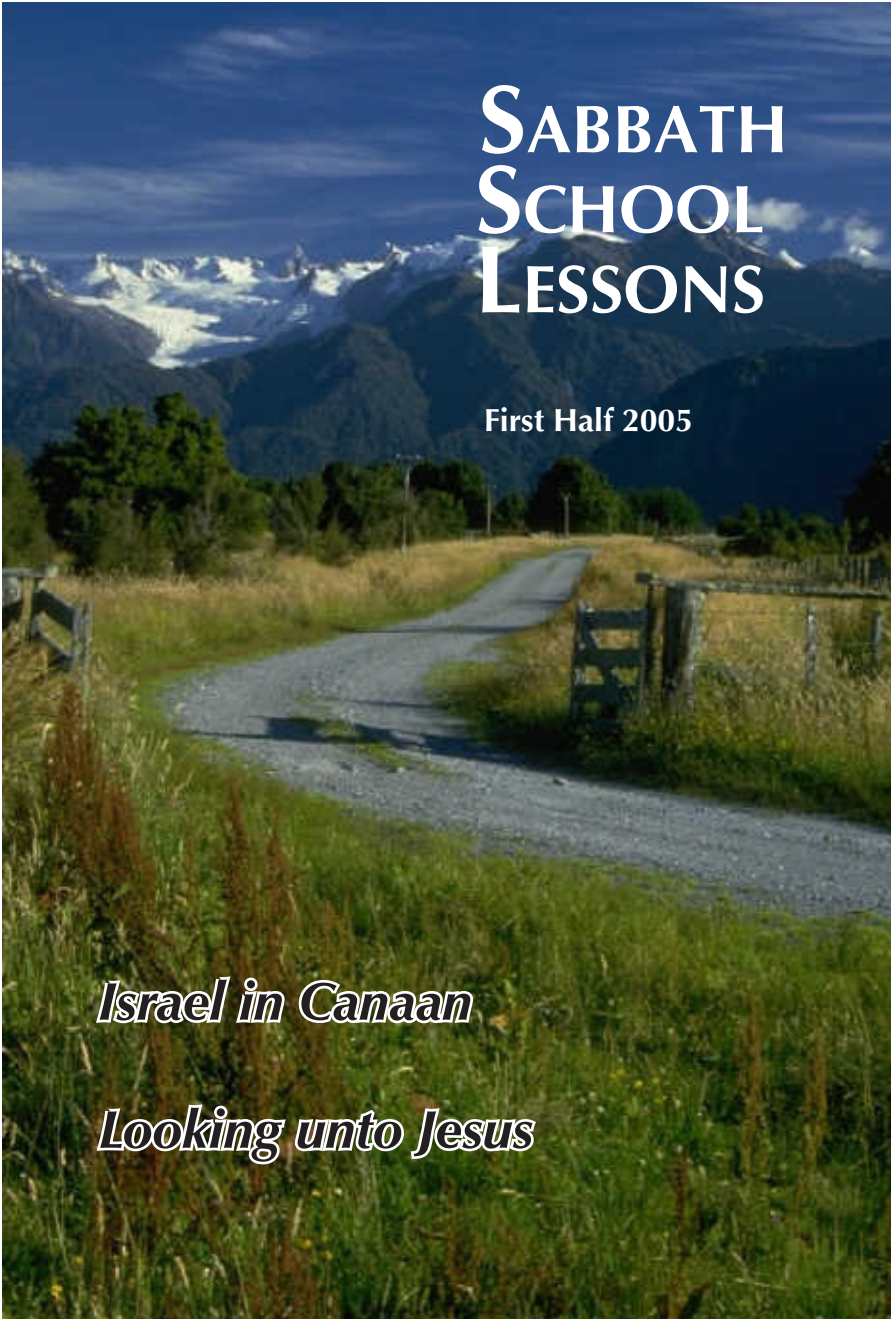




SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

First Half 2005

Israel in Canaan

Looking unto Jesus

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SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

for the First Half 2005

First Quarter

Israel in Canaan

Second Quarter

Looking unto Jesus

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INTRODUCTION

During this quarter of the Sabbath School we shall study a part of the history of the people of Israel, from the time they were established in Canaan to the times of the judges. During that interval there were periods of victory and prosperity as well as periods of defeat, oppression and servitude to neighboring nations, such as the Medianites and the Philistines, etc.

When God's people disobeyed the divine commands and defiled themselves with the idolatrous practices of the Canaanites, the Lord withdrew His protection and permitted those pagan nations to subdue them. Then the Israelites pleaded with God, repented of their idolatry and the Lord answered their pleas by setting up judges to set them free from their adversaries. Generally, when those judges died, the people went again after their idols and were once again subjugated by their enemies: "And when the Lord raised them up judges, then the Lord was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the Lord because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them. And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way." Judges 2:18, 19.

Some of the functions of those judges were limited to a tribe or a place; others became famous and had a wider range of influence, such as Deborah, Gideon, Samson, and Samuel, who were considered national heroes and respected by all the people.

The judges were not free from weaknesses and mistakes, but they clung to the Lord, fulfilled the purpose for which they had been called, administered justice, obtained victories and achieved peace: "Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go. O that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea." Isaiah 48:17, 18.

The actions of those leaders and of the people of Israel remain registered in the Holy Scriptures as an example for us, the church of the end times: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." Romans 15:4.

Now the Lord is again guiding His people to the promised land, and that is why He admonishes us: "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand:... and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day;... But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ,..." Romans 13:11-14.

May the study of these lessons help us in our pilgrimage toward the heavenly Canaan.

—The Brethren of the General Conference

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is dedicated to the General Conference
Good Samaritan Department.**

*Remember to give your offering as an expression
of love and gratitude.*

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Sabbath, January 1, 2005

Turning Obstacles into Success

OBJECTIVES

- To understand that the Lord is our supreme Leader and that if we do not lean on Him, even for a single moment, we shall fail.
- To consider that obstacles may be beneficial at the right moment.
- To remember God's wonders of the past in order to have sufficient confidence and obedience for present emergencies.

A NEW LEADER

- 1. Who was called by the Lord to be the leader of His people at the end of their journey? What great mission was appointed to him? Joshua 1:1, 2.**

“Joshua was now the acknowledged leader of Israel.... Courageous, resolute, and persevering, prompt, incorruptible, unmindful of selfish interests in his care for those committed to his charge, and, above all, inspired by a living faith in God—such was the character of the man divinely chosen to conduct the armies of Israel in their entrance upon the Promised Land. During the sojourn in the wilderness he had acted as prime minister to

Moses, and by his quiet, unpretending fidelity, his steadfastness when others wavered, his firmness to maintain the truth in the midst of danger, he had given evidence of his fitness to succeed Moses, even before he was called to the position by the voice of God.” *–Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 481, 482.

2. What words of encouragement did the Lord tell His servant? Joshua 1:5-9.

FORETELLING THE SEPARATION OF THE WATERS

3. What was necessary before the Lord would manifest His wonders among the people? Joshua 3:1-5.

“Orders were now issued to make ready for an advance....” Leaving their encampment in the acacia groves of Shittim, the host descended to the border of the Jordan. All knew, however, that without divine aid they could not hope to make the passage. At this time of the year—in the spring season—the melting snows of the mountains had so raised the Jordan that the river overflowed its banks, making it impossible to cross at the usual fording places. God willed that the passage of Israel over Jordan should be miraculous. Joshua, by divine direction, commanded the people to sanctify themselves; they must put away their sins and free themselves from all outward impurity; ‘for tomorrow,’ he said, ‘the Lord will do wonders among you.’” *–Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 483.

4. What exact instructions were given to the people before the divine miracle was to be performed? Joshua 3:6-13.

“The ‘ark of the covenant’ was to lead the way before the host. When they should see the token of Jehovah’s presence, born by the priests, remove from its place in the center of the camp, and advance toward the river, then they were to remove from their place, ‘and go after it.’ The circumstances of the passage were minutely foretold; and said Joshua, ‘Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites.... Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan.’” *–Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 483, 484.

5. How was the impressive miracle of the waters that rose and heaped up performed? Joshua 3:14-16.

“All watched with deep interest as the priests advanced down the bank of the Jordan. They saw them with the sacred ark move steadily forward toward the angry, surging stream, till the feet of the bearers were dipped into the waters. Then suddenly the tide above was swept back, while the current below flowed on, and the bed of the river was laid bare.

“At the divine command the priests advanced to the middle of the channel and stood there while the entire host descended and crossed to the farther side. Thus was impressed upon the minds of all Israel the fact that the power that stayed the waters of Jordan was the same that had opened the Red Sea to their fathers forty years before. When the people had all passed over, the ark itself was borne to the western shore. No sooner had it reached a place of security, and ‘the soles of the priests’ feet were lifted up unto the dry land,’ than the imprisoned waters, being set free, rushed down, a resistless flood, in the natural channel of the stream.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 484.

6. What do we think of this marvelous crossing of the dry river without a bridge or a boat? Joshua 3:17.

“The influence of this miracle, both upon the Hebrews and upon their enemies, was of great importance. It was an assurance to Israel of God’s continued presence and protection—an evidence that He would work for them through Joshua as He had wrought through Moses. Such an assurance was needed to strengthen their hearts as they entered upon the conquest of the land—the stupendous task that had staggered the faith of their fathers forty years before....

“This exercise of divine power in behalf of Israel was designed also to increase the fear with which they were regarded by the surrounding nations, and thus prepare the way for their easier and complete triumph.... To the Canaanites, to all Israel, and to Joshua himself, unmistakable evidence had been given that the living God, the King of heaven and earth, was among His people, and that He would not fail them nor forsake them.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 484, 485.

A MEMORIAL

7. In the ages to come, who was to receive the knowledge of God's miracles on behalf of His people? Joshua 4:1-9.

“Coming generations were not to be without a witness to this great miracle.”—Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 484.

“Study carefully the experiences of Israel... Study the third and fourth chapters of Joshua, recording their preparation for the passage over the Jordan into the promised land. We need to keep the heart and mind in training by refreshing the memory with the lessons that the Lord taught His ancient people. Then, to us, as He designed it should be to them, the teachings of His Word will ever be interesting and impressive.”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol.2, p. 994.

THE PURPOSE OF THE MIRACLE

- To give the people divine assistance.
- To confirm Joshua as the leader of Israel.
- To cause their enemies to fear.
- To leave a memorial for future generations.

FOR OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

- What elements are there in the history of the election of Joshua that can be a lesson for us?
- Are we also near “Canaan,” at the bank of a “river” that has to be crossed?
- What do we learn from the experience of Israel at the Jordan River?

“Through His people Israel, God designed to give to the world a knowledge of His will. His promises and threats, His instructions and reproofs, the wonderful manifestation of His power among them, in blessing for obedience, and judgment for transgression and apostasy,—all were designed for the education and development of religious principle among the people of God until the close of time. Therefore it is important that we acquaint ourselves with the history of the Hebrew host, and ponder with care the dealings of God with them.”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 994.

Victory and Defeat

OBJECTIVES

- To learn that progress does not set us free from trials and responsibilities.
- To meditate on why it is necessary for us to struggle if victory is a gift from God.
- To know that God requires obedience, rewards faithfulness and punishes unconfessed and unforsaken transgression.
- To realize that our personal actions can benefit or harm a whole community.

INCREDIBLE VICTORY

1. **Immediately after crossing the Jordan, what did the people of God come upon? What do we know about the condition of that city? Joshua 6:1.**

“One of the strongest fortresses in the land—the large and wealthy city of Jericho—lay just before them, but a little distance from their camp at Gilgal. On the border of a fertile plain, abounding with the rich and varied productions of the tropics, its palaces and temples the abode of luxury and vice, this proud city, behind its massive battlements, offered defiance to the God of Israel. Jericho was one of the principal seats of idol worship, being especially devoted to Ashtaroth, the goddess of the moon. Here centered all that was vilest and most degrading in the religion of the Canaanites. The people of Israel, in whose minds were fresh the fearful results of their sin at Beth-peor, could look upon this heathen city only with disgust and horror.”
—Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 487.

2. **In what marvelous way did the Lord intervene to give His people the victory in the conquest of Jericho? Joshua 6:2-5, 11-16, 20.**

“The vast army marched solemnly around the devoted walls. All was silent, save the measured tread of many feet, and the occasional sound of

the trumpet, breaking the stillness of the early morning. The massive walls of solid stone seemed to defy the siege of men. The watchers on the walls looked on with rising fear, as, the first circuit ended, there followed a second, then a third, a fourth, a fifth, a sixth. What could be the object of these mysterious movements? What mighty event was impending? They had not long to wait. As the seventh circuit was completed, the long procession paused. The trumpets, which for an interval had been silent, now broke forth in a blast that shook the very earth. The walls of solid stone, with their massive towers and battlements, tottered and heaved from their foundations, and with a crash fell in ruin to the earth. The inhabitants of Jericho were paralyzed with terror, and the hosts of Israel marched in and took possession of the city.

“The Israelites had not gained the victory by their own power; the conquest had been wholly the Lord’s;...” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 491.

“It was not Israel, but the Captain of the Lord’s host that took Jericho. But Israel had their part to act to show their faith in the Captain of their salvation.” –*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 994.

ONE MAN’S TRANSGRESSION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

3. What command had Israel received before the fall of Jericho? Joshua 6:17-19. What happened to someone who was not faithful to the divine command? Joshua 7:1.

“God’s command had been disregarded by one of those appointed to execute His judgments. And the nation was held accountable for the guilt of the transgressor: ‘They have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also.’ Instruction was given to Joshua for the discovery and punishment of the criminal. The lot was to be employed for the detection of the guilty. The sinner was not directly pointed out, the matter being left in doubt for a time, that the people might feel their responsibility for the sins existing among them, and thus be led to searching of heart and humiliation before God.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 494, 495.

4. To what extent can the sin of one person affect others? Joshua 7:1-6, 10-12. Can we draw any lessons from this incident for the church in our time?

“Are not similar sins still committed, in the face of warnings as solemn and explicit? We are as directly forbidden to indulge covetousness as was Achan to appropriate the spoils of Jericho. God has declared it to be idolatry....

“And this evil exists not in the world alone, but in the church. How common even here to find selfishness, avarice, overreaching, neglect of charities, and robbery of God ‘in tithes and offerings.’ Among church members ‘in good and regular standing’ there are, alas! many Achans....

“Achan’s sin brought disaster upon the whole nation. For one man’s sin the displeasure of God will rest upon His church till the transgression is searched out and put away. The influence most to be feared by the church is not that of open opposers, infidels, and blasphemers, but of inconsistent professors of Christ. These are the ones that keep back the blessing of the God of Israel and bring weakness upon His people.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 496, 497.

CORRECTION OF ERRORS AND VICTORY

5. How was Achan’s sin discovered and punished? Can personal sins be considered secondary matters? Joshua 7:10-15, 18-25.

“There are many in this day that would designate Achan’s sin as of little consequence, and would excuse his guilt; but it is because they have no realization of the character of sin and its consequences, no sense of the holiness of God and of His requirements.”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 998.

“The history of Achan teaches the solemn lesson that for one man’s sin the displeasure of God will rest upon a people or a nation till the transgression is searched out and punished. Sin is corrupting in its nature. One man infected with its deadly leprosy may communicate the taints to thousands....

“The love of God will never lead to the belittling of sin; it will never cover or excuse an unconfessed wrong.... It has to do with all our acts and thoughts and feelings. It follows us, and reaches every secret spring of action. By indulgence in sin, men are led to lightly regard the law of God.”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, pp. 996, 997.

6. Once the matter was settled, how did God confirm the fact that He had forgiven them and offered His powerful support to His people? Joshua 8:1, 2, 18-22.

“After the execution of the sentence... [the] power of God was with His people, and they were soon in possession of the city.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 499.

“The confession of Achan, although too late to be available in bringing to him any saving virtue, yet vindicated the character of God in His

manner of dealing with him, and closed the door to the temptation that so continually beset the children of Israel to charge upon the servants of God the work that God Himself had ordered to be done.”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 997.

PROMISES

7. What wonderful promise is there also for us as His remnant people? How is all this possible? 1 Corinthians 15:57; 1 John 5:4.

“The Christian will feel the promptings of sin, but he will maintain a constant warfare against it. Here is where Christ’s help is needed. Human weakness becomes united to divine strength, and faith exclaims: ‘Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ 1 Corinthians 15:57.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 469, 470.

FOR OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

“It is not enough to argue in defense of the truth. The most telling evidence of its worth is seen in a godly life; and without this the most conclusive statements will be lacking in weight and prevailing power;...

“The controversy for truth will have little success when sin is upon those who advocate it. Men and women may be well versed in Bible knowledge... yet if their hearts are not right before God, success will not attend their efforts. God will not be with them.”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 998.

“God will do great things for those who trust in Him. The reason why His professed people have no greater strength is that they trust so much to their own wisdom, and do not give the Lord an opportunity to reveal His power in their behalf. He will help His believing children in every emergency if they will place their entire confidence in Him and faithfully obey Him.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 493.

Sabbath, January 15, 2005

Trust, Power and Progress

OBJECTIVES

- To acknowledge the benefit of mutual cooperation and equality of rights and duties.
- To remember that, when obstacles come our way, there can be no progress without faith and decisive action.
- To ask ourselves what sins we still need to overcome.

SOMETHING YET TO BE ACCOMPLISHED

- 1. Was all the promised land conquered during Joshua's life, or were there still some areas in the hands of the Canaanites? What was still God's promise? Joshua 13:2-6.**

“But though the power of the Canaanites had been broken, they had not been fully dispossessed. On the west the Philistines still held a fertile plain along the seacoast, while north of them was the territory of the Sidonians. Lebanon also was in the possession of the latter people; and to the south, toward Egypt, the land was still occupied by the enemies of Israel.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 511.

- 2. After all this and when Joshua was already old, what was still to be accomplished? Joshua 13:1, 6.**

“Joshua was not, however, to continue the war. There was another work for the great leader to perform before he should relinquish the command of Israel. The whole land, both the parts already conquered and that which was yet unsubdued, was to be apportioned among the tribes. And it was the duty of each tribe to fully subdue its own inheritance. If the people should prove faithful to God, He would drive out their enemies from before them; and He promised to give them still greater possessions if they would but be true to His covenant.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 511.

- 3. What procedure were they to follow in the distribution of the land among the different tribes? Numbers 26:53-56. Who had to oversee the distribution of the land? Joshua 14:1, 2.**

“To Joshua, with Eleazar the high priest, and the heads of the tribes, the distribution of the land was committed, the location of each tribe being determined by lot. Moses himself had fixed the bounds of the country as it was to be divided among the tribes when they should come in possession of Canaan, and had appointed a prince from each tribe to attend to the distribution.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 511.

CALEB’S FAITH AND VALOR

- 4. At this time, which of the twelve spies were still alive? Had their faith and strength decreased during the hard years of wandering in the desert or during the difficult conquest of Canaan? Joshua 14:10, 11.**

“Caleb’s faith now was just what it was when his testimony had contradicted the evil report of the spies. He had believed God’s promise that He would put His people in possession of Canaan, and in this he had followed the Lord fully. He had endured with his people the long wandering in the wilderness, thus sharing the disappointments and burdens of the guilty; yet he made no complaint of this, but exalted the mercy of God that had preserved him in the wilderness when his brethren were cut off. Amid all the hardships, perils, and plagues of the desert wanderings, and during the years of warfare since entering Canaan, the Lord had preserved him; and now at upwards of fourscore his vigor was unabated.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 512.

- 5. Remembering Moses’ promises, what did Caleb ask Joshua? Considering its inhabitants, was it an easy or a difficult place? Joshua 14:6-9, 12-14.**

“Caleb now reminded Joshua of the promise then made, as the reward of his faithfulness... He therefore presented a request that Hebron he given him for a possession....

“Hebron was the seat of the dreaded Anakim, whose formidable

appearance had so terrified the spies, and through them destroyed the courage of all Israel. This, above all others, was the place which Caleb, trusting in the strength of God, chose for his inheritance.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 511, 512.

FAITH, VICTORY AND CONQUEST

6. What wonderful victory did Caleb have over his fearful enemies who years before had made the spies tremble? Joshua 15:13, 14.

“He did not ask for himself a land already conquered, but the place which above all others the spies had thought it impossible to subdue....

“Caleb obtained the inheritance upon which his heart had been set for forty years, and, trusting in God to be with him, he ‘drove thence the three sons of Anak.’ Having thus secured a possession for himself and his house, his zeal did not abate; he did not settle down to enjoy his inheritance, but pushed on to further conquests for the benefit of the nation and the glory of God.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 512, 513.

7. What was God’s promise to His people if they proved faithful to the covenant? Exodus 23:22-28, 31.

“The whole land, both the parts already conquered and that which was yet unsubdued, was to be apportioned among the tribes. And it was the duty of each tribe to fully subdue its own inheritance. If the people should prove faithful to God, He would drive out their enemies from before them; and He promised to give them still greater possessions if they would but be true to His covenant.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 511.

FOR OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

- Why did the Lord permit Joshua to finish his mission when there was still land to be conquered?
- What was required of the tribes in order to continue occupying the territory?
- How can we explain the fact that most of the people perished in the wilderness while Joshua and Caleb remained?
- Considering the example of these two heroes who overcame the difficulties in the wilderness and conquered the promised land, study how you can apply the promise found in Isaiah 40:30, 31 to yourself.

Distribution of the Desired Territory

OBJECTIVES

- To believe the promises made even if much time has passed since.
- To do everything possible so that the problems we face may be settled peacefully.
- To be happy with what the Lord has given us and consider it with the eyes of faith and heart full of gratitude.

THE CLAIM OF SOME OF THE TRIBES

1. **In the Transjordan, when the conquest began under the leadership of Moses, which tribes came to ask for certain regions of the Promised Land? Numbers 32:1, 5, 6; Joshua 13:8.**

“Two of the tribes of Israel, Gad and Reuben, with half the tribe of Manasseh, had received their inheritance before crossing the Jordan. To a pastoral people, the wide upland plains and rich forests of Gilead and Bashan, offering extensive grazing land for their flocks and herds, had attractions which were not to be found in Canaan itself...” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 517.

2. **What did they promise to do? Did they keep their promise? Numbers 32:16-19; Joshua 22:1-4.**

“... The two and a half tribes, desiring to settle here, had pledged themselves to furnish their proportion of armed men to accompany their brethren across the Jordan and to share their battles till they also should enter upon their inheritance. The obligation had been faithfully discharged.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 517.

- 3. What act of the Reubenites, Gaadites and the half tribe of Manasseh angered the people of Israel? Joshua 22:9, 10.**

- 4. What drastic and rash measures did the representatives of the people assembled at Shiloh propose? Joshua 22:11, 12.**

“Beside the Jordan, near the place of Israel’s miraculous passage of the river, the two and a half tribes had erected a great altar, similar to the altar of burnt offering at Shiloh. The law of God prohibited, on pain of death, the establishment of another worship than that at the sanctuary. If such was the object of this altar, it would, if permitted to remain, lead the people away from the true faith.

“The representatives of the people assembled at Shiloh, and in the heat of their excitement and indignation proposed to make war at once upon the offenders.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 518.

- 5. What steps were taken by the children of Israel to learn the facts in the case? How was the misunderstanding cleared up? Joshua 22:13-16, 21-34. What valuable lessons can we learn from this episode?**

“Through the influence of the more cautious, however, it was decided to send first a delegation to obtain from the two and a half tribes an explanation of their conduct. Ten princes, one from each tribe, were chosen. At their head was Phinehas, who had distinguished himself by his zeal in the matter of Peor.

“The two and a half tribes had been at fault in entering, without explanation, upon an act open to such grave suspicions. The ambassadors, taking it for granted that their brethren were guilty, met them with sharp rebuke....

“In reply the accused explained that their altar was not intended for sacrifice, but simply as a witness that, although separated by the river, they were of the same faith as their brethren in Canaan. They had feared that in future years their children might be excluded from the tabernacle, as having no part in Israel....

“With great joy the ambassadors accepted this explanation, and immediately carried back the tidings to those who sent them. All thoughts of war were dismissed, and the people united in rejoicing, and praise to God....

“How often serious difficulties arise from a simple misunderstanding, even among those who are actuated by the worthiest motives; and without the exercise of courtesy and forbearance, what serious and even fatal results may follow.... Instead of making courteous inquiry to learn the facts in the case, they had met their brethren with censure and condemnation. Had the men of Gad and Reuben retorted in the same spirit, war would have been the result. While it is important on the one hand that laxness in dealing with sin be avoided, it is equally important on the other to shun harsh judgment and groundless suspicion....

“The wisdom displayed by the Reubenites and their companions is worthy of imitation. While honestly seeking to promote the cause of true religion, they were misjudged and severely censured; yet they manifested no resentment. They listened with courtesy and patience to the charges of their brethren before attempting to make their defense, and then fully explained their motives and showed their innocence.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 518-520.

ANOTHER CLAIM

- 6. Although the tribes of Ephraim and the half tribe of Manasseh had already received their inheritance (Joshua 16:1, 4; 17:1, 2, 5), nevertheless, what claim did they present? Joshua 17:14.**

- 7. Since Joshua was also from the tribe of Ephraim, could it be said that he favored his brothers? What was his wise answer to their comfortable position? Joshua 17:15-18.**

“Another claim concerning the division of the land revealed a spirit widely different from that of Caleb. It was presented by the children of Joseph, the tribe of Ephraim with the half tribe of Manasseh. In consideration of their superior numbers, these tribes demanded a double portion of territory. The lot designated for them was the richest in the land, including the fertile plain of Sharon; but many of the principal towns in the valley were still in possession of the Canaanites, and the tribes shrank from the toil and danger of conquering their possessions, and desired an additional portion in territory already subdued....

“The power of the God of Israel had been pledged to His people, and had the Ephraimites possessed the courage and faith of Caleb, no enemy could have stood before them. Their evident desire to shun hardship and danger was firmly met by Joshua. ‘Thou art a great people, and hast great power,’ he said; ‘thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots, and though they be strong.’ Thus their own arguments were turned against them. Being a great people, as they claimed, they were fully able to make their own way, as did their brethren. With the help of God they need not fear the chariots of iron.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 513, 514.

FOR OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

- Are we more ready to ask and receive than to give and cooperate?
- Are we always ready to serve our brothers with joy?
- In matters that have to do with division of property, what lesson do we draw from the division of Canaan?
- What was really revealed by the answer of the tribes descending from Joseph?

“Their reply showed the real cause of complaint. They lacked faith and courage to drive out the Canaanites. ‘The hill is not enough for us,’ they said; ‘and the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron.’” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 514.

Involuntary Manslaughter and Cities of Refuge

OBJECTIVES

- To acknowledge God's love and righteousness in all His dispositions.
- To reveal the great interest that God has in providing the innocent party a place of refuge and protection.
- To be assured that the Lord fulfills His promises when we follow and serve Him.
- To come to Christ, our Refuge, our Savior, and to remain in Him.

A PLACE OF REFUGE

1. **What was God's merciful plan for those who were marred with involuntary murder? Numbers 35:10-13; Deuteronomy 19:4, 5.**

2. **What cities were then established in Israel with the purpose or providing safety? Joshua 20:1-3, 7-9.**

“Six of the cities assigned to the Levites—three on each side the Jordan—were appointed as cities of refuge, to which the manslayer might flee for safety. The appointment of these cities had been commanded by Moses, ‘that the slayer may flee thither, which killeth any person at unawares. And they shall be unto you cities for refuge,’ he said, ‘that the manslayer die not, until he stand before the congregation in judgment.’ Numbers 35:11, 12. This merciful provision was rendered necessary by the ancient custom of private vengeance, by which the punishment of the murderer devolved on the nearest relative or the next heir of the deceased.... The Lord did not see fit to abolish this custom at that time, but He made provision to ensure the safety of those who should take life unintentionally.” *—Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 515.

3. What do the cities of refuge ruled by the Levites symbolize? Psalm 62:7, 8; Romans 8:1, 34.

“The cities of refuge appointed for God’s ancient people were a symbol of the refuge provided in Christ. The same merciful Saviour who appointed those temporal cities of refuge has by the shedding of His own blood provided for the transgressors of God’s law a sure retreat, into which they may flee for safety from the second death. No power can take out of His hands the souls that go to Him for pardon.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 516.

ABIDING IN CHRIST

4. What happened with the murderer who did not remain in the city of refuge? Numbers 35:26-28.

“And those who were entitled to protection could receive it only on condition of remaining within the appointed refuge. Should one wander away beyond the prescribed limits, and be found by the avenger of blood, his life would pay the penalty of his disregard of the Lord’s provision.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 516.

5. What possibility of salvation does the sinner, who comes to Christ but does not abide in Him, have today? Acts 4:12; John 15:4-6.

“The sinner is exposed to eternal death, until he finds a hiding place in Christ; and as loitering and carelessness might rob the fugitive of his only chance for life, so delays and indifference may prove the ruin of the soul. Satan, the great adversary, is on the track of every transgressor of God’s holy law, and he who is not sensible of his danger, and does not earnestly seek shelter in the eternal refuge, will fall a prey to the destroyer.

“The prisoner who at any time went outside the city of refuge was abandoned to the avenger of blood. Thus the people were taught to adhere to the methods which infinite wisdom appointed for their security. Even so, it is not enough that the sinner believe in Christ for the pardon of sin; he must, by faith and obedience, abide in Him.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 517.

FOR OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

- What was the divine goal when establishing the cities of refuge and what does it mean for us? Deuteronomy 19:10.
- In what condition did the roads that led to the cities of refuge have to be? Deuteronomy 19:3.
- What is the purpose of these institutions—to remind us of the gravity of sin, to do our best to save the life of the innocent—or both?

6

Sabbath, February 5, 2005

Generosity and Spirituality

OBJECTIVES

- To remember that God is the owner of everything and that we have received the greatest gift from Him: His Son Jesus Christ.
- To give joyfully and to appreciate the privilege of being co-workers with God
- To understand that the poor and the rich each have their own missions, and that they should help one another.

THE SYSTEM OF TITHES IN THE OLD TIMES

1. **Who was acquainted with the system of tithes and transmitted it to his descendants? Genesis 14:20; 28:20-22.**

“But the tithing system did not originate with the Hebrews. From the earliest times the Lord claimed a tithe as His, and this claim was recognized and honored. Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, the priest of the most high God. Genesis 14:20. Jacob, when at Bethel, an exile and a wanderer, promised the Lord, ‘Of all that Thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto Thee.’ Genesis 28:22. As the Israelites were about to be established as a nation, the law of tithing was reaffirmed as one of the divinely ordained statutes upon obedience to which their prosperity depended.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 525.

2. What relationship is there between the forbidden tree, the Sabbath, and the tithe? Genesis 2:17; Exodus 20:10; Leviticus 27:30, 32.

“In the garden He caused to grow every tree that was pleasant to the eye or good for food; but among them He made one reserve. Of all else, Adam and Eve might freely eat; but of this one tree God said, ‘Thou shalt not eat of it.’ Here was the test of their gratitude and loyalty to God....

“Houses and lands, food and clothing, He has placed in the possession of men. He asks us to acknowledge Him as the Giver of all things; and for this reason He says, Of all your possessions I reserve a tenth for Myself, besides gifts and offerings, which are to be brought into My storehouse. This is the provision God has made for carrying forward the work of the gospel....

“The very same language is used concerning the Sabbath as in the law of the tithe: ‘The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God.... That specified portion of time, set apart by God Himself for religious worship, continues as sacred today as when first hallowed by our Creator.

“In like manner a tithe of our income is ‘holy unto the Lord.’”
—*Counsels on Stewardship*, pp. 65, 66.

SPIRITUAL REASONS FOR GIVING TITHES AND OFFERINGS

3. What purpose does the system of tithes and offerings serve?

(a) To acknowledge and thank God as the Owner and Giver of all that we have, including the greatest gift of all, His Son Jesus Christ: Psalm 24:1; 1 Chronicles 29:14; John 3:16.

“The system of tithes and offerings was intended to impress the minds of men with a great truth—that God is the source of every blessing to His creatures, and that to Him man’s gratitude is due for the good gifts of His providence.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 525.

(b) To be co-workers with the Lord, sustaining His work and participating in the proclamation of the gospel: Numbers 18:21; 1 Corinthians 9:13, 14.

“The Lord has ordained that the diffusion of light and truth in the earth shall be dependent upon the efforts and offerings of those who are partakers of the heavenly gift. He might have made angels the ambassadors of His truth; He might have made known His will, as He proclaimed the law from Sinai, with His own voice; but in His infinite love and wisdom He called men to become co-laborers with Himself, by choosing them to do this work.”
—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 528.

(c) To promote generosity among the people of God and to uproot selfishness and avarice: Isaiah 58:7; Romans 12:13.

“The Lord designed to bring man into close relationship with Himself and into sympathy and love with his fellow men by placing upon him responsibilities in deeds that would counteract selfishness and strengthen his love for God and man. The plan of system in benevolence God designed for the good of man, who is inclined to be selfish and to close his heart to generous deeds. The Lord requires gifts to be made at stated times, being so arranged that giving will become habit and benevolence be felt to be a Christian duty.”
—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 393.

PROMISES CONCERNING FAITHFULNESS

4. What blessings does God pour upon His children who are faithful in tithes, offerings, and the care of the poor? Malachi 3:10-12; Psalm 41:1-3; Luke 6:38.

“The contributions required of the Hebrews for religious and charitable purposes amounted to fully one fourth of their income. So heavy a tax upon the resources of the people might be expected to reduce them to poverty; but, on the contrary, the faithful observance of these regulations was one of the conditions of their prosperity.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 527.

PROVISIONS FOR THE POOR

5. In His love and mercy, how did the Lord provide for the needy in ancient Israel? (From the many laws, three will be analyzed.)

(a) The gleanings of the harvest: Leviticus 19:9, 10; Deuteronomy 24:19-21.

“The law of God gave the poor a right to a certain portion of the produce of the soil. When hungry, a man was at liberty to go to his neighbor’s field or orchard or vineyard, and eat of the grain or fruit to satisfy his hunger....

“All the gleanings of harvest field, orchard, and vineyard, belonged to the poor.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 531.

(b) The sabbatical year: Exodus 23:10, 11; Deuteronomy 15:1-10.

“Every seventh year special provision was made for the poor. The sabbatical year, as it was called, began at the end of the harvest. At the seedtime, which followed the ingathering, the people were not to sow; they

should not dress the vineyard in the spring; and they must expect neither harvest nor vintage. Of that which the land produced spontaneously they might eat while fresh, but they were not to lay up any portion of it in their storehouses. The yield of this year was to be free for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and even for the creatures of the field. Exodus 23:10, 11; Leviticus 25:5....

“In the sabbatical year the Hebrew slaves were to be set at liberty, and they were not to be sent away portionless....

“To the poor, the seventh year was a year of release from debt.”
—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 531, 532.

(c) The year of the jubilee: Leviticus 25:8-10, 28.

“After ‘seven sabbaths of years,’ ‘seven times seven years,’ came that great year of release—the jubilee....

“Certain classes of Hebrew slaves—all who did not receive their liberty in the sabbatical year—were now set free. But that which especially distinguished the year of jubilee was the reversion of all landed property to the family of the original possessor....

“The provisions of the sabbatical year and the jubilee would, in a great measure, set right that which during the interval had gone wrong in the social and political economy of the nation.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 533, 534.

THE PROPER ATTITUDE OF THE RICH AND THE POOR CHRISTIAN

6. What is the ideal financial situation for a Christian? Proverbs 30:8, 9.

7. How should a Christian deal with his means, whether he is rich or poor?

(a) The rich: 1 Timothy 6:17-19; 1 John 3:17; Job 29:15, 16.

“The Lord would place a check upon the inordinate love of property and power. Great evils would result from the continued accumulation of wealth by one class, and the poverty and degradation of another. Without some restraint the power of the wealthy would become a monopoly, and the poor, though in every respect fully as worthy in God’s sight, would be regarded and treated as inferior to their more prosperous brethren. The sense of this oppression would arouse the passions of the poorer class. There would be a

feeling of despair and desperation which would tend to demoralize society and open the door to crimes of every description. The regulations that God established were designed to promote social equality...

"The law of mutual dependence runs through all classes of society. The poor are not more dependent upon the rich than are the rich upon the poor. While the one class ask a share in the blessings which God has bestowed upon their wealthier neighbors, the other need the faithful service, the strength of brain and bone and muscle, that are the capital of the poor...

"There are many who urge with great enthusiasm that all men should have an equal share in the temporal blessings of God.... A diversity of condition is one of the means by which God designs to prove and develop character."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 534, 535.

(b) The poor: 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12; Ephesians 4:28; Titus 2:9, 10.

"Labor is apportioned to man. It was connected with the curse, because made necessary by sin. The physical, mental, and moral well-being of man makes a life of useful labor necessary. 'Be not slothful in business,' is the injunction of the inspired apostle Paul."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 120.

"No person, whether rich or poor, can glorify God by a life of indolence. All the capital that many poor men have is time and physical strength; and this is frequently wasted in love of ease and in careless indolence, so that they have nothing to bring to their Lord in tithes and in offerings. If Christian men lack wisdom to labor to the best account, and to make a judicious appropriation of their physical and mental powers, they should have meekness and lowliness of mind to receive advice and counsel of their brethren, that their better judgment may supply their own deficiencies. Many poor men who are now content to do nothing for the good of their fellow men, and for the advancement of the cause of God, might do much if they would. They are as accountable to God for their capital of physical strength as is the rich man for his capital of money."—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 121.

8. How should we give so that our offering may be accepted by the Lord? Deuteronomy 15:10; 2 Corinthians 9:7.

FOR OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

- What kind of a debt do we have and how can we show our gratitude for the great gift we have received? Psalm 116:12; Ephesians 2:8; Romans 8:12; Matthew 10:8.
- The main offering the Lord asks His children. Proverbs 23:26; Psalm 51:16, 17; 1 Samuel 15:22.

- What lessons of liberality and self-denial do we learn from the primitive church? Acts 4:32-35; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 344, 345.
- Were the pecuniary duties of the Israelites limited to the tithe and the care of the poor? Exodus 30:14-16; 36:3; 2 Kings 12:4, 5; Ezra 3:5; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 612, 613.
- The law of action and reaction in generosity: Proverbs 11:24; 2 Corinthians 9:6; *Testimony Treasures*, vol. 1, (Spanish pp. 360, 361.)
- With what measure should one give? Deuteronomy 16:17; Matthew 25:16, 17, 20-23; Luke 21:2-4; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 528.
- Did the Lord confirm the system of tithing in the New Testament?
- What can riches become when they are improperly used? 1 Timothy 6:10; Luke 12:16-21; Malachi 3:9.
- In which bank can a Christian's capital be secure? Matthew 6:19-21; *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 271.

7

Sabbath, February 12, 2005

The Conditions in the Time of the Judges

OBJECTIVES

- To understand that the Lord's promises entail a condition.
- To acknowledge that God's requirements are for our own benefit.
- To analyze the consequences of disobedience: How one sin leads to another, and finally to total ruin.

GOD'S PURPOSE FOR HIS PEOPLE IN CANAAN

- 1. What was God's purpose for the people of Israel when He took them out of Egypt? Exodus 3:8; Deuteronomy 11:23-25.**

“God had placed His people in Canaan as a mighty breastwork to stay the tide of moral evil, that it might not flood the world. If faithful to Him, God intended that Israel should go on conquering and to conquer. He would give into their hands nations greater and more powerful than the Canaanites.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 544.

2. **What did the Lord promise His people in the conquest of Canaan? Exodus 23:23, 27-31.**
3. **Upon what condition were the people of Israel promised the possession of the land? Deuteronomy 4:1, 2.**

THE LORD'S SPECIFIC COMMANDS TO THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL

4. **What clear instructions had the Lord given His people years before they entered Canaan? Numbers 33:51-53; Deuteronomy 7:1, 2.**
5. **Did the Israelites fulfill those instructions? Judges 1:21, 28-33.**

“After the settlement in Canaan the tribes made no vigorous effort to complete the conquest of the land. Satisfied with the territory already gained, their zeal soon flagged, and the war was discontinued. ‘When Israel was strong,... they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out.’ Judges 1:28.

“The Lord had faithfully fulfilled, on His part, the promises made to Israel; Joshua had broken the power of the Canaanites, and had distributed the land to the tribes. It only remained for them, trusting in the assurance of divine aid, to complete the work of dispossessing the inhabitants of the land. But this they failed to do. By entering into league with the Canaanites they directly transgressed the command of God, and thus failed to fulfill the condition on which He had promised to place them in possession of Canaan.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 543.

6. What warning had Israel received repeatedly in regard to its relation with the Canaanites? Exodus 23:32, 33; Deuteronomy 7:3, 4.

“From the very first communication of God with them at Sinai, they had been warned against idolatry. Immediately after the proclamation of the law the message was sent them by Moses concerning the nations of Canaan: ‘Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works: but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images. And ye shall serve the Lord your God, and He shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee.’ Exodus 23:24, 25.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 543.

RESULTS OF DISOBEDIENCE

7. What were the consequences of disobedience? Numbers 33:55; Joshua 23:12, 13; Psalm 106:34-42.

“The Israelites were ‘mingled among the heathen, and learned their works.’ Psalm 106:35. They intermarried with the Canaanites, and idolatry spread like a plague throughout the land. ‘They served their idols: which were a snare unto them. Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils:... and the land was polluted with blood.... Therefore was the wrath of the Lord kindled against His people, insomuch that He abhorred His own inheritance.’ Psalm 106:36-40.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 544.

HOW GOD WORKED TO GUIDE AND HELP THEM

8. In spite of their disobedience, did the Lord completely abandon His people? Judges 2:16, 18; 3:9, 15; Psalm 106:43-46.

“He did not utterly forsake His people. There was ever a remnant who were true to Jehovah; and from time to time the Lord raised up faithful and valiant men to put down idolatry and to deliver the Israelites from their enemies.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 545.

- What is God's purpose in giving us certain requirements and prohibitions?
- What will be the result of loving the world and joining it in disobedience?
- Are you aware that repeated sin separates you from God?
- How will you take advantage of the experiences of the people of Israel to avoid suffering due to disobedience?

8

Sabbath, February 19, 2005

Trust in the Lord, Not in Human Power

OBJECTIVES

- To learn to trust fully in God, not in man.
- To accept God's will.
- To become an instrument in the service of the Lord.

ISRAEL SUBDUED BY THE HEATHEN NATIONS

- 1. Why did God permit His people to be submitted to heathen nations? How did the condition of Israel deteriorate in the time of the judges? Judges 2:16-19.**

"The disregard of the Lord's restrictions on the part of those who came in possession of Canaan sowed seed of evil that continued to bring forth bitter fruit for many generations. The simple habits of the Hebrews had secured them physical health; but association with the heathen led to the indulgence of appetite and passion, which gradually lessened physical strength and enfeebled the mental and moral powers. By their sins the Israelites were separated from God; His strength was removed from them, and they could no longer prevail against their enemies. Thus they were brought into subjection to the very nations that through God they might have subdued....

“The king of Mesopotamia, the king of Moab, and after them the Philistines, and the Canaanites of Hazor, led by Sisera, in turn became the oppressors of Israel. Othniel, Shamgar, and Ehud, Deborah and Barak, were raised up as deliverers of their people. But again ‘the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian.’ Heretofore the hand of the oppressor had fallen but lightly on the tribes dwelling east of the Jordan, but in the present calamities they were the first sufferers.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 545.

LESSONS FROM THE HISTORY OF GIDEON

- 2. What qualities did God see in Gideon that would fit him to be appointed judge in Israel? Judges 6:15. What do we have to cultivate today so that we may be instruments of the Lord? Matthew 23:10-12; Luke 17:5; John 15:5.**

“The leader whom God chose to overthrow the Midianites occupied no prominent position in Israel. He was not a ruler, a priest, or a Levite. He thought himself the least in his father’s house. But God saw in him a man of courage and integrity. He was distrustful of himself and willing to follow the guidance of the Lord. God does not always choose for His work men of the greatest talents, but He selects those whom He can best use. ‘Before honor is humility’ Proverbs 15:33. The Lord can work most effectually through those who are most sensible of their own insufficiency, and who will rely upon Him as their leader and source of strength. He will make them strong by uniting their weakness to His might, and wise by connecting their ignorance with His wisdom.

“If they would cherish true humility, the Lord could do much more for His people; but there are few who can be trusted with any large measure of responsibility or success without becoming self-confident and forgetful of their dependence upon God. This is why, in choosing the instruments for His work, the Lord passes by those whom the world honors as great, talented, and brilliant. They are too often proud and self-sufficient. They feel competent to act without counsel from God...

“Trust in God and obedience to His will are as essential to the Christian in the spiritual warfare as to Gideon and Joshua in their battles with the Canaanites. By the repeated manifestations of His power in behalf of Israel, God would lead them to have faith in Him—with confidence to seek His help in every emergency. He is just as willing to work with the efforts of His people now and to accomplish great things through weak instrumentalities.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 553, 554.

3. What mission did the Lord entrust to Gideon? Judges 6:14, 16.

“Gideon was the son of Joash, of the tribe of Manasseh. The division to which this family belonged held no leading position, but the household of Joash was distinguished for courage and integrity. Of his brave sons it is said, ‘Each one resembled the children of a king.’ All but one had fallen in the struggles against the Midianites, and he had caused his name to be feared by the invaders. To Gideon came the divine call to deliver his people.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 546.

4. With how many men commanded by Gideon did God set Israel free from the oppression of the Midianites? What can we learn from this event? Judges 7:2-7, 16, 20-22.

“But the Lord saw the pride and unbelief existing in the hearts of His people. Aroused by the stirring appeals of Gideon, they had readily enlisted; but many were filled with fear when they saw the multitudes of the Midianites. Yet, had Israel triumphed, those very ones would have taken the glory to themselves instead of ascribing the victory to God.

“Gideon obeyed the Lord’s direction, and with a heavy heart he saw twenty-two thousand, or more than two thirds of his entire force, depart for their homes. Again the word of the Lord came to him: ‘The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go.’ The people were led down to the waterside, expecting to make an immediate advance upon the enemy. A few hastily took a little water in the hand and sucked it up as they went on; but nearly all bowed upon their knees, and leisurely drank from the surface of the stream. Those who took of the water in their hands were but three hundred out of ten thousand; yet these were selected; all the rest were permitted to return to their homes.

“By the simplest means character is often tested.... Success does not depend upon numbers. God can deliver by few as well as by many. He is honored not so much by the great numbers as by the character of those who serve Him.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 549, 550.

5. What inconsistency of Gideon caused a disaster in Israel? Judges 8:24-27.

“But Gideon was betrayed into another error, which brought disaster upon his house and upon all Israel. The season of inactivity that succeeds a great struggle is often fraught with greater danger than is the period of conflict. To this danger Gideon was now exposed. A spirit of unrest was upon him. Hitherto he had been content to fulfill the directions given him from God; but now, instead of waiting for divine guidance, he began to plan for himself....

“Because he had been commanded to offer sacrifice upon the rock where the Angel appeared to him, Gideon concluded that he had been appointed to officiate as a priest. Without waiting for the divine sanction, he determined to provide a suitable place, and to institute a system of worship similar to that carried on at the tabernacle. With the strong popular feeling in his favor he found no difficulty in carrying out his plan. At his request all the earrings of gold taken from the Midianites were given him as his share of the spoil.... From the material thus furnished, Gideon constructed an ephod and a breastplate, in imitation of those worn by the high priest. His course proved a snare to himself and his family, as well as to Israel. The unauthorized worship led many of the people finally to forsake the Lord altogether, to serve idols. After Gideon’s death great numbers, among whom were his own family, joined in this apostasy. The people were led away from God by the very man who had once overthrown their idolatry....

“Those who stand in the highest positions may lead astray. The wisest err; the strongest may falter and stumble.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 555, 556.

SNARES OF FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD

6. According to Joshua’s admonition, what result would Israel obtain from its friendship with the heathen nations? Joshua 23:11-13. What does unity with the world lead to? 1 John 2:15-17; James 4:4.

“As His people returned to their evil ways, the Lord permitted them to be still oppressed by their powerful enemies, the Philistines. For many years they were constantly harassed, and at times completely subjugated, by this cruel and warlike nation. They had mingled with these idolaters, uniting with them in pleasure and in worship, until they seemed to be one with them in spirit and interest. Then these professed friends of Israel became their bitterest enemies and sought by every means to accomplish their destruction.

“Like Israel, Christians too often yield to the influence of the world and conform to its principles and customs, in order to secure the friendship of the ungodly; but in the end it will be found that these professed friends

are the most dangerous of foes. The Bible plainly teaches that there can be no harmony between the people of God and the world. 'Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.' 1 John 3:13. Our Saviour says, 'Ye know that it hated Me before it hated you.' John 15:18. Satan works through the ungodly, under cover of a pretended friendship, to allure God's people into sin, that he may separate them from Him; and when their defense is removed, then he will lead his agents to turn against them and seek to accomplish their destruction." –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 558, 559.

THE ONLY WAY TO BE BLESSED

7. What is the only sure way to remain protected? Psalm 78:7, 8; 91:1-4; Proverbs 3:5.

"There is need that light from above should be constantly shed upon our pathway. Our only safety lies in trusting our way implicitly to Him who has said, 'Follow Me.'" –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 556.

FOR OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

- Was it only in the past that disobedience made Israel slaves of heathen nations? Of whom does it make us slaves today?
- Is there anything in my life or character that could have a bad influence upon the people of God?
- Do the mistakes and weaknesses of leaders lessen my trust in the divine leadership of His people or in man's capacities?
- What does the Lord want to find in me so that He can use me in His holy work as He used Gideon or one of the three hundred?
- In spite of the trying situation of the world, in whom should our faith be grounded more and more? Psalms 18:1-3; 20:7; 46.

Strength and Weakness

OBJECTIVES

- To understand that sensuality and the satisfaction of the flesh lead to moral and spiritual degradation.
- To not place ourselves on the grounds of the enemy. To not look for or invite temptation, but to avoid it.
- To acknowledge that real strength is found in self control and not in physical strength.
- To know that the Lord fulfills His purpose and that we are His instruments when we are reconciled with Him.

THE CONDITIONS IN ISRAEL AT THE TIME OF SAMSON'S BIRTH

1. **What conditions prevailed in Israel at the time of Samson's birth? Judges 13:1.**

“Amid the widespread apostasy the faithful worshipers of God continued to plead with Him for the deliverance of Israel. Though there was apparently no response, though year after year the power of the oppressor continued to rest more heavily upon the land, God's providence was preparing help for them. Even in the early years of the Philistine oppression a child was born through whom God designed to humble the power of these mighty foes.

“On the border of the hill country overlooking the Philistine plain was the little town of Zorah. Here dwelt the family of Manoah, of the tribe of Dan, one of the few households that amid the general defection had remained true to Jehovah.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 560.

GOD'S PLAN FOR SAMSON

2. **What message did the angel of the Lord transmit to Manoah and his wife? Judges 13:2, 3. What was the wonderful plan of God for the future child of that couple? Judges 13:5.**

"To the childless wife of Manoah 'the Angel of Jehovah' appeared with the message that she should have a son, through whom God would begin to deliver Israel. In view of this the Angel gave her instruction concerning her own habits, and also for the treatment of her child: 'Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing.' And the same prohibition was to be imposed, from the first, upon the child, with the addition that his hair should not be cut; for he was to be consecrated to God as a Nazarite from his birth....

"God had an important work for the promised child of Manoah to do, and it was to secure for him the qualifications necessary for this work that the habits of both the mother and the child were to be carefully regulated."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 560, 561.

RESPONSIBILITY AND INFLUENCE OF THE PARENTS

3. Considering the inheritance and pre-natal influences of a child, how should parents act? Genesis 5:3; Judges 13:9-12.

"And fathers as well as mothers are involved in this responsibility. Both parents transmit their own characteristics, mental and physical, their dispositions and appetites, to their child. As the result of parental intemperance, children often lack physical strength and mental and moral power. Liquor-drinkers and tobacco-users may, and do, transmit their insatiable craving, their inflamed blood and irritable nerves, to their children. The licentious often bequeath their unholy desires, and even loathsome diseases, as a legacy to their offspring. And as the children have less power to resist temptation than had the parents, the tendency is for each generation to fall lower and lower. To a great degree, parents are responsible, not only for the violent passions and perverted appetites of their children, but for the infirmities of the thousands born deaf, blind, diseased, or idiotic.

"The inquiry of every father and mother should be, 'What shall we do unto the child that shall be born unto us?' [Judges 13:8.] The effect of pre-natal influences has been by many lightly regarded; but the instruction sent from heaven to those Hebrew parents, and twice repeated in the most explicit and solemn manner, shows how this matter is looked upon by our Creator."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 561.

4. How important are food and good habits for a baby? Judges 13:4, 13, 14, 24, 25; Isaiah 7:15.

“And it was not enough that the promised child should receive a good legacy from the parents. This must be followed by careful training and the formation of right habits. God directed that the future judge and deliverer of Israel should be trained to strict temperance from infancy. He was to be a Nazarite from his birth, thus being placed under a perpetual prohibition against the use of wine or strong drink. The lessons of temperance, self-denial, and self-control are to be taught to children even from babyhood.

“The angel’s prohibition included ‘every unclean thing.’ The distinction between articles of food as clean and unclean was not a merely ceremonial and arbitrary regulation, but was based upon sanitary principles. To the observance of this distinction may be traced, in a great degree, the marvelous vitality which for thousands of years has distinguished the Jewish people. The principles of temperance must be carried further than the mere use of spirituous liquors. The use of stimulating and indigestible food is often equally injurious to health, and in many cases sows the seeds of drunkenness. True temperance teaches us to dispense entirely with everything hurtful and to use judiciously that which is healthful. There are few who realize as they should how much their habits of diet have to do with their health, their character, their usefulness in this world, and their eternal destiny. The appetite should ever be in subjection to the moral and intellectual powers. The body should be servant to the mind, and not the mind to the body.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 561, 562.

RELATIONSHIP OF THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL WITH SAMSON

5. How did the Israelites act with Samson when they were besieged by the Philistines? Why did they appoint him as a judge? Judges 15:9-20.

“To this place he was pursued by a strong force, and the inhabitants of Judah, in great alarm, basely agreed to deliver him to his enemies. Accordingly three thousand men of Judah went up to him. But even at such odds they would not have dared approach him had they not felt assured that he would not harm his own countrymen. Samson consented to be bound and delivered to the Philistines, but first exacted from the men of Judah a promise not to attack him themselves, and thus compel him to destroy them. He permitted them to bind him with two new ropes, and he was led into the camp of his enemies amid demonstrations of great joy. But while their shouts were waking the echoes of the hills, ‘the Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon him.’ He burst asunder the strong new cords as if they had been flax burned in the fire. Then seizing the first weapon at hand, which, though only the jawbone of an ass, was rendered more effective than sword or spear, he smote the Philistines until they fled in terror, leaving a thousand men dead upon the field.

“After his victory the Israelites made Samson judge, and he ruled Israel for twenty years.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 564.

SAMSON’S WEAKNESS WAS GREATER THAN HIS STRENGTH

6. But what weakness did the strongest man who ever lived reveal? Judges 14:1-3, 16, 17; 16:4-21.

“Physically, Samson was the strongest man upon the earth; but in self-control, integrity, and firmness, he was one of the weakest of men. Many mistake strong passions for a strong character, but the truth is that he who is mastered by his passions is a weak man. The real greatness of the man is measured by the power of the feelings that he controls, not by those that control him.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 567, 568.

GOD’S PURPOSE FULFILLED

7. Did Samson repent of his sins? Was he, at his death, an instrument of the Lord to punish the Philistines? Judges 14:4; 16: 22-31; Hebrews 11:32.

“What a change to him who had been the judge and champion of Israel!—now weak, blind, imprisoned, degraded to the most menial service! Little by little he had violated the conditions of his sacred calling....

“In suffering and humiliation, a sport for the Philistines, Samson learned more of his own weakness than he had ever known before; and his afflictions led him to repentance. As his hair grew, his power gradually returned; but his enemies, regarding him as a fettered and helpless prisoner, felt no apprehensions....

“After a time, as if weary, Samson asked permission to rest against the two central pillars which supported the temple roof. Then he silently uttered the prayer, ‘O Lord God, remember me, I pray Thee, and strengthen me, I pray Thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines.’ With these words he encircled the pillars with his mighty arms; and crying, ‘Let me die with the Philistines!’ he bowed himself, and the roof fell, destroying at one crash all that vast multitude....

“God’s promise that through Samson He would ‘begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines’ was fulfilled; but how dark and terrible the record of that life which might have been a praise to God and a glory to the nation! Had Samson been true to his divine calling, the purpose of God could have been accomplished in his honor and exaltation. But he yielded to

temptation and proved untrue to his trust, and his mission was fulfilled in defeat, bondage, and death.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 566, 567.

FOR OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

- How can we explain the fact that while Joshua overcame his trial Samson fell?
- Remembering that the Lord gave us the privilege to choose, who should remember Samson’s experience?
- Can we expect to succeed when we deliberately go to, and remain in, the enemy’s territory?
- “He that ruleth his spirit [is better] than he that taketh a city.” Proverbs 16: 32.

10

Sabbath, March 5, 2005

Vows and Faithfulness

OBJECTIVES

- To keep our promises to the Lord.
- To acknowledge that to consecrate our life to God and His service is the best we can do.
- To know that mothers have precious opportunities to help form the character of their children.
- To understand that success depends on our faithfulness and surrender to God.

HANNAH’S CHARACTER

- 1. What kind of a woman was Hannah, and what difficult situation did she face? 1 Samuel 1:2-8.**

“Elkanah, a Levite of Mount Ephraim, was a man of wealth and influence, and one who loved and feared the Lord. His wife, Hannah, was a woman of fervent piety. Gentle and unassuming, her character was marked with deep earnestness and a lofty faith.

“The blessing so earnestly sought by every Hebrew was denied this godly pair; their home was not gladdened by the voice of childhood; and the desire to perpetuate his name led the husband—as it had led many others—to contract a second marriage. But this step, prompted by a lack of faith in God, did not bring happiness. Sons and daughters were added to the household; but the joy and beauty of God’s sacred institution had been marred and the peace of the family was broken. Peninnah, the new wife, was jealous and narrow-minded, and she bore herself with pride and insolence. To Hannah, hope seemed crushed and life a weary burden; yet she met the trial with uncomplaining meekness.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 569.

2. What vow did Hannah make as she was praying in the house of God? What wish did Eli express when he knew of her fervent request? 1 Samuel 1:9-11, 17-20.

“Hannah uttered no reproach. The burden which she could share with no earthly friend she cast upon God. Earnestly she pleaded that He would take away her reproach and grant her the precious gift of a son to nurture and train for Him. And she made a solemn vow that if her request were granted, she would dedicate her child to God, even from its birth. Hannah had drawn near to the entrance of the tabernacle, and in the anguish of her spirit she ‘prayed,... and wept sore.’...

“Hannah’s prayer was granted; she received the gift for which she had so earnestly entreated. As she looked upon the child, she called him Samuel—‘asked of God.’” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 570.

PROPHETIC PRAYER OF GRATITUDE

3. In her prayer of gratitude, what did Hanna prophesize when she gave her son Samuel to the high priest Eli? 1 Samuel 1:26-28; 2:1-10.

“Hannah’s words were prophetic, both of David, who should reign as king of Israel, and of the Messiah, the Lord’s Anointed. Referring first to the boasting of an insolent and contentious woman, the song points to the destruction of the enemies of God and the final triumph of His redeemed people.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 572.

- 4. With what care did Hannah prepare her child for the service in the temple? What lesson do we find here for the Christian mothers of our days? 1 Samuel 1:21-24.**

“From the earliest dawn of intellect she had taught her son to love and reverence God and to regard himself as the Lord’s. By every familiar object surrounding him she had sought to lead his thoughts up to the Creator. When separated from her child, the faithful mother’s solicitude did not cease. Every day he was the subject of her prayers....

“The humble round of duties which women have come to regard as a wearisome task should be looked upon as a grand and noble work. It is the mother’s privilege to bless the world by her influence, and in doing this she will bring joy to her own heart. She may make straight paths for the feet of her children, through sunshine and shadow, to the glorious heights above. But it is only when she seeks, in her own life, to follow the teachings of Christ that the mother can hope to form the character of her children after the divine pattern.... Let her heed the instruction which God has given in His word, and wisdom will be given her as she shall have need.” *—Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 572, 573.

- 5. How was Hannah rewarded for her faithfulness to the Lord? 1 Samuel 2:18-21.**

“She did not ask for her son worldly greatness, but she earnestly pleaded that he might attain that greatness which heaven values,—that he might honor God, and bless his fellow men.

“What a reward was Hannah’s! and what an encouragement to faithfulness is her example! There are opportunities of inestimable worth, interests infinitely precious, committed to every mother. The humble round of duties which women have come to regard as a wearisome task, should be looked upon as a grand and noble work.” *—Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 572.

SAMUEL’S CHARACTER

- 6. What duties did young Samuel have in the temple? What was his relationship with the old priest Eli like? 1 Samuel 3:1-13, 15-18.**

“Samuel had been placed under the care of Eli, and the loveliness of his character drew forth the warm affection of the aged priest. He was kind, generous, obedient, and respectful.... Samuel was helpful and affectionate, and no father ever loved his child more tenderly than did Eli this youth. It was a singular thing that between the chief magistrate of the nation and the simple child so warm an affection should exist....

“Every year saw more important trusts committed to him; and while he was yet a child, a linen ephod was placed upon him as a token of his consecration to the work of the sanctuary. Young as he was when brought to minister in the tabernacle, Samuel had even then duties to perform the service of God, according to his capacity. These were at first very humble, and not always pleasant; but they were performed to the best of his ability, and with a willing heart.... And God fitted him to accomplish a great work for Israel.”
—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 573, 574.

THE KEY TO SUCCESS

7. What did Samuel’s success, and success in the life of every believer today, depend on? 1 Samuel 3:19-21; Luke 16:10.

“Success in this life, success in gaining the future life, depends upon a faithful, conscientious attention to the little things. Perfection is seen in the least, no less than in the greatest, of the works of God. The hand that hung the worlds in space is the hand that wrought with delicate skill the lilies of the field. And as God is perfect in his sphere, so we are to be perfect in ours. The symmetrical structure of a strong, beautiful character is built up by individual acts of duty. And faithfulness should characterize our life in the least as well as in the greatest of its details. Integrity in little things, the performance of little acts of fidelity and little deeds of kindness, will gladden the path of life; and when our work on earth is ended, it will be found that every one of the little duties faithfully performed, has exerted an influence for good—an influence that can never perish.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 574.

FOR OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

- One of the purest men. “The reign of judges in Israel closes with Samuel, than whom few purer or more illustrious characters are presented in the sacred record. There are few, also, whose life history contains lessons of greater value to the thoughtful student.” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 1008.
- Example of integrity for the youth. “The youth of our time may become as precious in the sight of God as was Samuel. By faithfully maintaining their Christian integrity, they may exert a strong influence in the work of reform.

Such men are needed at this time. God has a work for every one of them. Never did men achieve greater results for God and humanity than may be achieved in this our day by those who will be faithful to their God-given trust.”
—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 574.

11

Sabbath, March 12, 2005

There Is No Victory without Faith and Obedience

OBJECTIVES

- To understand that a repeated pattern of bad behavior leads to spiritual ruin and can be a stumbling block for many.
- To learn to trust more in the invisible God and not to fall into idolatry of sacred objects.
- To see that God forgives those who truly repent.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE MINISTER AND THE POWER OF HIS EXAMPLE

- 1. How did the permissive attitude of the high priest Eli toward his own children adversely affect the people? 1 Samuel 2:12-17, 22-25.**

“This irreverence on the part of the priests soon robbed the service of its holy and solemn significance, and the people ‘abhorred the offering of the Lord.’ The great antitypical sacrifice to which they were to look forward was no longer recognized. ‘Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord.’

“These unfaithful priests also transgressed God’s law and dishonored their sacred office by their vile and degrading practices; yet they continued to pollute by their presence the tabernacle of God. Many of the people, filled with indignation at the corrupt course of Hophni and Phinehas, ceased

to come up to the appointed place of worship. Thus the service which God had ordained was despised and neglected because associated with the sins of wicked men, while those whose hearts were inclined to evil were emboldened in sin. Ungodliness, profligacy, and even idolatry prevailed to a fearful extent.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 576, 577.

2. What were the terrible results for Eli’s house? 1 Samuel 2:27-36; 3:12-14; 4:16-18.

“Eli was priest and judge in Israel. He held the highest and most responsible positions among the people of God. As a man divinely chosen for the sacred duties of the priesthood, and set over the land as the highest judicial authority, he was looked up to as an example, and he wielded a great influence over the tribes of Israel. But although he had been appointed to govern the people, he did not rule his own household. Eli was an indulgent father. Loving peace and ease, he did not exercise his authority to correct the evil habits and passions of his children. Rather than contend with them or punish them, he would submit to their will and give them their own way...

“Because of Eli’s position, his influence was more extended than if he had been an ordinary man. His family life was imitated throughout Israel. The baleful results of his negligent, ease-loving ways were seen in thousands of homes that were molded by his example.

“The promise had been made that the house of Aaron should walk before God forever; but this promise had been made on condition that they should devote themselves to the work of the sanctuary with singleness of heart and honor God in all their ways, not serving self nor following their own perverse inclinations. Eli and his sons had been tested, and the Lord had found them wholly unworthy of the exalted position of priests in His service. And God declared, ‘Be it far from Me.’ He could not accomplish the good that He had meant to do them, because they failed to do their part.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 575, 579, 580.

CONSEQUENCES OF ELI’S, HIS CHILDREN’S, AND THE PEOPLE’S ATTITUDE

3. What two thoughtless acts did the people commit without consulting with God? 1 Samuel 4:1, 2, 4.

“Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Ebenezer; and the Philistines pitched in Aphek.’ This expedition was undertaken by the Israelites without counsel from God, without the concurrence of high priest or prophet.... The Lord had given no command or permission that the ark should come into the army; yet the Israelites felt

confident that victory would be theirs, and uttered a great shout when it was borne into the camp by the sons of Eli.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 583.

4. What terrible consequences followed? 1 Samuel 4:10, 11.

“The Philistines made a fierce assault, which resulted in the defeat of Israel, with great slaughter. Thirty thousand men lay dead upon the field, and the ark of God was taken, the two sons of Eli having fallen while fighting to defend it. Thus again was left upon the page of history a testimony for all future ages—that the iniquity of God’s professed people will not go unpunished....

“The most terrifying calamity that could occur had befallen Israel. The ark of God had been captured, and was in the possession of the enemy.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 583, 584.

5. In what sacred object did the people put their trust to the point of practicing idolatry? 1 Samuel 4:3, 5-8.

“They had not realized that their faith was only a nominal faith, and had lost its power to prevail with God. The law of God, contained in the ark, was also a symbol of His presence; but they had cast contempt upon the commandments, had despised their requirements, and had grieved the Spirit of the Lord from among them. When the people obeyed the holy precepts, the Lord was with them to work for them by His infinite power; but when they looked upon the ark, and did not associate it with God, nor honor His revealed will by obedience to His law, it could avail them little more than a common box. They looked to the ark as the idolatrous nations looked to their gods, as if it possessed in itself the elements of power and salvation. They transgressed the law it contained; for their very worship of the ark led to formalism, hypocrisy, and idolatry. Their sin had separated them from God, and He could not give them the victory until they had repented of and forsaken their iniquity.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 584.

THE PROPHET SAMUEL LEADS THE PEOPLE TO A REFORMATION

6. What solemn appeal did Samuel make to the people? Did Israel obey the voice of the prophet? 1 Samuel 7:3-6.

“The Israelites as a nation still continued in a state of irreligion and idolatry, and as a punishment they remained in subjection to the Philistines. During this time Samuel visited the cities and villages throughout the land, seeking to turn the hearts of the people to the God of their fathers; and his efforts were not without good results. After suffering the oppression of their enemies for twenty years, the Israelites ‘mourned after the Lord.’ Samuel counseled them, ‘If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve Him only.’ Here we see that practical piety, heart religion, was taught in the days of Samuel as taught by Christ when He was upon the earth. Without the grace of Christ the outward forms of religion were valueless to ancient Israel. They are the same to modern Israel.

“There is need today of such a revival of true heart religion as was experienced by ancient Israel. Repentance is the first step that must be taken by all who would return to God. No one can do this work for another. We must individually humble our souls before God and put away our idols. When we have done all that we can do, the Lord will manifest to us His salvation.

“With the co-operation of the heads of the tribes, a large assembly was gathered at Mizpeh. Here a solemn fast was held. With deep humiliation the people confessed their sins; and as an evidence of their determination to obey the instructions they had heard, they invested Samuel with the authority of judge.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 590.

REPENTANCE AND OBEDIENCE LEAD TO LIBERATION

7. How did the Lord show to the people that He accepted their repentance? 1 Samuel 7:7-14.

“While Samuel was in the act of presenting a lamb as a burnt offering, the Philistines drew near for battle. Then the Mighty One who had descended upon Sinai amid fire and smoke and thunder, who had parted the Red Sea and made a way through Jordan for the children of Israel, again manifested His power. A terrible storm burst upon the advancing host, and the earth was strewn with the dead bodies of mighty warriors.

“The Israelites had stood in silent awe, trembling with hope and fear. When they beheld the slaughter of their enemies, they knew that God had accepted their repentance. Through unprepared for battle, they seized the weapons of the slaughtered Philistines and pursued the fleeing host to Beth-car. This signal victory was gained upon the very field where, twenty years before, Israel had been smitten before the Philistines, the priests slain, and the ark of God taken. For nations as well as for individuals, the path of obedience to God is the path of safety and happiness, while that of

transgression leads only to disaster and defeat. The Philistines were now so completely subdued that they surrendered the strongholds which had been taken from Israel and refrained from acts of hostility for many years. Other nations followed this example, and the Israelites enjoyed peace until the close of Samuel's sole administration." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 590, 591.

FOR OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

- If day after day we do not want to hear the heavenly admonishments, what corrective method will the Lord be forced to use?
- In order to overcome the enemy, do we need a theoretical profession of faith like the one Israel had in the ark, or a living and active faith?
- If the ark was a help for the Israelites, why did the Lord permit the Philistines to take it?
- Considering that Israel obtained victory after they had undergone a great reformation, can we expect the same thing to happen to us if we consecrate ourselves wholly to the Lord?

12

Sabbath, March 19, 2005

Spiritual Leaders and Teachers

OBJECTIVES

- To understand the importance of Christian education at home and in school.
- To motivate young people to study the Bible and the book of nature.
- To learn an occupation, achieve habits of responsibility, and experience the benefits of physical exercise.

GOD'S SYSTEM OF EDUCATION IN ISRAEL

- 1. What special parental duty cannot be delegated to others?
Deuteronomy 4:9; 11:18-21; Psalm 78:5-7.**

“God had commanded the Hebrews to teach their children His requirements and to make them acquainted with all His dealings with their fathers. This was one of the special duties of every parent—one that was not to be delegated to another. In the place of stranger lips the loving hearts of the father and mother were to give instruction to their children. Thoughts of God were to be associated with all the events of daily life. The mighty works of God in the deliverance of His people and the promises of the Redeemer to come were to be often recounted in the homes of Israel; and the use of figures and symbols caused the lessons given to be more firmly fixed in the memory. The great truths of God’s providence and of the future life were impressed on the young mind. It was trained to see God alike in the scenes of nature and the words of revelation.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 592.

SYSTEM AND PURPOSE OF THE SCHOOL OF THE PROPHETS

2. Who officiated as a teacher of the prophets? What was Samuel’s purpose in founding these schools? 1 Samuel 19:20; 2 Kings 2:1-3, 15.

“Further provision was made for the instruction of the young, by the establishment of the schools of the prophets. If a youth desired to search deeper into the truths of the word of God and to seek wisdom from above, that he might become a teacher in Israel, these schools were open to him. The schools of the prophets were founded by Samuel to serve as a barrier against the widespread corruption, to provide for the moral and spiritual welfare of the youth, and to promote the future prosperity of the nation by furnishing it with men qualified to act in the fear of God as leaders and counselors. In the accomplishment of this object Samuel gathered companies of young men who were pious, intelligent, and studious. These were called the sons of the prophets. As they communed with God and studied His word and His works, wisdom from above was added to their natural endowments. The instructors were men not only well versed in divine truth, but those who had themselves enjoyed communion with God and had received the special endowment of His Spirit. They enjoyed the respect and confidence of the people, both for learning and piety.

“In Samuel’s day there were two of these schools—one at Ramah, the home of the prophet, and the other at Kirjath-jearim, where the ark then was. Others were established in later times.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 593.

3. What educational system developed in the school of the prophets? 1 Thessalonians 4:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:8. What did this practical system contribute to?

“The pupils of these schools sustained themselves by their own labor in tilling the soil or in some mechanical employment. In Israel this was not thought strange or degrading; indeed, it was regarded a crime to allow children to grow up in ignorance of useful labor. By the command of God every child was taught some trade, even though he was to be educated for holy office. Many of the religious teachers supported themselves by manual labor. Even so late as the time of the apostles, Paul and Aquila were no less honored because they earned a livelihood by their trade of tentmaking....

“Even if it were certain that one would never need to resort to manual labor for his support, still he should be taught to work. Without physical exercise, no one can have a sound constitution and vigorous health; and the discipline of well-regulated labor is no less essential to the securing of a strong and active mind and a noble character.

“Every student should devote a portion of each day to active labor. Thus habits of industry would be formed and a spirit of self-reliance encouraged, while the youth would be shielded from many evil and degrading practices that are so often the result of idleness.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 593, 601.

4. What subjects were taught in the schools of the prophets? In which way do those educational methods differ from the ones of our schools today? Leviticus 10:11; Hosea 6:3, first part; Psalm 145:4.

“The chief subjects of study in these schools were the law of God, with the instructions given to Moses, sacred history, sacred music, and poetry. The manner of instruction was far different from that in the theological schools of the present day, from which many students graduate with less real knowledge of God and religious truth than when they entered. In those schools of the olden time it was the grand object of all study to learn the will of God and man’s duty toward Him....

“A spirit of devotion was cherished. Not only were students taught the duty of prayer, but they were taught how to pray, how to approach their Creator, how to exercise faith in Him, and how to understand and obey the teachings of His Spirit....

“How wide the difference between those schools taught by the prophets of God and our modern institutions of learning! How few schools are to be found that are not governed by the maxims and customs of the world! There is a deplorable lack of proper restraint and judicious discipline. The existing ignorance of God’s word among a people professedly Christian is alarming.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 593, 594.

5. How does Christian education work in the restoration of God's image in man? 2 Peter 1:4-8; Galatians 5:22, 23.

"The true object of education is to restore the image of God in the soul. In the beginning God created man in His own likeness. He endowed him with noble qualities. His mind was well balanced, and all the powers of his being were harmonious. But the Fall and its effects have perverted these gifts. Sin has marred and well-nigh obliterated the image of God in man. It was to restore this that the plan of salvation was devised, and a life of probation was granted to man. To bring him back to the perfection in which he was first created is the great object of life—the object that underlies every other....

"All the varied capabilities that men possess—of mind and soul and body—are given them by God, to be so employed as to reach the highest possible degree of excellence. But this cannot be a selfish and exclusive culture; for the character of God, whose likeness we are to receive, is benevolence and love. Every faculty, every attribute, with which the Creator has endowed us is to be employed for His glory and for the uplifting of our fellow men. And in this employment is found its purest, noblest, and happiest exercise.

"Were this principle given the attention which its importance demands, there would be a radical change in some of the current methods of education. Instead of appealing to pride and selfish ambition, kindling a spirit of emulation, teachers would endeavor to awaken the love for goodness and truth and beauty—to arouse the desire for excellence. The student would seek the development of God's gifts in himself, not to excel others, but to fulfill the purpose of the Creator and to receive His likeness. Instead of being directed to mere earthly standards, or being actuated by the desire for self-exaltation, which in itself dwarfs and belittles, the mind would be directed to the Creator, to know Him and to become like Him." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 595, 596.

PRINCIPLES OF DIVINE EDUCATION

6. What is the foundation of true education? Psalm 111:10; Deuteronomy 4:6; Jeremiah 9:23, 24.

7. In which books do we find the principles of knowledge? Psalm 119:105; John 5:39; Psalm 19:1-4.

“In the study of the sciences also we are to obtain a knowledge of the Creator. All true science is but an interpretation of the handwriting of God in the material world. Science brings from her research only fresh evidences of the wisdom and power of God. Rightly understood, both the book of nature and the written word make us acquainted with God by teaching us something of the wise and beneficent laws through which He works.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 599.

FOR OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

- In matters of education, what advice do we have for parents and ministers?

“...Those who follow their own inclination, in blind affection for their children, indulging them in the gratification of their selfish desires, and do not bring to bear the authority of God to rebuke sin and correct evil, make it manifest that they are honoring their wicked children more than they honor God. They are more anxious to shield their reputation than to glorify God; more desirous to please their children than to please the Lord and to keep His service from every appearance of evil.

“God held Eli, as a priest and judge of Israel, accountable for the moral and religious standing of his people, and in a special sense for the character of his sons. He should first have attempted to restrain evil by mild measures; but if these did not avail, he should have subdued the wrong by the severest means. He incurred the Lord’s displeasure by not reproving sin and executing justice upon the sinner. He could not be depended upon to keep Israel pure. Those who have too little courage to reprove wrong, or who through indolence or lack of interest make no earnest effort to purify the family or the church of God, are held accountable for the evil that may result from their neglect of duty. We are just as responsible for evils that we might have checked in others by exercise of parental or pastoral authority as if the acts had been our own.

“Eli did not manage his household according to God’s rules for family government. He followed his own judgment. The fond father overlooked the faults and sins of his sons in their childhood, flattering himself that after a time they would outgrow their evil tendencies. Many are now making a similar mistake. They think they know a better way of training their children than that which God has given in His word. They foster wrong tendencies in them, urging as an excuse, ‘They are too young to be punished. Wait till they become older, and can be reasoned with.’ Thus wrong habits are left to strengthen until they become second nature.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 578, 579.

*Please,
read the Report from Malawi on page 58.*

13

Sabbath, March 26, 2005

Monarchy or Theocracy?

OBJECTIVES

- To understand that when we imitate the customs of the world we depart from God.
- To thank the Lord who has called us to be part of His people.
- To know that God helps us when we acknowledge our sins and come to Him with an obedient heart.

WHAT CAUSED THE PEOPLE TO WANT A KING

- 1. What arguments did the people of Israel use to ask Samuel for a king ? 1 Samuel 8:1-5; 12:12.**

“The people adopted many of the customs of their heathen neighbors and thus sacrificed to a great degree their own peculiar, holy character. Gradually they lost their reverence for God and ceased to prize the honor of being His chosen people. Attracted by the pomp and display of heathen monarchs, they tired of their own simplicity.... As they departed from obedience to God’s law, they desired to be freed from the rule of their divine Sovereign; and thus the demand for a monarchy became widespread throughout Israel....

“It was with the full assent of the nation that Samuel had appointed his sons to office, but they did not prove themselves worthy of their father’s choice. The Lord had, through Moses, given special directions to His people that the rulers of Israel should judge righteously, deal justly with the widow and the fatherless, and receive no bribes. But the sons of Samuel ‘turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.’ The sons of the prophet had not heeded the precepts which he had sought to impress upon their minds. They had not copied the pure, unselfish life of their father....

“The injustice of these judges caused much dissatisfaction, and a pretext was thus furnished for urging the change that had long been secretly desired.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 603, 604.

2. What burdens would the people have to bear to support the pomp and luxury of the king? 1 Samuel 8:9-18. Did Israel listen this time to Samuel’s reasoning? 1 Samuel 8:19-22.

“Samuel was instructed to grant the request of the people, but to warn them of the Lord’s disapproval, and also make known what would be the result of their course. ‘And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked of him a king.’ He faithfully set before them the burdens that would be laid upon them, and showed the contrast between such a state of oppression and their present comparatively free and prosperous condition. Their king would imitate the pomp and luxury of other monarchs, to support which, grievous exactions upon their persons and property would be necessary. The goodliest of their young men he would require for his service. They would be made charioteers and horsemen and runners before him. They must fill the ranks of his army, and they would be required to till his fields, to reap his harvests, and to manufacture implements of war for his service. The daughters of Israel would be for confectioners and bakers for the royal household. To support his kingly state he would seize upon the best of their lands, bestowed upon the people by Jehovah Himself. The most valuable of their servants also, and of their cattle, he would take, and ‘put them to his work.’ Besides all this, the king would require a tenth of all their income, the profits of their labor, or the products of the soil.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 606.

3. Whom did Israel reject wanting to be like “all the nations.”? 1 Samuel 8:6-8.

“‘Like all the nations.’ The Israelites did not realize that to be in this respect unlike other nations was a special privilege and blessing. God had separated the Israelites from every other people, to make them His own peculiar treasure. But they, disregarding this high honor, eagerly desired to imitate the example of the heathen!” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 607.

4. What does imitation of worldly practices lead to? James 4:4; Matthew 6:24; 2 Corinthians 6:14-16.

“...And still the longing to conform to worldly practices and customs exists among the professed people of God. As they depart from the Lord they become ambitious for the gains and honors of the world. Christians are constantly seeking to imitate the practices of those who worship the god of this world. Many urge that by uniting with worldlings and conforming to their customs they might exert a stronger influence over the ungodly. But all who pursue this course thereby separate from the Source of their strength. Becoming the friends of the world, they are the enemies of God. For the sake of earthly distinction they sacrifice the unspeakable honor to which God has called them, of showing forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. 1 Peter 2:9.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 607.

REPENTANCE AND FAITHFULNESS

5. After the admonishment, did the people finally acknowledge that it was a sin to ask for a king? 1 Samuel 12:14-19.

“Before there could be any hope of prosperity for Israel they must be led to repentance before God. In consequence of sin they had lost their faith in God and their discernment of His power and wisdom to rule the nation—lost their confidence in His ability to vindicate His cause. Before they could find true peace they must be led to see and confess the very sin of which they had been guilty. They had declared the object of the demand for a king to be, ‘That our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.’...

“At the time of wheat harvest, in May and June, no rain fell in the East. The sky was cloudless, and the air serene and mild. So violent a storm at this season filled all hearts with fear. In humiliation the people now confessed their sin—the very sin of which they had been guilty: ‘Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king.’” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 614, 615.

6. What was Samuel's inspired counsel for the continued well-being of the people? 1 Samuel 12:20-24.

"The government of Israel was administered in the name and by the authority of God.... From age to age men inspired by God were sent to instruct the people and to direct in the enforcement of the laws.

"The Lord foresaw that Israel would desire a king, but He did not consent to a change in the principles upon which the state was founded. The king was to be the vicegerent of the Most High. God was to be recognized as the Head of the nation, and His law was to be enforced as the supreme law of the land."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 603.

GOD'S DESIRE FOR HIS PEOPLE

7. What was God's purpose for Israel and what does He want from His people at the end of time? Deuteronomy 26:17-19; 1 Peter 2:9, 10.

"The days of Israel's greatest prosperity had been those in which they acknowledged Jehovah as their King—when the laws and the government which He had established were regarded as superior to those of all other nations. Moses had declared to Israel concerning the commandments of the Lord: 'This is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' Deuteronomy 4:6. But by departing from God's law the Hebrews had failed to become the people that God desired to make them, and then all the evils which were the result of their own sin and folly they charged upon the government of God....

"God desired His people to look to Him alone as their Law-giver and their Source of strength. Feeling their dependence upon God, they would be constantly drawn nearer to Him. They would become elevated and ennobled, fitted for the high destiny to which He had called them as His chosen people."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 605, 606.

FOR OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

- What can be said about some wishes and petitions of man?

"The Lord had, through His prophets, foretold that Israel would be governed by a king; but it does not follow that this form of government was best for them or according to His will. He permitted the people to follow their

own choice, because they refused to be guided by His counsel. Hosea declares that God gave them a king in His anger. Hosea 13:11. When men choose to have their own way, without seeking counsel from God, or in opposition to His revealed will, He often grants their desires, in order that, through the bitter experience that follows, they may be led to realize their folly and to repent of their sin. Human pride and wisdom will prove a dangerous guide. That which the heart desires contrary to the will of God will in the end be found a curse rather than a blessing.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 605, 606.

- How far did the power of the king the people had asked for and his court reach? Hosea 13:9-11.
- Whom should we trust as the only true helper?

MISSIONARY REPORT FROM MALAWI

To be read on Sabbath, March 26, 2005

The Special Sabbath School Offering
will be gathered Sabbath, April 2, 2005

Dear brothers, sisters and friends in the truth,

Greetings from Malawi with the Lord's blessings as found in Matthew 24: 14. "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."

Malawi is a Central African state bordering on Mozambique in the east, Zambia in the west and Tanzania in the north. Malawi covers an area of 118,500 square kilometres including 5 lakes.

Malawi's population of about 13 million inhabitants is comprised of 3 main tribes: Tumbuka in the north, Chewa in central and south Malawi and Zaos in the southeastern part of the southern region. The official languages are Chichewa and English.

Dr. David Livingstone, an English missionary, first preached the gospel to Malawi around 1850. Since then many Christian religions have penetrated the country so that today 70% of the population is Christian. The remaining 25% are Muslim, 5% have traditional African religions. The Adventist faith entered this tropical country around 1902 and since then has spread throughout.

With God's help the message of Reformation reached Malawi in 1981 when brother Mwabwagilo from Tanzania passed the message on to his friend in Malawi brother Kayira, who was blind. Soon several other Adventist brothers and sisters including brother L.M.N. Mwalukasa became interested in the Reform message and later that year brother L.M.N. Mwalukasa together with brother Kayira travelled to the missionary headquarters in Tanzania to study the whole truth especially the prophetic testimonies concerning this message of Reformation. By the grace of God, and the united, tireless efforts of those early pioneers the precious truth was carried to all parts of the country.

Today there are 300 members in the South Central African Union. The believers are generally farmers on a very low income who can barely afford many basic needs. The small offerings rendered by the members are used to support the workers including transport with no funds remaining for other missionary activities. Plans have been made to extend the work into other areas of Malawi as well as spiritually encouraging the Lord's small flock of members.

It has been proposed that 3 field headquarters be constructed as well as churches, church schools, publishing houses and a sanatorium. Some office equipment is also essential such as a photocopier, computers and typewriters with accessories.

In order to achieve our targets before the Lord forever closes human probation, we need the support of the brothers and sisters around the world. God's mercy to us has been recorded in Matthew 7:7 where we are encouraged to ask, knock and seek help for our urgent needs. We hope that this promise will be wonderfully fulfilled through you dear brothers and sisters around the world, as your hearts are touched by the knowledge of our needs as described above.

We kindly appeal to your united sympathy with Christ's work in this region of Africa just as He sympathized with our hopeless situation by suffering a painful death on the cross on our behalf. "Greater love hath no man that this that a man lay down his life for his friends." John 15:13.

May the Lord bless you in a special way that you in turn can be a blessing to others. Please accept our united thanks in advance for your generous financial and spiritual support.

—Your brothers in Christ from the Malawian fields.

Sabbath School Lessons

for the First Half of 2005

Second Quarter

Looking unto Jesus

INTRODUCTION

“Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.” Hebrews 12:1, 2. There are many things around us that call our attention. In our society today life is rather hectic. We have many responsibilities, many things to take care of, and sometimes we fall victims of stress and even depression, because we do not seem to be able to cope. This text speaks of a race—a completely different kind—the race of faith. The Christian has a very definite goal ahead of him but he is not alone, neither is he in darkness. The Lord’s Word is a lamp unto his path (Psalm 119:105) and we are invited to run the race “with patience” since we are not competing, but are already victors if we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus who gives us faith, strengthens it and perfects it.

Therefore, in these lessons we shall study the different roles Jesus had during His life on earth: as a member of a family in His role of child and son, and as a member of society in His role of friend, teacher, preacher and healer. We shall also concentrate on some outstanding traits of His character that are perfect examples for us, such as His humility, patience, mercy, righteousness and spirit of self-denial. But to be Christ-like does not consist only in being an imitation of the perfect Pattern, but in the implantation of Christ’s nature in us by the working of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. To this end, we shall study Jesus’ life of prayer so that we may realize the importance of a constant dialogue with God in order for this miracle to take place in our lives. The culminating point of Jesus’ mission on this earth was His death on the cross to pay for our debts to heaven and set us free from the bondage of sin. His ultimate goal for us is our sanctification. Nothing that we shall study during this quarter is new to any of us. As members of the church of the last period, we are rich in knowledge, although wanting in such important things as genuine faith, an experience with Christ’s righteousness and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. “Jesus represents himself as a merchantman, walking to and fro before our doors, and crying, ‘Buy of me gold, and white raiment, and eyesalve.’ Will we take his merchandise? We have a whole Saviour, who is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him. I want to be like him; I want to be with him through the ceaseless ages of eternity. Immortality and an eternal weight of glory will be given to those who have their lives hid with Christ in God.” Review and Herald, July 16, 1889.

The purpose of these lessons is that they may act as a mirror that should lead us to an awareness of our own condition, the high standard set by Heaven, and to a life of prayer and constant pleading with God. If in some way the study of these Bible texts and testimonies brings us to a closer dependence on our heavenly Father and a real communion with Jesus, they will have fulfilled their purpose.

May the Lord open our hearts to the holy influence of His Spirit so that when He comes in the clouds of heaven He may find us prepared for eternity with Him.

—The Brothers of the General Conference

The Special Sabbath School Offering is dedicated to Malawi

*Remember to give your offering as an expression
of love and gratitude.*

1

Sabbath, April 2, 2005

Jesus as a Child

“And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit.” Luke 1:80.

OBJECTIVES

- To see in what ways Jesus is an example for every child and young person.
- To understand that children also have a responsibility before God.
- To learn and know what is most important in the education of a child.
- To realize the role parents have in the Christian education of their children.

JESUS AS AN EXEMPLARY CHILD

1. What information do we have in the Scriptures and the Testimonies about Jesus’ childhood? Luke 2:40, 52.

“In childhood Jesus did the works of an obedient child. He spoke and acted with the wisdom of a child, and not of a man, honoring His parents and carrying out their wishes in helpful ways, according to the ability of a child. But at each stage of His development He was perfect, with the simple, natural grace of a sinless life.” - Child Guidance, pp. 204, 205.

“His mind was active and penetrating, with a thoughtfulness and wisdom beyond His years. Yet His character was beautiful in its sym-

metry. The powers of mind and body developed gradually, in keeping with the laws of childhood.

“As a child, Jesus manifested a peculiar loveliness of disposition. His willing hands were ever ready to serve others. He manifested a patience that nothing could disturb, and a truthfulness that would never sacrifice integrity. In principle firm as a rock, His life revealed the grace of unselfish courtesy.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 68, 69.

2. Considering that Jesus was the Son of God, was his childhood easier than that of an ordinary child? Revelation 12:4; Matthew 2:3, 8, 13.

“When Jesus came into the world, Satan’s power was turned against Him. From the time when He appeared as a babe in Bethlehem, the usurper worked to bring about His destruction. In every possible way he sought to prevent Jesus from developing a perfect childhood, a faultless manhood, a holy ministry, and an unblemished sacrifice.”

“Young companions urged Him to do as they did. ...they enjoyed His presence, and welcomed His ready suggestions; but they were impatient at His scruples, and pronounced Him narrow and strait-laced.”

“... His brothers... did not believe that He was the Sent of God.”

“It was necessary for Him to be constantly on guard in order to preserve His purity...”

“...No child of humanity will ever be called to live a holy life amid so fierce a conflict with temptation as was our Saviour.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 759, 89, 90, 71.

3. Did Jesus conform to the life style of the times in which he lived and the demands of society on a young person? Matthew 4:9, 10. What did he do instead? John 5:39 (first part).

“The childhood of Jesus, spent in poverty, had been uncorrupted by the artificial habits of a corrupt age. Working at the carpenter’s bench, bearing the burdens of home life, learning the lessons of obedience and toil, He found recreation amidst the scenes of nature, gathering knowledge as He sought to understand nature’s mysteries. He studied the word of God, and His hours of greatest happiness were found when He could turn aside from the scene of His labors to go into the fields, to meditate in the quiet valleys, to hold communion with God on the mountainside or amid the trees of the forest.” —*Ministry of Healing*, p. 52.

“Jesus did not, like many youth, devote His time to amusement. He studied the word until He became familiar with its sayings. Even in His childhood His life and all His habits were in harmony with the Scriptures, and He was skillful in their use.” –*Counsels to Teachers*, p. 178.

How JESUS RELATES TO CHILDREN

4. What can be expected from a child? Proverbs 1:8, 9; Ephesians 6:1-3.

“In childhood He [Jesus] could only do the work of an obedient child, fulfilling the wishes of His parents, in doing such duties as would correspond to His ability as a child. This is all that children can do, and they should be so educated and instructed that they may follow Christ’s example.” –*The Adventist Home*, p. 290.

5. Can Jesus understand children? Is He interested in them at all? Luke 18:16.

“Jesus was interested in children. He did not step into our world a fully matured man. Had He done this, children would not have had His example to copy. Christ was a child; He had the experience of a child; He felt the disappointments and trials that children feel; He knew the temptations of children and youth... If Christ had never been a child Himself, the youth might now think that He could not sympathize with them. But He lived their example, and all children and youth may find in Jesus one to whom they can carry all their griefs and all their disappointments, and in Him they will find a Friend who will help them.” –*Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, pp. 54, 55.

6. What did Jesus like about children? What did he see in them? Job 33:9; Matthew 18:3.

“When wearied with the bustle and confusion of the crowded city, tired of contact with crafty and hypocritical men, His spirit found rest and peace in the society of innocent little children.” –*Counsels to Teachers*, p. 179.

“In these children who were brought in contact with Him, Jesus saw the future men and women who should be heirs of His grace and

subjects of His kingdom, and some of whom would become martyrs for His sake. He knew that these children would listen to Him and accept Him as their Redeemer far more readily than would the grown people, many of whom were worldly-wise and hardhearted.” —*Special Testimonies on Education*, pp. 62-66. May 17, 1896.

THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

7. Did Jesus attend any special schools at a tender age as children do today?

“The child Jesus did not receive instruction in the synagogue schools. His mother was His first human teacher. From her lips and from the scrolls of the prophets, He learned of heavenly things... He needed not the education to be obtained from such sources; for God was His instructor.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 70.

“He applied Himself diligently to a study of the Scriptures, for He knew them to be full of invaluable instruction.” —*Counsels to Teachers*, p. 260.

“...He gathered stores of scientific knowledge from nature. He studied the life of plants and animals, and the life of man...” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 70.

8. How can parents contribute to the development of a Christian character in their children? Ephesians 6:4; 2 Timothy 1:5.

“Eternal vigilance must be manifested with regard to our children. They must strive in the love and fear of God to preoccupy the garden of the heart, sowing the good seeds of a right spirit, correct habits, and the love and fear of God.

“Obedience to parental authority must be inculcated in babyhood, childhood, and youth. The will of the parents must be under the discipline of Christ. Molded and controlled by God’s pure, Holy Spirit, they may establish unquestioned dominion over the children.” —*Notebook Leaflets from the Elmshaven Library*, vol. 1, p. 94.

“If we wish our children to possess the tender spirit of Jesus, and the sympathy that angels manifest for us, we must encourage the generous, loving impulses of childhood.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 516.

9. Is it wise to provide our children with a wealth of material things and give them much free time for recreation? Proverbs 30:8, 9.

“The parents of Jesus were poor, and dependent upon their daily toil. He was familiar with poverty, self-denial, and privation. This experience was a safeguard to Him. In His industrious life there were no idle moments to invite temptation. No aimless hours opened the way for corrupting associations. So far as possible, He closed the door to the tempter. Neither gain nor pleasure, applause nor censure, could induce Him to consent to a wrong act. He was wise to discern evil, and strong to resist it.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 72.

“The hours of study and recreation should be carefully regulated, and a portion of the time should be spent in physical labor.” —*Christian Education*, p. 183.

“Our great adversary is constantly working with power to allure the youth to self-indulgence, pride, and extravagance, that their minds and hearts may be so fully taken up with these things that there will be no place for God in their affections. He is by these means warping the character and dwarfing the intellect of the youth of this generation. It is the duty of parents to counteract his working.” —*Testimonies on Sabbath School*, p. 99.

FOR MEDITATION AND FURTHER STUDY

- Are we preparing our children for the time of affliction that is ahead of us? Read about the education of the Waldensian youth in *The Great Controversy*, p. 67.
- Think about the fact that we relate to our own children in the same way we relate to the child within us, and that we cannot help someone overcome what we have not yet overcome ourselves.
- Examine whether our children are exerting an influence for good on other children in school or whether they are becoming, little by little, more like the world.
- Read and meditate upon chapter 13 of *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, and study section IV of *Child Guidance*.
- Mothers, be comforted with these thoughts:

“Jesus knows the burden of every mother’s heart. He who had a mother that struggled with poverty and privation sympathizes with every mother in her labors. He who made a long journey in order to relieve the anxious heart of a Canaanite woman will do as much for the mothers of today. He who gave back to the widow of Nain her only son, and who in His agony upon the cross remembered His own mother, is touched today by the mother’s sorrow. In every grief and every need He will give comfort and help.

“Let mothers come to Jesus with their perplexities. They will find grace sufficient to aid them in the management of their children. The gates are open for every mother who would lay her burdens at the Saviour’s feet.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 512.

2

Sabbath, April 9, 2005

Jesus as a Son

“Hearken unto thy father that begat thee,
and despise not thy mother when she is old.” Proverbs 23:22.

OBJECTIVES

- To understand the responsibility we have toward our parents.
- To understand that not even the closest earthly relationship should interfere with our relationship with God.
- To be aware of what should be the only purpose of our life on this earth once we become Christians.

JESUS, THE SON OF MARY AND JOSEPH

1. What was Jesus’ relation to His earthly parents like, all his life long?

“Jesus lived in a peasant’s home, and faithfully and cheerfully acted His part in bearing the burdens of the household. He had been the Commander of heaven, and angels had delighted to fulfill His word; now He was a willing servant, a loving, obedient son. He learned a trade, and with His own hands worked in the carpenter’s shop with Joseph. In the simple garb of a common laborer He walked the streets of the little town, going to and returning from His humble work. He did not employ His divine power to lessen His burdens or to lighten His toil....

“Jesus did not ignore His relation to His earthly parents... He acknowledged the tie that bound Him to the home at Nazareth and performed the duties of a son, a brother, a friend and a citizen.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 82.

2. What conclusions can we draw about His relationship with His mother from the following events? Luke 2:48, 49; John 2:2-5; John 19:25-27.

“The life of Christ was marked with respect and love for His mother.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 90.

“Jesus loved his mother tenderly; for thirty years he had been subject to parental control; but the time had now come when he was to go about his Father’s business. In rebuking his mother, Jesus also rebukes a large class who have an idolatrous love for their family, and allow the ties of relationship to draw them from the service of God. Human love is a sacred attribute; but should not be allowed to mar our religious experience, or draw our hearts from God.” –*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, p. 101.

“Every act of Christ’s earthly life was in harmony with the precept He Himself had given, ‘Honor thy father and thy mother.’ Ex. 20:12.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 146.

3. What lesson can parents and children draw from Jesus’ relationship with His own parents?

“By many children and youth, time is wasted that might be spent in carrying home burdens, and thus showing a loving interest in father and mother. The youth might take upon their strong young shoulders many responsibilities which someone must bear.

“The life of Christ from His earliest years was a life of earnest activity. He lived not to please Himself. He was the Son of the infinite God, yet He worked at the carpenter’s trade with His father Joseph. His trade was significant...

“Parents should teach their children the value and right use of time...

“Parents cannot commit a greater sin than to allow their children to have nothing to do. The children soon learn to love idleness, and they grow up shiftless, useless men and women. When they are old enough to earn their living, and find employment, they work in a lazy, droning way, yet expect to be paid as much as if they were faithful.” –*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 345.

4. What was Jesus' relationship with His heavenly Father like? John 10:30; 14:11.

"In all that He did, Christ was cooperating with His Father. Ever He had been careful to make it evident that He did not work independently; it was by faith and prayer that He wrought His miracles. Christ desired all to know His relationship with His Father." —*Daughters of God*, p. 59.

5. Was there any conflict in His heart regarding His relationship with His earthly parents and His heavenly Father? Luke 2:49; Hebrews 12:9.

"As Son of the Most High, and Saviour of the world, no earthly ties must hold Him from His mission, or influence His conduct. He must stand free to do the will of God. This lesson is also for us. The claims of God are paramount even to the ties of human relationship. No earthly attraction should turn our feet from the path in which He bids us walk." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 147.

6. What was Jesus' highest purpose on this earth? John 4:34.

WE AS CHILDREN OF GOD

7. What privilege do we have if we accept Jesus' sacrifice for us? John 1:12.

"...He will adopt you into His family, and you will be His heir. In place of the world, He will give you, for a life of obedience, the kingdom under the whole heavens. He will give you an eternal weight of glory and a life that is as enduring as eternity." —*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 44.

"As children of God, you will hold His honor, His character, His family, His work, as the objects of your highest interest. It will be your joy to recognize and honor your relation to your Father and to every member of

His family. You will rejoice to do any act, however humble, that will tend to His glory or to the well-being of your kindred.” *–Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 105.

8. As soon as this miracle happens in our lives, what do we become? Philippians 3:20; 2 Corinthians 5:20.

9. As ambassadors of Christ and citizens of heaven longing to go home, what shall we feel constrained to do as we prepare for eternity? 1 Corinthians 9:16; Acts 5:42; Revelation 22:17.

“The ambassadors of Christ have a responsible and sacred work before them. They are saviors of life unto life, or of death unto death. Their influence decides the destiny of souls for whom Christ died.” *–Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 60.

“All who profess to be children of God should unceasingly bear in mind that they are missionaries in their labors brought in connection with all classes of minds.” *–Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 554.

FOR MEDITATION AND FURTHER STUDY

- How do I honor my parents?
- Can I blame my parents for my unfruitful Christian life?
- Does the relationship with my heavenly Father take first place in my life?
- How am I fulfilling the commission God gave me?

Jesus as a Friend

“The warmth of true friendship, the love that binds heart to heart, is a foretaste of the joys of heaven.” —*The Adventist Home*, p. 106.

OBJECTIVES

- To understand that a genuine friend is a God-given gift.
- To realize that there is no friend like Jesus.
- To know what qualifies one as a friend.
- To consider the criteria that must be applied when choosing a friend.

FRIENDSHIP—A PRECIOUS GIFT

1. **What was Jesus’ attitude toward this very special relationship that will last through eternity? Proverbs 17:9, 17.**

“Christ took a personal interest in men and women while He lived on this earth.” —*Welfare Ministry*, p. 162.

2. **Did He have any special friends on this earth? John 11:3; Luke 10:39; 7:38; John 13:23.**

“Jesus had often found the rest that His weary human nature required at the house of Lazarus, in Bethany.” —*Daughters of God*, p. 57.

“John is distinguished above the other apostles as ‘the disciple whom Jesus loved.’ John 21:20. He seems to have enjoyed to a pre-eminent degree the friendship of Christ, and he received many tokens of the Saviour’s confidence and love.

“The Saviour’s affection for the beloved disciple was returned with all the strength of ardent devotion. John clung to Christ as the vine clings to the stately pillar.”

“It was John’s deep love for Christ which led him always to desire to be close by His side.” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 539, 545.

JESUS-OUR FRIEND

- 3. What is a top requirement for being called a friend of Jesus, and what privilege does this friendship entail? John 15:14, 15.**

“There is many a man in the humble walks of life today whom the Lord might designate as He did Abraham: ‘The friend of God.’ Such men approve that which God approves and condemn that which He condemns.” –*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 615.

- 4. What other paradoxical fact counts us as His friends and why? Zechariah 13:6.**
- 5. Which friend should we cherish more than anyone in our life, and why? 1 John 4:19; Isaiah 53:5; Hebrews 4:15.**

“Seek to make God your father, and you will never want a friend.” –*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 314.

“Unless we continually cherish friendship between God and our souls, we shall separate from Him, and walk apart from Him. We shall make friends of those around us, and place our trust in humanity, and our affections will be diverted from the true object of worship.” –*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 28.

“The friendship expressed by nearest and dearest relatives and friends is so far surpassed by the revelation of Jesus Christ that the former is dumb and expressionless when compared with the latter.” –*This Day with God*, p. 328.

FRIENDSHIP IN THE BALANCES

- 6. What are some of the things that a real friend does and does not do?**

Proverbs 17:17
1 Samuel 18:4
1 Samuel 19:4 (first part)
1 Samuel 20:4
2 Samuel 9:1

Matthew 26:2
James 3:14
Romans 2:1
1 Samuel 20:17
Proverbs 27:6

“A true Christian is the poor man’s friend. He deals with his perplexed and unfortunate brother as one would deal with a delicate, tender, sensitive plant.” –*My Life Today*, p. 245.

“Whoever is foolish enough to flatter you cannot be your true friend. Your true friends will caution, entreat, and warn you, and reprove your faults.” –*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 226.

“They show the truest friendship who reprove error and sin without partiality and without hypocrisy.” –*Evangelism*, p. 368.

“When one is in trouble, call upon him and speak comforting words to him. This is true friendship.” –*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 928.

“There is no surer way of weakening spirituality than by cherishing envy, suspicion, faultfinding, and evil surmising.” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 549.

7. What kind of friendship are we to avoid? James 4:4.

“The Scriptures furnish abundant evidence that it is safer to be joined to the Lord, and lose the favor and friendship of the world, than to look to the world for favor and support, and forget our dependence upon God.” (RH Jan. 8, 1884) –*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1134.

“While we must live in the world, we are not to be of the world. We are forbidden to conform to its practices and fashions. The friendship of the ungodly is more dangerous than their enmity. (ST June 2, 1881)” –*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 1001).

“You should avoid contracting an intimate friendship with those whose example you would not choose to imitate. The influence and tendency of such friendship is to assimilate you to their ideas and their views, and unless there is a continual counteracting influence, all unrealized by you their spirit and habits have become yours.” –*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 4, p. 233.

FOR MEDITATION AND FURTHER STUDY

- Do I have friends in the real sense of the word?
- Have I made Jesus my true Friend?
- Do I fulfill the requirements to be considered a real friend?

- Let us think about this statement and pray that we may practice it: “A true friend is one who knows all about you and loves you just the same.” *—Retired Years*, (1990) Appendix C, p. 129.

4

Sabbath, April 23, 2005

Jesus as a Teacher

“He was the only perfect educator in our world.” *—Education*, p. 237.

OBJECTIVES

- To understand the qualifications needed in order to be able to teach.
- To realize that every place can be appropriate for teaching.
- To understand that the results of our teaching depend to a great extent on the way it is done and on our example.
- To understand what Christian education consists of.

EDUCATION AND PURPOSE OF TEACHING

1. What does true education involve, according to the Spirit of Prophecy?

“True education means more than the pursual of a certain course of study. It means more than a preparation for the life that now is. It has to do with the whole being, and with the whole period of existence possible to man. It is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers. It prepares the student for the joy of service in this world and for the higher joy of wider service in the world to come.” *—Education*, p. 13.

2. What should be the main purpose of education? 2 Timothy 3: 16 (second part), 17.

“The world does not so much need men of great intellect as of noble character. It needs men in whom ability is controlled by steadfast principle.

“Character building is the most important work ever entrusted to human beings; and never before was its diligent study so important as now. Never was any previous generation called to meet issues so momentous; never before were young men and young women confronted by perils so great as confront them today.” *—Education*, p. 225.

OUR SAVIOUR’S TEACHING METHODS

3. What methods did our Saviour use in order to make his teaching interesting and attractive? Matthew 13:1-3.

“Christ’s manner of teaching was beautiful and attractive, and it was ever characterized by simplicity. He unfolded the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven through the use of figures and symbols with which his hearers were familiar; and the common people heard him gladly, for they could comprehend his words. There were no high-sounding words used...

“Jesus illustrated the glories of the kingdom of God by the use of the experiences and occurrences of earth.

“This is the way in which He would have us present His truth to others. The power of speech is of great value, and the voice should be cultivated for the blessing of those with whom we come in contact.” *—Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students*, p. 240.

4. What characterized Jesus’ manner of teaching? Matthew 7: 29.

“Christ’s teaching was simplicity itself. He taught as one having authority... Jesus uttered the truth in a plain, direct manner, giving vital force and impressiveness to all His utterances.

“...He did not disdain the repetition of old and familiar truths in prophecies if they would serve His purpose to inculcate ideas.” *—Evangelism*, pp. 55, 56.

5. What was one of Christ's main subjects? Matthew 5:8; John 17:17.

“...Holiness of heart and purity of life was the great subject of the teachings of Christ.” –*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 445.

“Jesus had nothing to do with the various subjects of dissension among the Jews. It was His work to present the truth. His words shed a flood of light upon the teachings of patriarchs and prophets, and the Scriptures came to men as a new revelation. Never before had His hearers perceived such a depth of meaning in the word of God.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 253.

“Jesus brought into His teaching none of the science of men. His teaching is full of grand, ennobling, saving truth, to which man's highest ambitions and proudest inventions can bear no comparison...” –*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 408.

6. In what places did Jesus teach? Matthew 5:1, 2; 4:23; Luke 13:26; 19:47; Matthew 11:1; Mark 4:1, 2.

“He went from place to place, that those in the highways and byways might hear the words of truth. By the sea, on the mountain side, in the streets of the city, in the synagogue, His voice was heard explaining the Scriptures.” –*Gospel Workers*, p. 43.

EXAMPLE SPEAKS LOUDER THAN WORDS

7. Why was Jesus' teaching so effective? What are his words to us? John 14:6; 6:63.

“...Here Christ stands revealed as the master teacher; ...He alone has perfect understanding of the human soul.

“Christ alone had experience in all the sorrows and temptations that befall human beings...

“What He taught, He lived... what He taught, He was. His words were the expression, not only of His own life experience, but of His own character. Not only did He teach the truth, but He was the truth. It was this that gave His teaching power.” –*Education*, pp. 78, 79.

8. What should every teacher of God's word be able to say? 1 Corinthians 11:1; Philipians 3:17.

“Hard and dark as the world is, the influence of a really consistent example will be a power for good.” –*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 286.

“If the daily walk of those who profess the truth were a living example of the life of Christ, a light would shine forth from them which would lead others to the Redeemer. In heaven alone will be fully estimated the blessed results, in the salvation of others, of a consistent, harmonious, godly life.” –*Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 683, 684.

FOR MEDITATION AND FURTHER STUDY

- Let us make a list of subjects necessary for us to study for our own personal benefit and that of others.
- What are my methods of teaching?
- Am I interested in becoming more and more Christ-like?
- Am I aware that my life style and attitude are a constant lesson to others?
- Let us take time to study the book Education and draw personal lessons from it.

5

Sabbath, April 30, 2005

Jesus as a Preacher

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; ...to preach deliverance to the captives...”

Luke 4:18.

OBJECTIVES

- To realize what preaching the truth really entails.
- To become aware of our need to be anointed with the Spirit.
- To understand that preaching the gospel should be seen as a need and not just a duty.

1. Since the beginning of His ministry, what was one of Jesus' most important activities? Matthew 4:17.

“Why did our Saviour labor to sow the seed in out-of-the-way places? Why did he travel slowly away from the villages which had been His places for communicating light by opening the Scriptures? There was a world to hear, and some souls would accept the truth who had not yet heard it.”
–*Evangelism*, p. 47.

2. Being interested in man's mental, spiritual and physical well being, what did Jesus do while on earth? Matthew 9:35.

“Never was there such an evangelist as Christ. He was the majesty of heaven, but He humbled Himself to take our nature, that He might meet men where they were. To all people, rich and poor, free and bond, Christ, the Messenger of the covenant, brought the tidings of salvation... Thus He went from city to city, from town to town, preaching the gospel and healing the sick—the King of glory in the lowly garb of humanity.” –*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 22.

3. What does every preacher need to be endowed with so that his preaching may be effective? Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 2:4.

“While we are to preach the word, we can not impart the power that will quicken the soul, and cause righteousness and praise to spring forth. In the preaching of the word there must be the working of an agency beyond any human power. Only through the divine Spirit will the word be living and powerful to renew the soul unto eternal life. This is what Christ tried to impress upon His disciples. He taught that it was nothing they possessed in themselves which would give success to their labors, but that it is the miracle-working power of God which gives efficiency to His own word.” –*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 64.

“The spirit of truth burning in the heart, beaming from the countenance, and breathing from the lips in every word, constitutes a sermon which is hard to resist or to set aside, and which makes the strongholds of

Satan tremble. Ministers who walk with God are clad with the panoply of heaven, and victory will attend their efforts.” –*Lift Him Up*, p. 225.

- 4. What will the audience experience when hearing the truth from anointed lips? Luke 24:32; Acts 2:37.**

THE CENTRAL POINT OF A SERMON

- 5. What should be considered when preaching the message from heaven? Isaiah 40:3.**

“The preaching of the Word should appeal to the intellect and impart knowledge, but it comprises much more than this. The heart of the minister must reach the hearts of the hearers.” –*Evangelism*, pp. 209, 210.

- 6. What should be the aim of the preacher when delivering a sermon? Acts 26:18; Ephesians 4:13.**

- 7. Who should be the center of our message in order to reach the hearts of the people? 1 Corinthians 1:23; 2:2**

“There is marrow and fatness in the gospel. Jesus is the living center of everything. Put Christ into every sermon. Let the preciousness, mercy, and glory of Jesus Christ be dwelt upon until Christ is formed within, the hope of glory...” –*Evangelism*, p. 186.

“Theology is valueless unless it is saturated with the love of Christ. True Christianity diffuses love through the whole being. It touches every vital part, the brain, the heart, the helping hands, the feet, enabling men to stand firmly where God requires them to stand, lest the lame be turned out of the way. The burning, consuming love of Christ for perishing souls is the life of the whole system of Christianity.” –*The Signs of the Times*, May 10, 1910.

RECEIVING AND GIVING THE MESSAGE

- 8. What is Christ's commission for all time, and why is it of vital importance today that the signs of Christ's second coming are visible? Matthew 28:18-20; 24:14.**

- 9. What will every soul that has deeply experienced God's love and mercy say and do in every possible way? 1 Corinthians 9: 16.**

FOR MEDITATION AND FURTHER STUDY

- Examine the difference between teaching and preaching: Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary, pp. 1457, 1129. Teach: To impart knowledge of or skill in. Preach: To advocate or inculcate (religious or moral truth, right conduct, etc.) in speech or writing. To proclaim or make known by sermons (the gospel, the good tidings).
- Do I feel compelled to share with others my experiences and find souls for the heavenly kingdom?
- Am I using all the talents God has given me to His service?

The Sermon on the Mount

“The mount of beatitudes is a symbol of the spiritual elevation on which Christ ever stood. Every word He uttered came from God, and He spoke with the authority of heaven.” —*Counsels to Teachers*, p. 439.

OBJECTIVES

- To realize the importance of the teachings presented in the Sermon on the Mount as prerequisites for entering heaven.
- To understand that the new birth is a basic requirement for living a spiritual life.
- To perceive the spirituality of the law.
- To consider that Christianity affects our whole life style.

THE BLESSINGS

1. **In this masterpiece of His sermons, what do the various virtues Jesus presents as conditions to receiving the heavenly blessings have in common? Matthew 5:3, 5, 7, 9.**
2. **Can the natural man fulfill the conditions required to receive the blessings? What is necessary? Ezekiel 36:26; Romans 1:16; 8:16.**
3. **What great expectation does Jesus have of His followers in all times? Matthew 5:13, 14.**

“The light of heaven is to be reflected through Christ’s followers to the world. This is the Christian’s lifework to direct the minds of sinners to God. The Christian’s life should awaken in the hearts of worldlings high and elevated views of the purity of the Christian religion. This will make believers the salt of the earth, the saving power in our world; for a well-developed Christian character is harmonious in all its parts.” –*Confrontation*, p. 67.

THE LAW

4. How far do the sixth and seventh commandments reach in their deep spiritual meaning? Matthew 5:21, 22, 27, 28.

“Jesus takes up the commandments separately, and explains the depth and breadth of their requirement. Instead of removing one jot of their force, He shows how far-reaching their principles are...” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 310.

“...He who spoke to the people that day in accents of love, was opening to them the principles of the law proclaimed upon Sinai.” –*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 45.

5. What is the golden rule of the law of love? Matthew 7:12.

“In order to fulfill the law, we are to carry out the golden rule, and do unto others as we would have them do unto us. Our influence must be sanctified by the Holy Spirit of God, if it is to be a blessing to humanity... One day alone is ours, and during this day we are to live for God, beautify our characters by faith in the righteousness of Christ. This one day we are to place in the hands of Christ in solemn service, in all our purposes and plans to be guided by him. This one day we are to do unto others exactly as we wish them to do unto us. We are to be ready to speak kind words from hearts full of sympathy and love. We are to manifest patience, revealing to the world what it means to be a practical doer of the words of Christ...” –*The Signs of the Times*, July 11, 1892.

“...Whatever we give we shall receive again. The earthly blessings which we impart to others may be, and often are, repaid in kind. What we give does, in time of need, often come back to us in fourfold measure in the coin of the realm. But, besides this, all gifts are repaid, even in this life, in the fuller inflowing of His love, which is the sum of all heaven’s glory and its treasure.” –*Welfare Ministry*, p. 312.

- 6. What should characterize the life of a Christian who is following the heavenly pattern and preparing for eternity? Matthew 6:1-4; Matthew 6:5-15; Matthew 6:16-18. (Notice that in all three passages it says “when” and not “if”).**

“...Give in sincerity, for the benefit of the suffering poor. In prayer, let the soul commune with God. In fasting, go not with the head bowed down, and heart filled with thoughts of self.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 312.

- 7. What are some of the examples that we find in the Scriptures of people who prayed and fasted? For what purpose, and in what special situations, did they pray and fast? What cases can be applied to our times? Psalms 35:13; 2 Chronicles 20:2, 3; Jonah 3:4, 5; Esther 4:14-16; Ezra 8:21; 2 Corinthians 11:23, 27**

“...We need to humble ourselves before the Lord, with fasting and prayer, and to meditate much upon his Word, especially upon the scenes of the judgment. We should now seek a deep and living experience in the things of God. We have not a moment to lose. Events of vital importance are taking place around us; we are on Satan’s enchanted ground. Sleep not, sentinels of God; the foe is lurking near, ready at any moment, should you become lax and drowsy, to spring upon you and make you his prey.” —*Great Controversy*, p. 601.

“Now and onward till the close of time the people of God should be more earnest, more wide-awake, not trusting in their own wisdom, but in the wisdom of their Leader. They should set aside days for fasting and prayer.” —*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p.188.

- 8. Which law in Israel that Jesus mentions in the Sermon on the Mount is still valid in our times? Deuteronomy 15:7-11; Matthew 6:3, 4; James 2:14-17.**

“...The light of the gospel shining from the cross of Christ rebukes selfishness and encourages liberality and benevolence. It is not to be a lamented fact that there are increasing calls to give... The angel of God places benevolent acts close beside prayer. He said to Cornelius: ‘Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.’

“...The more we invest in the cause of God to aid in the salvation of souls, the closer to our hearts will they be brought.” –*Testimonies*, vol. 3 p. 405.

FOR MEDITATION AND FURTHER STUDY

- Do I experience God’s blessings in my daily life?
- How do I express my gratitude to the Lord for His presence in my life?
- Have I asked the Lord for a new heart, and have I received it?
- Is benevolence a constant practice in my life?
- Study Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing.

“Throughout all time the words that Christ spoke from the mount of Beatitudes will retain their power. Every sentence is a jewel from the treasure house of truth. The principles enunciated in this discourse are for all ages and for all classes of men. With divine energy Christ expressed His faith and hope as He pointed out class after class as blessed because of having formed righteous characters. Living the life of the Life-giver, through faith in Him, everyone can reach the standard held up in His words.” –*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 270.

7

Sabbath, May 14, 2005

Jesus as a Healer

“Christ was the greatest physician that ever trod this sin-cursed earth.”
–*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 178.

OBJECTIVES

- To realize that God is interested in all aspects of our well being.
- To understand that some diseases can be the result of a wrong life style.
- To become aware of the importance of practicing the principles of health reform.
- To realize the importance the health reform message has for the progress of the gospel.

1. What was the condition of the world in Jesus' time? Matthew 4:24.

“...This world is a vast lazar house, but Christ came to heal the sick, to proclaim deliverance to the captives of Satan. He was in Himself health and strength. He imparted His life to the sick, the afflicted, those possessed of demons. He turned away none who came to receive His healing power. He knew that those who petitioned Him for help had brought disease upon themselves; yet He did not refuse to heal them. And when virtue from Christ entered into these poor souls, they were convicted of sin, and many were healed of their spiritual disease, as well as of their physical maladies.”
—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 823.

2. What is sickness a consequence of? John 5:14.

“...Thus He taught that disease is the result of violating God's laws, both natural and spiritual. The great misery in the world would not exist did men but live in harmony with the Creator's plan.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 824.

HOPE IN THE LORD

3. What is the Lord's promise to His people? Exodus 15:26.

“...Christ gave to Israel definite instruction in regard to their habits of life, and He assured them, ‘The Lord will take away from thee all sickness.’ Deut. 7:15. When they fulfilled the conditions, the promise was verified to them. ‘There was not one feeble person among their tribes.’ Ps. 105:37.

“These lessons are for us. There are conditions to be observed by all who would preserve health. All should learn what these conditions are. The Lord is not pleased with ignorance in regard to His laws, either natural or spiritual. We are to be workers together with God for the restoration of health to the body as well as to the soul.

“And we should teach others how to preserve and to recover health.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 824.

4. In healing people, what element is indispensable? What remedies did Jesus use? Matthew 9:28; John 9:6, 7.

“...For the sick we should use the remedies which God has provided in nature, and we should point them to Him who alone can restore. It is our work to present the sick and suffering to Christ in the arms of our faith. We should teach them to believe in the Great Healer. We should lay hold on His promise and pray for the manifestation of His power. The very essence of the gospel is restoration, and the Saviour would have us bid the sick, the hopeless, and the afflicted take hold upon His strength.” –*Counsels on Health*, p. 31.

5. What great lesson do we learn from the episode of the healing of the man sick of the palsy? Matthew 9:6.

“Jesus was the healer of the body as well as of the soul. He was interested in every phase of suffering that came under His notice, and to every sufferer He brought relief, His kind words having a soothing balm.”

“The paralytic found in Christ healing for both the soul and the body. The spiritual healing was followed by physical restoration. This lesson should not be overlooked. There are today thousands suffering from physical disease, who, like the paralytic, are longing for the message, ‘Thy sins are forgiven.’ The burden of sin, with its unrest and unsatisfied desires, is the foundation of their maladies. They can find no relief until they come to the Healer of the soul. The peace which He alone can give would impart vigor to the mind, and health to the body.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 92, 270.

BODY AND SOUL - AN INSEPARABLE UNITY

6. Are psychosomatic diseases a product of modern society only? Psalm 31:9; 55:4-9; 88:3, 4; Proverbs 14:30.

“...Many are suffering from maladies of the soul far more than from diseases of the body, and they will find no relief until they shall come to Christ, the wellspring of life. Complaints of weariness, loneliness, and dissatisfaction will then cease. Satisfying joys will give vigor to the mind and health and vital energy to the body.” –*Counsels on Health*, p. 241.

7. How can they be healed? Psalm 38:18; 51:17.

8. What place does healing occupy in the preaching of the gospel? Matthew 10:1; 3 John 2.

“The Lord would have His people come to Him for their power of healing. He will baptize them with His Holy Spirit and fit them for service that will make them a blessing in restoring the spiritual and physical health of those who need healing...”

“...I know that an intimate relationship should ever exist between the medical missionary work and the gospel ministry.” –*Counsels on Health*, pp. 301, 528.

“During the life of Christ the sick and afflicted were objects of His special care. When He sent out His disciples He commissioned them to heal the sick as well as to preach the gospel... The Saviour of the world devoted more time and labor to healing the afflicted of their maladies than to preaching.” –*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 225.

FOR MEDITATION AND FURTHER STUDY

- Analyze your health condition in the light that comes from the Word of God and the Testimonies.
- How do I contribute to the well-being of the society in which I live?
- Make a list of what being a health reformer entails--not just being a vegetarian.
- Consider these testimonies:

“The grace of God is always reformatory. Every human being is in a school, where he is to learn to give up hurtful practices, and to obtain a knowledge of what he can do for himself.” –*Medical Ministry*, p. 226.

“The Lord, in His great goodness and matchless love, has been urging upon His human instrumentalities that missionaries are not really complete in their education unless they have a knowledge of how to treat the sick and suffering.” –*Counsels on Health*, p. 536.
- Let us read *Counsels on Diet and Foods* in a spirit of prayer.
- Read chapters 5 and 18 from *The Ministry of Healing*.

Jesus' Life of Prayer

"It is only at the altar of God that we can kindle our tapers with divine fire."

—*Gospel Workers*, p. 255.

OBJECTIVES

- To understand the importance of prayer in our everyday life.
- To recognize that prayer is not a formality but real communion with God.
- To realize that prayer is a powerful weapon and a must in our preparation for heaven.

HOW JESUS PRAYED

- 1. What conclusions do you come to by studying the details about Jesus' life of prayer? Mark 1:35; Luke 6:12; Hebrews 5:7.**

"He seemed as one who was set apart. His hours of happiness were found when alone with nature and with God. Whenever it was His privilege, He turned aside from the scene of His labor, to go into the fields, to meditate in the green valleys, to hold communion with God on the mountainside or amid the trees of the forest. The early morning often found Him in some secluded place, meditating, searching the Scriptures, or in prayer. From these quiet hours He would return to His home to take up His duties again, and to give an example of patient toil." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 89, 90.

"...the Man of Sorrows pours out His supplications with strong crying and tears. He prays for strength to endure the test in behalf of humanity. He must Himself gain a fresh hold on Omnipotence, for only thus can He contemplate the future... The dew is heavy upon His bowed form, but He heeds it not. The shadows of night gather thickly about Him, but He regards not their gloom. So the hours pass slowly by." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 419, 420.

2. Why is prayer so important for our Christian life? Matthew 26:41; 2 Peter 3:18.

“It is only through fervent prayer that we may hold sweet fellowship with Jesus, and through this blessed communion the words and the spirit are made fragrant with the spirit of Christ.” —*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 405.

“Prayer is the strength of the Christian. When alone he is not alone; he feels the presence of One who has said: ‘Lo, I am with you alway.’” —*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 504.

“Only by constant watchfulness and persevering and almost unceasing prayer shall we be able to exhibit in our life the character of Christ or the sanctifying influence of the truth.” —*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 304.

“If we would develop a character which God can accept, we must form correct habits in our religious life. Daily prayer is as essential to growth in grace, and even to spiritual life itself, as is temporal food to physical well-being.” —*The Sanctified Life*, p. 93.

3. About what kind of prayer did Jesus give specific instructions? Matthew 6:6.

“In solitude let the soul be laid open to the inspecting eye of God. Secret prayer is to be heard only by the prayer-hearing God. No curious ear is to receive the burden of such petitions. In secret prayer the soul is free from surrounding influences, free from excitement. Calmly, yet fervently, will it reach out after God. Sweet and abiding will be the influence emanating from Him who seeth in secret, whose ear is open to hear the prayer arising from the heart. By calm, simple faith, the soul holds communion with God, and gathers to itself rays of divine light to strengthen and sustain it in the conflict with Satan. God is our tower of strength.” —*Steps to Christ*, p. 98.

4. What did He say about collective prayer? Matthew 18:19, 20.

“In every church there should be stated seasons for united prayer for the advancement of this work.” —*Historical Sketches*, p. 294.

“As those thus united in Christian fellowship offer prayer to God, and pledge themselves to deal justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God, great blessing comes to them.” —*Gospel Workers*, p. 500.

"We have united in earnest prayer around the sickbed of men, women, and children, and have felt that they were given back to us from the dead in answer to our earnest prayers. In these prayers we thought we must be positive, and if we exercised faith, that we must ask for nothing less than life." *—Counsels on Health*, p. 378.

5. What are some of the things we should pray for?

Psalms 119:18, 35-37, 133

Matthew 5:44, last part

James 5:16

Acts 8:15

"Every soul has the privilege of stating to the Lord his own special necessities and to offer his individual thanksgiving for the blessings that he daily receives." *—Testimonies*, vol. 9, pp. 278, 279.

"Ask for humility, wisdom, courage, increase of faith, that you may see light in God's light and rejoice in His love." *—The Ministry of Healing*, p. 513.

"The part of the Christian is to persevere in overcoming every fault. Constantly he is to pray to the Saviour to heal the disorders of his sin-sick soul. He has not the wisdom or the strength to overcome; these belong to the Lord, and He bestows them on those who in humiliation and contrition seek Him for help." *—The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 532.

6. When should we pray? Psalms 5:3; 2 Chronicles 33:12; Colossians 1:3.

"In every Christian home God should be honored by the morning and evening sacrifices of prayer and praise. Children should be taught to respect and reverence the hour of prayer. It is the duty of Christian parents, morning and evening, by earnest prayer and persevering faith, to make a hedge about their children." *—Counsels to Teachers*, p. 110.

"Pray when you are fainthearted. When you are desponding, close the lips firmly to men; do not shadow the path of others; but tell everything to Jesus. Reach up your hands for help. In your weakness lay hold of infinite strength." *—The Ministry of Healing*, p. 513.

"Look unto Jesus at all times and in all places... When you are almost ready to yield, to lose patience and self-control, to be hard and denunciatory, to find fault and accuse--this is the time for you to send to heaven the prayer, 'Help me, O God, to resist temptation, to put all bitterness and wrath and evil-speaking out of my heart...'" *—The Adventist Home*, p. 214.

PRAYERS HEARD IN HEAVEN

7. **What conditions are given in the Scriptures for our prayers to be heard and answered? Mark 11:24, 25; Daniel 9:4; 1 John 5:14.**

8. **What attitude should we assume when praying? 1Peter 5:6, 7.**

„We obtain answers to our prayers because we humble our souls before God.“ - *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 188.

9. **Why do we sometimes seem to receive no answers to our prayers? James 4:3; Luke 18:5-7.**

„We all desire immediate and direct answers to our prayers, and are tempted to become discouraged when the answer is delayed or comes in an unlooked-for form. But God is too wise and good to answer our prayers always at just the time and in just the manner we desire. He will do more and better for us than to accomplish all our wishes. And because we can trust His wisdom and love, we should not ask Him to concede to our will, but should seek to enter into and accomplish His purpose. Our desires and interests should be lost in His will.“ - *Gospel Workers*, p. 219.

OUR PREPARATION FOR ETERNITY

10. **As individuals and as a church preparing for eternity, what should characterize our life? Colossians 4:2, 3.**

„Before the power of the Holy Ghost rested upon the disciples, they spent ten days before God in prayer and fasting and confession of sin. After they had come into unity, the heavens were opened, the glory of God was revealed, and the Holy Spirit came upon them. Then they went forth to proclaim the gospel with power, and under the influence of the Spirit five thousand were converted in one day.“ - *Peter's Counsels to Parents*, p. 33.

„Often we remained together until late at night, and sometimes through the entire night, praying for light, and studying the Word. As we fasted and prayed, great power came upon us.“ –*This Day with God*, p. 317.

FOR MEDITATION AND FURTHER STUDY

- Have I asked the Lord to cleanse my heart from every root of bitterness so that I may pray and expect forgiveness from God as I forgive others?
- Study some of the prayers given in the Scriptures and note the main points and the attitude of the person praying. Examples: 1 Kings 8:22-54; Daniel 9:1-19; Psalm 25; Ezra 9:5-15; Habakkuk 3:1-19; Matthew 9-13; Juan 17:1-26; etc.
- Make a list of the things and people we ought to pray for.
- Shouldn't we be praying at all times?
- Study the chapter on The Privilege of Prayer in the book Steps to Christ.
- Suggest how we can make our weekly prayer meetings what they really ought to be.

Jesus' Humility and Patience

“Meekness is the adorning which God estimates as of great price... as more excellent and valuable than gold or pearls or costly array. While the outward adorning beautifies only the mortal body, the ornament of meekness adorns the soul and connects finite man with infinite God.

This is the ornament of God's own choice. He who garnished the heavens with the orbs of light has by the same Spirit promised that ‘he will beautify the meek with salvation.’ Angels of heaven will register as best adorned those who put on the Lord Jesus and walk with Him in meekness and lowliness of mind.”
—Reflecting Christ, p. 264.

OBJECTIVES

- To understand what real humility is.
- To realize where our only hope lies.
- To examine ourselves and see what kind of fruits we bear.
- To consider what we can do to humble ourselves before God.

HUMILITY REFLECTED IN WORDS AND ACTIONS

1. **What are some of the fruits of humility seen in Jesus' behavior and words? John 6:38; John 13:4, 5; Matthew 26:39.**

“I present before you the life of self-denial, humility, and sacrifice of our divine Lord. The Majesty of heaven, the King of glory, left His riches, His splendor, His honor and glory, and, in order to save sinful man, condescended to a life of humility, poverty, and shame; ‘who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame.’” *—Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 490, 491.

2. **Are shyness and insecurity signs of humility? Luke 4:32; Philippians 4:13.**

“He came as a humble Man, to be the Teacher and Exemplar as well as the Redeemer of the race. ...Yet combined with His humility was an inherent power and grandeur that awed men...” –*Medical Ministry*, p. 22.

“His humility did not consist in a low estimate of his own character and qualifications, but in adapting himself to fallen humanity, in order to raise them up with him to a higher life.” –*Christian Education*, p. 180.

“The Redeemer of the world came from heaven to help man in his weakness, that, in the power which Jesus came to bring him, he might become strong to overcome appetite and passion and might be victor on every point.” –*Counsels on Health*, p. 125.

A HARD LESSON TO LEARN

3. Can humility be learned? How? Matthew 11:28, 29.

“Humility is a hard lesson for fallen man to learn. There is something in the human heart which rises in opposition to revealed truth on subjects connected with God and sinners, the transgression of the divine law and pardon through Christ.” –*Counsels on Health*, p. 415

“It is painful to learn lessons of humility, yet nothing is more beneficial in the end. The pain attendant upon learning lessons of humility is in consequence of our being elated by a false estimate of ourselves, so that we are unable to see our great need.” –*Testimonies*, vol. 4 p. 378.

“In order to preserve humility, it would be well to remember how we appear in the sight of a holy God, who reads every secret of the soul, and how we should appear in the sight of our fellow men if they all knew us as well as God knows us. For this reason, to humble us, we are directed to confess our faults, and improve this opportunity to subdue our pride.” –*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 211.

4. Who is the only one who can teach us humility, and why? Philippians 2:6-8.

SOME PRECIOUS FRUITS

5. Which fruits are directly connected with humility, and why are they so important? Hebrews 10:36; 1 Peter 1:22; Isaiah 48:18.

“Though you so often fail to reveal patience and calmness, do not give up the struggle. Resolve again, this time more firmly, to be patient under every provocation. And never take your eyes off your divine Example.” —*Messages to Young People*, p. 136.

“The truth brought to light by Christ teaches that humanity, through obedience to the truth as it is in Jesus, may realize power to overcome the corruptions that are in the world through lust. Through living faith in the merits of Christ the soul may be converted and transformed into Christlikeness. Angels of God will be by the side of those who in humbleness of mind learn daily the lessons taught by Christ.” —*Medical Ministry*, p. 85.

“Meekness and humility will characterize all who are obedient to the law of God, all who will wear the yoke of Christ with submission. And these graces will bring the desirable result of peace in the service of Christ.” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1090.

6. What will a humble person do? Luke 17:4; Philippians 2:3; Matthew 7:12.

“Humility is an active principle growing out of a thorough consciousness of God’s great love, and will always show itself by the way in which it works.” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1139.

7. What will a humble person not do? 1 Thessalonians 5:15; Romans 2:1; Matthew 23:5; Daniel 4:30.

“In self-love, self-exaltation, and pride there is great weakness; but in humility there is great strength. Our true dignity is not maintained when we think most of ourselves, but when God is in all our thoughts and our hearts are all aglow with love to our Redeemer and love to our fellow men. Simplicity of character and lowliness of heart will give happiness, while self-conceit will bring discontent, repining, and continual disappointment. It is learning to think less of ourselves and more of making others happy that will bring to us divine strength.” —*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 476.

“We should love and respect one another, notwithstanding the faults and imperfections that we cannot help seeing. Humility and self-distrust should be cultivated, and a patient tenderness with the faults of others. This will kill out all narrowing selfishness, and make us large-hearted and generous.” —*Steps to Christ*, p. 121.

8. What is one way in which we can humble ourselves before God? Jonah 3:5.

“For certain things, fasting and prayer are recommended and appropriate. In the hand of God they are a means of cleansing the heart and promoting a receptive frame of mind. We obtain answers to our prayers because we humble our souls before God.” –*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, pp. 187, 188.

9. Is fasting always a sign of humility? Isaiah 58:4; Luke 18:11, 12.

“Fasting and prayer will accomplish nothing while the heart is estranged from God by a wrong course of action. Read Isaiah 58:6, 7, 9-11.” –*Counsels on Health*, p. 377.

FOR MEDITATION AND FURTHER STUDY

- When the feet washing takes place before the Lord’s Supper, do I tend to pick out the person I feel closest to and the most comfortable with, or someone who is distant and cold and with whom I had some friction?
- If pride is the most prominent trait of our character, let us remember and believe that “those that walk in pride he is able to abase.” Daniel 4:37.
- Consider this statement as the key to keeping a humble spirit: “He who looks higher than himself will be humble;...” –*Education*, p. 237.
- Let us make it a point to read *The Desire of Ages* with a teachable spirit and underline all the details of Jesus’ life that point to His traits of character.

Jesus' Mercy and Righteousness

“God delights in mercy, and He manifests His compassion before He inflicts His judgments.”
—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 423.

OBJECTIVES

- To remember that God's mercy is above His righteousness.
- To be aware that Jesus' righteousness imputed to us is a sign of God's mercy.
- To understand that we are totally devoid of righteousness.
- To realize that the new birth is a deep experience with Christ.

MERCY AND LOVE - TWO INFALLIBLE INSTRUMENTS

1. **When we think of God as the Ruler of the Universe, what two elements must we consider? Psalm 89:14.**

“In the temple in heaven, the dwelling place of God, His throne is established in righteousness and judgment. In the most holy place is His law, the great rule of right by which all mankind are tested. The ark that enshrines the tables of the law is covered with the mercy seat, before which Christ pleads His blood in the sinner's behalf. Thus is represented the union of justice and mercy in the plan of human redemption.” —*Amazing Grace*, p. 69.

2. **How did Jesus, as the One sent from heaven to teach the way of a righteous life, deal with sinners? John 8:10, 11; 3:17.**
3. **When we as sinners approach our Lord, what do we appeal to? Luke 18:38.**

"The proud heart strives to earn salvation; but both our title to heaven and our fitness for it are found in the righteousness of Christ. The Lord can do nothing toward the recovery of man until, convinced of his own weakness, and stripped of all self-sufficiency, he yields himself to the control of God. Then he can receive the gift that God is waiting to bestow. From the soul that feels his need, nothing is withheld. He has unrestricted access to Him in whom all fullness dwells." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 300.

4. What should be a golden rule among those who want to be Christ's followers? Why? Ephesians 4:32.

5. What is the most effective medicine against a heart hardened by sin? Proverbs 10:12.

"God does not employ compulsory measures; love is the agent which He uses to expel sin from the heart. By it He changes pride into humility, and enmity and unbelief into love and faith." —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 77.

DIVINE RIGHTEOUSNESS VERSUS HUMAN RIGHTEOUSNESS

6. What do the Scriptures say about our righteousness? Isaiah 64:6; Matthew 5:20; Romans 3:10.

"The rabbis counted their righteousness a passport to heaven; but Jesus declared it to be insufficient and unworthy. External ceremonies and a theoretical knowledge of truth constituted Pharisaical righteousness..."

"The greatest deception of the human mind in Christ's day was that a mere assent to the truth constitutes righteousness. In all human experience a theoretical knowledge of the truth has been proved to be insufficient for the saving of the soul." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 309.

"Self-righteousness is the danger of this age; it separates the soul from Christ. Those who trust to their own righteousness cannot understand how salvation comes through Christ. They call sin righteousness and righteousness sin. They have no appreciation of the evil of transgression, no understanding of the terror of the law; for they do not respect God's moral standard. The reason there are so many spurious conversions in these days is

that there is so low an appreciation of the law of God. Instead of God's standard of righteousness, men have erected a standard of their own by which to measure character." —*Faith and Works*, p. 96.

7. What is God's standard of righteousness? Romans 7:12.

"Righteousness can be defined only by God's great moral standard, the Ten Commandments. There is no other rule by which to measure character.—Signs of the Times, June 20, 1895." —*Reflecting Christ*, p. 59.

NEW BIRTH AND NEW LIFE

8. Is it just by studying the Scriptures that we reach God's standard of righteousness? John 3:3; Luke 15:18-22.

"There must be a new birth, a new mind through the operation of the Spirit of God, which purifies the life and ennobles the character. This connection with God fits man for the glorious kingdom of heaven. No human invention can ever find a remedy for the sinning soul.

"There must be a power working from within, a new life from above, before men can be changed from sin to holiness. That power is Christ. His grace alone can quicken the lifeless faculties of the soul, and attract it to God, to holiness." —*The Faith I Live By*, p. 96.

"The want in the religious experience is the acceptance of Jesus Christ as presented in the gospel. Many have not yet received Christ. They have accepted a theory of the truth, and have been in a large degree left to this kind of experience. And how hard it has been to impress the minds with the necessity of justification by faith!" —*The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, 1987.

9. Does this experience that is so well described in Romans 6:14 exempt us from observing God's law? Romans 6:15, 18.

"God's law tolerates no sin, but demands perfect obedience. The echo of God's voice comes to us, ever saying. Holier, holier still. And ever our answer is to be, Yes, Lord, holier still. Holiness is within the reach of all who reach for it by faith, not because of their good works, but because of Christ's merits. Divine power is provided for every soul struggling for the victory over sin and Satan." —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 908.

FOR MEDITATION AND FURTHER STUDY

- Let us analyze our attitude in certain concrete circumstances and see if we react according to God's righteousness, imbued with mercy, or according to our own standard of righteousness?
- Is the new birth an experience in my life?
- Let us read in Testimony Treasures, vol. 3, the chapter on Christ our Righteousness.

11

Sabbath, June 11, 2005

Jesus' Self-Denial

"Self-denial and crosses meet us at every step on our heavenward journey."
—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 79.

OBJECTIVES

- To understand that self-denial is a basic point in our preparation for heaven.
- To realize that self-denial is not a self-imposed punishment but a way to freedom.
- To realize that gratitude and love lead to self-denial.
- To remember that self-denial should be learned from infancy.

SELF-DENIAL-A SIGN OF DISCIPLESHIP

1. What is the starting point of a Christian life? Luke 9:23.

"The life of Christ was one of self-sacrifice and self-denial at every step; and with consistent, Christ-like tenderness and love, His true follower will walk in the footsteps of the Master; and as he advances in this life, he will become more and more inspired with the spirit and life of Christ. (ST April 16, 1912)" —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1092.

“Follow Him in befriending the most needy and friendless. Follow Him in being forgetful of self, abundant in acts of self-denial and self-sacrifice to do others good; when reviled, reviling not again; manifesting love and compassion for the fallen race.” —*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 178.

2. To what point did Christ’s spirit of self-denial bring Him and may bring us also? Philippians 2:6-8; 1 John 3:16.

“He laid aside His glory, His dominion, His riches, and sought after those who were perishing in sin. He humbled Himself to our necessities, that He might exalt us to heaven. Sacrifice, self-denial, and disinterested benevolence characterized His life. He is our pattern.” —*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 549.

“Shall the world’s Redeemer practice self-denial and sacrifice on our account, and the members of Christ’s body practice self-indulgence?—No; self-denial is an essential principle of discipleship.” —*Signs of the Times*, November 25, 1886.

“The absence of self-denial in His professed followers, God regards as a denial of the Christian name.” —*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 54.

3. What is one of the most difficult natural desires to overcome? Proverb 23:1-3; Philippians 3:18, 19.

“It is a most difficult matter to unlearn the habits which have been indulged through life and have educated the appetite. The demon of intemperance is not easily conquered. It is of giant strength and hard to overcome.” —*Counsels on Health*, p. 609.

“Our tables are frequently spread with luxuries neither healthful nor necessary, because we love these things more than we love self-denial, freedom from disease, and soundness of mind.

“What a pity it is that often, when the greatest self-denial should be exercised, the stomach is crowded with a mass of unhealthful food, which lies there to decompose. The affliction of the stomach affects the brain. The imprudent eater does not realize that he is disqualifying himself for giving wise counsel, disqualifying himself for laying plans for the best advancement of the work of God. But this is so.” —*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 53.

4. What motivates a spirit of self-denial? 2 Corinthians 9:15; 8:9; 5:14.

“It is when divine light shines into the chambers of the mind with unusual clearness and power, that the feelings of the natural man are overcome, that selfishness loses its power upon the heart, and that desires are awakened to imitate the Pattern, Jesus Christ, in practicing self-denial and benevolence.” –*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 471.

“Every soul that accepts Jesus as his personal Saviour will pant for the privilege of serving God and will eagerly seize the opportunity to signalize his gratitude by devoting his abilities to God’s service. He will long to show his love for Jesus and for His purchased possession. He will covet toil, hardship, sacrifice. He will think it a privilege to deny self, lift the cross, and follow in Christ’s footsteps, thus showing his loyalty and love.” –*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 394.

5. What does self-denial have to do with consecration and sanctification? Romans 12:1.

“When the apostle appeals to his brethren to present their bodies ‘a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God,’ he sets forth the principles of true sanctification. It is not merely a theory, an emotion, or a form of words, but a living, active principle, entering into the everyday life. It requires that our habits of eating, drinking, and dressing be such as to secure the preservation of physical, mental, and moral health, that we may present to the Lord our bodies, not an offering corrupted by wrong habits, but ‘a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.’” –*The Sanctified Life*, pp. 27, 28.

6. What are some practical signs of self-denial?

“Self-denial means to rule the spirit when passion is seeking for the mastery; to resist the temptation to censure and to speak faultfinding words; to have patience with the child that is dull and whose conduct is grievous and trying; to stand at the post of duty when others may fail; to lift responsibilities wherever and whenever you can, not for the purpose of applause, not for policy, but for the sake of the Master, who has given you a work to be done with unwavering fidelity; when you might praise your-

self, to keep silent and let other lips praise you. Self-denial is to do good to others where inclination would lead you to serve and please yourself.” –*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 521.

“Do not talk about your meager wages. Do not cultivate a taste for expensive articles of dress or furniture. Let the work advance as it began, in simple self-denial and faith.” –*Selected Messages*, vol. 2, p. 188.

SELF-DENIAL FOR EVERYONE AT ALL TIMES

7. In what way is John the Baptist, as a forerunner of Jesus’ first coming, an example for us today? Matthew 3:4.

“John separated himself from friends, and from the luxuries of life. The simplicity of his dress, a garment woven of camel’s hair, was a standing rebuke to the extravagance and display of the Jewish priests, and of the people generally. His diet, purely vegetable, of locusts and wild honey, was a rebuke to the indulgence of appetite, and the gluttony that everywhere prevailed.” –*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 71.

Regarding the “locusts,” the Webster’s Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language, p. 842, among others, gives the following definitions: “An American fabaceous tree, *Robinia Pseudo-Acacia*, having thorny branches and white flowers. The durable wood of this tree. Any of various other trees, as the carob and the honey locust.”

“No one can practice real benevolence without self-denial. Only by a life of simplicity, self-denial, and close economy is it possible for us to accomplish the work appointed us as Christ’s representatives.” –*Messages to Young People*, p. 320.

8. Are children exempt from practicing self-denial?

“Children are to be educated to deny themselves.... It flashed upon me with great force that in every home there should be a self-denial box, and that into this box the children should be taught to put their pennies they would otherwise spend for candy and other unnecessary things.
...

“You will find that as the children place their pennies in these boxes, they will gain a great blessing. . . . Every member of the family, from the oldest to the youngest, should practice self-denial.” –*Child Guidance*, p. 132.

“Our children should be taught to deny themselves of such unnecessary things as candies, gum, ice cream, and other knickknacks, that they may put the money saved by their self-denial into the self-denial box, of which there should be one in every home. By this means large and small sums would be saved for the cause of God.” —*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 329.

FOR MEDITATION AND FURTHER STUDY

- Let us make a list of the benefits God has given us that fill our souls with gratitude.
- Let us make a list of the areas in which self denial is still difficult for us to practice and make it a point of prayer.
- Let us study and discuss this subject with the members of our family in a spirit of humility and prayer until everyone agrees to keep a self-denial box at home, if we do not already have one.
- Let us consider this testimony: “Study the principles of health reform and teach your children that the path of self-denial is the only path of safety.” —*Child Guidance*, p. 409.
- Let us learn the following statements by heart after having meditated on them, and let us pray they may become part of us:

“Self-denial is to do good to others where inclination would lead you to serve and please yourself.” —*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 521.

“Self denial and crosses meet us at every step on our heavenward journey.” —*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 79.

“Resolution, self-denial and consecrated effort are required for the work of preparation.” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1096.

“Self-denial, self sacrifice, is to be woven into all our experience.” —*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 116.

“The most difficult sermon to preach and the hardest to practice is self-denial.” —*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 29.

“We should not live for ourselves, but for others.” —*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 647.

Looking unto Jesus

“...let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith;...” Hebrews 12:1, 2.

OBJECTIVES

- To make us aware of the high price paid for our redemption.
- To experience once more God’s infinite love for us sinners.
- To move our hearts to gratitude and praise.

LOOKING AT GETHSEMANE

1. **What did it mean for Jesus to drink the cup that he had agreed to take even before He was born as a man and that is presented to Him at Gethsemane? Matthew 26:38, 39; Isaiah 53:3-6.**

“In Gethsemane the cup of woe trembled in His hand.” –*The Great Controversy*, p. 347.

“But now He seemed to be shut out from the light of God’s sustaining presence. Now He was numbered with the transgressors. The guilt of fallen humanity He must bear. Upon Him who knew no sin must be laid the iniquity of us all. So dreadful does sin appear to Him, so great is the weight of guilt He must bear, that He is tempted to fear it will shut Him out forever from His Father’s love.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 685.

2. **What did the drops of blood on His forehead reveal? Luke 22:44.**

“No sorrow, no agony, can measure with that which was endured by the Son of God.” –*God’s Amazing Grace*, p 168.

“Again the Son of God was seized with superhuman agony, and fainting and exhausted, He staggered back to the place of His former struggle. His suffering was even greater than before. As the agony of soul came upon Him, ‘His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.’ The cypress and palm trees were the silent witnesses of His anguish. From their leafy branches dropped heavy dew upon His stricken form, as if nature wept over its Author wrestling alone with the powers of darkness.”

“In His agony He clings to the cold ground, as if to prevent Himself from being drawn farther from God. The chilling dew of night falls upon His prostrate form, but He heeds it not. From His pale lips comes the bitter cry, ‘O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me.’” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 689, 687.

3. What was Jesus’ wish and what did He experience instead? Matthew 26:38; Ecclesiastes 4:10.

“The human heart longs for sympathy in suffering. This longing Christ felt to the very depths of His being. In the supreme agony of His soul He came to His disciples with a yearning desire to hear some words of comfort from those whom He had so often blessed and comforted.”

“Where now were His disciples, to place their hands tenderly beneath the head of their fainting Master, and bathe that brow, marred indeed more than the sons of men? The Saviour trod the wine press alone, and of the people there was none with Him.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 687, 693.

THE LAMB OF GOD

4. What did He bear together with our sins? Psalm 69:7; Hebrews 12:2.

“He endured shame, cruel scourging, insult, and mockery, that we might be reconciled to God and rescued from endless death. If our minds dwell upon these themes, our conversation will be in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, and even vain thoughts will seem out of place.” –*Gospel Workers* (1892), p. 419.

5. How did Christ react when insulted and accused? Mark 15:4, 5; Isaiah 53:7.

“...Christ heard the abuse; but to all the false charges against Him He answered not a word. His whole bearing gave evidence of conscious innocence. He stood unmoved by the fury of the waves that beat about Him. It was as if the heavy surges of wrath, rising higher and higher, like the waves of the boisterous ocean, broke about Him, but did not touch Him. He stood silent, but His silence was eloquence.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p 726.

6. What else did Jesus endure for me? Luke 23:21, 35, 36; Mark 14:65; John 19:1-3, 17, 18.

“A maddened throng enclose the Saviour of the world. Mocking and jeering are mingled with the coarse oaths of blasphemy. His lowly birth and humble life are commented upon by the unfeeling mob. His claim to be the Son of God is ridiculed, and the vulgar jest and insulting sneer are passed from lip to lip.

“...His hands stretched upon the cross; the hammer and the nails were brought, and as the spikes were driven through the tender flesh, the heart-stricken disciples bore away from the cruel scene the fainting form of the mother of Jesus.

“As soon as Jesus was nailed to the cross, it was lifted by strong men, and with great violence thrust into the place prepared for it. This caused the most intense agony to the Son of God...” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 734, 744, 745.

THE MAN OF CALVARY

7. What did Jesus’ agony and death on the cross reveal? John 3:16.

“The spotless Son of God hung upon the cross, His flesh lacerated with stripes; those hands so often reached out in blessing, nailed to the wooden bars; those feet so tireless on ministries of love, spiked to the tree; that royal head pierced by the crown of thorns; those quivering lips shaped to the cry of woe. And all that He endured--the blood drops that flowed from His head, His hands, His feet, the agony that racked His frame, and the unutterable anguish that filled His soul at the hiding of His Father’s face--speaks to each child of humanity, declaring, It is for thee that the Son of God consents to bear this burden of guilt; for thee He spoils the domain of death, and opens the gates of Paradise. He who stilled the angry waves and walked the foam-capped billows, who made devils tremble and disease

flee, who opened blind eyes and called forth the dead to life,--offers Himself upon the cross as a sacrifice, and this from love to thee.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 755.

8. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, what should we all experience when we see Jesus hanging on the cross? 2 Corinthians 5:21; Jeremiah 33:16 (last part); Romans 8:35.

“...When we behold Him in Gethsemane, sweating great drops of blood, and on the cross dying in agony—when we see this, self will no longer clamor to be recognized. Looking unto Jesus, we shall be ashamed of our coldness, our lethargy, our self-seeking. We shall be willing to be anything or nothing, so that we may do heart service for the Master. We shall rejoice to bear the cross after Jesus, to endure trial, shame, or persecution for His dear sake.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 439, 440.

FOR MEDITATION AND FURTHER STUDY

- “Heaven viewed with grief and amazement Christ hanging upon the cross, blood flowing from His wounded temples, and sweat tinged with blood standing upon His brow. From His hands and feet the blood fell, drop by drop, upon the rock drilled for the foot of the cross. The wounds made by the nails gaped as the weight of His body dragged upon His hands. His labored breath grew quick and deep, as His soul panted under the burden of the sins of the world. All heaven was filled with wonder when the prayer of Christ was offered in the midst of His terrible suffering—‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.’ Luke 23:34.” —*Desire of Ages*, p. 760.

***Please,
read the Report from China on page 113.***

As We Behold We are Sanctified

“Sanctification means habitual communion with God.”
—Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 908.

OBJECTIVES

- To realize that sanctification is the top requirement for entrance into heaven.
- To understand that unless we are born again we have not begun this process.
- To be aware that unselfishness and forgiving love are the ultimate goals of a Christian.

A VERY HIGH GOAL

1. **What is God’s will regarding us? 1 Thessalonians 4:3; 5:23; 1Peter 1:16.**

“‘This is the will of God concerning you, ‘even your sanctification.’ 1 Thessalonians 4:3. Is it your will also? Your sins may be as mountains before you; but if you humble your heart and confess your sins, trusting in the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour, He will forgive and will cleanse you from all unrighteousness. God demands of you entire conformity to His law. This law is the echo of His voice saying to you, Holier, yes, holier still. Desire the fullness of the grace of Christ. Let your heart be filled with an intense longing for His righteousness, the work of which God’s word declares is peace, and its effect quietness and assurance forever.” *—The Acts of the Apostles, p. 566.*

2. **Why is sanctification so important? Hebrews 12:14.**

3. Analyze and comment on the following definitions of the term:

“The sanctification of the soul by the operation of the Holy Spirit is the implanting of Christ’s nature in humanity.” –*Selected Messages*, vol. 3, p. 198.

“...Genuine sanctification... is nothing less than a daily dying to self, and a daily conformity to the will of God.” –*Life Sketches*, p. 237.

“...Sanctification consists in the cheerful performance of daily duties in perfect obedience to the will of God.” –*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 360.

“True sanctification means perfect love, perfect obedience, perfect conformity to the will of God.” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 565.

4. How can we possibly obey God’s holy will? Philippians 2:13; John 15:5.

THE MEANS OF SANCTIFICATION

5. What experience precedes sanctification? Romans 5:1; 6:22.

“Justification means the saving of a soul from perdition, that he may obtain sanctification, and through sanctification, the life of heaven. Justification means that the conscience, purged from dead works, is placed where it can receive the blessings of sanctification. (MS 113, 1902).” –*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 908.

6. May we consider sanctification as an instantaneous experience? Revelation 22:11.

“Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, a day, but of a lifetime. It is not gained by a happy flight of feeling, but is the result of constantly dying to sin, and constantly living for Christ. Wrongs cannot be righted nor reformations wrought in the character by feeble, intermittent efforts. It is only by long, persevering effort, sore discipline, and stern conflict, that we shall overcome. We know not one day how strong will be our conflict the next. So long as Satan reigns, we shall have self to subdue, besetting sins to overcome; so long as life shall last, there will be no stopping place, no point

which we can reach and say, I have fully attained. Sanctification is the result of lifelong obedience.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 560, 561.

“There is no such thing as instantaneous sanctification. True sanctification is a daily work, continuing as long as life shall last. Those who are battling with daily temptations, overcoming their own sinful tendencies, and seeking for holiness of heart and life, make no boastful claims of holiness. They are hungering and thirsting for righteousness. Sin appears to them exceedingly sinful.” —*The Sanctified Life*, p. 10.

7. Does Sabbath keeping have something to do with sanctification? Ezekiel 20:12.

“The Sabbath given to the world as the sign of God as the Creator is also the sign of Him as the Sanctifier. The power that created all things is the power that re-creates the soul in His own likeness. To those who keep holy the Sabbath day it is the sign of sanctification. True sanctification is harmony with God, oneness with Him in character. It is received through obedience to those principles that are the transcript of His character. And the Sabbath is the sign of obedience. He who from the heart obeys the fourth commandment will obey the whole law. He is sanctified through obedience.” —*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 350.

A SANCTIFIED LIFE

8. What are the visible signs of sanctification? Galatians 5:22.

“Those who experience the sanctification of the Bible will manifest a spirit of humility. Like Moses, they have had a view of the awful majesty of holiness, and they see their own unworthiness in contrast with the purity and exalted perfection of the Infinite One.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 470.

“Thus it is with the truly righteous man. He is unconscious of his goodness and piety. Religious principle has become the spring of his life and conduct, and it is just as natural for him to bear the fruits of the Spirit as for the fig tree to bear figs or for the rosebush to yield roses. His nature is so thoroughly imbued with love for God and his fellow men that he works the works of Christ with a willing heart.” —*The Sanctified Life*, p. 13.

9. The observance of what commandment reveals a sanctified life? Matthew 22:37-39.

“Love is the basis of godliness. Whatever the profession, no man has pure love to God unless he has unselfish love for his brother. But we can never come into possession of this spirit by trying to love others. What is needed is the love of Christ in the heart. When self is merged in Christ, love springs forth spontaneously. The completeness of Christian character is attained when the impulse to help and bless others springs constantly from within--when the sunshine of heaven fills the heart and is revealed in the countenance.

“It is not possible for the heart in which Christ abides to be destitute of love. If we love God because He first loved us, we shall love all for whom Christ died.” –*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 384.

FOR MEDITATION AND FURTHER STUDY

- Is the fulfillment of God’s will a top priority in my life?
- Can the fruits of the Spirit be seen in me?
- How do I spend the Sabbath day?
- Do I devote time to cultivating my relationship with God and with the people around me during the week? How?
- Somebody said: “Character is formed by the way individuals meet the common events of every day life, but it is tested by the way they meet the crises of life.” How does this apply to me personally?

MISSIONARY REPORT FROM CHINA

To be read on Sabbath, June 25, 2005

The Special Sabbath School Offering
will be gathered Sabbath, July 2, 2005

China is the third largest country with 22% of the world's population. By the grace of God, the Reform Movement established the first church in this country at the beginning of the new millennium, May 2000.

Within a short time, there were 270 baptized members (mostly from the separated movement) and an organised union with 3 fields. The message of the angel of Revelation 18 reached China from the church in Korea.

Officially, the People's Republic of China still considers communism to be their God, even after its fall in the Soviet Union. The Chinese once believed that communism would bring them to a heavenly paradise but it has not met their expectations and has left a vacuum in their hearts. Many people are therefore searching for something to replace their shattered hopes and this gives us a great opportunity to preach the gospel in this country.

The Chinese government claims to permit freedom of religion but complete freedom is still prohibited. Religious activities of foreign, unregistered missions are especially repressed; therefore there are no official foreign missionaries in China. Officially registered religious organisations are infiltrated and controlled. Restricted missionary work is only possible in the provinces where members are living.

Nevertheless, the light of the gospel is being preached in this country under such dangerous conditions. We claim that the Lord's coming is near but how can we expect the Lord to return when 1.4 billion people are still in total darkness?

We are to sow the seed of the gospel in this large country too. Let us be wise and use this great opportunity to preach the message of Revelation 18 and three angels' message in China, which has been isolated behind the iron curtain for so many years.

Those missionaries that enter China first, will have the largest land and richest fruit. Many very large churches in the world are waiting, increasing their financial resources and training people to enter China and preach the gospel as soon as China opens its door to them. But the door remains closed and so we, who have limited resources, now have the wonderful opportunity of working for the Lord. If we are prepared to labour in dangerous situations then there are many places where the gospel can be preached and many souls can be won.

Dear Brothers and Sisters around the world, listen to the Macedonian cry, which is coming from China the home of 1.4 billion people. The many Christian books so common in western countries are rare in China. The people are eager to read anything even detrimental books. Those people need a living message. Sending books is difficult instead literature could be printed, at some risk, in the country.

Although the church is not registered, it is growing and it needs a headquarters building. The recent rapid, economic growth in China means that the price of real state is soaring especially in the big cities. The time to purchase a building is now.

Dear Brothers and sisters, the Chinese church needs your help. E. G. White saw in a vision that many souls were saved in China. "In heathen Africa ... in China, in India, in the islands of the sea, and in all the dark corners of the earth, God has in reserve a firmament of chosen ones that will yet shine forth amidst the darkness, revealing clearly to an apostate world the transforming power of obedience to His law." *—Prophets and Kings*, p 189.

I sincerely hope that this prophecy will be fulfilled through your prayers and generous offerings and so hasten the coming of our Lord.

—Kang Dai Chun
Far East Asia Representative

