There were also workshops for the children and young people.

Workshop 1 was presented by **Elder Joel Barnedo**. The topic was **"Forgive them, for they know not what they do."** These words of Jesus on the cross were spoken despite the meanness of the religious leaders. The sinners who put Jesus on the cross were ignorant,



Elder Idel Suarez, Jr., opened the conference

following the orders of their leaders. The Redeemer's words did not mean that the people were actually forgiven, for forgiveness follows repentance. Jesus lived the principles that He taught: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven:..." Matthew 5:44, 45.

Even the Roman centurion could see what was actually going on, for he said, "Truly this was the Son of God." Matthew 27:54. The thief who acknowledged Jesus as his Lord saw it as well. And there were others. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea came forward boldly to support the disciples in their grief and fulfill the prophecy that Jesus would make His grave with the rich. Then, fifty days later, there was a great harvest of souls as many priests and people repented under the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We are never to look on anyone as hopeless, for Jesus will seek and save the very last person on earth who will repent. He is ready to offer forgiveness to all.

Elder Inayat Daniel presented Workshop 2 from Luke 23:34, "**I say..., thou shalt be with Me.**" Jesus was alone and friendless on the cross, but there were some who responded to His great love with all their hearts. This included the thief on the cross who said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." Luke 23:43. This thief recognized Him as the Son of God, the Lamb of God, who had divine power and authority. This was in response to the Holy Spirit's working on his heart. He saw what the kingdom of Christ was like both physically and spiritually.

"Christ foresaw that Jerusalem would remain obdurate and impenitent; yet all the guilt, all the consequences of rejected mercy, lay at her own door. Thus it will be with every soul who is following the same course. The Lord declares, 'O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself.' 'Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto My words, nor to My law, but rejected it.' Hosea 13:9; Jeremiah 6:19." -*The Desire of Ages*, p. 588.

There were two thieves on the cross. One wanted relief from crucifixion, while the other one wanted relief from sin. It was Jesus' desire to die so that He could offer that very forgiveness to



Elder Inayat Daniel presented Workshop 2

all. He gives victory over sin and also, in the end, victory over those who persecute the righteous. Let us glorify Him for everything that He does through us.

Workshop 3, which was given by **Elder Larry Watts**, was titled "**Woman, behold thy son,**" the words of comfort that Jesus spoke from the cross to His mother. In entrusting her to John, Jesus gave him a precious responsibility. It was like an adoption, making John her caregiver. At that moment, John was losing his best Friend, and Mary was losing her Son.

Burdens are given because they are a blessing. Mary's needs would be taken care of by John, who would be about the Father's business, as was Jesus. Thus, two people were put together who experienced at that moment the greatest loss of their lives. Mary would be comforted in seeing Jesus in John.

The story was told of a storm that threatened a train trestle that spanned a ravine with a river below. It was decided to park a fully loaded coal train on the trestle to hold it in place with the train's weight as the span was buffeted. The burden of the train on the trestle preserved it.

Jesus gives His children burdens to save them. In carrying those burdens faithfully, they see what is in their own hearts, even as they learn to depend fully on Jesus. Their relationship with Him is based on faith, not physical birth. When Jesus' mother and brothers came to see Him—primarily to urge Him to pay attention to the Jewish leaders—He said, "Who is My mother? And who are My brethren? And He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples, and said, Behold My mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of

My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother." Matthew 12:48-50. That relationship of faith is the greatest gift and blessing!

Sister Lisbeth Hunger presented Workshop 4 on Thursday afternoon. The title was "**Behold thy mother!**" referencing John 19:27. Jesus spoke these words to John the beloved right after He told His mother, "Woman, behold thy son!" Thus, He entrusted His mother to the care of the beloved disciple, who then took her to his own home. The question is, Where were Jesus' brothers, the sons of Joseph, who had died? It would have been expected that they would care for their step-mother. But Jesus knew what was best for Mary. John had already supported her by bringing her to the cross, and now Jesus gave her into his care.

This son of Zebedee, was in the group of Jesus' closest disciples. He was the only disciple at the cross, and Jesus had already prepared him to carry this responsibility. And what about Mary? Was she prepared for this situation? Surely in her mind she was prepared, but that was impossible emotionally. When Jesus was presented before the Lord in the temple as a baby, the aged Simeon had prophesied, "(Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also)." Luke 2:35. She had mourned that Jesus' life was so lonely, and now she was at the cross. Fifty days later, she was also in the upper when the Holy Spirit was poured out.

Her unique experience is a lesson for all who have aged parents. It is a great blessing to support them and other aged believers. Furthermore, since the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren is important in the life of faith, everyone is encouraged to make it a high priority to strengthen and sustain the family bonds.

Under the title **Judas Iscariot**, based on Matthew 27:3-5, **Elder Idel Suarez, Jr.**, told about the infamous disciple in the evening worship service. The man had attached himself to the disciples and was recommended by them because of his perceived status and talents. Jesus knew his heart right from the start and exerted every effort to save him from himself. He became a spy. He held the money bag and helped himself to it according to his view of his entitlement. He thought highly of himself; and so did the disciples, who could have—but did not—see who he really was. He saw Jesus' miracles as being perfect for the establishment of the earthly kingdom

that he envisioned and planned to help bring about, even to the point of betraying Jesus to manipulate Him into declaring Himself the king of Israel.

According to the Scriptures, Judas was a thief, a murderer, covetous, rebellious, a betrayer, and worse than Barabbas! Jesus said in Mark 14:21: "... Woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! Good were it for that man if he had never been born."

God trains people for service, not because they are perfect, but in spite of their imperfections. They are shown what the heavenly kingdom represents and are transformed-if that is what their hearts desire. Let us ask Jesus to change us from the inside out, and let us praise Him alone!

Friday

Friday morning's worship service was conducted by **Brother Jonathan Figuereo** and titled **Pontius Pilate**, based on Matthew 27:2. This governor of Judea served under the Roman emperor Tiberius. He was based in Caesarea, the military headquarters, and probably travelled to Jerusalem when it was necessary.

When Jesus was first brought to him, Pilate was in bed; he was urged to pronounce his judgment on the Prisoner as quickly as possible. Never before had he seen a man who bore the marks of such goodness-serenity, kindness, and sweetness. Jesus made a very favorable impression on the governor, who had heard of Him. The Jewish leaders, Caiaphas and Annas, thought that Pilate would judge Jesus swiftly by pronouncing the death sentence; in fact, he had done this before. But something held him back, and he asked more questions. Finding out that Jesus was from Gali-

lee, he decided to send him to Herod, the same one who had had John the Baptist slain. But Herod did not judge Jesus or give the death sentence; he just wanted favors, which were not given, so the Saviour was returned to Pilate, who said he would chastise Jesus and release Him. This weakness in punishing an innocent Man was seen by the Jewish leaders, and they shouted loudly for Him to be crucified.

Pilate washed his hands, saying that he was not guilty of this innocent Man's blood. He could have released Jesus, but he saw his position and honor as being at stake and gave Jesus up to die. The result was devastating for Pilate, and the day came when he committed suicide.

Such is the result when one attempts to compromise the truth. It appears to be good for one's self-interest, but that is swept away by evil. Pilate cared most about himself, his glory, and his power; and so, he lost his life. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Proverbs 14:12.

For Workshop 1, **Elder Uldarico Alejos** spoke about Mark 15:34, **"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"**

It is extremely difficult to try to grasp the depths of what Jesus experienced; this will be studied in eternity as the redeemed marvel at God's infinite love!

We are connected to Jesus by faith, and we share His inheritance on this earth of pain, suffering, and anguish. We need to understand that Jesus is our Lifeline. God promised to be with His children in every age and said that He would not forsake them, that the waters would not overwhelm them. There is no other resource in a time of trouble. Jesus Himself suffered for the whole world, enduring darkness and mistreatment,

being forsaken by His own disciples. He was crucified and offered no complaint. But the dense darkness mercifully hid Him from sight until the very end. He cried out to God as He carried the sin of the world, because by faith and experience He knew the magnitude of His Father's love.

Angels refused to look at the sight, and all nature shuddered

as Jesus took upon Himself the sin of the world. He could carry this, because He was and is holy, with no association with sin of any kind. But He felt forsaken and called on His Father, the One alone in whom He had confidence.

Everyone in this wicked world goes through this. Let us accept the holy Scriptures as the gift of God which reveals the plan of salvation. "You are free" from sin when you accept Jesus as your Saviour. Value Him in your life. Have a spirit of gratitude and deep love for Him. Let us be educated by Him as we love Him more and concentrate on spiritual things.



The youth choir presented beautiful specials

Sister Margie Seely presented Workshop 2, based on John 19:28, **"I thirst."** When Jesus uttered these words, He had endured immense physical torture, and His body was in the process of shutting down. He had had no water or food for 36 hours; He had been shunted from one place to another; He had been beaten; He had fallen beneath the heavy load of the cross; and He had been nailed to the cross, which eventually made breathing impossible. Most of all, He sensed His Father's wrath against the sin of the world that He was carrying. He had finished what He came to the earth to do-to save mankind. He simply wanted a little water, but even that was denied Him. He refused the vinegar that was offered to Him, for He needed His mind and spirit to be clear to His last moment.

What are we thirsty for? People drink things other than water, which represents God's word. The great adversary is doing everything possible to distract and entice people from pure water, pure food, pure truth, pure thoughts, and pure motives. Too many want to hang onto their trash-keep their sins. Jeremiah 2:13 describes this: "For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no



A youth workshop was conducted by Elder Idel Suarez, Jr.



Elder Joel Barnedo played and sang a special

water." We need Bible study and prayer every day, spending time with God, the Source of pure, uncontaminated water. Problems will diminish and our strength will increase to the measure that we do this. Let Him speak to us moment by moment.

In Workshop 3, **Elder Idel Suarez, Jr.**, brought encouraging insight into Jesus' very last words, **"Father, Into Thy hands I commend My spirit."** Luke 23:46. The question was asked, How much time do you dedicate to prayer? Most of Jesus' sayings on the cross were prayers. The religious leaders' charge against Christ was that He claimed God as His Father, thus making Himself God. What He said was true. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe Me not." John 8:42. The Jewish leaders claimed to be the descendants of Abraham, but they did not have that essential faith in God which Abraham had.

After hanging on the cross for six hours, Jesus' words in commending His spirit into His Father's hands showed His complete trust in Him. "... The righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God:..." Ecclesiastes 9:1. Such believers practice the Ten Commandments. Jesus told His children to call God their Father. And Daniel 12:3 says that the "wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

When one's heart is connected with God's heart, the two beat together. So, as Jesus, how does one commit his heart into God's hands? By taking

the Father's hand like a child. Do we trust God's hands? Ezekiel 10:8 portrays an amazing picture. "And there appeared in the cherubims the form of a man's hand under their wings." At no time is God absent from His people. The psalmist wrote: "Into Thine hand I commit my spirit: Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." His Spirit is committed to keeping His children safe now and through all eternity.

Workshop 4, presented by **Elder Larry Watts**, focused on the words, **"It is finished."** John 19:30. What was Jesus' position, according to the prophecy in Psalm 22:6? "But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people." Jesus left the presence of God, who is a consuming fire in heaven, to be incarnated in the form of man on the earth. The Scriptures identified Him as a worm who came to those who were made of the dust of the ground. Through His sacrifice, He called all men as worms to put on the wings of salvation and fly above the earth.

"After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst." John 19:28. After being offered the vinegar and refusing to take it, His next words were, "It is finished."

In Scripture and prophecy, there are three times when this phrase was expressed. The first was at the completion of the earth's creation, Genesis 1:31; 2:1: "And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished,

and all the host of them." The second was when Jesus completed His sacrifice, John 19:30. And the third will be when He leaves His ministerial office at the close of probation, according to Revelation 22:11, 12: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly: and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

God has only one tomorrow. We are to redeem the time—not to waste it. We can waste our own time, other people's, and God's. Indeed, time is money, and we waste it when we do the wrong things. It is important to finish what we start so that we will be ready for God's one tomorrow—Jesus' coming. He will leave the sanctuary at the end of the latter rain, the close of probation. We are called now, at this special time, to give our time and abilities to God. He is ready to use us when we allow Him to do so. That will be when the "worm" declares, "Sin is finished."

The Sabbath opening service was delivered by **Elder Addin Ajucum**, who spoke about the Roman centurion's words, **"Truly this was the Son of God."** Matthew 27:54. The centurion—by definition the commander of 100 soldiers—whose words are recorded in the Scriptures knew about Jesus and His actions prior to the crucifixion. He was amazed at what he saw and concluded that this was God's Son. All of the events surrounding Jesus and His trial revealed that something unusual was happening, and the evidence sup-



There were excellent vegan food and fellowship at mealtimes



ported the information. This officer had seen many crucifixions, but this one was very different: (1) Jesus' response during the trial; (2) Judas' actions; (3) the message conveyed by Jesus' silence; (4) what happened in the Praetorium—the mocking, the robe, calling Jesus the King of the Jews—revealed hidden motives; (5) Jesus' dignity, words, and actions; and (6) His mercy and forgiveness.

The trials that God's people are passing through today are preparing them

to speak and act for Him. Just as the centurion expressed his conviction, so the testimonies of God's servants will be given with burning words of life.

Elder Nicholas Anca, president of the Canadian Field, focused on Pilate's wife, **Claudia**, for the evening worship service. Matthew 27:19. This woman was not present in the judgment hall, but she was used by God both to give a warning to her husband and to add to the evidence of Jesus' innocence and atonement.

Why did Jesus have to suffer so much? By God's act, the spotless Lamb of God died for all the sin of the guilty. Worldly men (whether they claim to be religious, or not) act according to worldly principles under satanic possession. When confronted by the principles of heaven, they have to make a choice that threatens their familiar motives and actions in the world around them. In this setting, Pilate ignored his conscience, even as he "knew that for envy they had delivered Him." Verse 18. It was quite



obvious to him what the Jewish leaders were trying to do; but he cherished his own position, power, and honor in place of truth, thus condemning Jesus to death. After washing his hands and asserting that he was “innocent of the blood of this just person” (verse 24), he scourged Jesus and delivered Him to be crucified, after which the Roman soldiers cruelly mocked and beat Him.

The appeal is to everyone who reads the record of Jesus’ arrest, trial, and crucifixion: Spend dedicated time

meditating on Jesus’ sacrifice. With the most impressive conviction being engraved in your soul, the Holy Spirit will impress you with what you need to do!

Sabbath

Elder Benjamin Alejos led the Sabbath morning worship service under the title ***Herod the Tetrarch*** in Luke 23:8. Pontius Pilate, the governor of Judea, had questioned Jesus and learned that He was from Galilee. Therefore, since King

Herod was responsible for that area, Pilate decided to send Jesus to him, as he was in Jerusalem at the time.

Herod was glad to see Jesus, because he had heard a lot about Him and hoped to see a miracle. In fact, his cruel murder of John the Baptist after his refusal to receive the rebuke given to him by the prophet caused his conscience to be tormented day and night. Herod’s time of salvation had passed. He had many questions for Jesus, but Jesus had not a single word for this wicked, corrupt king.



The children sang beautifully

When He was sent back to Pilate, the governor told the chief priests and rulers, "Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined Him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse Him: No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto Him." Luke 23:14, 15. Pilate and Herod made friends over this incident, but not long afterward they both died terrible deaths.

God gives time and opportunity to everyone; but when there is no response to His call, He can do no more. Even then, people want to see signs to support their belief. But there is still a little time left for those who are alive today. Let us worship God, believe His promises, and walk by faith, not miracles. Blessed is the one who believes. Today is our time of opportunity to believe and be transformed into Jesus' image.

The Sabbath school, under the leadership of **Sister Elba Echavarria**, began with a Health Minute by Sister Persia Suarez about the basics of applying a tourniquet in the case of severe bleeding. For the Missionary Minute, Elder Pablo Hunger praised God for the new interest in the Northeastern Field, as well as for the light being shared on the Internet under the Rescue plan. He presented challenges for the believers to take up in spreading the gospel.

The Sabbath School Lesson, titled "The Rich Man and Lazarus," was taught by Sister Margie Seely. The two characters in Jesus' parable represented the Jews and the Gentiles. The rich man was oblivious to the needs of the poor. Jesus demonstrated the importance of overcoming self-centeredness, hypocrisy, and the lack of care for others. God's gifts and blessings are intended to be shared. Otherwise one is robbing not only those he could help but also himself and God, for one is blessed as he gives to others. Furthermore, gener-

osity is a measure of faith, and time is a gift.

God is not prejudiced by the conditions of one's birth but pours out His blessings freely. Originally the Jews were the depositary of God's physical and spiritual wealth, but that responsibility was transferred by Jesus to the Christian church—to us. Notice that the parable denotes Lazarus as being in touch with God, while the rich man appealed to Abraham. The Jews' physical connection to Abraham was more important to them than was God Himself. They considered themselves entitled to eternal life by virtue of being born in Abraham's lineage.

And worse, today people are influenced by churches and movies to see their departed relatives as actually protecting them and interacting with them. Thus, Satan is exalted and worshiped in the place of God, just as in the time of Jesus. May we turn from the popular idolatry that is so rampant in the world by worshiping God alone.

A lot of nice music was offered to God during the conference, and the Sabbath service was graced with a very beautiful choir piece, "**Behold the Man,**" which was the title of the sermon that was given by **Elder Tzvetan Petkov**, president of the General Conference. But first Elder Idel Suarez, Jr., told the children a story about a baby goat named Milagro that was born to a nanny on his family's farm. One day the little goat squeezed under the fence of the enclosure and did not heed her mother's cries to come back. She got into the donkey's corral, and he came running, bit her, picked her up, and shook her. Sadly, she died. The story demonstrated how important it is for children to obey their parents, much more so than animals.

Elder Petkov told of Jesus standing before His accusers wearing a crown of thorns and a mock purple robe. The authorities tried to make Jesus appear as weak as possible, because He claimed to be King, the Son of God. The priests cried, "Crucify Him," and the mob picked up the chant. When Pilate said he was convinced of Jesus' innocence, he nevertheless chose to let the mob decide whether Jesus or Barabbas should be re-

leased, following a custom sometimes carried out at the time of the Passover.

Despite the beatings, wounds, and everything else, Jesus had never before appeared more beautiful. By contrast, every line of Barabbas' face declared that he was a criminal, rebel, and revolutionary. In fact, according to *The Desire of Ages*, p. 735, "Even the priests and rulers were convicted that He was all that He claimed to be."

Both Jesus and Barabbas were the anthropos-representatives of human nature. Both inherited the fallen sinful nature, but Jesus never activated that nature. Barabbas, on the other hand, represented all evil; it was his second nature. He was used to sin and addicted to it. Jesus was the Holy One, who never yielded to temptation, never sinned.

The inherited sinful nature is infused with sin and will be consumed by fire. It cannot enter heaven. If one stops sinning by himself, he will become sick, because sin is a part of himself. Human nature cannot be let into heaven; its only chance is in being changed by Christ "in the twinkling of an eye." 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52. Even our prayers need to be purified by the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:26.

But the people chose Barabbas—one like them. They crucified the Holy One. Sin entered the world by one—the first Adam—and would now be redeemed by One—Jesus, the last Adam. There is salvation in no other. One may meditate for eight hours a day and perform miracles; but there still is no salvation in human nature, even if it is sanctified and transformed and remained so for the rest of one's life. This nature has to be consumed and totally changed.

Be very careful when you speak about Jesus. If an idea does not exist in God's



This difficult exercise was part of the youth activities

word, do not speculate about it. Jesus had not one spot of sin. He came in the likeness of sinful flesh, subject to sorrow and temptation, but He never yielded to it. He obeyed His Father. Someone had to retake the exam that Adam failed, and Jesus did that. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." 1 Corinthians 15:22.



Elder Idel Suarez, Jr., told the children a story

"Christ, the second Adam, came to a world polluted and marred, to live a life of perfect obedience. The race, weakened in moral power, was unable to cope with Satan, who ruled his subjects with cruel authority. Christ came to stand on the field of battle in warfare against all the satanic forces. By representing in His life the character of God, He sought to win man back to His allegiance." *-Review and Herald, December 15, 1896.*

"Behold the anthropos!"—the human being, man's representative before the whole universe. The risen, ascended Saviour is the Representative of all. He pleads with His own blood for the redeemed. He is the Substitute and Surety not only for man but also for the entire universe. In the war with the devil, man's nature is too weak. Therefore, Jesus became his Substitute: "I will fight for you. I will give you the victory." He stands in for the redeemed in heaven. Then the sinner is able to appear before the Father as if he were Jesus, who took the sin of the human race upon Himself when Adam sinned. Jesus is the only Man who never transgressed. Do you want to be part of the heavenly family? This question was asked especially of the young people in the congregation, and they came forward in response to it. Elder Pablo Hunger prayed for them and their walk with God as they prepare for baptism.

As the benediction was pronounced, we felt the Holy Spirit's presence and rejoiced to receive the blessings of the eternal words of life!

In the afternoon, the annual concert was presented under the theme, "Going through the Life of Jesus," led by Brother Wikler Moran and Sister Melite Hunger. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Psalm 133:1.

There were solos, duets, ensembles, family groups, and choirs. The children, young people, and adults shared their talents in vocal and instrumental music. Some of the titles were: "It Is by Your Grace," "Unlimited Love," "In Christ Alone," "If My People," "Mary, Did You Know?" "Is He Worthy," "People Need the Lord," "He Is God Always," "Thank you, Lord," and "Cristo en mi."

For the Sabbath closing service, **Elder Joami Barnedo** sang "I'll Rise Again" with his brother and mother. Reflecting on the Sabbath that we just experienced, it is good to remember that in the four gospels, the resurrection story is told from four different perspectives by Matthew, a tax collector (Matthew 28:1-6); Mark, a scribe (Mark 16:1-6); Luke, a doctor (Luke 24:1-9); and John, a fisherman (John 20:1-18). There was a great earthquake as the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, rolled back the stone that barred the tomb's entrance, and sat on it. There was an earthquake before Jesus died, and there was an earthquake when He rose from the dead. We can face tomorrow because Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, is alive!

Indeed, only God can turn a mess into a message, a test into a testimony, a trial into triumph, and a victim into a victory! The problems we encounter daily—and even on the way to this conference—provide opportunities for prayer and trust. They may seem small, but their solution shows us and our children that God provides in marvelous ways.

The resurrection was extraordinary in its power upon the earth and the soldiers surrounding the tomb when Jesus arose. He had told Martha at the resurrection of her brother, "I am the Resurrection and the Life." John 11:25. The power of Christ should never be taken lightly. The angel who remained at the tomb told the women, "I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay." Matthew 28:5, 6. That power is not just physical; it is the power of His

grace. It is God's word, which is powerful, effective, and able to bring about not just change but a complete transformation. If Christ has arisen in our lives, His word will be alive in us.

The evening worship service was given by **Elder Joel Barnedo** under the title **Simon of Cyrene**, referenced in Matthew 27:32. God's provision for His Son when He was unable to carry the heavy cross was shown in the help provided to Him by Simon. He was at the right place by divine appointment. God's



Sister Lisbeth Hunger and baby Mia Barnedo

intervention is not luck or chance. He knows the beginning from the end. Still today, He is working through His people; and this is not a coincidence. Jesus is looking for those who are willing to carry burdens, which are the means of training and blessing.

Sister Ellen G. White wrote the following concerning this incident on Jesus' way to Calvary: "The crowd that followed the Saviour saw His weak and staggering steps, but they manifested no compassion.... His persecutors saw that it was impossible for Him to carry His burden farther. They were puzzled to find anyone who would bear the humiliating load. The Jews themselves could not do this...."

"At this time a stranger, Simon a Cyrenian, coming in from the country, meets the throng. He hears the taunts and ribaldry of the crowd; he hears the words contemptuously repeated, Make way for the King of the Jews! He stops in astonishment at the scene; and as he expressed his compassion, they seize him and place the cross upon his shoulders.



Elder Pablo Hunger prayed for those who came forward to dedicate their lives to the Lord

"Simon had heard of Jesus. His sons were believers in the Saviour, but he himself was not a disciple. The bearing of the cross to Calvary was a blessing to Simon, and he was ever after grateful for this providence. It led him to take upon himself the cross of Christ from choice, and ever cheerfully stand beneath its burden.

"The cross he was forced to bear became the means of his conversion. His sympathies were deeply stirred in favor of Jesus; and the events of Calvary, and the words uttered by the Saviour, caused him to acknowledge that He was the Son of God." *-Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 249.

Sunday

The morning worship service was presented by **Elder Nicholas Anca** about **Joseph of Arimathea**, mentioned in John 19:38, 39. The examples of Nicodemus and Joseph, wealthy members of the Jewish Sanhedrin who stepped in after Jesus' crucifixion to give the Saviour an honorable burial, showed that there are many wealthy people who are waiting to use their blessings for the Master's kingdom. They are interested in what is happening in His cause. The prophecy concerning the Saviour's burial stated, "And He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death, because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth." Isaiah 53:9. Those whose minds and hearts are open to God's Spirit will be guided as to what to do.

Over the course of Jesus' ministry, both of these men had been in the council when Jesus and His activities were discussed, including the priests' attempts not just to stop His work but to put Him to death. They were very familiar with

His miracles, ministry, teachings, honesty, compassion, and righteousness. Joseph had to have acquaintance with Pilate for governmental business, so he was able not only to provide a place for Jesus to be buried (his own new tomb) but also to request and take care of the Saviour's body quickly. What a blessing!

Conversion is important, and it is dangerous not to understand the need for a full conversion. It encompasses personal experience, which is unique for each person. Joseph was looking for the kingdom of God and had accepted Christ. For a time it may be hidden, but the day will come when the seed that is planted in fertile soil—an honest, sincere, faithful heart—will spring to life. Then individually and publicly each person will come forward to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah and to do exactly what is needed. That happens in one's individual life and in every faithful church.

In Workshop 1, **Sister Raquel Orce** laid out the significance of Jesus' words that were spoken to Mary Magdalene after the resurrection, "**Woman, why weepest thou?**" John 20:15. When one makes a decision, three things come into play: (1) Belief (what is reality to the person), (2) experience (events of the past and one's own thinking), and (3) perception (how he or she understands what is happening).

When Mary arrived at the tomb early on the first day of the week, she had a plan that she determined to complete—to finish applying the herbs and spices to the body of Christ. She was wondering who would be able to remove the stone so that the women could do their service to Jesus, but she was shocked to see that it had already been moved when she got there. She immediately ran to tell Peter and John what she had discovered. They raced to the tomb and went

in. When Mary came back, she was crying and looked into the tomb. That was when she saw the two angels and they asked her why she was crying. She immediately turned away and saw Someone whom she thought was the gardener. In the emotion of the moment, she had already made certain assumptions that seemed to be confirmed—that Jesus' body had been taken.

When people are upset, it is important to try to help them by asking why. And for ourselves, we need to consider our own thoughts and what they are based on. People tend to isolate situations, and emotions become involved. But since cause and effect are always at play, it is important to think carefully.

When Mary saw the One whom she thought was the gardener, it was like she saw a quick panorama of her life. Since there can be a difference between one's perception and what actually is happening, it is necessary to have a rational relationship with the emotions. In other words, when someone is crying, she is overwhelmed and needs to be calmed down enough to understand her own feelings and be clear about what is going on. Faith in God will tell her that there is a reason for everything. Mary's assumption was that Jesus was dead. Jesus asked her the same question that the angels had: "Woman, why weepest thou?" And then He added, "Whom seekest thou?"

After she answered Him, He only had to say one word: "Mary." Jesus concentrated on her before she could concentrate on Him. That changed everything.



Elder Edison Enriquez's family sang a special

She immediately recognized Him. What a shock!

Jesus moved the situation from being emotionally driven to being calm and responsible. He gave Mary some simple instructions to carry out, including why they were necessary. To help a person, especially one who has been handicapped by being devalued in the past, be patient and give value to her.

God is the Source of all good for everyone. Each of us needs to go inside our own tombs, acknowledging what is, so that we can become new creatures in Christ. The reality is that God has been with us all along. Why are we weeping? What are we looking for? Jesus wants us to answer this question honestly and in the light of eternity. It is fundamental to getting a correct perception of not just the one moment but all moments.

Jesus then gives us a commission, or a mission, and we can help others in the same manner. Let our past be organized in our minds, including necessary repentance and confession. Then we can look to the future and see how we fit into God's plan for eternity.

Elder Pablo Hunger introduced a program under the Rescue missionary program that involves reaching out to people in certain ways after receiving the means to do so. In a physical disaster, those who are going to an area to help (1) are experienced, (2) are given necessary training, and (3) are supported by equipment and supplies. The example was given of the Good Samaritan, who had all of these necessary things. This program is a way for the believers to overcome laziness by forming teams and finding souls for the Lord. To find out more about this, go to the General Conference website at the following Internet link: <https://sda1844.org/resources/evangelization-materials/rescue-series/>. Resources are available in English and Spanish.

The closing of the conference was presented by **Elder Larry Watts** and then **Elder Uldarico Alejos**. Brother Watts asked, "Can you be more motivated?" What moves us to do what we do? During this conference, many things were presented in relation to Jesus' death, resurrection, and commission. He said in Luke 9:23: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."

There is an acronym in English: DDTD. It stands for "Daily Duty To Do." Jesus died daily to His own will so that He

could do His Father's will. As our Substitute and Surety, He is one with us—Emmanuel, God with us. This is not just a divine way to God, like a magic wand that makes us right with Him. Rather, it is God motivating us in our daily lives and activities. "How can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? And then he will spoil his house." Matthew 12:29. Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil; to do this, He (the seed) had to fall into the ground and die. God sent His Son to bind the works of Satan in the eyes of the universe as well as in our hearts.

Jesus bowed His head and died. He carried Satan's kingdom to the earth with Him—brought it down. This was the

redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine." We strengthen our spiritual lives by making good decisions in harmony with God's will. Some things are easy, but this is hard. The Scriptures show that small things, self-discipline, and self-denial make a huge difference in our lives.

If we will look to Jesus, we will not be ignorant but rejoice in knowing Christ—having a deep relationship with Him, as He said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his Lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that He will make him ruler over all that He hath."



The Hunger family presented special music

stone that struck the earth (Daniel 2:45), pronouncing that kingdom's death knell. The bases of Satan's kingdom are two: (1) You determine for yourself what is right and wrong (selfishness, you are god), and (2) you can sin without consequences (there is no cause and effect). These are evident in the popular false concepts of the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness.

But God's kingdom is different. It is based on His unselfish love and the final judgment in which every person will give account to God for what he received—life, his words, his talents and abilities, and time. God trusts His servants with resources to use in doing good in the world. One day they will give the entrusted goods back to Him with interest. That is when they will hear the words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Matthew 25:21.

Next, Elder Uldarico Alejos read Isaiah 43:1, last part: "Fear not; for I have

Luke 12:42-44. The coming trials can be faced if one has a relationship with God that is renewed every day.

Elder Idel Suarez, Jr., came forward to express his gratitude to all who came to the conference, including about fifty young people, as well as to all of the presenters, pastors, musicians, photographers, housekeepers, food preparers, and maintenance people.

The American Union officers look forward to your participation in upcoming events, including a youth conference during the July 4 holiday, when the book of Romans will be studied, along with issues of particular concern to the young people. We thank God for the Norman College facility and plead with Him to continue to bless everything that is done in the American Union and around the world by faithful workers and believers.

After the singing of "God Be with You 'Til We Meet Again," the ministers stood together with their hands raised to bless the congregation.



The Importance of Hydration

Emil Bainhardt
Western Field Health Leader
Novato, California

Hydration is a fancy word for the consumption of water. Like other organisms, people need to ingest water to stay alive. As a verb, “hydrate” means to moisturize; and as a noun it refers to a chemical compound that includes water molecules. One can survive for three minutes without breathable air, three days without drinkable water, and three weeks without food.

How much water should a person drink based on weight?

The general rule is to drink one ounce of water for every two pounds of body weight. All you have to do is weigh yourself, then divide the number of pounds by two to figure out your needed water intake. According to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), daily fluid intake is defined as the amount of water consumed from foods, plain drinking water, and other beverages.

Hydration helpers

Start your day with oatmeal. When oats are cooked, they expand and absorb water. Oatmeal is very hydrating.

- Almond milk
- Herbal teas
- Smoothies made with fresh fruit or vegetables
- Salads
- Soups
- Frozen fruit

Why is water necessary for life?

Water makes up 60-75 percent of a person’s body weight. A loss of just 4%

of total body water leads to dehydration, and a loss of 15% can be fatal. Water is a universal solvent and is involved in important biological processes. It helps to regulate body temperature and supports the cellular structure. Water buffers cells from dangerous effects of acids and bases. It helps to remove waste products through perspiration, urination, and elimination.

Water also helps to lubricate and cushion the joints and protects the spinal cord and other sensitive tissues. Lying down at night during sleep, or even taking a nap, takes the load off of the joints (especially the intervertebral discs) and helps the system to absorb necessary fluids so as to maintain healthy joint spaces and joint integrity.

75 percent of Americans are chronically dehydrated

A survey of 3,003 Americans found that 75 percent of them likely suffered from a net fluid loss, resulting in chronic dehydration. Although the survey found that Americans drank about eight servings of hydrating beverages per day, that was offset by drinking caffeinated beverages and alcohol and eating a diet that was high in sodium (salt).

What leads to dehydration?

- Not drinking enough water
- Excessive urination due to illness or medication
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Heat
- Excessive perspiration
- Fever

What are signs of dehydration?

- Being thirsty
- Having a dry mouth
- Urinating and sweating less than usual
- Dark-colored urine
- Dry skin
- Fatigue
- Dizziness
- Confusion

Who is most likely to develop dehydration?

- Older adults, who may lose their sense of thirst and not drink enough liquids
- Infants and young children, who tend to have more diarrhea and vomiting than adults do
- People with chronic illnesses, such as diabetes, cystic fibrosis, or kidney difficulties
- People who take medications that cause excessive sweating or urination
- People who work or exercise outdoors in hot weather

“In health and in sickness, pure water is one of heaven’s choicest blessings. Its proper use promotes health. It is the beverage which God provided to quench the thirst of animals and man. Drunk freely, it helps to supply the necessities of the system and assists nature to resist disease.” *—The Ministry of Healing*, p. 237.

References

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Disclaimer: This article on hydration is intended to increase one’s knowledge of health-related lifestyle choices for the benefit of maintaining sound health and preventing disease. It is not designed for use as a medical reference to diagnose, treat, or prevent medical illness. Neither the author, Emil Bainhardt, nor the publisher, International Missionary Society, is responsible for anyone’s use of this material or its consequences. If you have questions about diagnosis, treatment, or prevention of a medical condition or illness, you should consult with a physician.

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