

ENDTIME ISSUES NEWSLETTER No. 168

“Does God Want You to Be Rich?”

Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D.,

**Retired Professor of Theology and Church History,
Andrews University**

INDEX OF TOPICS OF THIS NEWSLETTER

- **How to Subscribe and Unsubscribe**
- **Update on My Medical Condition:
Remember Me in Your Prayers**
- **A Conversion Experience from Romania**
- **DOES GOD WANT YOU TO BE RICH?
(The Essay of this Newsletter)**
- **Announcements of Services and Products**
 - * **Special offer on all the 6 DVD/CD albums
with Dr. Bacchiocchi's lectures and publications**
 - * **Upgrade of Prof. Jon Paulien's Album with powerpoint
outlines of his Revelation's lectures**
 - * **Special offer on the New DVD Album with 10
powerpoint lectures on the Sabbath and Second Advent**
 - * **Incredible New Offers on Hitachi Projectors**
 - * **The Smallest and most Powerful Remote Presenter**
 - * **Does your church or School Need a Screen?**
 - * **A New Townhome Community near the campus of
Andrews University**
 - * **Bed and Breakfast in London, England**
 - * **TAGNET new Web-hosting offer**

HOW TO SUBSCRIBE AND UNSUBSCRIBE

How to unsubscribe to this newsletter:

To unsubscribe simply click on this address and send it:
<mailto:endtimeissues-unsubscribe@lists.biblicalperspectives.com>

No additional words or explanations are necessary. The TAGNET server is set up to automatically remove your address. If you have a problem, send us an email at <mailto:sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com> saying “unsubscribe me and we will ask TAGNET to remove your address manually.

How to subscribe to this newsletter:

To subscribe simply click on this address and send it:
mailto:endtimeissues-subscribe@lists.biblicalpherspectives.com

No additional words or explanations are necessary. The TAGNET is set up to automatically add your address to the list. If you have a problem, send us an email at <mailto:sbacchiocchi@biblicalpherspectives.com> saying “subscribe me,” and we will ask TAGNET to enter your address manually.

UPDATE ON MY MEDICAL CONDITION

In the last newsletter I reported on the three hours surgery that took place on Tuesday afternoon, February 20, 2007, to remove both my colon cancer and gallbladder. The surgeon, Dennis Rasbach, MD, performed a magnificent surgery. His surgical skill have become well-known in Southwestern Michigan, especially in the Adventist community. Some faculty members have received a new lease on life as a result of his surgeries.

This past week I underwent a new Pet/Cat Scan at the Center for Cancer Care in Goshen, Indiana. This sophisticated machine is able to combine together the images of the the Pet Scan and the Cat Scan. The official results of this test will be available in a couple of days. This test gives a more accurate picture of the presence of cancer in the liver and will help the oncologists decide on their best treatment strategy. The preliminary reading suggests that no significant change has taken place in my liver cancer since my previous Cat Scan five weeks ago.

We are most grateful to God for leading us to the CENTER FOR CANCER CARE in Goshen, Indiana, which is less than one hour away from Andrews University where we live. The Center was built about 4 years ago and is staffed by a dozen of specialists in different fields. So far I have been greatly impressed by their competence and compassion.

Let me explain the basis for my impressions, by mentioning two conversations I had this past weeks with two different oncologist, one from the University of Illinois and the other from the M. D. Anderson

Cancer Center in Dallas. Both oncologists told me that at their center they attack widespread liver cancer exclusively with a new chimo medication which has proven very successful. They advised me against using microspheres together with chimo.

I reported the two conversation to Seza Gulec, MD, the Nuclear Oncologist, who leads the team that is treating me. I asked him what he thought of the advice to treat my liver cancer with chimo first, and subsequently with microspheres, if necessary. He explained to me that the reason the two oncologists proposed only chimo at first, is because they do not know yet how his combined method of chimo and microsphere works. He is a pioneer of this method. On May 1 he will present the results of his clinical trials at the American Medical Association. He plans to show how his combined method gives much better results than chimo or microspheres given separately.

In my case, Dr. Gulec intends to treat one lobe of the liver only with chimo and the other lobe with both chimo and microspheres. Yesterday I underwent two small surgeries to place under my skin the two ports needed to administer the two medications. The treatments begin next week. After two treatments given two weeks apart, I will take another Cat Scan test to see the difference in the results in the two lobes of the liver. This means that by the end of April, I should be able to report to you to what extent we are winning the battle against my liver cancer. Please wait for my report before starting calling the Center for Cancer Care in Goshen, Indiana. If the results are very positive, I will post all the necessary information about the Center for the benefit of those who are coping with cancer problems.

Regarding the use of anti-cancer natural products, I am still taking about 30 pills a day, special tea, plus Ambrotose by Mannatech. So far the Cat Scan has not shown any tangible improvements in my liver cancer after two months of intensive natural treatments. Perhaps the real beneficiaries are the manufacturers of these products who make millions of dollars by promising what they do not deliver. At this point, please do not mail me any more books or products. We have received far more than we can handle.

Rest assured that on our part we are using all the resources at our disposal to help me fight the battle against my widespread liver cancer. But I firmly believe that ultimately the healing is in the Lord's hand. After I have done my best, I trust in God to do the rest.

Please keep me still in your prayers as my battle against cancer is not over yet. James tells us: "pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (5:16). I am claiming this promise every day. May the Lord hear our prayers and grant me a few more years to live and serve Him. Thank you for your prayers.

A CONVERSION EXPERIENCE FROM ROMANIA

Nicu Butoi, is a Romanian Pastor currently ministering to a 400 members Adventist congregation in London, England, while pursuing his doctorate at Oxford University. Last year he invited me to speak at his church. He emailed me the following message with an encouraging experience.

My precious Friend, Pastor and Professor Bacchiocchi:

Last night I conducted a youth meeting and we had a special guest, a 36 old young man from Romania, called Daniel. He spent over 14 years in prison back in Romania, specially for stealing cars and violent acts

In the prison he became a Christian. He received several books from a friend of mine and started talking with a Greek-orthodox priest. The Priest was very knowledgeable and the young man couldn't convince him about the Sabbath and our other doctrines.

One day he received a pile of books. Among them was your dissertation *From Sabbath to Sunday*. The young man gave that book to the Priest who soon afterwards refused to work on Saturday.

Today the priest is a baptized SDA member and a very popular speaker at our camp-meetings and youth rallies. I told the congregation last night that I know personally the author of *From Sabbath to Sunday*

and the challenge you are facing with cancer at this time. After telling your story, we all prayed for you with a very earnest heart. Daniel, our special guest speaker, offered a special prayer for you, asking God to enable you to continue your marvelous work.

May the Good Lord Bless You!

Pastor Nicu Butoi

SPECIAL OFFER ON *THE PASSION OF CHRIST* EXTENDED UNTIL APRIL 30, 2007

The response to the special offer on *The Passion of Christ* has been very encouraging. Many churches and individual believers have ordered the book by the case of 34 copies for only \$100.00, that is \$2.95 per copy, instead of the regular price of \$25.00 per copy. Since the book is an ideal witnessing tool at this Easter time when the Christian world celebrates Christ's death and resurrection, I decided to extend the special offer until April 30, 2007.

In the previous newsletters I explained the mistake I made by asking the printer to reprint twice *The Passion of Christ*, forgetting completely that he had already delivered me the reprint of book two weeks earlier. I sense that this was a providential mistake that will help many people to appreciate the unique Adventist understanding of the centrality, necessity, and achievements of the Cross.

The Passion of Christ exposes the prevailing Catholic and Protestant misconceptions of the Cross. The book is designed to lead people to appreciate the unique, biblical, Adventist view of the suffering, death, and heavenly intercession of Christ. It is an ideal book for witnessing. It will help many people at this Easter time, to appreciate and accept the beauty of our Adventist Message.

To make it possible for many people to benefit from *The Passion of Christ*, we are extending until April 30, 2007 the special offer of \$2.95 per copy for a case 34 copies (\$100.00 for the case, postpaid), or \$5.00 per copy for a smaller case of 10 copies (\$50.00 for the case, postage paid). The regular price of the book is \$25.00 per copy. You will also

receive as a special bonus TWO FREE DVD ALBUMS with the two hours 3ABN live interview, where I share the highlights of the book. The DVD ALBUM regularly sells for \$50.00, but you receive it free with your order as a special bonus.

The DVD album contains the two hours the 3ABN interview, where I share the highlights of the book. After the interview, the phone kept on ringing for three weeks, as viewers from different parts of the world were calling to order a copy of the book which sold out in three weeks. This double reprint came out at the right time, because in few days most Christians will celebrate Christ's Passion and Resurrection on Easter-Sunday (April 8, 2007).

Incidentally, the term "Easter" is not found in the New Testament. Jesus was crucified and resurrected at the time of the Passover (April 3, 2007 this year), not at Easter. The date of Easter occurs on the Sunday following Passover to show separation from the Jews. (Check your calendar). It was the Bishop of Rome who changed the Sabbath to Sunday and Passover to Easter-Sunday. The reasons for these changes are discussed at length in my dissertation *From Sabbath to Sunday*.

The book *The Passion of Christ* and the accompanying DVD album, are ideal witnessing tools. They will help both your church members and friends to appreciate more fully the meaning of the Cross. Your help in promoting and distributing this timely book is greatly appreciated.

This is the Special Offer for quantity orders of *The Passion of Christ in Scripture and History*.

- **1 copy** of the book for **\$25.00**, postage paid.
Plus ONE free 3ABN DVD album included.
- **2 copies** of the book for **\$35.00**, postage paid. (\$17.50 each).
Plus ONE free 3ABN DVD album included.
- **10 copies** of the book for **\$50.00**, postage paid. (\$5.00 each).
Plus ONE free 3ABN DVD album is included.
- **34 copies** (one case) of the book for **\$100.00**, postage paid. (\$2.95 each). Plus TWO free 3ABN DVD albums are included.

Four Ways to Order *The Passion of Christ*

(1) **Online:** By clicking here: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/cart/catalog/index.php?cPath=25> CHECK THIS LINK

(2) **Phone:** By calling us at (269) 471-2915 to give us your credit card number and postal address.

(3) **Email:** By emailing your order to <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com>. Be sure to provide your postal address, credit card number, and expiration date.

(4) **Regular Mail:** By mailing a check to BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES, 4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, Michigan 4990, USA. We guarantee to process your order immediately.

“Does God Want You to Be Rich?”**Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D.,****Retired Professor of Theology and Church History,
Andrews University**

The cover story of a recent issue of *Time* magazine (September 18, 2006) raised the question: “Does God Want you to be Rich?” The accompanying photo shows a Rolls Royce with a Cross as a hood ornament. The article, written by David Van Bema and Jeff Chu, offers an informative discussion of the popular *Prosperity Gospel*, being preached today by leading tele-evangelists such as Creflo Dollar, Benny Hinn, Joyce Meyer, T. D. Jakes, Paul Couch, Kenneth Copeland, and Joel Osteen. These preachers encourage their followers to “sow a seed” of faith by donating to their ministry, in order to reap prosperity in the future.

The *Prosperity Gospel* teaches that God wants his children to prosper and be in good health. It calls upon Christians to step out in faith and claim prosperity as their birthright. Joel Osteen, Pastor of the Houston’s Lakewood Church—the largest megachurch in the USA—is perhaps the most successful popularizer of the *Prosperity Gospel*. In his Best-selling book *Your Best Life Now*, Osteen writes: “Your lot in life

is to continually increase. Your lot in life is to be an overcomer, to live prosperously in every area. . . . The Bible says, ‘God takes pleasure in prospering his children.’ As his children prosper spiritually, physically and materially, their increase brings pleasure to God.”

According to the *Prosperity Theology*, the purpose of Christ’s incarnation and atoning sacrifice was to provide reconciliation and restoration for our physical and financial problems. The secret to receive all the physical blessings of God, is to be found in the *amount of faith* of the believer. Prosperity preachers believe that faith is a *force* which has the magic ability to change and restore people’s lives. This means that if some believers do not receive the blessings asked for, it is because they lacked faith or did not tap correctly into God’s spiritual resources.

The problem with the *Prosperity Theology* is that it turns “faith” into a magic power possessed by a few privileged believers. In Scripture, however, faith is not a magic force possessed by few, but a trustful commitment to God, manifested in faithful, obedient living. This is a privilege granted to all believers, not to a privileged few. Faith does not guarantee “wealth and health.” Great men of faith like Paul were not blessed with “wealth and health,” but with infirmities and poverty, in spite of their total commitment to God.

The *Prosperity Theology* of health and wealth, is a profoundly American Gospel, especially connected to the blue collar Protestant religion that thrives on the cultural myth from rags to riches. The self-worth of individuals is often measure by their net-worth. Such a message is incomprehensible in impoverish countries like Ethiopia where we served for five years. In such poor countries there are no social, industrial, or economic mechanisms to even create the possibility of wealth.

Ethiopia, for example, was viewed at one time as the breadbasket of Africa, because its fertile soil, clement weather, and rainy seasons, allows for three to four harvests a year. The country has the potential for feeding much of Africa. But civil wars and inept, corrupt politicians have turned the country into a miserable place. The countless millions living in abject poverty in developing countries, find the *Prosperity Theology*, not only incomprehensible, but also insulting to their paralyzing poverty.

Objectives of this Bible Study

This Bible study attempts to answer the question: “Does God want you to be rich?” by examining the biblical view of wealth. This is an important and relevant study because an understanding of the biblical view of wealth is necessary to live a balanced lifestyle, avoiding asceticism on the one hand and materialism on the other hand.

Should Adventists Equate Piety with Frugality?

Adventists need to understand the biblical view of wealth and poverty, because some members equate piety with frugality. If some members drive a more expensive car or lives in a custom-made, attractive home, or wears more elegant clothes, chances are that some Adventists will label such members as “worldly.” I am familiar with this accusation because I faced it myself.

On several occasions I received critical messages from fellow believers who questioned my commitment to the Lord and to the Adventist church, because we built what they labeled a “luxurious pontifical palace.” The truth is that my two sons and myself invested two years of our spare time and energy to build a rather modest home that could better meet our family needs. I laid myself over 1000 square feet of tiles and some of the wooden floors. We wanted a home with plenty of sun-light and adequate space for my ministry of research and publishing. Storing my 17 books and recordings is becoming a constant challenge, because of the lack of storage place.

Some of my detractors choose to live in run-down homes to display their frugality and piety. They may have lived for the past 30 years in the same home with small, prison-style windows, old carpets, spartan furniture, and a gravel driveway. I wonder how can they be inspired to praise God every day for blessing them with a “gloomy,” run-down home to live in! I wonder how they can claim the promises of prosperity to be considered shortly. “Beloved, I wish above all things that you may prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospers” (3 John 2).

Since we moved into our new home 14 years ago, we have never ceased to praise God for the blessing of a luminous and comfortable

home where we can live and serve him. My wife can testify that in our prayers, we frequently thank God for giving us the strength to build a home where we can constantly praise Him with a joyful heart. It is my conviction that the church where we worship and the home where we live (remember that the home is also a sanctuary), should reflect the beauty of the God we worship.

The examples just cited show the importance of addressing the question: Should piety be equated with frugality? What should be the Adventist (Christian) attitude toward wealth? We intend to address these questions from a biblical perspective.

A BIBLICAL VIEW OF WEALTH

Few things trouble people today more than money. Too much of it tempts people to be insensitive to the needs of others. No enough of it, can result in hunger, sickness, and death. The management of money is a major concern today. Its mismanagement is a leading cause of family conflicts.

Today Christians are bombarded with *unbiblical* views of wealth. Television programs focusing on the lifestyle of the rich and famous and the veneration of the hollywood stars, testify to our society's materialistic values—values that many Christians have adopted. This is exemplified by those who preach a prosperity gospel of “health and wealth” for all Christians. We noted earlier that this is the gospel preached today by leading tele-evangelists.

At the other extreme there are radical Christians who condemn all wealth as sinful, and equate a pious Christian lifestyle with frugality and poverty. For them the notion of *rich Christian* is a contradiction of terms. Which of the two positions is biblically sound?

At first glance the Bible seems to condemn wealth as wrong for Christians. Both the Old and New Testaments denounce materialism and view wealth as a stumbling block to discipleship. The most well-known text is: “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:25; Matt 19:24; Luke 18:25).

If wealth is a stumbling block to salvation, then Christians living in developed countries are in trouble, because they are all wealthy by New Testament standards. But a study of the relevant passages shows that the biblical view of wealth is more complex. Wealth is presented as both a bane and a blessings. Let us look at some basic biblical principles about wealth.

Wealth Can Be an Evidence of God's Blessing

Both the Old and the New Testaments speak of wealth as an evident of God's blessings on His faithful children. For example, we read in Genesis 13:2: "Now Abraham was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold." His enormous wealth was not an obstacle to his faithful commitment to God. He is presented in the Bible as an outstanding example of faith.

On a similar vein we are told that Job was "blameless and upright, one who feared God" (Job 1:1), though he was one of the wealthiest man in the East: "He had seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses, and very many servants; so that this man was the greatest of all the people in the East" (Job 1:3). After the testing experience, "the Lord restored the fortune of Job . . . the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before" (Job 42:10). It is evident that in the case of Job, prosperity was an evidence of divine blessings, granted him by God Himself.

Repeatedly the Old Testament promises all manner of material blessings to those who are faithful to God. "If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, then I will give you your rains in their seasons and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. . . . You shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land securely" (Lev 26:3, 5; Lev 26:9-10; Deut 11:13-15; Is 54:11-12; Jer 33:6-9).

Prosperity is promised not only at the national level, but also at the individual one. We read in Psalm 25:12-13, that "the man that fears the Lord . . . shall abide in prosperity and his children shall possess the land." Ecclesiastes speaks of "wealth and possessions" as a divine gift to be enjoyed in this life: "Every man also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them . . . this is a gift of God" (Eccl 5:19).

Some will argue that the blessings of prosperity are peculiar to the Old Testament times, when believers were more interested in *physical* blessings. But in the New Testament Christians are called upon to set their hearts upon the *spiritual* world, and look forward to the prosperity and wealth that awaits them in the world to come.

Such a distinction can hardly be sustained, because the OT promises of prosperity apply with equal force to NT statements like the one of Jesus found in Mark 10: 29-30: “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this life (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and fields . . .) and in the age to come eternal life.”

Sell a piece of land and use its proceeds to support mission programs of the church, and you are promised a hundredfold return from the Lord. These are sweeping promises often quoted especially by *Gospel Prosperity* preachers. Their meaning must be found in the context of the whole teaching of Scripture on wealth. Let us look at some basic ways in which the Bible explains the meaning of wealth and prosperity.

The Promises of Blessings are True as a General Principle

As a general principle Christians who live godly lives, obeying the biblical moral principles, do prosper in their lives and work. This is the constant theme of the Book of Proverbs. Persons who live faithfully and responsibly before God, will be blessed in their lives and work. “I walk in the way of righteousness, in the paths of justice, endowing with wealth those who love me, and filling their treasuries” (Prov 8:20-21; 10:4; 12:11, 24; 13:4; 14:23). Paul acknowledges that God gives liberally to His people for their enjoyment (1 Tim 6:17). John writes: “I wish above all things that you may prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth” (3 John 2). By comparing the prosperity of the soul with that of the body, it is evident that John speaks of both physical and spiritual prosperity.

It is a simple, observable fact that over time Christians faithful to God, usually prosper in their life. They improve their socio-economic conditions. An example is the English Puritans who came to America

seeking for freedom to live their faith. In time they became very prosperous as a direct consequence of their faithfulness to the way of life and ethics taught in Scripture. Some scholars trace the roots of capitalism to the principles espoused by the Puritans (Calvinism).

A Christian who trust in the Lord and lives according to the principles of His Word, will be an honest, generous, hard-working person, eager to use all the God-given opportunities. As a general rule, such persons improve their socio-economic condition, and view their prosperity as a tangible evidence of God's blessings.

In my travels around the world, time and again I have witnessed how converts to our Adventist church, gradually improve their socio-economic conditions. This is true even in developing countries where the educational and economic opportunities are very limited.

Blessed are the churches with a good mix of professional and business members who have become prosperous through diligent work and management skills. These are the members who usually contributes generously to support the school, outreach programs, building expansion and renovation. I have preached in churches where the carpet is stained and torn from 20 plus years of use. The pastor apologized to me saying: "We desperately need to renovate our church. But our church members are poor. They are mostly "blue collars workers. We have very few wealthy church members."

Societies Built on Biblical Moral Principles Can Prosper

What is more is that even whole economies and societies which are built in some measures on biblical ethical principles, prosper more than those who do not. An example of the latter is the poverty and corruption that prevails in the predominant Catholic countries of central and South America. The root problem in these countries is the failure of the Catholic Church to practice and teach the moral principles of the Bible.

In these countries people ignore and violate biblical moral principles. Bribes and stealing is a way of life. People live under the assumption that salvation after all is a *dispensation of the Catholic Church*, not a *disposition of the believer*. No matter how evil their lives have been,

the Catholic Church has the keys to open to them the door of paradise. Such a mind set fosters the corruption and poverty widespread in countries where the Catholic Church still controls the thinking and living of the people.

Summing up, we can certainly say that as a general principle God's promises of prosperity to His faithful children, are literally true, though this may sound extravagant. But their meaning can ultimately be correctly understood in the context of the whole teaching of Scripture on wealth and prosperity.

Spiritual and Eschatological Application of Blessings of Prosperity

Often in Scripture the blessing of salvation such as peace with God, forgiveness of sin, eternal salvation, the joy of salvation, are presented under the figure of material prosperity. For example, Job recollects the happy period of his life, saying: "I was in my autumn days, when the friendship of God was upon my tent; when the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were about me; when my steps were washed with milk, and the rock poured out for me streams of oil" (Job 29:4-5).

It is evident that Job here speaks of milk and oil, not to describe his material prosperity, but to represent his happy relationship with God. On a similar vein Isaiah speaks of the "oil of joy" to describe the time of the Lord's favor (Is 61:3). In these instances material prosperity serves to represent spiritual blessings.

The blessings of material prosperity promised in Deuteronomy and Leviticus, were given when Israel was poised to enter the Promised Land. But Canaan was not only a fertile and beautiful land, it also represented their spiritual heritage, the blessings of the eternal Promised Land. In Hebrews 11 we read that Canaan was not only a significant piece of real estate, but a prophetic representation of the world to come. Abraham "looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb 11:10).

What all of this means is that taken in the whole context of the Scriptures, the promises of prosperity for those who trust and obey God,

are fulfilled in the greater spiritual blessings of the soul and heart in this present life, and in a more complete way in the prosperity of the world to come—which is the true and eternal Promised Land.

Prosperity is not Always a Sign of Divine Blessings.

But in Scripture material prosperity is not always a sign of divine blessings. Psalm 73 refutes the notion that material prosperity is always a sign of fidelity to God. The Psalmist is troubled by the fact that in a world controlled by God, the wicked seem to prosper more than His faithful children. “I was envious of the arrogant, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For they have no pangs; their bodies are sound and sleek. . . . Behold, these are the wicked; always at ease, they increase in riches. All in vain I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence. For all the day long I have been stricken, and chastened every morning” (Ps 73:12-14).

The Psalmist was deeply troubled by the prosperity of the wicked and the misery of the righteous. By his own confession he came close to giving up his faith in God and join the world. But then something happened. One Sabbath when he went to the Temple to worship, the Lord showed him the end of the wicked: “I perceived their end” (Ps 73:17). The Lord revealed to him that at the end the wicked will be “destroyed in a moment, swept away utterly by terror” (Ps 73:19).

The vision of the tragic end of the wicked gave to the Psalmist the reassurance that God’s love is infinitely greater than any material prosperity this world can provide. “Whom I have in heaven but thee? And there is nothing upon the earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my *portion for ever*” (Ps 73:25-26).

“My *portion for ever*” is a phrase used to describe the *portion* which any Israelite received as his inheritance. But in this case the Psalmist says that he would rather have the Lord than land, the love of God in his heart than earthly wealth and prosperity. If the Lord is his portion, that is, his inheritance and wealth, then he had no reason to envy anyone, no matter how rich and prosperous that person might be.

Summing up, the blessings of material prosperity promised to the faithful, find their fulfilment sometimes in a *literal* way, but sometimes in a spiritual and eschatological way. The apostles gave up everything for their Lord, yet as far as we know none of them were blessed with houses or land or children. But they became incalculably rich in other things: they did not receive splendid material homes made of stones, but spiritual temples made of living stones, the people of God. Through their preaching they established churches across the world with spiritual children in great number. In their cases the blessing of prosperity were fulfilled in the advancement of the Gospel.

Distinction Between the Possession of Wealth and Love of Wealth

The Bible condemns the love of wealth, not the possession of wealth per se. Money is not good or evil, but neutral. It is a tool in our hands which can be used for good or evil, depending upon the intention of the person possessing it. Paul warns against the love of money, saying: “The love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs” (1 Tim 6:10).

The love of money is evil because it creates sinful desires. It leads people to love their wealth more than God. They become possessed by their possessions, to the point of crowding God out of their lives. They live independently from God, trusting in their wealth for solution to their problems. Greed for money is just as much idolatry as worshipping an idol. Paul warns that many stray from the faith because of greed. Instead of experiencing the blessings of God, they are headed for pain and sorrow.

Money is not the standard of faith or godliness. *We do not measure the spiritual worth of church members by their net financial worth.* But what we do with our money tells a lot about our priorities. Believers who cheerfully returns their tithes and offering to God, and responds generously to the needs of the church and community, show that they view their money as a blessing to be shared. If our spiritual life has the right focus, we will give with a cheerful heart to God and the needy. That is why the Bible says that “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor 9:7).

Wealth as the Fruit of Injustice

Wealthy people are often condemned in the Bible, not because of their riches, but because of the dishonest means used to acquire them. Amos railed against the injustice of obtaining wealth through oppression and fraud (Amos 5:11). Micah spoke out against the unjust scales and light weights used to defraud the poor (Micah 6:10-12). Isaiah condemns the unjust decrees passed by the princes to rob the poor and make the orphans their pray (Is 10:1-3; 3:14-15).

James warns the rich that the Lord will destroy all their gold, silver, and fine garments, because they gained their wealth by exploiting and defrauding their laborers. “Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you have kept by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of host. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned, you have killed the righteous man; he does not resist you” (James 5:4-6).

None of the above texts condemn wealth *per se*. What they denounce is the unjust means by which wealth was obtained. This denouncement is applicable to our times. Many employers in the USA today become rich by paying minimum wage to immigrant workers who are forced to live in miserable conditions below the poverty line.

Sometime ago I presented a seminar in a magnificent three million dollar brand new Hispanic Adventist church that was inaugurated in occasion of my visit. I was told that the church was donated by a wealthy business man who operates a chain of nurseries. That was one of several churches this Adventist business man built and donated to Hispanic believers as an expression of his gratitude for their hard-work which made him rich. In his speech he said: “The hard-work of the Hispanic people have made me rich. Now I want to express my gratitude to them by building and donating churches to our Hispanic believers.

When I listened to the praises piled upon this business man for his generosity, I could not help but ask: How wiser it would have been for this business man to share some of his profits with his poor workers

by paying them a generous wage? Becoming rich by exploiting desperate immigrant willing to work even below minimum wage, is condemned by Scripture as exploitation (James 5:4-6).

It is important to remember that on judgment day Christ will praise those who have shown concern for the poor (Matt 25:34-36, 40), not those who have built churches with money taken from the poor. We must never forget that in the Bible the church is not a building, but people (*ekklesia*—called out) who have responded to God’s call. Helping God’s people means building His church.

Wealth as the Reward of Diligent Labor

We live in a time when many want to become wealthy without diligent work. Untold numbers of books have been published on “how to become a millionaire” without hard work. Millions of people are buying these books, hoping to learn how to strike it rich. The lotteries and gambling casinos are filled with people who want to make a fast buck. But the reality is that the coffers of the lotteries and casinos that are amassing wealth.

The Bible teaches that wealth should be built up slowly through diligent work. “An inheritance gained hastily at the beginning will not be blessed at the end” (Prov 20-21). Wealth can be amassed quickly through lottery or gambling without diligent work, but such wealth is not blessed by God. By enticing people with the promise of becoming rich overnight, gambling replaces the Biblical concept of diligent labor with the secular theory of luck. The get-rich-quick philosophy, mocks the core values of disciplined work habits, thrift, adherence to routine, and appreciation for the reward of diligent labor.

Repeatedly Scripture equates wealth with diligent labor. “A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich” (Prov 19:4). “The soul of the sluggard craves, and gets nothing, while the soul of the diligent is richly supplied” (Prov 13: 4).

A Personal Experience

Sometimes poverty is inevitable. In spite of their best efforts some people cannot raise above the miserable condition in which their

were born, because their society offers no educational or job opportunities. I remember in Ethiopia, students knocking at our door all the time, begging for the chance to work at our “pipe industry,” where we made chairs, desks, and tables. It was heartbreaking to have to say that I could not assume another student, because I knew that no other job was available.

But even in societies with limited job opportunities, a diligent person can find some employment. I grew up after World War II in a very poor home. We were five children depending for our survival on the meager salary of our father who was a carpenter. Mother had to stretch every penny to feed us and clothe us with donated garments.

At the age of 10-12, I wanted to help my family, but there were no jobs available for a boy of my age. One day I got the bright idea to ask Dad’s builder, if he would allow me to collect all the discarded bent nails and straighten them up for his workers to reuse. He accepted the proposal and agreed to pay me the equivalent of a couple dollar for every bucket of nails I would straighten. I was a happy boy, straightening nails on an old anvil. Sometimes I missed the nail and hit my finger instead. It was not long before I have several blisters on my fingers.

Some people would rather be unemployed than accept a menial job that pays minimum wages. The fact is that sometimes we cannot be choosy. We must accept what is available, and work at it wholeheartedly. “Whatever your hands find to do, do it with your might” (Ecc 9:10). Diligent people soon receive the recognition that they deserve and are promoted to higher positions.

In some churches and communities there are a few persons who do not want to work. They depend largely on the help of the church or community. The problem existed already in the primitive church. Paul’s instructions for this people are clear: “We gave you this command: ‘If anyone will not work, let him not eat. For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busy-bodies, not doing any work. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work in quietness and to earn their own living’” (2 Thess 3:10-12).

Work is a Creation Ordinance

In the Bible work begins as a divine example and not as a divine command. The first worker mentioned in the Bible is God Himself. The entire drama of human history began as a result of the work of God. “In the first two chapters of Genesis,” writes John Stott, “God reveals Himself to us as a worker. Day by day, stage by stage, his creative work unfolded. And when He created mankind male and female to His own image, He made them workers too.”

The seven days structure of human time was established at creation by God’s working on six days and resting on the seventh day. The experience of work and rest are human, yet the Scripture applies them first to God. “On the seventh day God finished his *work* which he had done” (Gen 2:2). Moreover during the creation week God rested from his creative work at the end of each day, thus setting up a rhythm of work and rest for us to follow.

God like a Human Worker

God’s work of creation is described in human terms. He became a cosmic gardener when He planted a garden in Eden (Gen 2:8), a sculptor when He formed man from the dust of the earth (Gen 2:7), a surgeon when He made Eve from the rib of Adam (Gen 2:21-22). Psalm 19:1 tells us that “the firmament proclaims his handiwork.” Psalm 8:3 pictures the heavens as “the work of thy fingers.” Again and again God is portrayed as a Master Craftsman.

The creation account tells us that God made mankind in his own image (Gen 1:26-27). The resemblance between God and His human creatures is to be found in many areas. One obvious similarity is that they are both workers. At creation God assigned a distinctive task to mankind on this planet: “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves upon the earth” (Gen 1:28). Mankind is to achieve dominion by inhabiting the earth, by controlling and nurturing the physical environment, and by maintaining the physical and animal worlds in their proper relationship with God. The creation story implicitly shows that human work is part of God’s plan for mankind.

Working Six Days is Part of Sabbathkeeping

What is implicit in the creation story becomes explicit in the Fourth Commandment where God enjoins to mankind to work six days and rest on the seventh day in accordance with the pattern He himself established at creation: “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work . . . for in six days the Lord made the heaven and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.”(Ex 20:8-11).

Generally we think of the Sabbath commandment as an injunction to rest on the seventh day. But the commandment is equally clear in enjoining us to work during the six days: “Six days you shall labor, and do all your work.” It is the doing of all our work in six days that makes possible the rest experience of the seventh day.

As Adventists we tend to emphasize the “rest” aspect of the seventh day, ignoring the “work” aspect of the sixth days. Yet, working six days is an essential component of sabbathkeeping. The Fourth Commandment challenges us to be productive, to use our time wisely to accomplish all the work that needs to be done. This means that we can break the Sabbath, for example, on a Tuesday, by loafing around and doing nothing.

If we waste our time during the week, accomplishing very little, then we have little reason to celebrate when the Sabbath comes around. But, if on Friday night we can look back to a productive week, then we can joyfully celebrate, not only God’s creative and redemptive accomplishments, but also what we by God’s grace have been able to accomplish during the week which has gone by.

The fact that the Sabbath challenges us to be productive during the week, using our time to the full, may partly explain why people who become Seventh-day Adventists tend to improve their socio-economic status. In my travels I note that Adventist congregations over all are faring better than the general population. Could it be that by accepting the Sabbath, people are inspired to work harder during the six days in

order to be free for God on the seventh-day? It would be interesting to investigate how the Sabbath “work ethics” of Adventists, influences their socio-economic status.

Conclusion

Does God want you to be rich? The answer that has emerged from our study of the biblical view of wealth, is that as a general principle those who live godly lives, working diligently, are blessed by God with prosperity. This principle applies also to societies which are built in some measures on biblical ethical principles. They prosper more than those who do not.

The Bible condemns the love of wealth, not the possession of wealth per se. The problem is when people become possessed by their possessions. Money is not good or evil, but neutral. It is a tool in our hands which can be used for good or evil, depending upon the intention of the person possessing it.

The Bible teaches that wealth should be built up slowly through diligent work, not through gambling and lotteries without hard work. The get-rich-quick philosophy, mocks the core values of disciplined work habits, thrift, adherence to routine, and appreciation for the reward of diligent labor.

In Scripture material prosperity is not always a sign of divine blessings. Unbelievers often prosper more than believers, because they acquire their wealth by dishonest means. Ultimately their wealth will perish with them.

Money is not the standard of faith or godliness. *We do not measure the spiritual worth of church members by their net financial worth.* But what we do with our money tells a lot about our priorities. If God blesses us with wealth, we must keep our priorities straight and guard against the seductive effects of wealth.

ANNOUNCEMENTS OF SERVICES AND PRODUCTS

SPECIAL OFFER ON THE 6 DVD/CD ALBUMS WITH ALL OF DR. BACCHIOCCHI'S LECTURES AND PUBLICATIONS

This offer may sound too good to be true, but it is true. Until April 30, 2007, you can order **the complete package of all my DVD and CD recordings, consisting of 6 Albums, for only \$100.00**, instead of the regular price of \$700.00. This is a one-time incredible offer.

You can see the picture of all the SIX ALBUMS and read a detailed description of them, just by clicking at this URL address:
<http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/holidayoffer.htm>

You can order **the complete package of 6 DVD and CD Albums for only \$100.00**, instead of the regular price of \$700.00, in four different ways:

(1) Online: By clicking here: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/holidayoffer.htm>

(2) Phone: By calling us at (269) 471-2915 to give us your credit card number and postal address.

(3) Email: By emailing your order to <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com>. Be sure to provide your postal address, credit card number, and expiration date.

(4) Regular Mail: By mailing a check for \$100.00 to BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES, 4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, Michigan 4990, USA. We guarantee to process your order immediately.

UPGRADE OF PROF. JON PAULIEN'S CD ALBUM, WITH THE POWERPOINT OUTLINES ON REVELATION

Prof. Jon Paulien is one of the most respected Adventist scholars. Besides serving as the chairman of the New Testament at Andrews University Theological Seminary, he writes and lectures extensively in many

parts of the world. He is rightly regarded as a leading Adventist authority on the book of Revelation which he has taught at the Seminary for the past 20 years.

Prof. Paulien teaches the book of Revelation using powerpoint outlines. The file containing all his powerpoint outlines, has just been added to his CD ALBUM, which contains more than a dozen of his books and scores of his articles. If you plan to study or to teach the book of Revelation, you will find the powerpoint outlines of Prof. Paulien's lectures most helpful.

You will find in this collection a priceless resource to enrich your understanding and experience of biblical truths. Prof. Paulien examines fundamental biblical beliefs in a profound and yet popular way. He is a recognized expert on the book of Revelation. Several of his books will help you to unlock the secrets of Revelation.

Until now Prof. Paulien books and articles were available only in a printed form, often unavailable at local ABC stores. In view of my indebtedness to Prof. Paulien's scholarship, I have offered to help him to place all of his books and articles on a CD disk. This makes it possible with the ACROBAT global search, to locate immediately what he has written on biblical texts or current topics.

The new CD Album contains a dozen of Prof. Paulien's books, scores of his articles, and his powerpoint outlines of the book of Revelation. You will find this collection to be a priceless resource to enrich your understanding and experience of biblical truths. Prof. Paulien examines fundamental biblical beliefs in a profound and yet popular way.

The special offer for the new CD ALBUM, which includes Prof. Paulien's books, articles, and powerpoint outlines of the book of Revelation, is only \$40.00 instead of the regular price of \$60.00. The price includes the airmailing expenses to any overseas destination.

To order the newly released CD ALBUM with all of Prof. Paulien books and articles, simply click here: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/PaulienAD/>

If you have a problem ordering online, email us your order at <bacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com>, giving us your address, credit card number, and expiration date. You can also order by phone, calling us at (269) 471-2915. We will take your order by phone.

SPECIAL OFFER ON THE LATEST DVD ALBUM WITH THE SABBATH AND SECOND ADVENT POWERPOINT SEMINARS

While undergoing cancer treatment for the next few weeks, I will be unable to present my popular powerpoint Sabbath and Advent Seminars. But the good thing is that recently these two seminars have been professionally recorded by a TV crew here at Andrews University. This means that you do not have to wait for me to come to your church. If your church has a DVD player and a projector, the whole congregation can enjoy these messages immediately.

The DVD ALBUM consists of 10 DVD powerpoint lectures on the Sabbath and Second Advent which I presents in churches and schools across North America and overseas. Each lecture is delivered with about 100 powerpoint slides professionally prepared. If you have not had the opportunity to attend one of my seminars, you will enjoy listening to my passionate and compelling presentation of the Sabbath and Second Advent in the privacy of your home.

You can preview a few minutes of these timely messages, simply by clicking on this link: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/preview.html> If you have DSL service, the downloading time is less than two minutes. To view these digital clips, your computer must have QUICK TIME software. If you need to install QUICK TIME, you can download it freely from the web simply by clicking <http://www.apple.com/quick-time/mac.html>

You will be impressed by the clarity of the 1000 slides used for the 10 lectures. The reason for their clarity is that the editor spent a month to insert manually each slide during the editing process. This has been an expensive project, costing me over \$10,000.00. I have worked on this project during the past 10 years, making three different recordings. My goal has been to offer clear, visual, and compelling lectures on the Sabbath and Second Advent.

Topics Covered by the latest DVD Album:

- The gripping testimony of my search for the Sabbath at a Vatican University in Rome:

- The discoveries I made in Vatican libraries on the change from Sabbath to Sunday in early Christianity. You will see some of the documents and pictures of the Popes largely responsible for promoting the abandonment of the Sabbath and the adoption of Sunday.

- Practical principles on how to keep the Sabbath to experience mental, physical, and spiritual renewal.

- An update report on the recent Sabbath/Sunday developments. You will learn about the latest attacks against the Sabbath and the unprecedented rediscovery of the Sabbath by scholars, church leaders, and congregations of different denominations.

- An informative Bible Study on the certainty and imminence of Christ's Return. The lecture discusses the unprecedented fulfilment of end-time prophecies.

- A practical meditation on how to live in the joyful expectancy of a soon-coming Savior.

- As an extra bonus the album includes also a two-hours sacred concert entitled THE SABBATH IN SONGS. With the help of two gifted lyric tenors, I presents the message and blessings of the Sabbath for today with words and songs. I do the speaking and the two tenors do the singing. The recording was professionally done at a TV studio in South Bend, Indiana.

The history of this DVD album goes back about 10 years, when *Amazing Facts* first recorded only 4 lectures at the Sacramento Central SDA Church. In seeking to improve the visual quality of the lectures, a new recording was done about 5 years later in Dallas, Texas, by our Adventist Media Center. Since then, I worked hard to increase the number of the lectures and to produce about 500 new powerpoint slides to enhance the visual quality of the presentations. This called for a new recording that was done recently by a TV crew at the new Michiana-FilAm SDA Church at Andrews University.

Special Offer and Order Information

Your special offer on this latest recording, consisting of 10 DVD powerpoint lectures on the Sabbath and Second Advent, is

only \$50.00, instead of the regular price of \$150.00. The special \$50.00 price includes the airmail expenses to any foreign country.

You can order **the latest DVD Album on the SABBATH and SECOND ADVENT for only \$50.00**, instead of the regular price of \$150.00, in four different ways:

(1) Online: By clicking here: http://www.biblicalpherspectives.com/cart/catalog/product_info.php?cPath=23&products_id=48

(2) Phone: By calling us at (269) 471-2915 to give us your credit card number and postal address.

(3) Email: By emailing your order to <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com>. Be sure to provide your postal address, credit card number, and expiration date.

(4) Regular Mail: By mailing a check for \$50.00 to BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES, 4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, Michigan 4990, USA. We guarantee to process your order immediately.

INCREDIBLE NEW OFFERS ON HITACHI PROJECTORS

HITACHI has given us an additional discount on some of their projectors to help especially our churches and schools in developing countries. This is the special offer on the following three models:

CP-X260 HIGH RESOLUTION 2500 LUMENS - Only \$1095.00

Previous SDA price for the 2500 lumens was \$2395.00.

CP-X444 HIGH RESOLUTION 3200 LUMENS - Only \$1695.00

Previous SDA price for the 3200 lumens was \$3295.00.

CP-X1250 HIGH RESOLUTION 4500 LUMENS Only \$3795.00

Previous SDA price for the 4500 lumens was \$4900.00.

WARRANTY: The above prices include a 3 years 24/7 replacement warranty worth about \$285.00.

You can order the HITACHI projectors online by clicking at this link:
<http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/cart/catalog/index.php?cPath=24>

If you have a problem ordering online, call us at (269) 471-2915. We will take your order by phone. Your order will be processed immediately.

THE SMALLEST AND MOST POWERFUL REMOTE PRESENTER

If you are looking for an outstanding REMOTE for your Power-Point presentations, you will be pleased to know HONEYWELL has just come out with the smallest and most powerful remote in the market.

The size of the transmitter is smaller than a credit card. You can stick it inside the palm of your hand and nobody can see it. I tested the remote in an open environment, and the radio signal can go up to 400 feet of distance. IT IS INCREDIBLE! The transmitter has three buttons: forward, backward, and laser.

You can order online the new POWERPOINT PRESENTER simply by clicking here: http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/cart/catalog/product_info.php?cPath=27&products_id=67

If you have a problem ordering online, simply call us at (269) 471-2915. We will take your order by phone. You can also email us your order at <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com>, giving us your address, credit card number, and expiration date.

DOES YOUR CHURCH OR SCHOOL NEED A SCREEN?

If your church/school is looking for a screen, the DA-LITE SCREEN COMPANY, the largest manufacturer of screens in the world, has agreed to offer their line of screens to our Adventist churches and schools at a about 30% discount.

The procedure is very simple. Visit the DA-LITE SCREEN COMPANY website at <http://www.da-lite.com>. You will see hundreds of models of screens with their respective prices. Once you find the screen that you need, give us the model number by phone (269) 471-2915 or

email your request <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com> We will forward your order immediately to DA-LITE that will ship the screen directly to your address. You will receive the screen at about 30% discount.

A NEW TOWNHOME COMMUNITY NEAR TO THE CAMPUS OF ANDREWS UNIVERSITY

If you are planning to move to Andrews University, you will be pleased to learn about a new Townhome Community being developed less than a mile away from the campus of Andrews University.

For a description and a picture of the Townhome Units, click at this link: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/danny>

BED & BREAKFAST FACILITIES IN LONDON, ENGLAND

If your travel plans call for a stop in London, you will be pleased to learn about a most gracious Adventist couple that offer the best accommodation and breakfast I have ever enjoyed. It has become my home away from home when in London. See details at: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/Promotions/BED&BREAKFAST.htm>

TAGNET SPECIAL NEW WEB HOSTING OFFER FOR ADVENTIST CHURCHES AND MEMBERS

TAGnet provides an incredible number of webhosting services to our churches and members. This newsletter comes to you through their gracious and efficient service. For detail information, visit their website at <http://www.netadventist.org> or <http://home.tagnet.org/> You may also call their office 800 - 9TAGNET. They are ready and eager to help you.