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Many of you who are reading this President's Page will be (or are)

attending the historic Jerusalem Bible Conference. Others will be at the conference via the World Wide Web as the various lectures are uploaded to the General Conference presidential Website (www.adventist.org/GCpresidential) on the same day they are presented. Sunday afternoon (June 14) we will be "reliving" Jesus' resurrection walk to Emmaus with His disciples.

This capstone event will encapsulate what the Bible conference is all about—and in a larger way, what ATS is all about. May I invite you to consider the meaning of the historical walk as you participate, either in person, by World Wide Web, or in imagination while reading this column. Several crucial points of the narrative in Luke 24 coincide with the thrust of this conference and the wider thrust of ATS:

Walking With Jesus on a Sunday Afternoon

1. Focus on the reliability and authority of the written Word. Luke records colorful details regarding Jesus' encounter with His disciples on Resurrection Sunday, even to such minutiae as the distance from Emmaus to Jerusalem (Luke 24:13). Clearly, Luke intended the reader to be struck with the historical reality of the events he was describing.

Further, Luke emphasizes the foundational authority of Scripture. When Jesus was walking with His disciples, He could have simply revealed the wounds in His hands and side and feet; and upon recognizing Him, they would have eagerly bowed and worshiped. But Jesus determined that their faith not be based primarily upon physical phenomena but rather on the testimony of the Scriptures. Only after they were convinced concerning the Messiah and His mission by the written Word, did Jesus disclose His identity by showing them the nail prints in

His hands. At least *six* times in the narrative, Luke refers to the Scriptures as the foundational authority for the disciples' faith (Luke 24:25, 27, 32, 44, 45, 46).

At this Bible conference and in all the activity of ATS, may the foundation of all we do and say be the fully authoritative Word of God. And as we travel from site to site in the lands of the Bible, may we "relive" the historical details affirming the reliability of Scripture—like the description of Emmaus' seven miles (60 stadia) distance from Jerusalem. (You'll never forget the distance after walking part of it in the summer Palestine sun!)

2. Focus on proper biblical hermeneutics. Speaking to the disciples on the way to Emmaus, Jesus "*interpreted* to them the things

about himself in all the scriptures" (Luke 24:27, NRSV). The word for "interpret" here is *diermeneuo* (*dia* + *hermeneuo*), which is related to the English term *hermeneutics*. Jesus gave His disciples a "crash course" in hermeneutics during that seven-mile walk in the country! If I could have one single audio or video recording of Jesus' teaching while He was on earth, I would request the one containing His hermeneutics class on Resurrection Sunday—including His teaching later that evening in the upper room when "He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45, NKJV)!*

Our Bible conference in Jeru-

*Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible texts in this article are quoted from the New King James Version.

GOALS OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

- To affirm the centrality of the cross
- To reaffirm the surety of the Word
- To confirm the Spirit of Prophecy
- To seek revealed truth
- To consider principles of interpretation
- To investigate unsettled questions
- To fellowship with believers
- To pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit

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salem is dedicated to faithfully expounding Scripture according to the solid hermeneutical principles of *sola, tota, and prima Scriptura*. We pray that every plenary session and research paper—as well as every future gathering of Bible students in ATS and beyond—will uphold and faithfully apply solid biblical principles of Scripture interpretation.

3. Focus on Jesus the crucified and risen Saviour. Jesus' only recorded words in His ambulatory teaching session with the disciples focused upon His death and resurrection: "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" (Luke 24:25, 26). Then Luke records that Jesus "expounded to them in all the Scriptures *the things concerning Himself*" (vs. 27). Later that night in the upper room He reiterated "that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms *concerning Me*. . . Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ *to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day*" (vs. 44).

As on Resurrection Sunday, may this Bible conference and every future gathering of Adventist Bible students focus on Jesus the Christ, and in particular His death and resurrection.

4. Recapture the experience of the "Burning Heart." The two disciples' testimony after the Emmaus walk with Jesus is striking: "Did not our heart *burn within us* while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32).

The miracle of the burning heart! Oh, that our sharing from the Scriptures during this Bible conference and beyond would have the same effect in our own hearts and in all who listen! The theory of the truth is empty, even though it is solidly biblical, if it does not produce a burning heart!

5. Emphasize gospel preaching and witnessing with power. After Jesus opened the Scriptures to His disciples that Sunday of His resurrection, He immediately gave them the gospel commission: "and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His [the Christ's] name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:47-49).

I believe God longs for as mighty a result of our "tarrying at Jerusalem" during this Bible conference as happened to the disciples after Jesus' resurrection and ascension. I pray that here again, in Jerusalem,

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we may be “endued with power from on high” so that we may return to preach and teach the gospel in His name with new boldness and effectiveness to all nations. And I pray also that those present via the Internet and later reports may be “witnesses of these things” and share in the promised reception of the Spirit’s Pentecostal power.

6. Enjoy sweet fellowship with one another in the unity of the faith. After Jesus’ ascension, the disciples were gathered in that same upper room where they had met the resurrected Christ the evening of the Emmaus experience (Acts 1:13). Their numbers grown to about 120 (vs. 15), they “all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication” (Acts 1:14). “Putting away all differences, all desire for the supremacy, they came close together in Christian fellowship” (*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 37).

We are convening this first international Bible conference during the

precise time of year in which the disciples were meeting in the upper room! Our number has swelled to 200! May we find the same intimate fellowship in prayer and supplication; may we be “with one accord”—unified around our faith in the Risen Christ.

7. Return home “with great joy,” “praising and blessing God.” The narrative of Luke 24 ends with the enthusiastic report of the disciples’ experience after Jesus’ ascension: “And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually . . . praising and blessing God” (Luke 24: 52).

After walking to Emmaus on Sunday evening, we plan to travel to the Mount of Olives, in the vicinity of Bethany, where Jesus ascended. I long for us to find in this Bible conference and in later fellowship that same “great joy” as the disciples demonstrated through their continual “praising and blessing God”! □

