



THE GOOD NEWS FOR LAODICEA

Study Guide One

Why It's a Blessing to Be Hungry and Thirsty

Most of us have at some time in our lives been so sick that we had lost our appetite. We knew we needed food but the thought of eating was repulsive to us.

Perhaps the Lord permitted us to have this frightening experience for a special reason. Your European host or hostess will seat you at the table and say, "I wish you a good appetite." The Lord wants us to learn to appreciate what a blessing a healthy appetite is. Without it, life is hardly worth living, and death by starvation may be the result.

Not only is the Lord our shepherd, He is also our host who seats us at His table loaded with nutritious spiritual food. He wants us to have a good appetite, because we can't eat without it. But most Seventh-day Adventists are not *spiritually* hungry and thirsty, and many are literally starving for spiritual food. They don't feel their need for it. Day after day, week after week passes by without their personally eating the bread of life. A millionaire starving for want of an appetite may be worse off than an African refugee who feels his hunger.

The 1888 message is not so much the miracle of feeding hungry people as the greater miracle of developing an appetite in church members who are so sick that they do not even feel hungry. It can arouse discouraged people who thought that nothing could inspire them.

The Inestimable Blessing of Feeling Hungry and Thirsty

1. What special happiness comes to those who feel a spiritual appetite? Matthew 5:6.

Note: Here is a description of the happiness we will know when we learn to be hungry: "If you have a sense of need in your soul, if you hunger and thirst after righteousness, this is an evidence that Christ has wrought upon your heart....Familiar truths will present themselves to your mind in a new aspect; texts of Scripture will burst

upon you with a new meaning, as a flash of light....You will know that Christ is leading you; a divine Teacher is at your side....You...will long to speak to others of the comforting things that have been revealed to you....You will communicate some fresh thought in regard to the character or the work of Christ. You will have some fresh revelation of His pitying love to impart to those who love Him and to those who love Him not. (*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 36).

2. When Jesus says that we are blessed when we hunger after righteousness, what kind of righteousness must He be speaking of? Galatians 5:5.

Note: There is only one kind of righteousness—that which is by faith. Those who feel that they already understand it lose the blessing; those who feel empty and hungry are the only ones who can "be filled."

3. What does the Lord Jesus say is the basic problem of Seventh-day Adventists generally? Revelation 3:16, 17.

Note: This is another way of saying, "You feel full; you don't feel hungry or thirsty." It is clear that the Lord is not talking about money or material possessions. He is talking about how, as a people generally, we feel wealthy in our understanding of the gospel. "We have the truth; we have the doctrine of righteousness by faith." This feeling of satisfaction dooms us to be "wretched, and miserable, and poor."

4. To whom does Jesus address this message? Who are the ones who primarily exhibit this lack of healthy appetite? Verse 14; Revelation 1:20; *Gospel Workers*, pp. 13, 14; *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 586.

Note: The "angel of the church" is not the same as the church. The churches are "the seven golden candlesticks," but the "angels of the seven churches" are their leadership. The leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church includes its administrators, educators, pastors, elders, deacons, Sabbath School teachers, Pathfinder leaders, etc. As a group, the Lord says we share a common illness: feeling full when in fact we are starving and don't realize it.

5. Hungry people want to eat; what does Jesus promise to the "angel of the church of the Laodiceans"? Revelation 3:19, 20.

Note: The promise in Jesus' beatitude to those who hunger and thirst ("they shall be filled") is repeated in this promise to the leadership of the last church. We have not obeyed Christ's call to repent unless we have learned to sense the reality of our hunger.

A Message of Healing for the Seventh-day Adventist Church

6. What was the spiritual condition of the church prior to 1888?

Answer: The Lord's messenger declared: "A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs....We have far more to fear from within than from without. The hindrances to strength and success are far greater from the church itself than from the world....What is our condition in this fearful and solemn time? Alas, what pride is prevailing in the church, what hypocrisy, what deception, what love of dress, frivolity, and amusement, what desire for supremacy! All these sins have clouded the mind, so that eternal things have not been discerned" (*Review and Herald*, March 22, 1887).

"The facts concerning the real condition of the professed people of God, speak more loudly than their profession, and make it evident that some power has cut the cable that anchored them to the Eternal Rock, and that they are drifting away to sea, without chart or compass" (*Ibid.*, July 24, 1888).

A few weeks before the 1888 Conference began, she wrote: "O that the haughty hearts of men...might enter into the meaning of redemption, and seek to learn the meekness and lowliness of Jesus" (*Ibid.*, September 11, 1888).

7. How did the Lord seek to meet this need in the message of 1888?

Answer: "The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones. This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God" (*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 91, 92).

8. How did Ellen White identify this message as that of the special angel of Revelation 18:1?

Answer: "The loud cry of the third angel has already begun in the

revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer. This is the beginning of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth" (*Review and Herald*, November 22, 1892).

She spoke of the 1888 message as "the special power of the Holy Spirit that God longed to impart," "the light that is to lighten the whole earth with its glory" (*Selected Messages*, Book One, pp. 234, 235), "the strong clear light of that other angel who comes down from heaven having great power" (Letter B2a, 1892). She also identified the message as the beginning of the long-awaited latter rain (*General Conference Bulletin*, 1893, p. 377). Had the message been accepted, the glorious work of God would have been finished in that generation (p. 419).

This is a fantastic truth! That for which the world church has been praying for a century has already been given in the 1888 message. Yet Ellen White says that "Satan succeeded in shutting [it] away from our people, in a great measure...and by the action of our own brethren [it] has been in a great degree kept away from the world" (*Selected Messages*, Book One, pp. 234, 235).

9. What beautiful pictures of success describe the future of God's work? Matthew 24:14; Revelation 18:1-4; Habakkuk 2:14; Joel 2:28-32.

Note: This grand finale of world history will feature the Christlike service of the remnant church. It was to prepare the church to enter into this destiny that the Lord sent that "most precious message" in 1888. Pure gospel truth produces true character.

10. How simple and how beautiful is this last message to be? Jeremiah 23:6; 33:16; Isaiah 32:17.

Note: The Lord's servant spoke of the message as "the sweetest melodies that come from human lips,—justification by faith, and the righteousness of Christ" (*Review and Herald*, April 4, 1895). "The present message—justification by faith—is a message from God; it bears the divine credentials, for its fruit is unto holiness" (*ibid.*, September 3, 1889). "This I do know, that our churches are dying for the want of teaching on the subject of righteousness by faith in Christ, and on kindred truths" (*Gospel Workers*, p. 301).

The future is good news: "If through the grace of Christ His people will become new bottles, He will fill them with the new wine. God

will give additional light, and old truths will be recovered, and replaced in the framework of truth....One interest will prevail, one subject will swallow up every other,—CHRIST OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (*Review and Herald*, Extra, December 23, 1890).

The purpose of this set of study guides is to discover what that "most precious" message is, and how it differs from what is commonly assumed to be "the doctrine of righteousness by faith." We shall find that the message is distinctly different from that of the popular churches. The revelation of "the righteousness of Christ" reveals Him as a Saviour "nigh at hand" and "not afar off." It is good news far better than most Christians imagine is possible.