Dear brothers and sisters,
May the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you in this New Year.

As the calendar turns, time continues its forward march; and only in our memories are we able to go back. Often, we may wish to relive a memory, correct things, or, maybe, even rewrite the order of events to escape some dark consequences we now face. Some memories give us joy, and others fill us with guilt. Our consciences afford us no peace until we repent and receive the Lord’s forgiveness.

It was no different for the Israelite nation during their time in Babylonian captivity. Terrible were the consequences of their sins and apostasy. Seventy years were spent under the pagan rule of King Nebuchadnezzar. Often their elders remembered the glory days of Israel, their exodus out of Egypt, and the great miracles God performed for His people in giving them the promised land overflowing with milk and honey. Oh, how easy it would be if they could only go back in time, correct their mistakes, remove this captivity from their history, and once again freely worship in the glorious temple in Jerusalem. But it could not be. Jerusalem was destroyed. The temple was reduced to ruins, and the gold and silver vessels had been taken.

God allows us no possibility to go back in time. Instead, He gives us the opportunity to rebuild what was destroyed, mend the broken, restore the stolen, straighten the crooked, make right the wrong, and correct our mistakes. Today, God gives us the privilege of redeeming our time.

This year, the Reform Movement celebrates one hundred years of existence. Since the First World War began in 1914, faithful believers around the world have stood firm in faith, truth, and hope. Many have risked their lives or died a martyr’s death in defense of precious Bible truths. Has the passing of time lessened our faith? Do we have this same courage today? How are we redeeming the time left to us?

One more year has passed, and a new one is already here. Impressive news is shaking the world. New possibilities are on the horizon. We live in a world where a flying robot may soon be delivering our purchases, and robots may one day be as common in the workplace as human employees. What awaits us in the future?

The people of God have always looked to prophecy to identify their place in time. Like the prophet Daniel, we should earnestly seek God and study His word. Daniel 9:2 says: “In the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.”

Then, suddenly, their captivity was finished, and the Israelite people were free to redeem the time. First, King Cyrus called for the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. Later, King Darius sent Ezra to complete the work; and, finally, Nehemiah inspired the people to rebuild the wall. Still much of the Jewish population remained in captivity. Why? They remained because they had become accustomed to living in captivity. Perhaps freedom was too
demanding or too complicated for them. Perhaps going back to the promised land was no longer a priority. Perhaps it required simply too much effort to restore what had been lost.

What are our priorities for this New Year? Are we willing to build up the broken-down temples in our lives? Will we enter the promised land, or have we become too comfortable living in captivity to accomplish the goals God has for us?

In the book of Ezra, we find that a genuine revival and reformation took place. The people of God not only restored the temple building but also reinstated its services and sacrifices. The people put away their foreign wives, abandoned their private benefits, and, in perfect unity, worked hard to rebuild Jerusalem. This is the only way to achieve progress and success. Unity in God is possible only with the intervening of the Holy Spirit. The Lord speaks about His people as united in mind, heart, and action. “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul…. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.” Acts 4:32, 33.

During 2013, the Lord has blessed the American Union with many baptisms. More souls are interested. Our departments are working hard to develop new programs to serve the churches and isolated members, but we need to set our goals even higher. There are many cities and states that have not heard the Reformation message. We need to unite and build and redeem the time. When the people of God reformed and made progress, the enemy did everything possible to interfere with their plans and stop them. We need to be ready at any time and in any place to defend the truth and the cause of God. We should never permit temptations, difficulties in life, or the aggressive attacks against the church to detain us from the important work we have to do. Nehemiah and his people worked in unity; together they held their swords and built a wall in record time.

“The few faithful builders upon the true foundation were perplexed and hindered, as the rubbish of false doctrine obstructed the work. Like the builders upon the wall of Jerusalem in Nehemiah’s day, some were ready to say, ‘The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish, so that we are not able to build.’ Nehemiah 4:10. Wearing with the constant struggle against persecution, fraud, iniquity, and every other obstacle that Satan could devise to hinder their progress, some who had been faithful builders became disheartened; and for the sake of peace and security for their property and their lives they turned away from the true foundation. Others, undaunted by the opposition of their enemies, fearlessly declared, ‘Be not ye afraid of them; remember the Lord, which is great and terrible’ (Nehemiah 4:14), and they proceeded with the work, every one with his sword girded by his side. Ephesians 6:17.” –The Great Controversy, p. 56.

We need to prepare properly for the work still before us. Work done well today builds a strong foundation for the future. Going back in time is not the solution. Today is the only measure of time we can hold in our hands, and it is today when we must build a temple for God in our hearts and minds. “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 2:5.

It is an incredible privilege that God gives us to redeem the time, become a member of His divine family, and take our places as pillars in the temple of God. The greater His promises, the stronger the enemy fights against us. Let us never be discouraged but stay firmly in the sight of God. Fight with the armor of Christ; and, because of the blood and sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, God will give us the victory now and forever. Amen and amen!

### 2014 Calendar

- **August 11-13:** Western Field Delegates’ Meetings, Mountain Center, California
- **August 13-17:** Western Field Conference, Mountain Center, California