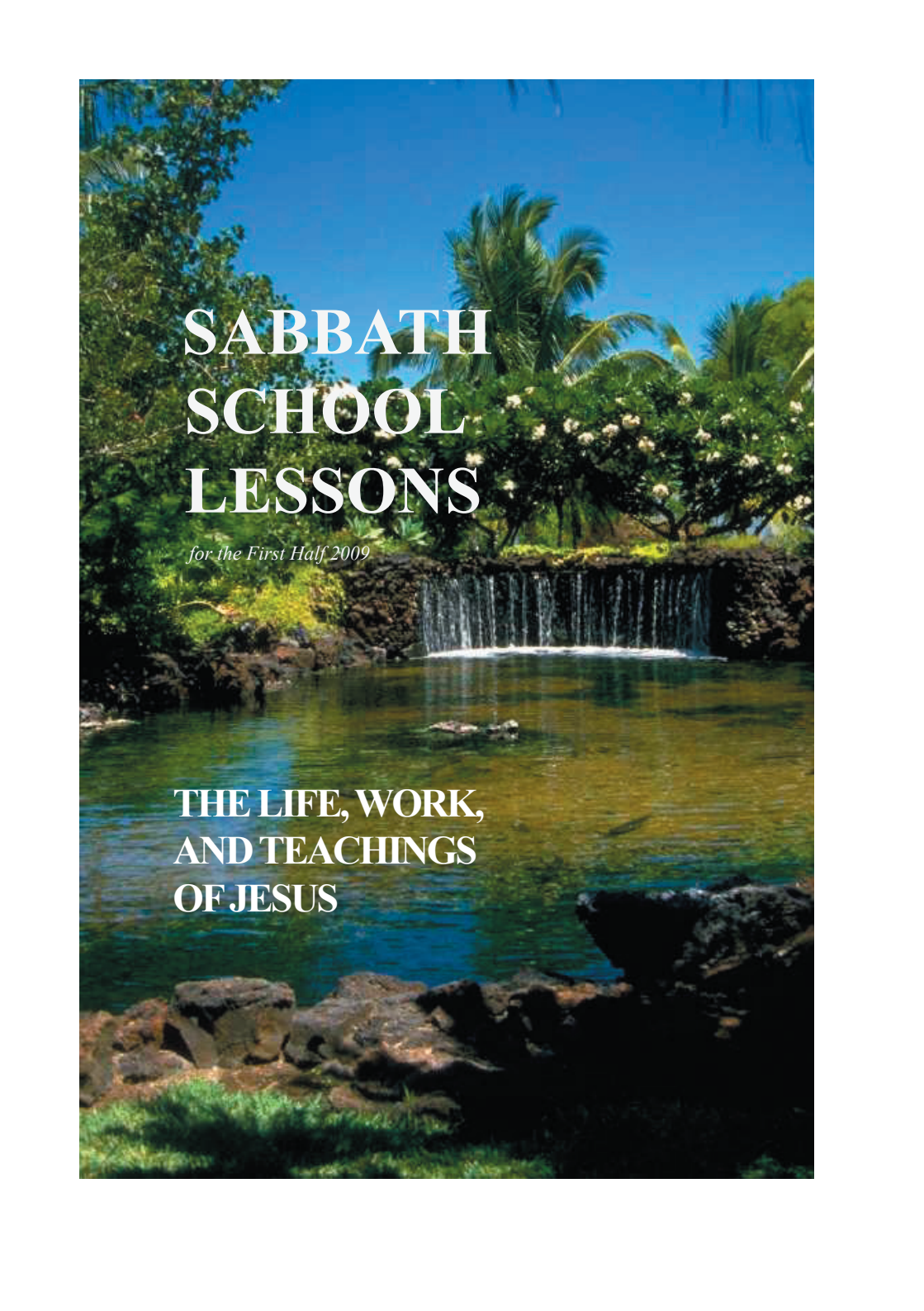




SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

for the First Half 2009

THE LIFE, WORK,
AND TEACHINGS
OF JESUS

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for the First Half 2009

THE LIFE, WORK, AND TEACHINGS OF JESUS

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INTRODUCTION

“Never man spake like this man” (John 7:46)—these words expressed the astonishment of individuals who listened to Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, for the first time. In a similar vein, a ruler in Israel told Him: “No man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him” (John 3:2). And another man confessed: “Truly this man was the Son of God (Mark 15:39). In this quarter, we will study and learn about “this Man,” Jesus Christ.

The life, work, and teachings of Jesus are the foundation of the plan of redemption. They are the center of the Holy Scriptures, the ultimate end of the law, and the fulfilment of all prophecy. What blessing and happiness are ours if He is the goal of our life! When Andrew, one of the first disciples, became acquainted with Him, he exclaimed: “We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ” (1 John 1:41). And another disciple, filled with joy, announced to a friend: “We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth” (John 1:45).

Jesus is the Lamb of God—the hope of salvation. He is our Redeemer, granting everyone who comes to Him freedom from sin and death. He alone can help, because “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). His life is the greatest revelation of love, through which the gospel message reaches and conquers the hearts of men. Let us take Him as the Lord of our spiritual life and have Him beside us constantly. Christ gives power for the progress of His church all around the world. Let us follow His example and see very soon the fulfilment of our missionary service.

“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrew 12:2)—this is the invitation of God’s word. He is the sun of righteousness which illuminates the entire world, and His great desire is that we reflect His light in our every word and action.

After Moses returned to the camp after spending time with God on Mount Sinai, his face shone with glory (Exodus 34:29). And after the disciples had learned from Jesus, even the rulers in Israel “took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). This will also happen today if we will walk with the Saviour.

Dear brothers and sisters everywhere in the world, let us pray earnestly and constantly throughout this quarter that the teachings of the Saviour’s life that we study will be food for His church, that His flesh will become our flesh, and that His spirit will become our spirit. This is our sincere wish and prayer.

—The Brethren of the General Conference

The Special Sabbath School Offering is dedicated to Ethiopia

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

1

Sabbath, January 3, 2009

THE WORD WAS WITH GOD

“But while God’s Word speaks of the humanity of Christ when upon this earth, it also speaks decidedly regarding His preexistence. The Word existed as a divine being, even as the eternal Son of God, in union and oneness with His Father. From everlasting He was the Mediator of the covenant, the one in whom all nations of the earth, both Jews and Gentiles, if they accepted Him, were to be blessed. ‘The Word was with God, and the Word was God.’ Before men or angels were created, the Word was with God, and was God.”—*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 247.

HIS PREEXISTENCE

- 1. What good news is contained in the Old Testament regarding the preexistence of Israel’s Ruler? Micah 5:2.**

“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God’ (Ps. 90:2)... Here the preexistence of Christ ... [is] presented as living beams of light from the eternal throne. ‘Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops: He hath laid siege against us: they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek. But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting’ (Micah 5:1, 2)”—*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 248.

2. What did the prophet Isaiah affirm concerning His eternal existence? Isaiah 9:6 [5].

“The Sovereign of the universe was not alone in His work of beneficence. He had an associate—a co-worker who could appreciate His purposes, and could share His joy in giving happiness to created beings. ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.’ John 1:1, 2. Christ, the Word, the only begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father—one in nature, in character, in purpose—the only being that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God. ‘His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.’ Isaiah 9:6. His ‘goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.’ Micah 5:2. And the Son of God declares concerning Himself: ‘The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting.... When He appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him.’ Proverbs 8:22-30.”
—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 34.

THE MESSAGE OF HIS PREEXISTENCE CONFIRMED

3. What does the Bible say about the Word at the beginning? What did He accomplish? 1 John 1:1; John 1:1.

“Jesus was to reveal God both to men and to angels. He was the Word of God—God’s thought made audible.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 19.

“Who is Christ? He is the only begotten Son of the living God. He is to the Father as a word that expresses the thought—as a thought made audible. Christ is the word of God. Christ said to Philip, ‘He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father.’ His words were the echo of God’s words. Christ was the likeness of God, the brightness of His glory, the express image of His person.”
—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 21.

JESUS’ OWN TESTIMONY

4. What did Jesus state about His preexistence? Matthew 22:41-46; John 8:58.

“In speaking of His preexistence, Christ carries the mind back through dateless ages. He assures us that there never was a time when He was not in close fellowship with the eternal God. He to whose voice the Jews were then listening had been with God as one brought up with Him.” —*The Signs of the Times*, August 29, 1900.

5. What does He call Himself on the last page of the Bible? Why? Revelation 22:13.

“Christ Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the Genesis of the Old Testament, and the Revelation of the New. Both meet together in Christ. Adam and God are reconciled by the obedience of the second Adam, who accomplished the work of overcoming the temptations of Satan and redeeming Adam’s disgraceful failure and fall.” —*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, pp. 1092, 1093.

“All the great truths of the Scriptures center in Christ; rightly understood, all lead to Him. Let Christ be presented as the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end, of the great plan of redemption. Present to the people such subjects as will strengthen their confidence in God and in His Word, and lead them to investigate its teachings for themselves.” —*Review and Herald*, June 13, 1912.

IN HEAVEN BEFORE HIS INCARNATION

6. What relationship existed between the Father and the Son in eternity? John 1:1; John 17:24.

“From the days of eternity the Lord Jesus Christ was one with the Father; He was ‘the image of God,’ the image of His greatness and majesty, ‘the outshining of His glory.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 19.

“The Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, existed from eternity, a distinct person, yet one with the Father. He was the surpassing glory of heaven. He was the commander of the heavenly intelligences, and the adoring homage of the angels was received by Him as His right. This was no robbery of God. ‘The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His way,’ He declares, ‘before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth; while as yet He had not made the earth,

nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When He prepared the heavens, I was there: when He set a compass upon the face of the depth.”
–*Review and Herald*, April 5, 1906.

7. What is recorded in the Scriptures about Him before He came to this earth? John 1:1; Philippians 2:6; John 17:5; Hebrew 1:3.

“Heavenly angels had seen the glory which the Son of God shared with the Father before the world was, and they had looked forward with intense interest to His appearing on earth as an event fraught with the greatest joy to all people.” –*The Great Controversy*, p. 313.

“When Christ passed within the heavenly gates, He was enthroned amidst the adoration of the angels. As soon as this ceremony was completed, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples in rich currents, and Christ was indeed glorified, even with the glory which He had with the Father from all eternity.”
–*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 38, 39.

FOR MEDITATION

A “... dangerous error is the doctrine that denies the deity of Christ, claiming that He had no existence before His advent to this world.... It cannot be entertained without the most unwarranted wresting of the Scriptures. It not only lowers man’s conceptions of the work of redemption, but undermines faith in the Bible as a revelation from God.... If men reject the testimony of the inspired Scriptures concerning the deity of Christ, it is in vain to argue the point with them.... None who hold this error can have a true conception of the character or the mission of Christ, or of the great plan of God for man’s redemption.” –*The Great Controversy*, p. 524.

HIS WORK IN THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD

“And these will be the study of the redeemed through eternal ages. As they contemplate the work of God in creation and redemption, new truth will continually unfold to the wondering and delighted mind. As they learn more and more of the wisdom, the love, and the power of God, their minds will be constantly expanding, and their joy will continually increase.” *—Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 702, 703.

CREATION OF THE VISIBLE AND THE INVISIBLE

- 1. What does the Bible say about the existence of other worlds? Who created them? Hebrews 1:2; 1 Corinthians 8:6; John 1:3.**

“But while God’s Word speaks of the humanity of Christ when upon this earth, it also speaks decidedly regarding His preexistence. The Word existed as a divine being, even as the eternal Son of God, in union and oneness with His Father. From everlasting He was the Mediator of the covenant, the one in whom all nations of the earth, both Jews and Gentiles, if they accepted Him, were to be blessed. ‘The Word was with God, and the Word was God’ (John 1:1). Before men or angels were created, the Word was with God, and was God.

“The world was made by Him, ‘and without Him was not any thing made that was made’ (John 1:3). If Christ made all things, He existed before all things. The words spoken in regard to this are so decisive that no one need be left in doubt. Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense. He was with God from all eternity, God over all, blessed forevermore.” *—Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 247.

- 2. What else and who else was included in God’s wonderful work of creation? Colossians 1:16; Job 38:4,7.**

“Christ the Word, the Only Begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father—one in nature, in character, and in purpose—the only being in all the universe that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God. By Christ the Father wrought in the creation of all heavenly beings. ‘By Him were all things created, that are in heaven,... whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers’ (Colossians 1:16); and to Christ, equally with the Father, all heaven gave allegiance.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 493; see also *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 34, 37.

“The Father wrought by His Son in the creation of all heavenly beings. ‘By him were all things created,... whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him’ (Colossians 1:16). Angels are God’s ministers, radiant with the light ever flowing from His presence, and speeding on rapid wing to execute His will. But the Son, the anointed of God, the ‘express image of his person,’ ‘the brightness of his glory,’ ‘upholding all things by the word of His power,’ holds supremacy over them all (Hebrews 1:3).” —*That I May Know Him*, p. 11.

3. What is the Biblical report of the creation of heaven and earth? Psalm 33:6,9; Ephesians 3:9; Hebrews 1:10.

“In the beginning, God was revealed in all the works of creation. It was Christ that spread the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth. It was His hand that hung the worlds in space, and fashioned the flowers of the field. ‘His strength setteth fast the mountains.’ ‘The sea is His, and He made it.’ Psalms 65:6; 95:5. It was He that filled the earth with beauty, and the air with song. And upon all things in earth, and air, and sky, He wrote the message of the Father’s love.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 20.

LAYING THE PLAN OF REDEMPTION

4. When and where was the plan of redemption formulated? Revelation 13:8.

“The plan was devised in heaven.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 105.

“The plan of salvation had been laid before the creation of the earth; for Christ is ‘the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world’ (Revelation 13:8)....” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 63.

“The words, ‘Mine hour is not yet come,’ point to the fact that every act of Christ’s life on earth was in fulfilment of the plan that had existed from the days of eternity. Before He came to earth, the plan lay out before Him, perfect in all its details.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 147.

5. How do the Holy Scriptures depict that plan? 1 Timothy 3:16.

“As the life of Christ and the character of His mission are dwelt upon, rays of light will shine forth more distinctly at every attempt to discover truth. Each fresh search will reveal something more deeply interesting than has yet been unfolded. The subject is inexhaustible. The study of the incarnation of Christ, His atoning sacrifice and mediatorial work, will employ the mind of the diligent student as long as time shall last; and looking to heaven with its unnumbered years he will exclaim, ‘Great is the mystery of godliness.’” –*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 133.

6. When was this eternal plan of redemption made known to man? Romans 16:25.

“The plan for our redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. It was a revelation of ‘The mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal.’ Romans 16:25, R.V. It was an unfolding of the principles that from eternal ages have been the foundation of God’s throne. From the beginning, God and Christ knew of the apostasy of Satan, and of the fall of man through the deceptive power of the apostate. God did not ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence, and made provision to meet the terrible emergency. So great was His love for the world, that He covenanted to give His only-begotten Son, ‘that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ John 3:16.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 22.

7. What promise of hope and victory was given in Eden immediately after the fall? Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 43:1.

“The central theme of the Bible, the theme about which every other in the whole book clusters, is the redemption plan, the restoration in the human soul of the image of God. From the first intimation of hope in the sentence

pronounced in Eden to that last glorious promise of the Revelation, ‘They shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads’ (Revelation 22:4), the burden of every book and every passage of the Bible is the unfolding of this wondrous theme—man’s uplifting—the power of God, ‘which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ 1 Corinthians 15:57.” —*Education*, pp. 125, 126.

FOR MEDITATION

“There are many who in their hearts charge God with being a hard master because He claims their possessions and their service. But we can bring to God nothing that is not already His. ‘All things come of Thee,’ said King David, ‘and of Thine own have we given Thee.’ All things are God’s, not only by creation, but by redemption. All the blessings of this life and of the life to come are delivered to us stamped with the cross of Calvary.” —*Review and Herald*, December 23, 1902.

3

Sabbath, January 17, 2009

THE WORD BECAME MAN

“Jesus, heaven’s great Commander, left the royal courts to come to a world seared and marred by the curse. He took upon Himself our nature, that with His human arm He might encircle the race, while with His divine arm He grasps Omnipotence, and thus links finite man to the infinite God. Our Redeemer came to the world to show how man should live in order to secure immortal life. Our heavenly Father made an infinite sacrifice in giving His Son to die for fallen man. The price paid for our redemption should give us exalted views of what we may become through Christ.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 563.

INCARNATION OF THE WORD

- 1. What great change took place in the person of the Word when He came into this world? John 1:14; 1 Timothy 3:16; 1 John 4:3.**

“The doctrine of the incarnation of Christ in human flesh is a mystery, ‘even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations’ (Col. 1:26). It is the great and profound mystery of godliness. ‘The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us’ (John 1:14). Christ took upon Himself human nature, a nature inferior to His heavenly nature. Nothing so shows the wonderful condescension of God as this. He ‘so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son’ (John 3:16). John presents this wonderful subject with such simplicity that all may grasp the ideas set forth, and be enlightened.” –*Selected Messages*, Book 1, pp. 246, 247.

2. What position did the glorious Word take when He came to earth as a human being? Philippians 2:7, 8; Hebrews 2:9.

“The One appointed in the counsels of heaven came to the earth as an instructor. He was no less a being than the Creator of the world, the Son of the Infinite God. The rich benevolence of God gave Him to our world; and to meet the necessities of humanity, He took on Him human nature. To the astonishment of the heavenly host, He walked this earth as the Eternal Word. Fully prepared, He left the royal courts to come to a world marred and polluted with sin. Mysteriously He allied Himself to human nature. ‘The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.’ God’s excess of goodness, benevolence, and love was a surprise to the world, of grace which could be realized, but not told.” –*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 400.

THE TIME OF HIS INCARNATION

3. According to prophecy, when was His incarnation to occur? Daniel 9:25.

“The Saviour’s coming was foretold in Eden. When Adam and Eve first heard the promise, they looked for its speedy fulfilment. They joyfully welcomed their first-born son, hoping that he might be the Deliverer.... From the days of Enoch the promise was repeated through patriarchs and prophets, keeping alive the hope of His appearing, and yet He came not. The prophecy of Daniel revealed the time of His advent, but not all rightly interpreted the message.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 31.

4. How was the prophecy of the Messiah fulfilled? Galatians 4:4.

“But like the stars in the vast circuit of their appointed path, God’s purposes know no haste and no delay.... So in heaven’s council the hour for the coming of Christ had been determined. When the great clock of time pointed to that hour, Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

“When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son.’ Providence had directed the movements of nations, and the tide of human impulse and influence, until the world was ripe for the coming of the Deliverer. The nations were united under one government. One language was widely spoken, and was everywhere recognized as the language of literature. From all lands the Jews of the dispersion gathered to Jerusalem to the annual feasts. As these returned to the places of their sojourn, they could spread throughout the world the tidings of the Messiah’s coming.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 32.

- 5. When the fulness of the time came, what amazing message was given to a young woman? Luke 1:30-33.**

THE MISSION OF THE INCARNATE WORD

- 6. What was to be the great mission of the incarnate Word in this world? Matthew 1:21, 23; Luke 2:30-32.**

“Before the foundations of the world were laid, Christ, the Only Begotten of God, pledged Himself to become the Redeemer of the human race, should Adam sin. Adam fell, and He who was partaker of the Father’s glory before the world was, laid aside His royal robe and kingly crown, and stepped down from His high authority to become a Babe in Bethlehem, that by passing over the ground where Adam stumbled and fell, He might redeem fallen human beings.” –*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 226.

- 7. How far did He go to save fallen human beings? Romans 8:3; Hebrew 2:14.**

“There are mysteries in the plan of redemption—the humiliation of the Son of God, that He might be found in fashion as a man, the wonderful love and condescension of the Father in yielding up His Son—that are to the heavenly angels subjects of continual amazement. The apostle Peter, speaking of

the revelations given to the prophets of ‘the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow,’ says that these are things which ‘the angels desire to look into.’” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 702, 703.

FOR MEDITATION

“The incarnation of Christ was an act of self-sacrifice; His life was one of continual self-denial. The highest glory of the love of God to man was manifested in the sacrifice of His only-begotten Son, who was the express image of His person. This is the great mystery of godliness. It is the privilege and the duty of every professed follower of Christ to have the mind of Christ. Without self-denial and cross bearing we cannot be His disciples.” –*Selected Messages*, Book 2, p. 185.

4

Sabbath, January 24, 2009

CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS BIRTH

“Christ was appointed to the office of Mediator from the creation of God, set up from everlasting to be our substitute and surety. Before the world was made, it was arranged that the divinity of Christ should be enshrouded in humanity. ‘A body,’ said Christ, ‘hast thou prepared Me’ (Hebrews 10:5). But He did not come in human form until the fullness of time had expired. Then He came to our world, a babe in Bethlehem.” –*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 250.

AN EXHAUSTING TRIP

- 1. What long, difficult trip did Mary take at the very end of her pregnancy? Luke 2:1-5.**

Such a trip from Nazareth, in Galilee, to Bethlehem, in Judea, required crossing the entire area of Samaria and covered a distance of at least 120 kilometers (66 miles). In those days, without train, bus or car, it required many days of walking. This would not be easy for a woman under normal circumstances, so we can imagine how stressful it would be for Mary to travel by foot or ride a donkey in her final days of pregnancy!

THE MESSIAH'S BIRTH

- 2. Arriving tired and exhausted in Bethlehem, the village of their birth, were Joseph and Mary able to find a good place to stay for the night? What can be said about the reception provided for these descendants of the royal line? Luke 2:26, 27.**

“Angels attend Joseph and Mary as they journey from their home in Nazareth to the city of David.... But in the city of their royal line, Joseph and Mary are unrecognized and unhonored. Weary and homeless, they traverse the entire length of the narrow street, from the gate of the city to the eastern extremity of the town, vainly seeking a resting place for the night. There is no room for them at the crowded inn. In a rude building where the beasts are sheltered, they at last find refuge, and here the Redeemer of the world is born.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 44.

- 3. Compare the circumstances of Jesus' birth and childhood with those of your own family members. Luke 2:12, 16.**

“His birth was without worldly grandeur. He was born in a stable and cradled in a manger; yet His birth was honored far above that of any of the sons of men. Angels from heaven informed the shepherds of the advent of Jesus, and light and glory from God accompanied their testimony. The heavenly host touched their harps and glorified God. They triumphantly heralded the advent of the Son of God to a fallen world to accomplish the work of redemption, and by His death to bring peace, happiness, and everlasting life to man. God honored the advent of His Son. Angels worshiped Him.” –*Early Writings*, p. 153.

VARIOUS TYPES OF RECEPTION FOR THE SAVIOUR

- 4. While some people rejoiced with all their heart at the birth of the Saviour, how did others feel? Luke 2:8-11, 20; Matthew 2:3.**

“In the fields where the boy David had led his flock, shepherds were still keeping watch by night. Through the silent hours they talked together of the promised Saviour, and prayed for the coming of the King to David’s throne. ‘And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them.... And the angel said unto them... behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy... For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.’...”

“Heaven and earth are no wider apart today than when shepherds listened to the angels’ song. Humanity is still as much the object of heaven’s solicitude as when common men of common occupations met angels at noon-day, and talked with the heavenly messengers in the vineyards and the fields. To us in the common walks of life, heaven may be very near. Angels from the courts above will attend the steps of those who come and go at God’s command.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 47, 48.

5. What fearful danger confronted the newborn Child and his parents? What prophecy already began to be fulfilled? Matthew 2:13; Luke 2:34, 35.

“Many who have never been placed in positions of trial appear to be excellent Christians, their lives seem faultless; but God sees that they have traits of character that must be revealed to them before they can perceive and correct them. Simeon prophesied under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and said unto Mary in reference to Jesus: ‘Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.’ In the providence of God we are placed in different positions to call into exercise qualities of mind calculated to develop character under a variety of circumstances.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 55.

GOD’S WAYS—DIFFICULT BUT PERFECT

6. Not long afterward, what instruction did an angel give Jesus’ parents to save him from terrible danger? How long was this second trip? Matthew 2:13, 14

The distance from Bethlehem to Egypt was more than twice as far as Nazareth was from Bethlehem. This means that the second trip required at least 270 kilometers (about 150 miles) of walking or riding. Imagine how many days they traveled and how difficult such a long trip must have been for Mary with her little baby!

7. In light of the difficulties this little family endured, what great difference is there between our own thinking and the course God chose for the life of His beloved Son? Isaiah 55:8-11; Ephesians 2:4, 5.

“The dealings of God with His people often appear mysterious. His ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts. Many times His way of dealing is so contrary to our plans and expectations that we are amazed and confounded. We do not understand our perverse natures; and often when we are gratifying self, following our own inclinations, we flatter ourselves that we are carrying out the mind of God. And so we need to search the Scriptures, and be much in prayer, that, according to His promise, the Lord may give us wisdom.”—*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 503.

FOR MEDITATION

“Christ submitted to insult and mockery, contempt and ridicule. He heard His message, which was fraught with love and goodness and mercy, misstated and misapplied. He heard Himself called the prince of demons, because He testified to His divine Sonship. His birth was supernatural, but by His own nation, those who had blinded their eyes to spiritual things, it was regarded as a blot and a stain. There was not a drop of our bitter woe which He did not taste, not a part of our curse which He did not endure, that He might bring many sons and daughters to God.

“The fact that Jesus was on this earth as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, that in order to save fallen man from eternal ruin, He left His heavenly home, should lay in the dust all our pride, put to shame all our vanity, and reveal to us the sin of self-sufficiency. Behold Him making the wants, the trials, the griefs and sufferings of sinful men His own. Can we not take home the lesson that God endured these sufferings and bruises of soul in consequence of sin?”—*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 253.

Lord, high and holy, meek and lowly,
Thou hast brought me to the valley of vision,
where I live in the depths but see Thee in the heights;
hemmed in by mountains of sin I behold Thy glory.

Let me learn by paradox that the way down is the way up,
that to be low is to be high,
that the broken heart is the healed heart,
that the contrite spirit is the rejoicing spirit,
that the repenting soul is the victorious soul,
that to have nothing is to possess all,
that to bear the cross is to wear the crown,
that to give is to receive,
that the valley is the place of vision.

Lord, in the daytime stars can be seen from deepest wells,
and the deeper the wells the brighter Thy stars shine;
let me find Thy light in my darkness,
Thy life in my death,
Thy joy in my sorrow,
Thy grace in my sin,
Thy riches in my poverty,
Thy glory in my valley.

The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions, edited
by Arthur Bennett

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Sabbath, January 31, 2009

JESUS' CHILHOOD AND YOUTH

“The Saviour’s early years are more than an example to the youth. They are a lesson, and should be an encouragement, to every parent. The circle of family and neighborhood duties is the very first field of effort for those who would work for the uplifting of their fellow men. There is no more important field of effort than that committed to the founders and guardians of the home. No work entrusted to human beings involves greater or more far-reaching results than does the work of fathers and mothers.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 350, 351.

HIS EARLY YEARS

- 1. What wonderful record is given about the growth of Jesus as a child? How has our own or our children’s development been similar to that of the Saviour? Luke 2:39, 40.**

“During all these secluded years His life flowed out in currents of sympathy and helpfulness. His unselfishness and patient endurance, His courage and faithfulness, His resistance of temptation, His unfailing peace and quiet joyfulness, were a constant inspiration. He brought a pure, sweet atmosphere into the home, and His life was as leaven working amidst the elements of

society. None said that He had wrought a miracle; yet virtue—the healing, life-giving power of love—went out from Him to the tempted, the sick, and the disheartened. In an unobtrusive way, from His very childhood, He ministered to others, and because of this, when He began His public ministry, many heard Him gladly.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 350.

- 2. What special efforts did Jesus and His parents put forth to attend the spiritual feasts? What similar experiences do we and our families make? Luke 2:41, 42.**

“Among the Jews the twelfth year was the dividing line between childhood and youth. On completing this year a Hebrew boy was called a son of the law, and also a son of God. He was given special opportunities for religious instruction, and was expected to participate in the sacred feasts and observances. It was in accordance with this custom that Jesus in His boyhood made the Passover visit to Jerusalem. Like all devout Israelites, Joseph and Mary went up every year to attend the Passover; and when Jesus had reached the required age, they took Him with them.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 75.

VISIT TO THE TEMPLE

- 3. What company did Jesus seek? What did His discussions with the doctors of the law reveal? What was special about the interests of this 12-year-old boy? Luke 2:43-47.**

“For the first time the child Jesus looked upon the temple. He saw the white-robed priests performing their solemn ministry. He beheld the bleeding victim upon the altar of sacrifice. With the worshipers He bowed in prayer, while the cloud of incense ascended before God. He witnessed the impressive rites of the paschal service.

“Rapt in the contemplation of these scenes, He did not remain beside His parents. He sought to be alone. When the paschal services were ended, He still lingered in the temple courts; and when the worshipers departed from Jerusalem, He was left behind.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 78.

- 4. What did His response to His parents’ questions show? Luke 2:48-50.**

“Day by day He saw their meaning more clearly. Every act seemed to be bound up with His own life. New impulses were awakening within Him. Silent and absorbed, He seemed to be studying out a great problem. The mystery of His mission was opening to the Saviour.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 78.

“His first visit to the temple had awakened new impulses. All earthly obligations were, for the time, lost sight of; but with the knowledge of His divine mission, and of His union with God, He did not resist the authority of His parents. At their request He returned with them as a faithful, obedient son, and aided them in their life of toil. He buried in His own heart the secret of His future mission, waiting submissively until the period of His public ministry should commence before announcing to the world that He was the Messiah.” —*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 129.

JESUS' ATTITUDE TOWARD HIS PARENTS

5. How would you compare Jesus' relationship with His earthly parents to such relationships in Christian society today? Luke 2:51.

“Jesus did not ignore His relation to His earthly parents. From Jerusalem He returned home with them, and aided them in their life of toil. He hid in His own heart the mystery of His mission, waiting submissively for the appointed time for Him to enter upon His work. For eighteen years after He had recognized that He was the Son of God, 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.

6. What noble testimony is recorded in the Scriptures about Jesus' youth, the most critical years of a human being? Luke 2:52.

“The importance and the opportunities of the home life are illustrated in the life of Jesus. He who came from heaven to be our example and teacher spent thirty years as a member of the household at Nazareth. Concerning these years the Bible record is very brief. No mighty miracles attracted the attention of the multitude. No eager throngs followed His steps or listened to His words. Yet during all these years He was fulfilling His divine mission. He lived as one of us, sharing the home life, submitting to its discipline, performing its duties, bearing its burdens. In the sheltering care of a humble home, participating in the experiences of our common lot, He ‘increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.’ Luke 2:52.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 349.

“... At each stage of His development He was perfect, with the simple, natural grace of a sinless life. The Sacred Record says of His childhood, ‘The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.’ And of His youth it is recorded, ‘Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.’ Luke 2:40, 52.” –*Child Guidance*, p. 204.

7. Of whom do the Scriptures give a similar testimony? What counsel had the Lord already provided in the past so young people would progress and grow and have the favor of God and their fellow men? 1 Samuel 2:26; Luke 1:13, 80; Proverbs 3:1-4.

“Let Jesus take possession of your mind, your heart, and your affections; and work as Christ worked, doing conscientiously the home duties, little acts of self-denial and deeds of kindness, employing the moments diligently, keeping a careful watch against little sins and a grateful heart for little blessings, and you will have at last such a testimony for yourself as was given of John and Samuel, and especially of Christ: ‘And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.’” –*The Adventist Home*, p. 297.

FOR MEDITATION

“It is by the youth and children of today that the future of society is to be determined, and what these youth and children shall be depends upon the home. To the lack of right home training may be traced the larger share of the disease and misery and crime that curse humanity. If the home life were pure and true, if the children who went forth from its care were prepared to meet life’s responsibilities and dangers, what a change would be seen in the world!” –*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 351.

THE FORERUNNER PREPARES THE WAY

“Jesus afterward said, referring to John, ‘If ye are willing to receive it, this is Elijah, which is to come.’ Matthew 11:14, R.V. John came in the spirit and power of Elijah, to do such a work as Elijah did. If the Jews had received him, it would have been accomplished for them.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 135.

PROPHECY OF THE SPECIAL MESSENGER

- 1. What prophecies had been given concerning the spiritual awakening to occur before the coming of the Messiah? Isaiah 40:3-5; Malachi 3:1; Malachi 4:5.**

“Anciently, when a king journeyed through the less frequented parts of his dominion, a company of men was sent ahead of the royal chariot to level the steep places and to fill up the hollows, that the king might travel in safety and without hindrance. This custom is employed by the prophet to illustrate the work of the gospel. ‘Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low.’ When the Spirit of God, with its marvelous awakening power, touches the soul, it abases human pride. Worldly pleasure and position and power are seen to be worthless. ‘Imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God’ are cast down;... 2 Corinthians 10:5.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 135.

- 2. How was his birth announced? What great mission and reformation would he carry out? Luke 1:13-17; Luke 1:76,77.**

“In the announcement to Zacharias before the birth of John, the angel had declared, ‘He shall be great in the sight of the Lord.’ Luke 1:15. In the estimation of Heaven, what is it that constitutes greatness? Not that which the world accounts greatness; not wealth, or rank, or noble descent, or intellectual gifts, in themselves considered. If intellectual greatness, apart from any higher consideration, is worthy of honor, then our homage is due to

Satan, whose intellectual power no man has ever equaled. But when perverted to self-serving, the greater the gift, the greater curse it becomes. It is moral worth that God values. Love and purity are the attributes He prizes most.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 219.

A SIMPLE, PRINCIPLED LIFE

3. What brief but significant information do we have concerning John’s physical and spiritual growth? Why did he choose to live in the desert? Luke 1:80; Matthew 3:4.

“John the Baptist ... received his early training from his parents. The greater portion of his life was spent in the wilderness, that he might not be influenced by beholding the lax piety of the priests and rabbis.... It was John’s choice to forego the enjoyments and luxuries of city life for the stern discipline of the wilderness. Here his surroundings were favorable to habits of simplicity and self-denial. Uninterrupted by the clamor of the world, he could here study the lessons of nature, of revelation, and of providence.... From his childhood his mission had been kept before him, and he accepted the holy trust. To him the solitude of the desert was a welcome escape from the society in which suspicion, unbelief, and impurity had become well-nigh all-pervading. He distrusted his own power to withstand temptation and shrank from constant contact with sin lest he should lose the sense of its exceeding sinfulness.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 221.

4. Where did John the Baptist first preach? What inspired message reached all the people? Matthew 3:1, 2; Luke 3:2-5.

“In John the Baptist the Lord raised up for Himself a messenger to prepare the way of the Lord. He was to bear to the world an unflinching testimony in reproving and denouncing sin. Luke, in announcing his mission and work, says, ‘And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord’ (Luke 1:17).” –*Selected Messages*, Book 2, pp. 147, 148.

CARRYING OUT HIS MISSION

5. What different classes of people came to hear John the Baptist preach? What was the result? Matthew 3:5-8.

- 6. What clear answer did he give to those who asked him about his identity? To whom did he point as worthy of honor? John 1:19-23.**

“John was great in the sight of the Lord, when, before the messengers from the Sanhedrin, before the people, and before his own disciples, he refrained from seeking honor for himself, but pointed all to Jesus as the Promised One. His unselfish joy in the ministry of Christ presents the highest type of nobility ever revealed in man.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 219.

PRESENTING THE REDEEMER

- 7. To whom did he direct the people as the true light and Messiah? How did he introduce the Redeemer of the world? What did Jesus say about John? John 1:25-27, 29; Luke 7:26-28.**

“The message was distinct and unequivocal, to be carried back to the Sanhedrin. The words of John could apply to no other than the long-promised One. The Messiah was among them! In amazement priests and rulers gazed about them, hoping to discover Him of whom John had spoken. But He was not distinguishable among the throng.

“When at the baptism of Jesus, John pointed to Him as the Lamb of God, a new light was shed upon the Messiah’s work.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 136.

FOR MEDITATION

“Eyes that had never been turned in faith to Him that is invisible beheld not the revelation of the glory of God; ears that had never listened to His voice heard not the words of witness. So it is now. Often the presence of Christ and the ministering angels is manifest in the assemblies of the people, and yet there are many who know it not. They discern nothing unusual. But to some the Saviour’s presence is revealed. Peace and joy animate their hearts. They are comforted, encouraged, and blessed.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 136.

JESUS' BAPTISM

“John had been deeply moved as he saw Jesus bowed as a suppliant, pleading with tears for the approval of the Father. As the glory of God encircled Him, and the voice from heaven was heard, John recognized the token which God had promised. He knew that it was the world’s Redeemer whom he had baptized. The Holy Spirit rested upon him, and with outstretched hand pointing to Jesus, he cried, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 112.

JOHN THE BAPTIST’S MINISTRY

1. **Before Jesus began His public ministry, what spiritual awakening took place? Why was this particularly important? Matthew 3:1, 2; Mark 1:4; Luke 7:29.**

“John was to go forth as Jehovah’s messenger, to bring to men the light of God. He must give a new direction to their thoughts. He must impress them with the holiness of God’s requirements, and their need of His perfect righteousness. Such a messenger must be holy. He must be a temple for the indwelling Spirit of God....

“In preparing the way for Christ’s first advent, he was a representative of those who are to prepare a people for our Lord’s second coming....

“John proclaimed the coming of the Messiah, and called the people to repentance. As a symbol of cleansing from sin, he baptized them in the waters of the Jordan. Thus by a significant object lesson he declared that those who claimed to be the chosen people of God were defiled by sin, and that without purification of heart and life they could have no part in the Messiah’s kingdom.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 100, 101, 105.

THE REASON FOR JESUS’ BAPTISM

2. **Why did Jesus go to John the Baptist to be baptized? Matthew 3:13.**

“Tidings of the wilderness prophet and his wonderful announcement, spread throughout Galilee. The message reached the peasants in the remotest hill towns, and the fisher folk by the sea, and in these simple, earnest hearts found its truest response. In Nazareth it was told in the carpenter shop that had been Joseph’s, and One recognized the call. His time had come. Turning from His daily toil, He bade farewell to His mother, and followed in the steps of His countrymen who were flocking to the Jordan.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 109.

3. For John the Baptist, what was amazing about Jesus’ coming to him to be baptized? Matthew 3:14.

“When Jesus came to be baptized, John recognized in Him a purity of character that he had never before perceived in any man. The very atmosphere of His presence was holy and awe-inspiring. Among the multitudes that had gathered about him at the Jordan, John had heard dark tales of crime, and had met souls bowed down with the burden of myriad sins; but never had he come in contact with a human being from whom there breathed an influence so divine. All this was in harmony with what had been revealed to John regarding the Messiah. Yet he shrank from granting the request of Jesus. How could he, a sinner, baptize the Sinless One? And why should He who needed no repentance submit to a rite that was a confession of guilt to be washed away?” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 110.

4. Why did Jesus come to be baptized by John, when He had no sins to repent of or to confess? What did this important step signify in Christ’s mission to the world? Matthew 3:15.

“Jesus did not receive baptism as a confession of guilt on His own account. He identified Himself with sinners, taking the steps that we are to take, and doing the work that we must do. His life of suffering and patient endurance after His baptism was also an example to us.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 111.

“The divine beauty of the character of Christ, of whom the noblest and most gentle among men are but a faint reflection; of whom Solomon by the Spirit of inspiration wrote, He is ‘the chiefest among ten thousand,... yea, He is altogether lovely’ (Song of Solomon 5:10-16); of whom David, seeing Him in prophetic vision, said, ‘Thou art fairer than the children of men’ (Psalm 45:2); Jesus, the express image of the Father’s person, the effulgence of His glory; the self-denying Redeemer, throughout His pilgrimage of love on earth, was a living representation of the character of the law of God. In His life it is made

manifest that heaven-born love, Christlike principles, underlie the laws of eternal rectitude....

“Speaking of the law, Jesus said, ‘I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.’ He here used the word ‘fulfill’ in the same sense as when He declared to John the Baptist His purpose to ‘fulfill all righteousness’ (Matthew 3:15); that is, to fill up the measure of the law’s requirement, to give an example of perfect conformity to the will of God.” –*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 48, 49.

HIS FATHER’S SIGN OF ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL

5. Immediately after Jesus’ baptism, what glorious sign of approval came from heaven and rested upon Him? Matthew 3:16; Luke 3:21; John 1:32.

“When Christ bowed on the banks of Jordan, after His baptism, the heavens were opened, and the Spirit descended in the form of a dove, like burnished gold, and encircled Him with its glory; and the voice of God from the highest heaven was heard, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ The prayer of Christ in man’s behalf opened the gates of heaven, and the Father had responded, accepting the petition for the fallen race. Jesus prayed as our substitute and surety, and now the human family may find access to the Father through the merits of His well-beloved Son.... The light that encircled the divine Son of God will fall upon the pathway of all who follow in His footsteps. There is no reason for discouragement. The promises of God are sure and steadfast.” –*My Life Today*, p. 260.

6. What other divine testimony was given? Matthew 3:17; Luke 3:22; John 1:33, 34.

“Jesus was our example in all things that pertain to life and godliness. He was baptized in Jordan, just as those who come to Him must be baptized. The heavenly angels were looking with intense interest upon the scene of the Saviour’s baptism, and could the eyes of those who were looking on, have been opened, they would have seen the heavenly host surrounding the Son of God as He bowed on the banks of the Jordan. The Lord had promised to give John a sign whereby he might know who was the Messiah, and now as Jesus went up out of the water, the promised sign was given; for he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit of God, like a dove of burnished gold, hovered

over the head of Christ, and a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’... Jesus, the world’s Redeemer, has opened the way so that the most sinful, the most needy, the most oppressed and despised, may find access to the Father—may have a home in the mansions which Jesus has gone to prepare for those who love Him.” —*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 133.

SIMULTANEOUSLY MONARCH AND MAN

7. How old was Jesus at the time of His baptism? What was significant about this? Luke 3:23.

“... Behold Christ, who was Monarch in heaven, equal with God, coming down to humanity, and working out the plan of redemption, breaking off from man the chains wherewith Satan had bound him, and making it possible for him to regain his godlike manhood. Christ taking upon Himself humanity, and preserving the level of man for thirty years, and then making His soul an offering for sin, that man might not be left to perish, is a subject for the deepest thought and the most concentrated study....” —*Messages to Young People*, p. 255.

“Christ was the only sinless one who ever dwelt on earth; yet for nearly thirty years He lived among the wicked inhabitants of Nazareth. This fact is a rebuke to those who think themselves dependent upon place, fortune, or prosperity, in order to live a blameless life. Temptation, poverty, adversity, is the very discipline needed to develop purity and firmness.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 72.

FOR MEDITATION

“Those who have risen with Christ to walk in newness of life are the elect of God. They are holy unto the Lord, and are acknowledged by Him as His beloved. As such, they are under solemn covenant to distinguish themselves by showing humility of mind. They are to clothe themselves in garments of righteousness. They are separate from the world, from its spirit, its practices, and they are to reveal that they are learning of Him.... If they realize that they have died with Christ, if they keep their baptismal vow, the world will have no power to draw them aside to deny Christ. If they live the life of Christ in this world, they are partakers of the divine nature.” —*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 133.

TEMPTATION AND VICTORY

“‘The prince of this world cometh,’ said Jesus, ‘and hath nothing in Me.’ John 14:30. There was in Him nothing that responded to Satan’s sophistry. He did not consent to sin. Not even by a thought did He yield to temptation. So it may be with us.... So long as we are united to Him by faith, sin has no more dominion over us.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 123.

TEMPTED AS WE

- 1. After the glorious scene at Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan, where was He led? Why? Luke 4:1; Matthew 4: 1, 2.**

“He did not invite temptation. He went to the wilderness to be alone, to contemplate His mission and work. By fasting and prayer He was to brace Himself for the bloodstained path He must travel. But Satan knew that the Saviour had gone into the wilderness, and he thought this the best time to approach Him....

“When Jesus entered the wilderness, He was shut in by the Father’s glory. Absorbed in communion with God, He was lifted above human weakness. But the glory departed, and He was left to battle with temptation. It was pressing upon Him every moment. His human nature shrank from the conflict that awaited Him.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 114, 118.

- 2. After fasting for forty days, what temptation did Jesus face? Luke 4:2; Matthew 4:3.**

“For forty days He fasted and prayed. Weak and emaciated from hunger, worn and haggard with mental agony, ‘His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.’ Isaiah 52:14. Now was Satan’s opportunity....

“It was in the time of greatest weakness that Christ was assailed by the fiercest temptations. Thus Satan thought to prevail. By this policy he had

gained the victory over men. When strength failed, and the will power weakened, and faith ceased to repose in God, then those who had stood long and valiantly for the right were overcome.... Satan has taken advantage of the weakness of humanity. And he will still work in the same way. Whenever one is encompassed with clouds, perplexed by circumstances, or afflicted by poverty or distress, Satan is at hand to tempt and annoy. He attacks our weak points of character. He seeks to shake our confidence in God, who suffers such a condition of things to exist. We are tempted to distrust God, to question His love.... If we would meet him as Jesus did, we should escape many a defeat.”
—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 118, 120, 121.

THE FIRST TEMPTATION

- 3. Although Jesus was extremely hungry and weak, what was His response to the devil’s temptation to use His divine power to supply His own needs? Matthew 4:4.**

“Jesus met Satan with the words of Scripture. ‘It is written,’ He said. In every temptation the weapon of His warfare was the word of God. Satan demanded of Christ a miracle as a sign of His divinity. But that which is greater than all miracles, a firm reliance upon a ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ was a sign that could not be controverted. So long as Christ held to this position, the tempter could gain no advantage....

“Often the follower of Christ is brought where he cannot serve God and carry forward his worldly enterprises. Perhaps it appears that obedience to some plain requirement of God will cut off his means of support.... But the only thing in our world upon which we can rely is the word of God.... Even in this life it is not for our good to depart from the will of our Father in heaven. When we learn the power of His word, we shall not follow the suggestions of Satan in order to obtain food or to save our lives. Our only questions will be, What is God’s command? and what His promise?” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 120, 121.

THE SECOND ATTACK

- 4. In his second temptation, what was Satan asking Jesus to prove? Matthew 4:5, 6.**

5. How did Jesus respond to this challenge? What was the result? Matthew 4:7.

“Bear in mind that it is none but God that can hold an argument with Satan (Letter 206, 1906).

“Jesus would not place Himself in peril to please the devil. But how many today can stand a dare? (MS 17, 1893).” –*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1083.

“Jesus declared to Satan, ‘It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.’...

“Often when Satan has failed of exciting distrust, he succeeds in leading us to presumption. If he can cause us to place ourselves unnecessarily in the way of temptation, he knows that the victory is his. God will preserve all who walk in the path of obedience; but to depart from it is to venture on Satan’s ground.... The Saviour has bidden us, ‘Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.’ Mark 14:38. Meditation and prayer would keep us from rushing unbidden into the way of danger....” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 125, 126.

THE THIRD TEMPTATION

6. What deceptive offer did Satan then present to the Redeemer? Matthew 4:8, 9.

“Christ’s mission could be fulfilled only through suffering. Before Him was a life of sorrow, hardship, and conflict, and an ignominious death. He must bear the sins of the whole world. He must endure separation from His Father’s love. Now the tempter offered to yield up the power he had usurped.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 129.

7. How did Jesus respond to this alluring and deceptive offer? What did His firm and clear answer show? What assurance does Christ’s victory over this and every other temptation give us? Matthew 4:10,11; Hebrew 4:15; Hebrew 2:18.

“With the same temptation Satan approaches men, and here he has better success than with Christ....

“Satan had no power to resist the command.... He was forced to withdraw from the presence of the world’s Redeemer. Christ’s victory was as complete as had been the failure of Adam.

“So we may resist temptation, and force Satan to depart from us. Jesus gained the victory through submission and faith in God, and by the apostle He says to us, ‘Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you.’ James 4:7, 8. We cannot save ourselves from the tempter’s power; he has conquered humanity, and when we try to stand in our own strength, we shall become a prey to his devices; but ‘the name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.’ Proverbs 18:10. Satan trembles and flees before the weakest soul who finds refuge in that mighty name.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 130, 131.

FOR MEDITATION

“Many look on this conflict between Christ and Satan as having no special bearing on their own life; and for them it has little interest. But within the domain of every human heart this controversy is repeated. Never does one leave the ranks of evil for the service of God without encountering the assaults of Satan. The enticements which Christ resisted were those that we find it so difficult to withstand. They were urged upon Him in as much greater degree as His character is superior to ours.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 116, 117.

THE FIRST DISCIPLES

“The question that Christ had put to Peter was significant. He mentioned only one condition of discipleship and service. ‘Lovest thou Me?’ He said. This is the essential qualification. Though Peter might possess every other, yet without the love of Christ he could not be a faithful shepherd over the Lord’s flock. Knowledge, benevolence, eloquence, gratitude, and zeal are all aids in the good work; but without the love of Jesus in the heart, the work of the Christian minister is a failure.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 815.

“Abiding in Christ is choosing only the disposition of Christ, so that His interests are identified with yours. Abide in Him, to be and to do only what He wills. These are the conditions of discipleship.... Rest is in Christ; it cannot be as something apart from Him.” —*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 110.

ANDREW AND JOHN

- 1. After hearing the witness of John the Baptist, who decided to connect with Jesus? John 1:35-37.**

“... John again saw Jesus among the people. Again the face of the prophet was lighted up with glory from the Unseen, as he cried, ‘Behold the Lamb of God!’ The words thrilled the hearts of the disciples. They did not fully understand them. What meant the name that John had given Him—‘the Lamb of God?’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 138.

- 2. What did they call Jesus, and what sincere interest was revealed in their questions? John 1:38-40.**

“Leaving John, they went to seek Jesus. One of the two was Andrew, the brother of Simon; the other was John the evangelist. These were Christ’s first disciples. Moved by an irresistible impulse, they followed Jesus—anxious to speak with Him, yet awed and silent, lost in the overwhelming significance of the thought, ‘Is this the Messiah?’....

“Jesus knew that the disciples were following Him. They were the first fruits of His ministry, and there was joy in the heart of the divine Teacher as these souls responded to His grace.... Of one purpose only were they conscious. One presence filled their thought.... In a brief interview by the wayside they could not receive that for which they longed. They desired to be alone with Jesus, to sit at His feet, and hear His words.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 138.

SIMON AND PHILIP

3. Rejoicing that they had found the Messiah, what did Andrew immediately do? John 1:41, 42.

“Andrew sought to impart the joy that filled his heart. Going in search of his brother Simon, he cried, ‘We have found the Messias.’ Simon waited for no second bidding. He also had heard the preaching of John the Baptist, and he hastened to the Saviour. The eye of Christ rested upon him, reading his character and his life history. His impulsive nature, his loving, sympathetic heart, his ambition and self-confidence, the history of his fall, his repentance, his labors, and his martyr death—the Saviour read it all, and He said, ‘Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 139.

4. How was Philip brought to Jesus? John 1:43, 44.

“It was by personal contact and association that Jesus trained His disciples. Sometimes He taught them, sitting among them on the mountainside; sometimes beside the sea, or walking with them by the way, He revealed the mysteries of the kingdom of God. He did not sermonize as men do today. Wherever hearts were open to receive the divine message, He unfolded the truths of the way of salvation. He did not command His disciples to do this or that, but said, ‘Follow Me.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 152.

“Those who stand in the highest positions may lead astray. The wisest err; the strongest may falter and stumble. 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.

THE MASTER'S CALL TO NATHANAEL

- 5. In his enthusiasm, whom did Philip tell about Jesus? Do you think that this system of sharing the Saviour with others is still effective today? John 1:45.**

- 6. Even though Nathanael initially expressed prejudice, how wonderfully did Jesus reach his heart? What divine principle can we see in action here? John 1:46-48.**

“None will ever be called to perfect Christian character under more unfavorable circumstances than that of our Saviour. The fact that Christ lived thirty years in Nazareth, from which many thought it a wonder if any good thing could come, is a rebuke to the youth who consider that their religious character must conform to circumstances. If the surroundings of youth are unpleasant and positively bad, many make this an excuse for not perfecting Christian character. The example of Christ would rebuke the idea that His followers are dependent upon place, fortune, or prosperity, in order to live blameless lives. Christ would teach them that their faithfulness would make any place or position, where the providence of God called them, honorable, however humble.” —*Messages to Young People*, p. 79.

- 7. What confession did Nathanael make from the depths of his heart when he saw that Jesus understood his innermost longings? John 1:49-51.**

“... The gifts of Jesus are ever fresh and new. The feast that He provides for the soul never fails to give satisfaction and joy. Each new gift increases the capacity of the receiver to appreciate and enjoy the blessings of the Lord. He gives grace for grace. There can be no failure of supply. If you abide in Him, the fact that you receive a rich gift today insures the reception of a richer gift tomorrow. The words of Jesus to Nathanael express the law of God's dealing with the children of faith. With every fresh revelation of His love, He declares to the receptive heart, 'Believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.' John 1:50.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 148.

FOR MEDITATION

“You may rise to the heights to which the Holy Spirit calls you. True religion means living the word in your practical life. Your profession is not of any value without the practical doing of the word. ‘If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.’ This is the condition of discipleship.” —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 127.

“This love is the evidence of their discipleship. ‘By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples,’ said Jesus, ‘if ye have love one to another.’ When men are bound together, not by force or self-interest, but by love, they show the working of an influence that is above every human influence. Where this oneness exists, it is evidence that the image of God is being restored in humanity, that a new principle of life has been implanted. It shows that there is power in the divine nature to withstand the supernatural agencies of evil, and that the grace of God subdues the selfishness inherent in the natural heart.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 678.

10

Sabbath, March 7, 2009

JESUS’ FIRST MIRACLE

“Here is a lesson for the disciples of Christ through all time, not to exclude themselves from society, renouncing all social communion and seeking a strict seclusion from their fellow beings. In order to reach all classes, we must meet them where they are; for they will seldom seek us of their own accord. Not alone from the pulpit are the hearts of men and women touched by divine truth. Christ awakened their interest by going among them as one who desired their good. He sought them at their daily avocations and manifested an unfeigned interest in their temporal affairs. He carried His instructions into the household of the people, bringing whole families in their own homes under the influence of His divine presence....” —*My Life Today*, p. 186.

A PROBLEM AT THE WEDDING

- 1. After calling the first disciples in Judea and Galilee, where did Jesus go? John 2:1, 2.**

“The parties were relatives of Joseph and Mary. Christ knew of this family gathering, and that many influential persons would be brought together there, so, in company with His newly made disciples, He made His way to Cana....

“He had joined the mixed assembly of a festal gathering, and, while no shadow of worldly levity marred His conduct, He had sanctioned the social gathering with His presence.” –*My Life Today*, p. 186.

2. What unexpected situation arose during the celebration? Why do you think Jesus’ mother told Him about this? John 2:3.

“As Mary had heard the disciples’ testimony in regard to Jesus, she had been gladdened with the assurance that her long-cherished hopes were not in vain.... As she saw the many glances bent upon Jesus, she longed to have Him prove to the company that He was really the Honored of God. She hoped there might be opportunity for Him to work a miracle before them....

“As a relative of the parties, Mary had assisted in the arrangements for the feast, and she now spoke to Jesus, saying, ‘They have no wine.’ These words were a suggestion that He might supply their need.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 145.

JESUS’ RESPONSE

3. How did Jesus answer His mother’s implied request? What governs Jesus’ response to such requests, both spoken and unspoken? John 2:4.

“This answer, abrupt as it seems to us, expressed no coldness or discourtesy. The Saviour’s form of address to His mother was in accordance with Oriental custom. It was used toward persons to whom it was desired to show respect. Every act of Christ’s earthly life was in harmony with the precept He Himself had given, ‘Honor thy father and thy mother.’ Exodus 20:12. On the cross, in His last act of tenderness toward His mother, Jesus again addressed her in the same way, as He committed her to the care of His best-loved disciple. Both at the marriage feast and upon the cross, the love expressed in tone and look and manner interpreted His words....

“The words, ‘Mine hour is not yet come,’ point to the fact that every act of Christ’s life on earth was in fulfillment of the plan that had existed from the days of eternity. Before He came to earth, the plan lay out before Him,

perfect in all its details. But as He walked among men, He was guided, step by step, by the Father's will. He did not hesitate to act at the appointed time. With the same submission He waited until the time had come." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 146, 147.

- 4. How was His answer to His mother to be understood? Considering that, during Jesus' ministry, He answered the petitions of many different people, what would we expect in this case? John 2:5.**

"In saying to Mary that His hour had not yet come, Jesus was replying to her unspoken thought—to the expectation she cherished in common with her people. She hoped that He would reveal Himself as the Messiah, and take the throne of Israel. But the time had not come. Not as a King, but as 'a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief,' had Jesus accepted the lot of humanity.

"But though Mary had not a right conception of Christ's mission, she trusted Him implicitly. To this faith Jesus responded. It was to honor Mary's trust, and to strengthen the faith of His disciples, that the first miracle was performed. The disciples were to encounter many and great temptations to unbelief.... The Saviour's early miracles strengthened the disciples to stand against this opposition." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 147, 148.

HOW GOD WORKS

- 5. What did Jesus instruct the servants to do? What was the meaning of this miracle? John 2:6, 7.**

"The gift of Christ to the marriage feast was a symbol. The water represented baptism into His death; the wine, the shedding of His blood for the sins of the world. The water to fill the jars was brought by human hands, but the word of Christ alone could impart to it life-giving virtue. So with the rites which point to the Saviour's death. It is only by the power of Christ, working through faith, that they have efficacy to nourish the soul....

"At the first feast He attended with His disciples, Jesus gave them the cup that symbolized His work for their salvation. At the last supper He gave it again, in the institution of that sacred rite by which His death was to be shown forth 'till He come.' 1 Corinthians 11:26." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 148, 149.

6. Did Jesus explain or call attention to the miracle that He performed? What do you think the reason was for this? John 2:8-10.

“The wine which Christ provided for the feast, and that which He gave to the disciples as a symbol of His own blood, was the pure juice of the grape. To this the prophet Isaiah refers when he speaks of the new wine ‘in the cluster,’ and says, ‘Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it.’ Isaiah 65:8.

“It was Christ who in the Old Testament gave the warning to Israel, ‘Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.’ Proverbs 20:1. And He Himself provided no such beverage. Satan tempts men to indulgence that will becloud reason and benumb the spiritual perceptions, but Christ teaches us to bring the lower nature into subjection. His whole life was an example of self-denial. In order to break the power of appetite, He suffered in our behalf the severest test that humanity could endure. It was Christ who directed that John the Baptist should drink neither wine nor strong drink. It was He who enjoined similar abstinence upon the wife of Manoah. And He pronounced a curse upon the man who should put the bottle to his neighbor’s lips. Christ did not contradict His own teaching. The unfermented wine which He provided for the wedding guests was a wholesome and refreshing drink. Its effect was to bring the taste into harmony with a healthful appetite.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 149.

REASONS FOR JESUS’ MIRACLES

7. How might it be explained that Jesus refused to change a stone into bread in the wilderness, but here He changed water into wine? John 2:11.

“Jesus did not begin His ministry by some great work before the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem. At a household gathering in a little Galilean village His power was put forth to add to the joy of a wedding feast. Thus He showed His sympathy with men, and His desire to minister to their happiness....

“The news of the miracle spread through all that region, and was carried to Jerusalem. With new interest the priests and elders searched the prophecies pointing to Christ’s coming. There was eager desire to learn the mission of this new teacher, who appeared among the people in so unassuming a manner.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 144, 150.

FOR MEDITATION

“The example of Christ in linking Himself with the interests of humanity should be followed by all who preach His word, and by all who have received the gospel of His grace.... We should not seclude ourselves from others. In order to reach all classes, we must meet them where they are.... There is another field of labor, humbler, it may be, but fully as promising. It is found in the home of the lowly, and in the mansion of the great; at the hospitable board, and in gatherings for innocent social enjoyment.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 152.

“Jesus rebuked intemperance, self-indulgence, and folly; yet He was social in His nature. He accepted invitations to dine with the learned and noble, as well as the poor and afflicted.... He gave no license to scenes of dissipation and revelry, yet innocent happiness was pleasing to Him. A Jewish marriage was a solemn and impressive occasion, the pleasure and joy of which were not displeasing to the Son of man.” —*My Life Today*, p. 186.

“As disciples of Christ we shall not mingle with the world from a mere love of pleasure, to unite with them in folly. Such associations can result only in harm. We should never give sanction to sin by our words or our deeds, our silence or our presence. Wherever we go, we are to carry Jesus with us, and to reveal to others the preciousness of our Saviour.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 152.

IN THE HOUSE OF GOD

“In the cleansing of the temple, Jesus was announcing His mission as the Messiah, and entering upon His work. That temple, erected for the abode of the divine Presence, was designed to be an object lesson for Israel and for the world. From eternal ages it was God’s purpose that every created being, from the bright and holy seraph to man, should be a temple for the indwelling of the Creator. Because of sin, humanity ceased to be a temple for God. Darkened and defiled by evil, the heart of man no longer revealed the glory of the Divine One. But by the incarnation of the Son of God, the purpose of Heaven is fulfilled. God dwells in humanity, and through saving grace the heart of man becomes again His temple.” *—The Desire of Ages*, p. 161.

GOD’S HOUSE DEFILED

- 1. What did Jesus encounter when He entered the temple during the Passover week? Why was this so foreign and painful to Him? John 2:13, 14.**

“... During the Passover week large numbers assembled, coming from all parts of Palestine, and even from distant lands. The temple courts were filled with a promiscuous throng. Many were unable to bring with them the sacrifices.... For the convenience of these, animals were bought and sold in the outer court of the temple. Here all classes of people assembled to purchase their offerings. Here all foreign money was exchanged for the coin of the sanctuary....

“And it was required that all foreign coin should be changed for a coin called the temple shekel, which was accepted for the service of the sanctuary. The money changing gave opportunity for fraud and extortion, and it had grown into a disgraceful traffic, which was a source of revenue to the priests.

“The dealers demanded exorbitant prices for the animals sold, and they shared their profits with the priests and rulers ... Thus a high price for the animals could be secured; for after coming so far, the people would not return to their homes without performing the act of devotion for which they had come.” *—The Desire of Ages*, pp. 154, 555.

JESUS' LESSON IN CLEANSING THE TEMPLE

2. How did He act to rectify this situation? John 2:15.

“A great number of sacrifices were offered at the time of the Passover, and the sales at the temple were very large. The consequent confusion indicated a noisy cattle market rather than the sacred temple of God.... So great was the confusion that the worshipers were disturbed, and the words addressed to the Most High were drowned in the uproar that invaded the temple....

“With searching glance, Christ takes in the scene before Him as He stands upon the steps of the temple court.... He sees how priests and rulers will turn the needy from their right, and forbid that the gospel shall be preached to the poor. He sees how the love of God will be concealed from sinners, and men will make merchandise of His grace. As He beholds the scene, indignation, authority, and power are expressed in His countenance.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 155, 157.

3. What clear, touching message did His words to the sellers of doves convey? John 2:16.

“Slowly descending the steps, and raising the scourge of cords gathered up on entering the enclosure, He bids the bargaining company depart from the precincts of the temple. With a zeal and severity He has never before manifested, He overthrows the tables of the money-changers. The coin falls, ringing sharply upon the marble pavement. None presume to question His authority. None dare stop to gather up their ill-gotten gain. Jesus does not smite them with the whip of cords, but in His hand that simple scourge seems terrible as a flaming sword. Officers of the temple, speculating priests, brokers and cattle traders, with their sheep and oxen, rush from the place, with the one thought of escaping from the condemnation of His presence.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 158.

DIVERSE REACTIONS

4. What thought came to the disciples as they saw His interest in and zeal for the house of God? John 2:17.

“In cleansing the temple from the world’s buyers and sellers, Jesus announced His mission to cleanse the heart from the defilement of sin—from the earthly desires, the selfish lusts, the evil habits, that corrupt the soul. ‘The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap: and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver.’ Malachi 3:1-3.” *—The Desire of Ages*, p. 161.

5. Instead of acknowledging their grave sin in defiling God’s holy house, what did the Jews say to Jesus? What should characterize all who serve and worship in God’s house? John 2:18.

“The Jews were exceedingly proud of their piety. They rejoiced over their temple, and regarded a word spoken in its disfavor as blasphemy; they were very rigorous in the performance of ceremonies connected with it; but the love of money had overruled their scruples. They were scarcely aware how far they had wandered from the original purpose of the service instituted by God Himself....

“The priests and rulers were called to be the representatives of God to the nation; they should have corrected the abuses of the temple court. They should have given to the people an example of integrity and compassion. Instead of studying their own profit, they should have considered the situation and needs of the worshipers, and should have been ready to assist those who were not able to buy the required sacrifices. But this they did not do. Avarice had hardened their hearts.” *—The Desire of Ages*, pp. 155-157.

PURIFIER AND REBUILDER

6. Explain the significance of Jesus’ answer to the Jews who asked Him for a sign of His authority to cleanse the temple. John 2:19-21.

“Jesus had shown them a sign. In flashing light into their hearts, and in doing before them the works which the Messiah was to do, He had given convincing evidence of His character. Now when they asked for a

sign, He answered them by a parable, showing that He read their malice, and saw to what lengths it would lead them. 'Destroy this temple,' He said, 'and in three days I will raise it up.'

"In these words His meaning was twofold. He referred not only to the destruction of the Jewish temple and worship, but to His own death—the destruction of the temple of His body....

"It was for the sake of those who should believe on Him that these words of Christ were spoken. He knew that they would be repeated. Being spoken at the Passover, they would come to the ears of thousands, and be carried to all parts of the world. After He had risen from the dead, their meaning would be made plain. To many they would be conclusive evidence of His divinity." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 164, 165.

7. From the perspective of the spiritual reformation which was the purpose of His coming to earth, what was the ultimate result of Jesus' work? John 2:22, 23.

"... From the rent sepulcher of Joseph, Jesus came forth a conqueror. 'Having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them.' Colossians 2:15. By virtue of His death and resurrection He became the minister of the 'true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.' Hebrews 8:2. Men reared the Jewish tabernacle; men builded the Jewish temple; but the sanctuary above, of which the earthly was a type, was built by no human architect. 'Behold the Man whose name is The Branch;... He shall build the temple of the Lord; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne.' Zechariah 6:12, 13....

"While Jesus ministers in the sanctuary above, He is still by His Spirit the minister of the church on earth. He is withdrawn from the eye of sense, but His parting promise is fulfilled, 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.' Matthew 28:20." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 165, 166.

FOR MEDITATION

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.' 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17. No man can of himself cast out the evil throng that have taken possession of the heart. Only Christ can cleanse the soul temple. But He will not force an entrance. He comes not into the heart as to the temple of old; but He says, 'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him.' Revelation 3:20.

He will come, not for one day merely; for He says, 'I will dwell in them, and walk in them;... and they shall be My people.' 'He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.' 2 Corinthians 6:16; Micah 7:19. His presence will cleanse and sanctify the soul, so that it may be a holy temple unto the Lord, and 'an habitation of God through the Spirit.' Ephesians 2:21, 22." *—The Desire of Ages*, pp. 161, 162.

12

Sabbath, March 21, 2009

THE NECESSITY OF THE REBIRTH

"In the interview with Nicodemus, Jesus unfolded the plan of salvation, and His mission to the world. In none of His subsequent discourses did He explain so fully, step by step, the work necessary to be done in the hearts of all who would inherit the kingdom of heaven. At the very beginning of His ministry He opened the truth to a member of the Sanhedrin, to the mind that was most receptive, and to an appointed teacher of the people. But the leaders of Israel did not welcome the light. Nicodemus hid the truth in his heart, and for three years there was little apparent fruit." *—The Desire of Ages*, p. 176.

A NIGHT VISIT

1. Who come to visit Jesus one night? What was he seeking? John 3:1, 2.

"Nicodemus held a high position of trust in the Jewish nation. He was highly educated, and possessed talents of no ordinary character, and he was an honored member of the national council. With others, he had been stirred by the teaching of Jesus. Though rich, learned, and honored, he had been strangely attracted by the humble Nazarene. The lessons that had fallen from the Saviour's lips had greatly impressed him, and he desired to learn more of these wonderful truths....

"He greatly desired an interview with Jesus, but shrank from seeking Him openly. It would be too humiliating for a ruler of the Jews to acknowl-

edge himself in sympathy with a teacher as yet so little known.... He resolved upon a secret interview, excusing this on the ground that if he were to go openly, others might follow his example. Learning by special inquiry the Saviour's place of retirement in the Mount of Olives, he waited until the city was hushed in slumber, and then sought Him." *—The Desire of Ages*, pp. 167, 168.

THE MASTER'S MESSAGE TO THE RULER

2. What spiritual requirement did Jesus present to Nicodemus, and thus to all who desire to be heirs of God's kingdom? John 3:3.

"He did not acknowledge Jesus to be the Messiah, but only a teacher sent from God....

"Nicodemus had come to the Lord thinking to enter into a discussion with Him, but Jesus laid bare the foundation principles of truth. He said to Nicodemus, It is not theoretical knowledge you need so much as spiritual regeneration. You need not to have your curiosity satisfied, but to have a new heart. You must receive a new life from above before you can appreciate heavenly things. Until this change takes place, making all things new, it will result in no saving good for you to discuss with Me My authority or My mission." *—The Desire of Ages*, pp. 168, 171.

3. Did Nicodemus understand Jesus' message? Why or why not? John 3:4.

"The figure of the new birth, which Jesus had used, was not wholly unfamiliar to Nicodemus. Converts from heathenism to the faith of Israel were often compared to children just born. Therefore he must have perceived that the words of Christ were not to be taken in a literal sense. But by virtue of his birth as an Israelite he regarded himself as sure of a place in the kingdom of God. He felt that he needed no change. Hence his surprise at the Saviour's words. He was irritated by their close application to himself.... He wondered that Christ should speak to him as He did, not respecting his position as ruler in Israel." *—The Desire of Ages*, p. 171.

THE NEW BIRTH BY THE SPIRIT

4. What does the new birth experience accomplish in the believer? John 3:5-8.

“... The Saviour did not meet argument with argument. Raising His hand with solemn, quiet dignity, He pressed the truth home with greater assurance, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.’ Nicodemus knew that Christ here referred to water baptism and the renewing of the heart by the Spirit of God. He was convinced that he was in the presence of the One whom John the Baptist had foretold....

“The fountain of the heart must be purified before the streams can become pure. He who is trying to reach heaven by his own works in keeping the law is attempting an impossibility. There is no safety for one who has merely a legal religion, a form of godliness. The Christian’s life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. There is a death to self and sin, and a new life altogether. This change can be brought about only by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 171, 172.

5. What does Jesus’ answer to Nicodemus tell about that most precious of all experiences—the new birth? John 3:9-11.

“... As Jesus explained that His mission on earth was to establish a spiritual instead of a temporal kingdom, His hearer was troubled. Seeing this, Jesus added, ‘If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?’ If Nicodemus could not receive Christ’s teaching, illustrating the work of grace upon the heart, how could he comprehend the nature of His glorious heavenly kingdom? Not discerning the nature of Christ’s work on earth, he could not understand His work in heaven.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 173.

SALVATION BY FAITH IN JESUS

6. What do we need to do to receive eternal life? How does question this affect each of us personally? John 3:14, 15.

“Like Nicodemus, we must be willing to enter into life in the same way as the chief of sinners. Than Christ, ‘there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.’ Acts 4:12. Through faith we receive the grace of God; but faith is not our Saviour. It earns nothing. It is the hand by which we lay hold upon Christ, and appropriate His merits, the remedy for sin. And we cannot even repent without the aid of the Spirit of God. The Scripture says of Christ, ‘Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.’ Acts 5:31. Repentance comes from Christ as truly as does pardon....

“Not through controversy and discussion is the soul enlightened. We must look and live. Nicodemus received the lesson, and carried it with him.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 175.

7. Which great change of thought, perspective, and motive occurs when we accept Jesus as our Saviour? What happens after that? John 3:16, 17.

“How, then, are we to be saved? ‘As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,’ so the Son of man has been lifted up, and everyone who has been deceived and bitten by the serpent may look and live. ‘Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’ John 1:29. The light shining from the cross reveals the love of God. His love is drawing us to Himself. If we do not resist this drawing, we shall be led to the foot of the cross in repentance for the sins that have crucified the Saviour. Then the Spirit of God through faith produces a new life in the soul. The thoughts and desires are brought into obedience to the will of Christ. The heart, the mind, are created anew in the image of Him who works in us to subdue all things to Himself. Then the law of God is written in the mind and heart, and we can say with Christ, ‘I delight to do Thy will, O my God.’ Psalm 40:8.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 175, 176.

FOR MEDITATION

“It is impossible for finite minds to comprehend the work of redemption. Its mystery exceeds human knowledge; yet he who passes from death to life realizes that it is a divine reality. The beginning of redemption we may know here through a personal experience. Its results reach through the eternal ages.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 173.

Please,
read the Report from the General Conference
Youth Department on page 55.

13

Sabbath, March 28, 2009

THE FORERUNNER AND THE MESSIAH

“So with the followers of Christ. We can receive of heaven’s light only as we are willing to be emptied of self. We cannot discern the character of God, or accept Christ by faith, unless we consent to the bringing into captivity of every thought to the obedience of Christ. To all who do this the Holy Spirit is given without measure. In Christ ‘dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and in Him ye are made full.’ Colossians 2:9, 10, R.V.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 181.

THE FORERUNNER’S SUBSEQUENT MISSION

1. How did Jesus’ mission begin as John continued his mission as the forerunner? John 3:22-24.

“Now he saw the tide of popularity turning away from himself to the Saviour. Day by day the crowds about him lessened. When Jesus came from Jerusalem to the region about Jordan, the people flocked to hear Him. The number of His disciples increased daily. Many came for baptism, and while Christ Himself did not baptize, He sanctioned the administration of the ordinance by His disciples. Thus He set His seal upon the mission of His forerunner.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 178.

2. Where John the Baptist’s disciples clear about the work and baptism of the Messiah? John 3:25, 26.

“But the disciples of John looked with jealousy upon the growing popularity of Jesus. They stood ready to criticize His work, and it was not long before they found occasion. A question arose between them and the Jews as to whether baptism availed to cleanse the soul from sin; they maintained that the baptism of Jesus differed essentially from that of John. Soon they were in dispute with Christ’s disciples in regard to the form of words proper to use at baptism, and finally as to the right of the latter to baptize at all....

“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.’ No need of disputation as to whether Christ’s baptism or John’s purified from sin. It is the grace of Christ that gives life to the soul. Apart from Christ, baptism, like any other service, is a worthless form. ‘He that believeth not the Son shall not see life.’”
—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 178, 181.

PUBLIC CONFESSION OF THE MESSIAH

3. What clear conviction did John express concerning Jesus? How did he explain his relationship to the Messiah? John 3:27; James 1:17.

“The Holy Spirit is waiting our demand if we will only demand it with that intensity of purpose which is proportionate to the value of the object we seek.”
—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 175.

“John the Baptist was pronounced by our Saviour the greatest of prophets. Yet what a contrast between the language of this man of God and that of many who profess to be ministers of the cross. When asked if he was the Christ, John declares himself unworthy even to unloose his Master’s sandals. When his disciples came with the complaint that the attention of the people was turned to the new Teacher, John reminded them that he himself had claimed to be only the forerunner of the Promised One. To Christ, as the bridegroom, belongs the first place in the affections of His people. ‘The friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all.’ ‘He that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.’” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 224.

4. What clear contrast did John demonstrate between himself and the Jews when he testified of Jesus? John 3:28.

“Looking in faith to the Redeemer, John had risen to the height of self-abnegation. He sought not to attract men to himself, but to lift their thoughts higher and still higher, until they should rest upon the Lamb of God. He himself had been only a voice, a cry in the wilderness. Now with joy he accepted silence and obscurity, that the eyes of all might be turned to the Light of life.

“Those who are true to their calling as messengers for God will not seek honor for themselves. Love for self will be swallowed up in love for Christ.”
—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 179.

THE FRIEND AND THE BRIDEGROOM

5. How did John consider himself? What place will be given to the Messiah by all who are children of the heavenly kingdom? In what way will He increase in their lives? John 3:29, 30.

“John represented himself as the friend who acted as a messenger between the betrothed parties, preparing the way for the marriage. When the bridegroom had received his bride, the mission of the friend was fulfilled. He rejoiced in the happiness of those whose union he had promoted. So John had been called to direct the people to Jesus, and it was his joy to witness the success of the Saviour’s work. He said, ‘This my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.’...

“The work of God is not to bear the image and superscription of man. From time to time the Lord will bring in different agencies, through whom His purpose can best be accomplished. Happy are they who are willing for self to be humbled, saying with John the Baptist, ‘He must increase, but I must decrease.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 179, 182.

UPLIFTING THE HEAVENLY REDEEMER

6. What clear differences are there between a mortal human being and the One who came down from heaven? What does this mean for those who love Jesus? John 3:31-34.

“Those who are true to their calling as messengers of God, will not seek honor for themselves. Love for self will be swallowed up in love for Christ. They will recognize that it is their work to proclaim, as did John the Baptist, ‘Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world’ (John 1:29).

“The soul of the prophet, emptied of self, was filled with the light of the Divine. In words that were almost a counterpart of the words of Christ Himself, he bore witness to the Saviour’s glory. ‘He that cometh from above,’ he said, ‘is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: He that cometh from heaven is above all.’ ‘For He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God’ (John 3:31, 34).” —*Gospel Workers*, pp. 56, 57.

7. What wonderful invitation does the Lord extend to all who desire to inherit eternal life? John 3.35, 36.

“When the soul surrenders itself to Christ, a new power takes possession of the new heart. A change is wrought which man can never accomplish for himself. It is a supernatural work, bringing a supernatural element into human nature. The soul that is yielded to Christ becomes His own fortress, which He holds in a revolted world, and He intends that no authority shall be known in it but His own. A soul thus kept in possession by the heavenly agencies is impregnable to the assaults of Satan.” —*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 23.

FOR MEDITATION

“John had been called to lead out as a reformer. Because of this, his disciples were in danger of fixing their attention upon him, feeling that the success of the work depended upon his labors, and losing sight of the fact that he was only an instrument through which God had wrought. But the work of John was not sufficient to lay the foundation of the Christian church. When he had fulfilled his mission, another work was to be done, which his testimony could not accomplish. His disciples did not understand this. When they saw Christ coming in to take the work, they were jealous and dissatisfied.

“The same dangers still exist.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 181, 182.

MISSIONARY REPORT FROM THE GENERAL CONFERENCE YOUTH DEPARTMENT

To be read on Sabbath, March 28, 2009

The Special Sabbath School Offering
will be gathered on Sabbath, April 4, 2009

Youth is the most beautiful period of life. A young person has many projects, dreams and aspirations. His or her strength and talents, if well channeled, can be a great help for God's people. "Young men and women are invited to give God the strength of their youth, that through the exercise of their powers, through keen thought and vigorous action, they may bring glory to Him and salvation to their fellow men." —*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 535. It is very important for the church to help the youth to channel their feelings, abilities, enthusiasm, energy and ideas in an appropriate way. The church must provide the necessary means to help the youth to develop in the areas of physical, moral and spiritual health. Let us not forget that in the Holy Scriptures there is a divine invitation to the youth to surrender to the Lord, "My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways" (Proverbs 23:26), and the church should help so that this ideal may become a reality.

In the Bible we find examples of young people who accomplished great work in their time and left indelible footprints among their contemporaries and also for the future generations. The life of each one of them was as bright and shiny as the stars in the firmament. Their convictions and attitudes made them great in their own time and in some cases, they influenced in to a great degree the course of events of world empires.

The case of Joseph is worth mentioning since his example of faithfulness and integrity led him, after enduring many trials, to occupy the position of governor of Egypt. Daniel and his three companions are even today an examples to be followed by the youth of our times, and a testimony of what young people can achieve if they place their lives in God's hands.

Young Samuel, Isaac, David and many others gave an us examples of faith, courage, enthusiasm, obedience patience and perseverance and left an indelible mark on history. Today, their lives continue to be a pleasant fragrance that encourages and inspires countless young people in the world to continue fighting the good fight of faith.

The church needs the kind of youth that cannot be bought or sold, young people who are ready to defend moral principles and live their faith just like others did in the past, because the future of the church is its youth. We need new missionaries, canvassers, doctors, musicians, accountants, etc., young people who are willing to surrender all, and are ready to live the great adventure of faith; young people who, with their example, challenge the modern monsters of materialism, immorality and unbelief. We need young people who will actively cooperate in their local churches and use all their talents to serve others. Their energy, if wisely used, will be a great motivation for the church and a blessing to the world.

God's people urgently need to pay more attention to the work with the youth. The devil is working with all his strength to separate the youth from God's way in order to corrupt them. He uses the blinding lights of worldly pleasures to take away our dear youth. We have to double our efforts to stimulate the youth to lift our principles. We need to show them the great benefits they will obtain if they consecrate their lives to God. We should place before them the perfect example to be followed: the Lord Jesus Christ—the friend of the youth.

The General Conference wishes to cooperate with this work; therefore the Youth Department is busy preparing the proper materials and plans to hold educational seminars in order to achieve this goal. We receive many calls from different countries for the General Conference to send its representative to give orientation and help. We have many young people in our ranks and the unions and field conferences ask us to send them material and to support different projects, some of them already in progress in South America and Africa, with the purpose of helping the youth, but we do not have enough means to carry on this work successfully. We need your financial support! The General Conference kindly asks your help so that we may provide support to the unions, field conferences and missionary fields. May God bless you richly for your generosity!

Your brother and coworker,

—*José V. Giner*

Leader of the General Conference Youth Department

SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

for the First Half 2009

**THE LIFE, WORK,
AND TEACHINGS OF JESUS**

Second Quarter

THE TRUE WORSHIPERS

“Our Redeemer thirsts for recognition. He hungers for the sympathy and love of those whom He has purchased with His own blood. He longs with inexpressible desire that they should come to Him and have life. As the mother watches for the smile of recognition from her little child, which tells of the dawning of intelligence, so does Christ watch for the expression of grateful love, which shows that spiritual life is begun in the soul.” *—The Desire of Ages*, p. 191.

ASKING FOR A KINDNESS

- 1. Traveling from Judea to Galilee, through what region did Jesus pass? Where did He stop to rest in the warm noon hour? John 4:1-6 (see Genesis 26:17-22; 33:18, 19).**

“On the way to Galilee Jesus passed through Samaria. It was noon when He reached the beautiful Vale of Shechem. At the opening of this valley was Jacob’s well. Wearied with His journey, He sat down here to rest while His disciples went to buy food’.” *—The Desire of Ages*, p. 183.

- 2. What did Jesus request of the woman who came to Jacob’s well? Why did this appear strange to her? John 4:7-9.**

“The Jews and the Samaritans were bitter enemies, and as far as possible avoided all dealing with each other.... A Jew would not borrow from a Samaritan, nor receive a kindness, not even a morsel of bread or a cup of water. The disciples, in buying food, were acting in harmony with the custom of their nation. But beyond this they did not go. To ask a favor of the Samaritans, or in any way seek to benefit them, did not enter into the thought of even Christ’s disciples.

“The hatred between Jews and Samaritans prevented the woman from offering a kindness to Jesus; but the Saviour was seeking to find the key to this heart, and with the tact born of divine love, He asked, not offered, a favor.” *—The Desire of Ages*, p. 183.

THE GIFT OF GOD

- 3. Like the Samaritan woman, what do we often overlook? Can our spiritual thirst be quenched at the world's fountains? John 4:10-12.**

"She saw before her only a thirsty traveler, wayworn and dusty.... She was looking backward to the fathers, forward to the Messiah's coming, while the Hope of the fathers, the Messiah Himself, was beside her, and she knew Him not. How many thirsting souls are today close by the living fountain, yet looking far away for the wellsprings of life!" *—The Desire of Ages*, p. 184.

- 4. What very special gift does the Lord want to give to everyone who is thirsty for His blessings? John 4:1-6; 6:27.**

"He who seeks to quench his thirst at the fountains of this world will drink only to thirst again. Everywhere men are unsatisfied. They long for something to supply the need of the soul. Only One can meet that want. The need of the world, 'The Desire of all nations,' is Christ. The divine grace which He alone can impart, is as living water, purifying, refreshing, and invigorating the soul.

"Jesus did not convey the idea that merely one draft of the water of life would suffice the receiver. He who tastes of the love of Christ will continually long for more; but he seeks for nothing else. The riches, honors, and pleasures of the world do not attract him. The constant cry of his heart is, More of Thee. And He who reveals to the soul its necessity is waiting to satisfy its hunger and thirst. Every human resource and dependence will fail. The cisterns will be emptied, the pools become dry; but our Redeemer is an inexhaustible fountain. We may drink, and drink again, and ever find a fresh supply. He in whom Christ dwells has within himself the fountain of blessing,—'a well of water springing up into everlasting life.' From this source he may draw strength and grace sufficient for all his needs." *—The Desire of Ages*, p. 187.

WORSHIPERS WHOM GOD IS SEEKING

- 5. What realization struck this woman as Jesus spoke to her heart? John 4:16-19.**

“Jesus now abruptly turned the conversation. Before this soul could receive the gift He longed to bestow, she must be brought to recognize her sin and her Saviour.... The listener trembled. A mysterious hand was turning the pages of her life history, bringing to view that which she had hoped to keep forever hidden. Who was He that could read the secrets of her life? There came to her thoughts of eternity, of the future Judgment, when all that is now hidden shall be revealed. In its light, conscience was awakened.

“She could deny nothing; but she tried to evade all mention of a subject so unwelcome. With deep reverence, she said, ‘Sir, I perceive that Thou art a prophet.’ Then, hoping to silence conviction, she turned to points of religious controversy. If this was a prophet, surely He could give her instruction concerning these matters that had been so long disputed.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 187, 188.

- 6. Does God accept us because we worship in a beautiful temple like the one in Jerusalem or the one on Mount Gerizim? Who are the true worshippers? Whom can God accept? How does this relate to each of us? John 4:20-24 (see Psalm 50:23).**

“The Samaritans built a rival temple on Mount Gerizim. Here they worshiped in accordance with the Mosaic ritual, though they did not wholly renounce idolatry. But disasters attended them, their temple was destroyed by their enemies, and they seemed to be under a curse; yet they still clung to their traditions and their forms of worship.

“Not by seeking a holy mountain or a sacred temple are men brought into communion with heaven.... The religion that comes from God is the only religion that will lead to God. In order to serve Him aright, we must be born of the divine Spirit. This will purify the heart and renew the mind, giving us a new capacity for knowing and loving God. It will give us a willing obedience to all His requirements. This is true worship. It is the fruit of the working of the Holy Spirit.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 188, 189.

A GREAT REVELATION

- 7. Which great revelation did Jesus give this woman? Abandoning her original errand, what joyful news did she become eager to share? John 4:25-30; Luke 13:10.**

“As the past of her life had been spread out before her, she had been made sensible of her great want.... Jesus had convinced her that He read the secrets of her life; yet she felt that He was her friend, pitying and loving her.... She began to have some conviction of His character. The question arose in her mind, Might not this be the long-looked-for Messiah?

“The plain statement made by Christ to this woman could not have been made to the self-righteous Jews. Christ was far more reserved when He spoke to them. That which had been withheld from the Jews, and which the disciples were afterward enjoined to keep secret, was revealed to her. Jesus saw that she would make use of her knowledge in bringing others to share His grace.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 189, 190.

WORDS OF LIFE

“Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary. He who drinks of the living water becomes a fountain of life. The receiver becomes a giver. The grace of Christ in the soul is like a spring in the desert, welling up to refresh all, and making those who are ready to perish eager to drink of the water of life.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 195.

HARVEST TIME

“We see the great need of missionary work to carry the truth not only to foreign countries, but to those who are near us. Close around us are cities and towns in which no efforts are made to save souls. Why should not families who know the present truth settle in these cities and villages, to set up there the standard of Christ, working in humility, not in their own way, but in God’s way, to bring the light before those who have no knowledge of it?”
—*Christian Service*, p. 180.

A SPECIAL SPIRITUAL FOOD FOR THE SOUL

- 1. When the disciples returned to Jacob’s well, what did Jesus answer when they offered Him food? What was significant about His answer? 4:31, 32; Matthew 4:4.**

“The creative energy that called the worlds into existence is in the word of God. This word imparts power; it begets life. Every command is a promise; accepted by the will, received into the soul, it brings with it the life of the Infinite One. It transforms the nature and re-creates the soul in the image of God.

“The life thus imparted is in like manner sustained. ‘By every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God’ (Matthew 4:4) shall man live.” —*Education*, p. 126.

- 2. Did the disciples understand His words? Which deep spiritual meaning did His message convey? John 4:33, 34; 5:36, 38.**

“When the church shall truly have the spirit of the message, they will throw all their energies into the work of saving the souls for whom Christ has died. They will enter new fields. Some who are not ordained ministers will be laborers together with God in visiting the churches, and trying to strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die. There will be laymen who will

move into towns and cities, and into apparently out-of-the-way places, that they may let the light which God has given them, shine forth to others.” – *Christian Service*, p. 180.

“There are times when it seems to the servant of God impossible to do the work necessary to be done.... Some are fearful that with the facilities at their command they cannot do all that they feel it their duty to do. But if they advance in faith, the salvation of God will be revealed, and prosperity will attend their efforts. He who has bidden His followers go into all parts of the world will sustain every laborer who in obedience to His command seeks to proclaim His message.” – *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 357.

THE HARVEST IS READY

- 3. In His encounter with this woman of Samaria, what was Jesus preparing the disciples to understand? John 4:35; Acts 1:8; Matthew 24:14.**

“As Jesus still sat at the well side, He looked over the fields of grain that were spread out before Him, their tender green touched by the golden sunlight. Pointing His disciples to the scene, He employed it as a symbol: ‘Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.’ And as He spoke, He looked on the groups that were coming to the well. It was four months to the time for harvesting the grain, but here was a harvest ready for the reaper.” – *The Desire of Ages*, p. 191.

- 4. What is the reward of a worker who is active in God’s field? What eternal wages will he receive? John 4:36; Luke 14:14.**

“‘He that reapeth,’ He said, ‘receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.’ Here Christ points out the sacred service owed to God by those who receive the gospel. They are to be His living agencies. He requires their individual service. And whether we sow or reap, we are working for God. One scatters the seed; another gathers in the harvest; and both the sower and the reaper receive wages. They rejoice together in the reward of their labor.” – *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 191, 192.

REAPING FROM A PREVIOUS SOWING

- 5. If the spiritual sower does not reap the fruit of his efforts, what hope motivates him to continue working? John 4:37, 38; 1 Corinthians 3:6, 7.**

“The Saviour was here looking forward to the great ingathering on the day of Pentecost. The disciples were not to regard this as the result of their own efforts. They were entering into other men’s labors. Ever since the fall of Adam, Christ had been committing the seed of the word to His chosen servants, to be sown in human hearts. And an unseen agency, even an omnipotent power, had worked silently but effectually to produce the harvest. The dew and rain and sunshine of God’s grace had been given, to refresh and nourish the seed of truth. Christ was about to water the seed with His own blood. His disciples were privileged to be laborers together with God. They were coworkers with Christ and with the holy men of old. By the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, thousands were to be converted in a day. This was the result of Christ’s sowing, the harvest of His work.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 192.

INGATHERING FROM AN UNEXPECTED SOURCE

- 6. Hearing the message of Jesus, what happened to many of the Samaritans, despite the fact that they were so despised by the Jews? John 4:39, 40; Song of Solomon 3:4.**

“In the words spoken to the woman at the well, good seed had been sown, and how quickly the harvest was received. The Samaritans came and heard Jesus, and believed on Him. Crowding about Him at the well, they plied Him with questions, and eagerly received His explanations of many things that had been obscure to them. As they listened, their perplexity began to clear away. They were like a people in great darkness tracing up a sudden ray of light till they had found the day. But they were not satisfied with this short conference. They were anxious to hear more, and to have their friends also listen to this wonderful teacher. They invited Him to their city, and begged Him to remain with them. For two days He tarried in Samaria, and many more believed on Him.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 192.

7. Was their prejudice against the Jews an obstacle, or did they accept Him as the Saviour with true conviction? John 4:41, 42; 1 John 5:20.

“The Samaritans believed that the Messiah was to come as the Redeemer, not only of the Jews, but of the world. The Holy Spirit through Moses had foretold Him as a prophet sent from God. Through Jacob it had been declared that unto Him should the gathering of the people be; and through Abraham, that in Him all the nations of the earth should be blessed. On these scriptures the people of Samaria based their faith in the Messiah. The fact that the Jews had misinterpreted the later prophets, attributing to the first advent the glory of Christ’s second coming, had led the Samaritans to discard all the sacred writings except those given through Moses. But as the Saviour swept away these false interpretations, many accepted the later prophecies and the words of Christ Himself in regard to the kingdom of God.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 193.

SAVIOUR OF ALL

“Jesus had begun to break down the partition wall between Jew and Gentile, and to preach salvation to the world. Though He was a Jew, He mingled freely with the Samaritans, setting at nought the Pharisaic customs of His nation. In face of their prejudices He accepted the hospitality of this despised people. He slept under their roofs, ate with them at their tables partaking of the food prepared and served by their hands taught in their streets, and treated them with the utmost kindness and courtesy.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 193.

YOUR SON IS ALIVE

“The more earnestly and steadfastly we ask, the closer will be our spiritual union with Christ. We shall receive increased blessings because we have increased faith.

“Our part is to pray and believe. Watch unto prayer. Watch, and cooperate with the prayer-hearing God.... Speak and act in harmony with your prayers. It will make an infinite difference with you whether trial shall prove your faith to be genuine, or show that your prayers are only a form.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 146.

“Not because we see or feel that God hears us are we to believe. We are to trust in His promises. When we come to Him in faith, every petition enters the heart of God.” —*The Desire of Ages*, 200.

A MAN WITH AN URGENT REQUEST

1. **Despite overwhelming evidence that Jesus was a prophet, why did some refuse to accept His message? John 4:44, 45; Matthew 13:57; Mark 6:4.**

“The Galileans who returned from the Passover brought back the report of the wonderful works of Jesus.... They hoped that this Man, who had put the rulers to flight, might be the looked-for Deliverer. Now tidings had come that seemed to confirm their brightest anticipations. It was reported that the prophet had declared Himself to be the Messiah.

“But the people of Nazareth did not believe on Him. For this reason, Jesus did not visit Nazareth on His way to Cana. The Saviour declared to His disciples that a prophet has no honour in his own country. Men estimate character by that which they themselves are capable of appreciating. The narrow and worldly-minded judged of Christ by His humble birth, His lowly garb, and daily toil. They could not appreciate the purity of that spirit upon which was no stain of sin.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 196.

2. **While in Cana, what urgent request did Jesus receive from an officer of the king? John 4:46, 47.**

“In Capernaum the tidings attracted the attention of a Jewish nobleman who was an officer in the king’s service. A son of the officer was suffering from what seemed to be an incurable disease. Physicians had given him up to die; but when the father heard of Jesus, he determined to seek help from Him. The child was very low, and, it was feared, might not live till his return; yet the nobleman felt that he must present the case in person. He hoped that a father’s prayers might awaken the sympathy of the Great Physician.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 196, 197.

THE TRUE FOUNDATION OF FAITH

3. What was Jesus’ answer of Jesus to the officer’s request? Explain Jesus’ response. John 4:48; 1 Corinthians 1:22; Matthew 12:38, 39.

“On reaching Cana he found a throng surrounding Jesus. With an anxious heart he pressed through to the Saviour’s presence. His faith faltered when he saw only a plainly dressed man, dusty and worn with travel. He doubted that this Person could do what he had come to ask of Him; yet he secured an interview with Jesus, told his errand, and besought the Saviour to accompany him to his home. But already his sorrow was known to Jesus. Before the officer had left his home, the Saviour had beheld his affliction.

“But He knew also that the father had, in his own mind, made conditions concerning his belief in Jesus. Unless his petition should be granted, he would not receive Him as the Messiah. While the officer waited in an agony of suspense, Jesus said, ‘Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.’” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 197, 198.

4. What can we understand from the father’s second plea? What would we do in a similar situation? John 4:49; Mark 5:23, 35, 36.

“Yet the nobleman had a degree of faith; for he had come to ask what seemed to him the most precious of all blessings. Jesus had a greater gift to bestow. He desired, not only to heal the child, but to make the officer and his household sharers in the blessings of salvation, and to kindle a light in Capernaum, which was so soon to be the field of His own labors. But the nobleman must realize his need before he would desire the grace of Christ. This courtier represented many of his nation. They were interested in Jesus from selfish motives. They hoped to receive some special benefit through His power, and

they staked their faith on the granting of this temporal favor; but they were ignorant as to their spiritual disease, and saw not their need of divine grace.”
—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 198.

GOD’S ANSWER TO HUMAN NEED

- 5. Had the nobleman expected to receive such a prompt, gracious hearing and the performance of a miracle from so great a distance? John 4:50.**

“Like Jacob he prevailed. The Saviour cannot withdraw from the soul that clings to Him, pleading its great need.... The nobleman left the Saviour’s presence with a peace and joy he had never known before. Not only did he believe that his son would be restored, but with strong confidence he trusted in Christ as the Redeemer. At the same hour the watchers beside the dying child in the home at Capernaum beheld a sudden and mysterious change. The shadow of death was lifted from the sufferer’s face... The fever had left him in the very heat of the day. The family were amazed, and great was the rejoicing.... At the very moment when the father’s faith grasped the assurance, ‘Thy son liveth,’ divine love touched the dying child.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 198, 199.

- 6. What wonderful results did this experience have for this man and his family? John 4:51-54.**

“The father hurries on to greet his son. He clasps him to his heart as one restored from the dead, and thanks God again and again for this wonderful restoration.

“The nobleman longed to know more of Christ. As he afterward heard His teaching, he and all his household became disciples. Their affliction was sanctified to the conversion of the entire family. Tidings of the miracle spread; and in Capernaum, where so many of His mighty works were performed, the way was prepared for Christ’s personal ministry.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 200.

- 7. Why are answers to our prayers sometimes delayed? Should our trust in God depend on His answering all our prayers? James 4:3; 1:6; Psalm 31:24.**

“He who blessed the nobleman at Capernaum is just as desirous of blessing us. But like the afflicted father, we are often led to seek Jesus by the desire for some earthly good; and upon the granting of our request we rest our confidence in His love. The Saviour longs to give us a greater blessing than we ask; and He delays the answer to our request that He may show us the evil of our own hearts, and our deep need of His grace. He desires us to renounce the selfishness that leads us to seek Him. Confessing our helplessness and bitter need, we are to trust ourselves wholly to His love.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 200.

WORDS OF LIFE

“The nobleman wanted to see the fulfilment of his prayer before he should believe; but he had to accept the word of Jesus that his request was heard and the blessing granted. This lesson we also have to learn. Not because we see or feel that God hears us are we to believe. We are to trust in His promises. When we come to Him in faith, every petition enters the heart of God. When we have asked for His blessing, we should believe that we receive it, and thank Him that we have received it. Then we are to go about our duties, assured that the blessing will be realized when we need it most. When we have learned to do this, we shall know that our prayers are answered. God will do for us ‘exceeding abundantly,’ ‘according to the riches of His glory,’ and ‘the working of His mighty power.’ Ephesians 3:20, 16; 1:19.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 200.

HEALING OF THE PARALYTIC

“To talk of religion in a casual way, to pray without soul hunger and living faith, avails nothing. A nominal faith in Christ, which accepts Him merely as the Saviour of the world, can never bring healing to the soul.... It is not enough to believe about Christ; we must believe in Him. The only faith that will benefit us is that which embraces Him as a personal Saviour; which appropriates His merits to ourselves.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 347.

SICK AND INCAPABLE

- 1. What poor people always lay under the porches of the pool at Bethesda? What was their great hope? John 5:2-4.**

“At certain seasons the waters of this pool were agitated, and it was commonly believed that this was the result of supernatural power, and that whoever first after the troubling of the pool stepped into the waters, would be healed of whatever disease he had. Hundreds of sufferers visited the place; but so great was the crowd when the water was troubled that they rushed forward, trampling underfoot men, women, and children, weaker than themselves.... There were some who spent the night in these porches, creeping to the edge of the pool day after day, in the vain hope of relief.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 201.

- 2. Who was among that suffering, handicapped crowd? John 5:5 (see Proverbs 8:34, 35).**

“Jesus was again at Jerusalem. Walking alone, in apparent meditation and prayer, He came to the pool. He saw the wretched sufferers watching for that which they supposed to be their only chance of cure. He longed to exercise His healing power, and make every sufferer whole. But it was the Sabbath day. Multitudes were going to the temple for worship, and He knew that such an act of healing would so excite the prejudice of the Jews as to cut short His work.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 201, 202.

HEALING WORDS

- 3. What question asked Jesus that the crippled man, knowing how long he had been in that condition? John 5:6, 7.**

“... The Saviour saw one case of supreme wretchedness. It was that of a man who had been a helpless cripple for thirty-eight years. His disease was in a great degree the result of his own sin, and was looked upon as a judgment from God. Alone and friendless, feeling that he was shut out from God’s mercy, the sufferer had passed long years of misery...”

“The sick man was lying on his mat, and occasionally lifting his head to gaze at the pool, when a tender, compassionate face bent over him, and the words, ‘Wilt thou be made whole?’ arrested his attention. Hope came to his heart. He felt that in some way he was to have help.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 202.

- 4. Did the Redeemer ask him any other questions? How quickly did Jesus grant his greatest longing? John 5:8.**

“Jesus does not ask this sufferer to exercise faith in Him. He simply says, ‘Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.’ But the man’s faith takes hold upon that word. Every nerve and muscle thrills with new life, and healthful action comes to his crippled limbs. Without question he sets his will to obey the command of Christ, and all his muscles respond to his will. Springing to his feet, he finds himself an active man.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 202, 203.

- 5. What happened instantly when the Lord told him to stand up and walk? John 5:9.**

“Jesus had given him no assurance of divine help. The man might have stopped to doubt, and lost his one chance of healing. But he believed Christ’s word, and in acting upon it he received strength.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 203.

“With a new hope the sick man looks upon Jesus. The expression of His countenance, the tones of His voice, are like no other. Love and power seem to breathe from His very presence. The cripple’s faith takes hold upon Christ’s word. Without question he sets his will to obey, and, as he does this, his whole body responds.

“Every nerve and muscle thrills with new life, and healthful action comes to his crippled limbs. Springing to his feet, he goes on his way with firm, free step, praising God and rejoicing in his new-found strength.” *—The Ministry of Healing*, p. 84.

AFTER THE MIRACLE

- 6. What was the Jews’ reaction of Jews when they saw the healed man walking? Did they praise the Lord for His great miracle? John 5:10-13; Romans 10:2 (see Jeremiah 17:21; Micah 6:8).**

“The restored paralytic stooped to take up his bed, which was only a rug and a blanket, and as he straightened himself again with a sense of delight, he looked around for his Deliverer; but Jesus was lost in the crowd. The man feared that he would not know Him if he should see Him again. As he hurried on his way with firm, free step, praising God and rejoicing in his new-found strength, he met several of the Pharisees, and immediately told them of his cure. He was surprised at the coldness with which they listened to his story.

“With lowering brows they interrupted him, asking why he was carrying his bed on the Sabbath day. They sternly reminded him that it was not lawful to bear burdens on the Lord’s day.... These rulers knew well that only One had shown Himself able to perform this miracle; but they wished for direct proof that it was Jesus, that they might condemn Him as a Sabbath-breaker. In their judgment He had not only broken the law in healing the sick man on the Sabbath, but had committed sacrilege in bidding him bear away his bed.” *—The Desire of Ages*, pp. 203, 204.

- 7. What important message did Jesus give the healed man when He met him in the temple? What lesson was contained in this miracle? John 5:14, 15.**

“Many ... need, like the paralytic of old, the forgiveness of sin the first thing, and they need to learn how to ‘go, and sin no more.’” *—Medical Ministry*, p. 27.

“By sin we have been severed from the life of God. Our souls are palsied.... The sense of sin has poisoned the springs of life. But Christ says, ‘I will take your sins; I will give you peace. I have bought you with My blood. You are Mine. My grace shall strengthen your weakened will; your remorse for sin I will remove.’ When temptations assail you, when care and perplexity surround you, when, depressed and discouraged, you are ready to yield

to despair, look to Jesus, and the darkness that encompasses you will be dispelled by the bright shining of His presence. When sin struggles for the mastery in your soul, and burdens the conscience, look to the Saviour. His grace is sufficient to subdue sin." *—The Ministry of Healing*, p. 85.

8. Of what should this wonderful miracle remind us? What promise of hope has been given to us all? Psalms 91:15; 50:15.

"Through the same faith we may receive spiritual healing. By sin we have been severed from the life of God. Our souls are palsied.... The Saviour is bending over the purchase of His blood, saying with inexpressible tenderness and pity, 'Wilt thou be made whole?' He bids you arise in health and peace. Do not wait to feel that you are made whole. Believe His word, and it will be fulfilled. Put your will on the side of Christ. Will to serve Him, and in acting upon His word you will receive strength." *—The Desire of Ages*, p. 203.

CONFESSION AND HEALING

"Praying for the sick is a most solemn thing, and we should not enter into this work in any careless, hasty way. Examination should be made as to whether those who would be blessed with health have indulged in evilspeaking, alienation, and dissension. Have they sowed discord among the brethren and sisters of the church? If these things have been committed, they should be confessed before God and the church. When wrongs have been confessed, the subjects for prayer may be presented before God in earnestness and faith, as the Spirit of God may move upon you." *—Counsels on Health*, p. 374.

BLESSED IS HE WHO DOES NOT DOUBT

“In this age, just prior to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, God calls for men who will prepare a people to stand in the great day of the Lord. Just such a work as that which John did, is to be carried on in these last days. The Lord is giving messages to His people, through the instruments He has chosen, and He would have all heed the admonitions and warnings He sends.... As a people who believe in Christ’s soon appearing, we have a definite message to bear, ‘Prepare to meet thy God.’” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1184.

THE HERALD OF THE MESSIAH

1. **What happened to John the Baptist because of his faithful testimony against sin? Mark 6:17; Luke 3:18-20.**

“John the Baptist had been first in heralding Christ’s kingdom, and he was first also in suffering. From the free air of the wilderness and the vast throngs that had hung upon his words, he was now shut in by the walls of a dungeon cell. He had become a prisoner in the fortress of Herod Antipas. In the territory east of Jordan, which was under the dominion of Antipas, much of John’s ministry had been spent. Herod himself had listened to the preaching of the Baptist. The dissolute king had trembled under the call to repentance. ‘Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy;... and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.’ John dealt with him faithfully, denouncing his iniquitous alliance with Herodias, his brother’s wife. For a time Herod feebly sought to break the chain of lust that bound him; but Herodias fastened him the more firmly in her toils, and found revenge upon the Baptist by inducing Herod to cast him into prison.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 214.

2. **Did he fully understand the Messiah’s mission? Isaiah 40:3, 4; Matthew 3:10, 12.**

“Like the Saviour’s disciples, John the Baptist did not understand the nature of Christ’s kingdom. He expected Jesus to take the throne of David; and as time passed, and the Saviour made no claim to kingly authority, John became perplexed and troubled. He had declared to the people that in order for the way to be prepared before the Lord, the prophecy of Isaiah must be fulfilled; the mountains and hills must be brought low, the crooked made straight, and the rough places plain. He had looked for the high places of human pride and power to be cast down. He had pointed to the Messiah as the One whose fan was in His hand, and who would thoroughly purge His floor, who would gather the wheat into His garner, and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Like the prophet Elijah, in whose spirit and power he had come to Israel, he looked for the Lord to reveal Himself as a God that answereth by fire.” – *The Desire of Ages*, p. 215.

PERPLEXITY AND AN ENCOURAGING ANSWER

3. What perplexities arose in his mind as he saw that things were not proceeding as he expected? Matthew 11:2, 3.

“The life of John had been one of active labor, and the gloom and inaction of his prison life weighed heavily upon him. As week after week passed, bringing no change, despondency and doubt crept over him. His disciples did not forsake him. They were allowed access to the prison, and they brought him tidings of the works of Jesus, and told how the people were flocking to Him. But they questioned why, if this new teacher was the Messiah, He did nothing to effect John’s release. How could He permit His faithful herald to be deprived of liberty and perhaps of life?

“These questions were not without effect. Doubts which otherwise would never have arisen were suggested to John.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 214, 215.

4. What may we learn from the assuring answer that Jesus sent to His forerunner? Matthew 11:4, 5 (see also Psalm 146:8; Isaiah 29:18).

“The Saviour did not at once answer the disciples’ question. As they stood wondering at His silence, the sick and afflicted were coming to Him to be healed. The blind were groping their way through the crowd; diseased ones of all classes, some urging their own way, some borne by their friends, were eagerly pressing into the presence of Jesus. The voice of the mighty Healer

penetrated the deaf ear. A word, a touch of His hand, opened the blind eyes to behold the light of day, the scenes of nature, the faces of friends, and the face of the Deliverer. Jesus rebuked disease and banished fever. His voice reached the ears of the dying, and they arose in health and vigor. Paralyzed demoniacs obeyed His word, their madness left them, and they worshiped Him. While He healed their diseases, He taught the people. The poor peasants and laborers, who were shunned by the rabbis as unclean, gathered close about Him, and He spoke to them the words of eternal life.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 216, 217.

BLESSED IS HE WHO GAINS THE VICTORY OVER DOUBT

5. What is promised to those who do not doubt Jesus or His work? Matthew 11:6; John 6:61, 62.

”The evidence of His divinity was seen in its adaptation to the needs of suffering humanity. His glory was shown in His condescension to our low estate.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 217.

MORE THAN A PROPHET

6. What did Jesus testify concerning John the Baptist? What was his greatness? Matthew 11:7-11; Luke 1:15.

“As the Messiah’s herald, John was ‘much more than a prophet.’ For while prophets had seen from afar Christ’s advent, to John it was given to behold Him, to hear the testimony from heaven to His Messiahship, and to present Him to Israel as the Sent of God. Yet Jesus said, ‘He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.’

“The prophet John was the connecting link between the two dispensations. As God’s representative he stood forth to show the relation of the law and the prophets to the Christian dispensation. He was the lesser light, which was to be followed by a greater. The mind of John was illuminated by the Holy Spirit, that he might shed light upon his people; but no other light ever has shone or ever will shine so clearly upon fallen man as that which emanated from the teaching and example of Jesus. Christ and His mission had been but dimly understood as typified in the shadowy sacrifices. Even John had not fully comprehended the future, immortal life through the Saviour.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 220.

7. How is our mission similar to the work of John the Baptist? What can we learn from him and his work? Matthew 11:12-14; Malachi 4:5.

“John came in the spirit and power of Elijah to proclaim the first advent of Jesus. I was pointed down to the last days and saw that John represented those who should go forth in the spirit and power of Elijah to herald the day of wrath and the second advent of Jesus.” —*Early Writings*, p. 155.

THE SAME WORK TO BE DONE TODAY

“In this time of well-nigh universal apostasy, God calls upon His messengers to proclaim His law in the spirit and power of Elias. As John the Baptist, in preparing a people for Christ’s first advent, called their attention to the Ten Commandments, so we are to give, with no uncertain sound, the message: ‘Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come.’ With the earnestness that characterized Elijah the prophet and John the Baptist, we are to strive to prepare the way for Christ’s second advent (Southern Watchman, March 21, 1905).” —*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1184.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

“As the message of Christ’s first advent announced the kingdom of His grace, so the message of His second advent announces the kingdom of His glory. And the second message, like the first, is based on the prophecies....

“We have reached the period foretold in these scriptures. The time of the end is come, the visions of the prophets are unsealed, and their solemn warnings point us to our Lord’s coming in glory as near at hand.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 234, 235.

THE JOYFUL MESSAGE OF JESUS

- 1. What had the prophet Isaiah foretold about Jesus’ mission? Luke 4:18, 19, 21 (see Isaiah 60:1, 2).**

“But when Jesus announced, ‘This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears,’ they were suddenly recalled to think of themselves, and of the claims of Him who had been addressing them. They, Israelites, children of Abraham, had been represented as in bondage. They had been addressed as prisoners to be delivered from the power of evil; as in darkness, and needing the light of truth. Their pride was offended, and their fears were roused. The words of Jesus indicated that His work for them was to be altogether different from what they desired.” — *The Desire of Ages*, p. 237.

- 2. Which message full of joy and hope did Jesus preach from the very beginning of His ministry? Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:14, 15.**

“His work there had continued some months before the Sermon on the Mount was given. The message He had proclaimed throughout the land, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand’ (Matthew 4:17), had arrested the attention of all classes, and had still further fanned the flame of their ambitious hopes. The fame of the new Teacher had spread beyond the limits of Palestine, and,

notwithstanding the attitude of the hierarchy, the feeling was widespread that this might be the hoped-for Deliverer. Great multitudes thronged the steps of Jesus, and the popular enthusiasm ran high.” *—Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 2, 3.

THE KINGDOM OF GRACE

3. Did Jesus present the nature of God’s kingdom in a clear manner? Luke 17:20, 21; Luke 11:20; Matthew 12:28.

“The kingdom of God comes not with outward show. The gospel of the grace of God, with its spirit of self-abnegation, can never be in harmony with the spirit of the world. The two principles are antagonistic. ‘The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.’ 1 Corinthians 2:14....” *—The Desire of Ages*, p. 509.

“But as Jesus explained that His mission on earth was to establish a spiritual instead of a temporal kingdom, His hearer was troubled. Seeing this, Jesus added, ‘If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?’...

“The Jews misinterpreted and misapplied the word of God, and they knew not the time of their visitation. The years of the ministry of Christ and His apostles—the precious last years of grace to the chosen people—they spent in plotting the destruction of the Lord’s messengers. Earthly ambitions absorbed them, and the offer of the spiritual kingdom came to them in vain. So today the kingdom of this world absorbs men’s thoughts, and they take no note of the rapidly fulfilling prophecies and the tokens of the swift-coming kingdom of God.” *—The Desire of Ages*, pp. 509, 173, 235.

4. Did the disciples understand the spiritual nature of God’s kingdom? Luke 19:11; Luke 24:21; Acts 1:6, 7.

“Like the Saviour’s disciples, John the Baptist did not understand the nature of Christ’s kingdom....

“With longing heart He has listened for some expression of faith from His disciples. He has heard only the mournful words, ‘We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel.’” *—The Desire of Ages*, pp. 215, 750.

“The disciples, with a sudden revival of their old hope that Jesus would take His place upon the throne of David at Jerusalem, inquired, ‘Wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?’ Acts 1:6. The Saviour threw an

uncertainty over their minds in regard to the subject by replying that it was not for them 'to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power.' Acts 1:7." —*The Story of Redemption*, p. 241.

THE KINGDOM OF GLORY

- 5. At the same time, referring to the future, what prophecies had been given regarding the kingdom of Jesus? Luke 1:31-33; Daniel 7:14; Hebrew 1:8.**

- 6. Did Jesus clearly indicate that His kingdom of glory was still in the future? What was an example of that glory? John 6:16; 18:36; Matthew 16:28.**

Referring to the transfiguration reported in Matthew 17:1-9, the Sister Ellen G. White commented:

"The Saviour's promise to the disciples was now fulfilled. Upon the mount the future kingdom of glory was represented in miniature—Christ the King, Moses a representative of the risen saints, and Elijah of the translated ones." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 421.

OUR PRAYERS AND INTEREST

- 7. According to Jesus, what should be the first and greatest interest of every true believer? Mathew 6:33; 5:3; 6:11; 4:17.**

- "Christ calls upon the members of His church to cherish the true, genuine hope of the gospel. He points them upward, distinctly assuring them that the riches that endure are above, not below. Their hope is in heaven, not on the earth. 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness,' He says; 'and all these things'—all that is essential for your good—'shall be added unto you.'"

—*Christian Service*, p. 218.

- 8. Therefore, what should we ask request of God? Matthew 6:9, 10.**

“The disciples of Christ were looking for the immediate coming of the kingdom of His glory, but in giving them this prayer Jesus taught that the kingdom was not then to be established. They were to pray for its coming as an event yet future. But this petition was also an assurance to them. While they were not to behold the coming of the kingdom in their day, the fact that Jesus bade them pray for it is evidence that in God’s own time it will surely come.” *—Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 107, 108.

ENTERING GOD’S KINGDOM

“The kingdom of God’s grace is now being established, as day by day hearts that have been full of sin and rebellion yield to the sovereignty of His love. But the full establishment of the kingdom of His glory will not take place until the second coming of Christ to this world. ‘The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven,’ is to be given to ‘the people of the saints of the Most High.’ Daniel 7:27. They shall inherit the kingdom prepared for them ‘from the foundation of the world.’ Matthew 25:34. And Christ will take to Himself His great power and will reign.” *—Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 108.

COME WITH ME

“He who loves Christ the most will do the greatest amount of good. There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, by putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God. If men will endure the necessary discipline, without complaining or fainting by the way, God will teach them hour by hour, and day by day. He longs to reveal His grace. If His people will remove the obstructions, He will pour forth the waters of salvation in abundant streams through the human channels. If men in humble life were encouraged to do all the good they could do, if restraining hands were not laid upon them to repress their zeal, there would be a hundred workers for Christ where now there is one.”
—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 250, 251.

EXPERIENCE PRECEDES CALLING

1. **What is known about the men whom Jesus called? Were they active, or were they idle? Matthew 4:18; Luke 5:1, 2.**

“Day was breaking over the Sea of Galilee. The disciples, weary with a night of fruitless toil, were still in their fishing boats on the lake. Jesus had come to spend a quiet hour by the waterside. In the early morning He hoped for a little season of rest from the multitude that followed Him day after day. But soon the people began to gather about Him.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 244.

2. **After He was finished using Simon’s ship for preaching, what did the Lord request him to do? Luke 5:3, 4. Whom else does the Lord want to let down their nets?**

“There are those who think it is their duty to preach the truth, but they dare not venture from the shore, and they catch no fish. They will choose to go among the churches, over and over the same ground. They report a good

time, a pleasant visit, but we look in vain for the souls that are converted to the truth through their instrumentality. These ministers hug the shore too closely. Let them launch out into the deep, and cast their net where the fish are. There is no lack of work to be done. There could be hundreds employed in the vineyard of the Lord where there is now one. (*—The True Missionary*, February, 1874).” *—Evangelism*, pp. 59, 60.

THE RESULT OF TRUST AND OBEDIENCE

- 3. Although their efforts the previous night had been unsuccessful, what was Simon willing to do? What might we do after a making a similar experience? Luke 5:5.**

“The discourse ended, Jesus turned to Peter, and bade him launch out into the sea, and let down his net for a draught. But Peter was disheartened. All night he had taken nothing.... Even his own occupation had failed him; and as he watched by the empty nets, the future had seemed dark with discouragement. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net.’” *—The Desire of Ages*, p. 245.

- 4. What was amazing result of his obedience? Luke 5:6-8.**

“Night was the only favorable time for fishing with nets in the clear waters of the lake. After toiling all night without success, it seemed hopeless to cast the net by day; but Jesus had given the command, and love for their Master moved the disciples to obey. Simon and his brother together let down the net. As they attempted to draw it in, so great was the quantity of fish enclosed that it began to break. They were obliged to summon James and John to their aid. When the catch was secured, both the boats were so heavily laden that they were in danger of sinking....

“But Peter was unmindful now of boats or lading. This miracle, above any other he had ever witnessed, was to him a manifestation of divine power. In Jesus he saw One who held all nature under His control. The presence of divinity revealed his own unholiness. Love for his Master, shame for his own unbelief, gratitude for the condescension of Christ, above all, the sense of his uncleanness in the presence of infinite purity, overwhelmed him. While his companions were securing the contents of the net, Peter fell at the Saviour’s feet, exclaiming, ‘Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.’” *—The Desire of Ages*, p. 246.

CALLED TO BE FISHERS OF MEN

5. What holy calling followed that experience? What did Jesus promise? Matthew 4:18; Mark 1:16, 17.

“The Saviour answered, ‘Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.’ It was after Isaiah had beheld the holiness of God and his own unworthiness that he was entrusted with the divine message. It was after Peter had been led to self-renunciation and dependence upon divine power that he received the call to his work for Christ....

“Until this time none of the disciples had fully united as co-laborers with Jesus. They had witnessed many of His miracles, and had listened to His teaching; but they had not entirely forsaken their former employment. The imprisonment of John the Baptist had been to them all a bitter disappointment. If such were to be the outcome of John’s mission, they could have little hope for their Master, with all the religious leaders combined against Him. Under the circumstances it was a relief to them to return for a short time to their fishing. But now Jesus called them to forsake their former life, and unite their interests with His. Peter had accepted the call. Upon reaching the shore, Jesus bade the three other disciples, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 246, 249.

6. Did they hesitate, or did they follow Jesus immediately? Matthew 4:20.

“So it was with the disciples previously called. When Jesus bade Peter and his companions follow Him, they immediately left their boats and nets. Some of these disciples had friends dependent on them for support; but when they received the Saviour’s invitation, they did not hesitate, inquiring, How shall I live, and sustain my family? They were obedient to the call; and when afterward Jesus asked them, ‘When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything?’ they could answer, ‘Nothing.’

“Today the Saviour calls us, as He called Matthew and John and Peter, to His work. If our hearts are touched by His love, the question of compensation will not be uppermost in our minds. We shall rejoice to be co-workers with Christ, and we shall not fear to trust His care. If we make God our strength, we shall have clear perceptions of duty, and unselfish aspirations; our life will be actuated by a noble purpose, which will raise us above sordid motives.” —*Gospel Workers*, pp. 113, 114.

**7. Who else willingly abandoned everything and followed Jesus?
Would we do the same? Matthew 4:21, 22; Luke 14:27, 33.**

CALLED TO WIN SOULS

“Whatever one’s calling in life, his first interest should be to win souls for Christ. He may not be able to speak to congregations, but he can work for individuals. To them he can communicate the instruction received from his Lord. Ministry does not consist alone in preaching. Those minister who relieve the sick and suffering, helping the needy, speaking words of comfort to the desponding and those of little faith.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 822.

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Sabbath, May 23, 2009

SPEAKING WITH POWER

“The means by which we can overcome the wicked one is that by which Christ overcame—the power of the word. God does not control our minds without our consent; but if we desire to know and to do His will, His promises are ours: ‘Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’ ‘If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching.’ John 8:32; 7:17, R.V. Through faith in these promises, every man may be delivered from the snares of error and the control of sin.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 258.

SABBATH ACTIVITY

- 1. From one town to another what did Jesus frequently do on the Sabbath? Luke 4:31; 6:6; 13:10.**
- 2. Was Jesus’ preaching similar to that of the scribes and elders? What did the people automatically notice? Luke 4:32; 24:27; Matthew 7:28, 29; John 12:32.**

“The teaching of the scribes and elders was cold and formal, like a lesson learned by rote. To them the word of God possessed no vital power. Their own ideas and traditions were substituted for its teaching. In the accustomed round of service they professed to explain the law, but no inspiration from God stirred their own hearts or the hearts of their hearers....

“Jesus met the people on their own ground, as one who was acquainted with their perplexities. He made truth beautiful by presenting it in the most direct and simple way. His language was pure, refined, and clear as a running stream. His voice was as music to those who had listened to the monotonous tones of the rabbis. But while His teaching was simple, He spoke as one having authority. This characteristic set His teaching in contrast with that of all others. The rabbis spoke with doubt and hesitancy, as if the Scriptures might be interpreted to mean one thing or exactly the opposite. The hearers were daily involved in greater uncertainty. But Jesus taught the Scriptures as of unquestionable authority. Whatever His subject, it was presented with power, as if His words could not be controverted.” *—The Desire of Ages*, p. 253.

INTERRUPTION AND OPPOSITION

3. Who was present among the audience of the synagogue to interrupt Him? Luke 4:33.

“Jesus in the synagogue spoke of the kingdom He had come to establish, and of His mission to set free the captives of Satan. He was interrupted by a shriek of terror. A madman rushed forward from among the people, crying out.... All was now confusion and alarm. The attention of the people was diverted from Christ, and His words were unheeded. This was Satan’s purpose in leading his victim to the synagogue.” *—The Desire of Ages*, p. 255.

4. What did the man shout? Luke 4:34.

“The mind of this wretched sufferer had been darkened by Satan, but in the Saviour’s presence a ray of light had pierced the gloom. He was roused to long for freedom from Satan’s control; but the demon resisted the power of Christ. When the man tried to appeal to Jesus for help, the evil spirit put words into his mouth, and he cried out in an agony of fear. The demoniac partially comprehended that he was in the presence of One who could set him free; but when he tried to come within reach of that mighty hand, another’s will held him, another’s words found utterance through him. The conflict between the power of Satan and his own desire for freedom was terrible....

“So it will be in the great final conflict of the controversy between righteousness and sin. While new life and light and power are descending from on high upon the disciples of Christ, a new life is springing up from beneath, and energizing the agencies of Satan. Intensity is taking possession of every earthly element. With a subtlety gained through centuries of conflict, the prince of evil works under a disguise. He appears clothed as an angel of light, and multitudes are ‘giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.’ 1 Timothy 4:1.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 255, 257.

CONFRONTATION AND VICTORY

5. Did Jesus know with whom he was dealing in this conflict? How did He gain the victory? Luke 4:35 (see Ephesians 6:12).

“He who had conquered Satan in the wilderness of temptation was again brought face to face with His enemy. The demon exerted all his power to retain control of his victim. To lose ground here would be to give Jesus a victory. It seemed that the tortured man must lose his life in the struggle with the foe that had been the ruin of his manhood. But the Saviour spoke with authority, and set the captive free. The man who had been possessed stood before the wondering people happy in the freedom of self-possession. Even the demon had testified to the divine power of the Saviour....

“The period of Christ’s personal ministry among men was the time of greatest activity for the forces of the kingdom of darkness. For ages Satan with his evil angels had been seeking to control the bodies and the souls of men, to bring upon them sin and suffering; then he had charged all this misery upon God. Jesus was revealing to men the character of God. He was breaking Satan’s power, and setting his captives free. New life and love and power from heaven were moving upon the hearts of men, and the prince of evil was aroused to contend for the supremacy of his kingdom. Satan summoned all his forces, and at every step contested the work of Christ.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 256, 257.

6. What did all those who were present recognize? Luke 4:36.

“Other instances of a similar nature are recorded in the Scriptures. The daughter of the Syrophenician woman was grievously vexed with a devil, whom Jesus cast out by His word. (Mark 7:26-30). ‘One possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb’ (Matthew 12:22); a youth who had a dumb spirit, that oftentimes ‘cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him’ (Mark

9:17-27); the maniac who, tormented by 'a spirit of an unclean devil' (Luke 4:33-36), disturbed the Sabbath quiet of the synagogue at Capernaum—all were healed by the compassionate Saviour. In nearly every instance, Christ addressed the demon as an intelligent entity, commanding him to come out of his victim and to torment him no more. The worshipers at Capernaum, beholding His mighty power, 'were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power He commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out.' Luke 4:36." —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 515, 516.

7. What do you think were the results of such victories? What did the people think about Jesus? Luke 4:37.

"Tidings of the work of Christ spread rapidly throughout Capernaum. For fear of the rabbis, the people dared not come for healing upon the Sabbath; but no sooner had the sun disappeared below the horizon than there was a great commotion. From the homes, the shops, the market places, the inhabitants of the city pressed toward the humble dwelling that sheltered Jesus. The sick were brought upon couches, they came leaning upon staffs, or, supported by friends, they tottered feebly into the Saviour's presence.

"Hour after hour they came and went; for none could know whether tomorrow would find the Healer still among them. Never before had Capernaum witnessed a day like this. The air was filled with the voice of triumph and shouts of deliverance. The Saviour was joyful in the joy He had awakened. As He witnessed the sufferings of those who had come to Him, His heart was stirred with sympathy, and He rejoiced in His power to restore them to health and happiness." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 259.

PROMISE OF DELIVERANCE FOR US

"Every man is free to choose what power he will have to rule over him.... Those who will consent to enter into covenant relation with the God of heaven are not left to the power of Satan or to the infirmity of their own nature. They are invited by the Saviour, 'Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me.' Isaiah 27:5. The spirits of darkness will battle for the soul once under their dominion, but angels of God will contend for that soul with prevailing power. The Lord says, 'Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered?'... Thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children.' Isaiah 49:24, 25." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 258, 259.

YOU CAN HEAL ME

“The religion of the Bible is not detrimental to the health of the body or of the mind. The influence of the Spirit of God is the very best medicine that can be received by a sick man or woman. Heaven is all health; and the more deeply the heavenly influences are realized, the more sure will be the recovery of the believing invalid.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 172.

“Christ feels the woes of every sufferer. When evil spirits rend a human frame, Christ feels the curse. When fever is burning up the life current, He feels the agony. And He is just as willing to heal the sick now as when He was personally on earth. Christ’s servants are His representatives, the channels for His working. He desires through them to exercise His healing power.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 823, 824.

ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT CASES

1. **What pitiful man appeared before Jesus and asked to be healed? Matthew 8:1, 2.**

“Of all diseases known in the East the leprosy was most dreaded. Its incurable and contagious character, and its horrible effect upon its victims, filled the bravest with fear. Among the Jews it was regarded as a judgment on account of sin, and hence was called ‘the stroke,’ ‘the finger of God.’ Deep-rooted, ineradicable, deadly, it was looked upon as a symbol of sin. By the ritual law, the leper was pronounced unclean. Like one already dead, he was shut out from the habitations of men. Whatever he touched was unclean. The air was polluted by his breath. One who was suspected of having the disease must present himself to the priests, who were to examine and decide his case. If pronounced a leper, he was isolated from his family, cut off from the congregation of Israel, and was doomed to associate with those only who were similarly afflicted. The law was inflexible in its requirement. Even kings and rulers were not exempt. A monarch who was attacked by this terrible disease must yield up the scepter, and flee from society.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 262.

2. In your imagination, picture his condition in the advanced stage of his sickness. Is the human being affected by sin in a condition than the leper? Luke 5:12.

“He is a loathsome spectacle. The disease has made frightful inroads, and his decaying body is horrible to look upon. At sight of him the people fall back in terror. They crowd upon one another in their eagerness to escape from contact with him. Some try to prevent him from approaching Jesus, but in vain. He neither sees nor hears them. Their expressions of loathing are lost upon him....

“The man who came to Jesus was ‘full of leprosy.’ Its deadly poison permeated his whole body. The disciples sought to prevent their Master from touching him; for he who touched a leper became himself unclean.... Thus it is with the leprosy of sin—deep-rooted, deadly, and impossible to be cleansed by human power. ‘The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores.’ Isaiah 1:5, 6.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 263, 266.

DEALING WITH DREADFUL LEPROSY

3. How long did it take for Jesus to respond to the poor man’s request? Mark 1:41.

“In some instances of healing, Jesus did not at once grant the blessing sought. But in the case of leprosy, no sooner was the appeal made than it was granted. When we pray for earthly blessings, the answer to our prayer may be delayed, or God may give us something other than we ask, but not so when we ask for deliverance from sin. It is His will to cleanse us from sin, to make us His children, and to enable us to live a holy life. Christ ‘gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.’ Galatians 1:4. And ‘this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us: and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.’ 1 John 5:14, 15. ‘If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.’ 1 John 1:9.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 266.

4. Was Jesus afraid to touch the man for fear of infection? What happened to the terrible leprosy as soon as Jesus expressed his willingness and touched him? Luke 5:13.

“Immediately a change passed over the leper. His flesh became healthy, the nerves sensitive, the muscles firm. The rough, scaly surface peculiar to leprosy disappeared, and a soft glow, like that upon the skin of a healthy child, took its place....

“But in laying His hand upon the leper, Jesus received no defilement. His touch imparted life-giving power. The leprosy was cleansed.... Jesus, coming to dwell in humanity, receives no pollution. His presence has healing virtue for the sinner. Whoever will fall at His feet, saying in faith, ‘Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean,’ shall hear the answer, ‘I will; be thou made clean.’ Matthew 8:2, 3, R.V.” *—The Desire of Ages*, pp. 263, 266.

A TESTIMONY

5. Immediately after healing him, what instructions did Jesus give the man? Matthew 8:4; Mark 1:43, 44.

“The words of Scripture show with what urgency Christ enjoined upon the man the necessity of silence and prompt action. ‘He straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; and saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.’ Had the priests known the facts concerning the healing of the leper, their hatred of Christ might have led them to render a dishonest sentence. Jesus desired the man to present himself at the temple before any rumors concerning the miracle had reached them. Thus an impartial decision could be secured, and the restored leper would be permitted to unite once more with his family and friends.” *—The Desire of Ages*, p. 264.

6. Did he obey these instructions? Mark 1:45.

“This examination was made. The priests who had condemned the leper to banishment testified to his cure. The healed man was restored to his home and society. He felt that the boon of health was very precious. He rejoiced in

the vigor of manhood and in his restoration to his family. Notwithstanding the caution of Jesus, he could no longer conceal the fact of his cure, and joyfully he went about proclaiming the power of the One who had made him whole.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 69, 70.

7. But what unexpected results did this wonderful testimony have for Jesus? What important lesson is this for us? Luke 5:15, 16.

But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities. (Luke 5:15)

“You are not to wait for great occasions, or to expect extraordinary abilities, before you work in earnest for God. You need not have a thought of what the world will think of you. If your intercourse with them, and your godly conversation, are a living testimony to them of the purity and sincerity of your faith, and they are convinced that you desire to benefit them, your words will not be wholly lost upon them, but will be productive of good.” —*Gospel Workers* (1892), p. 402.

“From hour to hour in our varied life opportunities to reach and save souls are opened to us. These opportunities are continually coming and going. God desires us to make the most of them. Days, weeks, and months are passing; we have one day, one week, one month less in which to do our work. A few more years at the longest, and the voice which we cannot refuse to answer will be heard saying, ‘Give an account of thy stewardship.’” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 373, 374.

HEALING POWER

“Sin brings physical and spiritual disease and weakness. Christ has made it possible for us to free ourselves from this curse. The Lord promises, by the medium of truth, to renovate the soul. The Holy Spirit will make all who are willing to be educated able to communicate the truth with power. It will renew every organ of the body, that God’s servants may work acceptably and successfully. Vitality increases under the influence of the Spirit’s action. Let us, then, by this power lift ourselves into a higher, holier atmosphere, that we may do well our appointed work.” —*Review and Herald*, January 14, 1902.

MATTHEW CALLED TO FOLLOW JESUS

“Man must be emptied of self before he can be, in the fullest sense, a believer in Jesus. When self is renounced, then the Lord can make man a new creature. New bottles can contain the new wine. The love of Christ will animate the believer with new life. In him who looks unto the Author and Finisher of our faith the character of Christ will be manifest.” *—The Desire of Ages*, p. 280.

CHOOSING A PUBLICAN

1. How did the Jews regard the publicans? To whom did they compare them? Luke 15:1; 7:34; Matthew 21:31.

“Of the Roman officials in Palestine, none were more hated than the publicans. The fact that the taxes were imposed by a foreign power was a continual irritation to the Jews, being a reminder that their independence had departed. And the taxgatherers were not merely the instruments of Roman oppression; they were extortioners on their own account, enriching themselves at the expense of the people. A Jew who accepted this office at the hands of the Romans was looked upon as betraying the honor of his nation. He was despised as an apostate, and was classed with the vilest of society.” *—The Desire of Ages*, p. 272.

2. Who was one of this class whom Jesus called to be His disciple? Luke 5:27.

“To this class belonged Levi-Matthew, who, after the four disciples at Gennesaret, was the next to be called to Christ’s service. The Pharisees had judged Matthew according to his employment, but Jesus saw in this man a heart open for the reception of truth. Matthew had listened to the Saviour’s teaching. As the convicting Spirit of God revealed his sinfulness, he longed to seek help from Christ... Great was his astonishment to hear the words addressed to himself, ‘Follow Me.’” *—The Desire of Ages*, pp. 272, 273.

FEAST AMONG THE PUBLICANS

3. How did he respond to the call of Jesus? Luke 5:28.

“Matthew ‘left all, rose up, and followed Him.’ There was no hesitation, no questioning, no thought of the lucrative business to be exchanged for poverty and hardship. It was enough for him that he was to be with Jesus, that he might listen to His words, and unite with Him in His work.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 273.

4. What did the new disciple organize at his house and for what reason? Luke 5:29.

“In the joy of his new discipleship, Matthew longed to bring his former associates to Jesus. Accordingly he made a feast at his own house, and called together his relatives and friends. Not only were publicans included, but many others who were of doubtful reputation, and were proscribed by their more scrupulous neighbors.

“The entertainment was given in honor of Jesus, and He did not hesitate to accept the courtesy. He well knew that this would give offense to the Pharisaic party, and would also compromise Him in the eyes of the people. But no question of policy could influence His movements. With Him external distinctions weighed nothing. That which appealed to His heart was a soul thirsting for the water of life.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 273, 274.

NEED OF THE PHYSICIAN

5. How did the scribes and Pharisees react to the calling of Matthew and the feast with the publicans? Luke 5:30.

“The calling of Matthew to be one of Christ’s disciples excited great indignation. For a religious teacher to choose a publican as one of his immediate attendants was an offense against the religious, social, and national customs. By appealing to the prejudices of the people the Pharisees hoped to turn the current of popular feeling against Jesus.

“When the rabbis learned of the presence of Jesus at Matthew’s feast, they seized the opportunity of accusing Him. But they chose to work through

the disciples. By arousing their prejudices they hoped to alienate them from their Master. It was their policy to accuse Christ to the disciples, and the disciples to Christ, aiming their arrows where they would be most likely to wound." –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 273, 275.

6. What answer did Jesus give to the Pharisees? Did He approve abuse by His presence? What spiritual lesson can we learn from this? Luke 5:31, 32.

"Jesus did not wait for His disciples to answer.... The Pharisees claimed to be spiritually whole, and therefore in no need of a physician.... Then was it not His work, as a physician, to go to the very class that needed His help?

"But although the Pharisees thought so highly of themselves, they were really in a worse condition than the ones they despised....

"The Pharisees would not consider that Jesus was eating with publicans and sinners in order to bring the light of heaven to those who sat in darkness. They would not see that every word dropped by the divine Teacher was a living seed that would germinate and bear fruit to the glory of God." –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 275, 276.

OLD AND NEW

7. How did the disciples enjoy the company of Jesus? Was this a spiritual feast for them? How did Jesus present Himself to them? Luke 5:33-35.

"The Prince of heaven was among His people. The greatest gift of God had been given to the world. Joy to the poor; for Christ had come to make them heirs of His kingdom. Joy to the rich; for He would teach them how to secure eternal riches. Joy to the ignorant; He would make them wise unto salvation. Joy to the learned; He would open to them deeper mysteries than they had ever fathomed; truths that had been hidden from the foundation of the world would be opened to men by the Saviour's mission." –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 277.

8. How are we to understand His teaching about the old and the new? Does the "old garment" or "old bottles" represent the religion founded on the law and the prophets? Luke 5:36-39; Romans 3:31; Ephesians 2:20.

“Continuing His answer to the disciples of John, Jesus spoke a parable, saying, ‘No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old....’ The message of John the Baptist was not to be interwoven with tradition and superstition. An attempt to blend the pretense of the Pharisees with the devotion of John would only make more evident the breach between them.

“Nor could the principles of Christ’s teaching be united with the forms of Pharisaism....’No man putteth new wine into old bottles....’ The faith that works by love and purifies the soul could find no place for union with the religion of the Pharisees, made up of ceremonies and the injunctions of men. The effort to unite the teachings of Jesus with the established religion would be vain. The vital truth of God, like fermenting wine, would burst the old, decaying bottles of the Pharisaical tradition.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 278, 279.

TRUE DISCIPLESHIP

“There are those who profess holiness, who declare that they are wholly the Lord’s, who claim a right to the promises of God, while they do not render obedience to His commandments. These transgressors of the law claim everything that is promised to the children of God, but this is simply presumption.... Obedience is the true sign of discipleship.” —*Gospel Workers*, pp. 226, 227.

SABBATH BLESSING

“No other institution which was committed to the Jews tended so fully to distinguish them from surrounding nations as did the Sabbath. God designed that its observance should designate them as His worshipers. It was to be a token of their separation from idolatry, and their connection with the true God. But in order to keep the Sabbath holy, men must themselves be holy. Through faith they must become partakers of the righteousness of Christ. When the command was given to Israel, ‘Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy,’ the Lord said also to them, ‘Ye shall be holy men unto Me.’ Exodus 20:8; 22:31. Only thus could the Sabbath distinguish Israel as the worshipers of God.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 283.

JESUS, THE SABBATH, AND THE PHARISEES

- 1. From what time on has the seventh-day been sanctified as the day of rest and worship? What was recorded about Jesus and the Sabbath? Genesis 2:2, 3; Luke 4:16.**

“The Sabbath was hallowed at the creation. As ordained for man, it had its origin when ‘the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.’ Job 38:7. Peace brooded over the world; for earth was in harmony with heaven. ‘God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good;’ and He rested in the joy of His completed work. Genesis 1:31.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 281.

- 2. What type of field did Jesus and His disciples pass through one Sabbath? What did the disciples do that the Pharisees condemned as Sabbath breaking? Matthew 12:1, 2; Luke 6:1.**

“Upon one Sabbath day, as the Saviour and His disciples returned from the place of worship, they passed through a field of ripening grain. Jesus had continued His work to a late hour, and while passing through the fields, the

disciples began to gather the heads of grain, and to eat the kernels after rubbing them in their hands. On any other day this act would have excited no comment, for one passing through a field of grain, an orchard, or a vineyard, was at liberty to gather what he desired to eat. See Deuteronomy 23:24, 25. But to do this on the Sabbath was held to be an act of desecration. Not only was the gathering of the grain a kind of reaping, but the rubbing of it in the hands was a kind of threshing. Thus, in the opinion of the rabbis, there was a double offense.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 284.

THE CASES OF DAVID AND OF THE PRIESTS

- 3. Did the disciples pick and rub the ears of grain as would a common laborer or because of need? How did this compare to the example of David which Jesus gave? Matthew 12:3, 4; Mark 2:25.**

“Now that the disciples are attacked, He cites His accusers to examples from the Old Testament, acts performed on the Sabbath by those who were in the service of God.

“If it was right for David to satisfy his hunger by eating of the bread that had been set apart to a holy use, then it was right for the disciples to supply their need by plucking the grain upon the sacred hours of the Sabbath.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 284, 285.

- 4. What other example did Jesus mention to make a distinction between common work and acceptable service on the Sabbath? Matthew 12:5, 6.**

Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? (Matthew 12:5, 6)

“Again, the priests in the temple performed greater labor on the Sabbath than upon other days. The same labor in secular business would be sinful; but the work of the priests was in the service of God. They were performing those rites that pointed to the redeeming power of Christ, and their labor was in harmony with the object of the Sabbath. But now Christ Himself had come. The disciples, in doing the work of Christ, were engaged in God’s service, and that which was necessary for the accomplishment of this work it was right to do on the Sabbath day.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 285.

5. Was this example applicable only to the temple service or also to cases of need? Matthew 12:6.

“Christ would teach His disciples and His enemies that the service of God is first of all. The object of God’s work in this world is the redemption of man; therefore that which is necessary to be done on the Sabbath in the accomplishment of this work is in accord with the Sabbath law.” *—The Desire of Ages*, p. 285.

THE SPIRIT OF THE LAW

6. How should we understand the spirit and the practice of the law? Matthew 12:7.

“Jesus did not let the matter pass with administering a rebuke to His enemies. He declared that in their blindness they had mistaken the object of the Sabbath. He said, ‘If ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.’ Matthew 12:7. Their many heartless rites could not supply the lack of that truthful integrity and tender love which will ever characterize the true worshiper of God.” *—The Desire of Ages*, pp. 285, 286.

7. For what purpose did the Lord institute the Sabbath? How should this day be observed? Mark 2:27.

“The Sabbath was not for Israel merely, but for the world. It had been made known to man in Eden, and, like the other precepts of the Decalogue, it is of imperishable obligation. Of that law of which the fourth commandment forms a part, Christ declares, ‘Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law.’ So long as the heavens and the earth endure, the Sabbath will continue as a sign of the Creator’s power. And when Eden shall bloom on earth again, God’s holy rest day will be honored by all beneath the sun. ‘From one Sabbath to another’ the inhabitants of the glorified new earth shall go up ‘to worship before Me, saith the Lord.’ Matthew 5:18; Isaiah 66:23.” *—The Desire of Ages*, p. 283.

“‘The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath,’ Jesus said. The institutions that God has established are for the benefit of mankind.

‘All things are for your sakes.’... 2 Corinthians 4:15.... The law of Ten Commandments, of which the Sabbath forms a part, God gave to His people as a blessing. ‘The Lord commanded us,’ said Moses, ‘to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive.’ Deuteronomy 6:24.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 288.

THE AUTHORITY PRESENTS ITS TRUE MEANING

- 8. Who has the authority to establish how to observe the holy day of rest—traditions and human laws, or the Son of God? Mark 2:28; 1 Samuel 2:30.**

“Jesus then crowned His argument by declaring Himself the ‘Lord of the Sabbath’—One above all question and above all law. This infinite Judge acquits the disciples of blame, appealing to the very statutes they are accused of violating.

“‘Wherefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.’ These words are full of instruction and comfort. Because the Sabbath was made for man, it is the Lord’s day. It belongs to Christ. For ‘all things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.’ John 1:3. Since He made all things, He made the Sabbath. By Him it was set apart as a memorial of the work of creation. It points to Him as both the Creator and the Sanctifier.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 285, 288.

MEDICAL MINISTRY AND SABBATH OBSERVANCE

“Those who are connected with our sanitariums are to be taught to regard the Sabbath question as the great test for this time. God desires His people to bind medical missionary work up with the work of the third angel’s message.” –*Medical Ministry*, p. 160.

“All who love God will show that they bear His sign by keeping His commandments. They are the restorers of paths to dwell in. The Lord says: ‘If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath,... and call the Sabbath a delight,... then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord....’ Isaiah 58:13, 14. Thus genuine medical missionary work is bound up inseparably with the keeping of God’s commandments, of which the Sabbath is especially mentioned, since it is the great memorial of God’s creative work. Its observance is bound up with the work of restoring the moral image of God in man.... This ministry, rightly performed, will bring rich blessings to the church.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 265, 266.

“Often physicians are called upon on the Sabbath to minister to the sick, and it is impossible for them to take time for rest and devotion. The Saviour has shown us by His example that it is right to relieve suffering on this

day; but physicians and nurses should do no unnecessary work. Ordinary treatment, and operations that can wait, should be deferred till the next day. Let the patients know that physicians must have one day for rest. The Lord says, 'Verily My Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations.' Exodus 31:13." –*Medical Ministry*, p. 214.

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Sabbath, June 20, 2009

ORDAINED TO PREACH

"It is manifest that the power which works through the weakness of humanity is the power of God; and thus we are encouraged to believe that the power which can help others as weak as ourselves can help us. And those who are themselves 'compassed with infirmity' should be able to 'have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way.' Hebrews 5:2. Having been in peril themselves, they are acquainted with the dangers and difficulties of the way, and for this reason are called to reach out for others in like peril. There are souls perplexed with doubt, burdened with infirmities, weak in faith, and unable to grasp the Unseen; but a friend whom they can see, coming to them in Christ's stead, can be a connecting link to fasten their trembling faith upon Christ." –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 297.

THE GREAT NEED OF WORKERS

1. **Looking upon the multitudes in need of the gospel, what did Jesus tell His disciples? Matthew 9:36-38.**

"We are to be laborers together with the heavenly angels in presenting Jesus to the world. With almost impatient eagerness the angels wait for our cooperation; for man must be the channel to communicate with man. And when we give ourselves to Christ in wholehearted devotion, angels rejoice that they may speak through our voices to reveal God's love." –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 297.

2. Until what time of day did the householder continue to hire workers? Matthew 20:6.

“In His earthly life the Saviour gives us an example of the hallowed lives that may be ours if we will devote our days to doing good to the souls that need our help. It is our privilege to bring joy to the sorrowful, light to the darkened, and life to the perishing. The Lord’s message comes to us, ‘Why stand ye here all the day idle; work while it is day; for the night cometh when no man can work.’ Every word we speak, every act we perform, that conduces to the happiness of others, will conduce to our own happiness, and make our lives like the life of Christ.” –*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 42.

“Many fail to come up to the gospel standard; they have a selfish regard for their own interest and neglect to see what they can do to be a blessing to their fellow men. Christ wants no idlers in His vineyard. He requires that everyone shall work for time and for eternity.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 518.

ELECTION AND ORDINATION

3. How did the Master spend the night before ordaining the disciples? Why? Luke 6:12.

“The Saviour knew the character of the men whom He had chosen; all their weaknesses and errors were open before Him; He knew the perils through which they must pass, the responsibility that would rest upon them; and His heart yearned over these chosen ones. Alone upon a mountain near the Sea of Galilee He spent the entire night in prayer for them, while they were sleeping at the foot of the mountain. With the first light of dawn He summoned them to meet Him; for He had something of importance to communicate to them.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 291, 292.

4. Due to this great need of workers, to what office did He call his disciples? Mark 3:13.

“It was beneath the sheltering trees of the mountainside, but a little distance from the Sea of Galilee, that the twelve were called to the apostolate, and the Sermon on the Mount was given.

“The first step was now to be taken in the organization of the church that after Christ’s departure was to be His representative on earth....

“Jesus had called His disciples that He might send them forth as His witnesses, to declare to the world what they had seen and heard of Him. Their office was the most important to which human beings had ever been called, and was second only to that of Christ Himself. They were to be workers together with God for the saving of the world. As in the Old Testament the twelve patriarchs stand as representatives of Israel, so the twelve apostles were to stand as representatives of the gospel church.” *–The Desire of Ages*, pp. 290, 291.

5. What was the specific mission of these chosen ones? Mark 3:14.

“When Jesus had ended His instruction to the disciples, He gathered the little band close about Him, and kneeling in the midst of them, and laying His hands upon their heads, He offered a prayer dedicating them to His sacred work. Thus the Lord’s disciples were ordained to the gospel ministry.” *–The Desire of Ages*, p. 296.

“It was at the ordination of the Twelve that the first step was taken in the organization of the church that after Christ’s departure was to carry on His work on the earth. Of this ordination the record says, ‘He goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto Him whom He would: and they came unto Him. And He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach.’ Mark 3:13, 14.

“Look upon the touching scene. Behold the Majesty of heaven surrounded by the Twelve whom He has chosen. He is about to set them apart for their work. By these feeble agencies, through His word and Spirit, He designs to place salvation within the reach of all.” *–Acts of the Apostles*, p. 18.

MISSION AND SPECIAL POWER

6. According to the name they received, what was their mission from that point on? Luke 6:13.

“As His representatives among men, Christ does not choose angels who have never fallen, but human beings, men of like passions with those they seek to save. Christ took upon Himself humanity, that He might reach humanity. Divinity needed humanity; for it required both the divine and the human to bring salvation to the world. Divinity needed humanity, that humanity

might afford a channel of communication between God and man. So with the servants and messengers of Christ. Man needs a power outside of and beyond himself, to restore him to the likeness of God, and enable him to do the work of God; but this does not make the human agency unessential. Humanity lays hold upon divine power, Christ dwells in the heart by faith; and through cooperation with the divine, the power of man becomes efficient for good.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 296, 297.

7. What special power did they receive to carry out their mission? Matthew 10:5-8.

“In the light given me so long ago, I was shown that our own people, those who claimed to believe the present truth, should do this [preaching] work. How were they to do it? In accordance with the directions Christ gave His twelve disciples when He called them together and sent them forth to preach the gospel.

“When He had called unto Him His twelve disciples, He gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.” —*Counsels on Health*, p. 530.

THE SAME POWER HAS BEEN PROMISED FOR TODAY

“He who called the fisherman of Galilee is still calling men to His service. And He is just as willing to manifest His power through us as through the first disciples. However imperfect and sinful we may be, the Lord holds out to us the offer of partnership with Himself, of apprenticeship to Christ. He invites us to come under the divine instruction, that, uniting with Christ, we may work the works of God.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 297.

*Please,
read the Report from Papua New Guinea
on page 109.*

THE CENTURION'S FAITH

"It is thus that every sinner may come to Christ. 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us.' Titus 3:5. When Satan tells you that you are a sinner, and cannot hope to receive blessing from God, tell him that Christ came into the world to save sinners. We have nothing to recommend us to God; but the plea that we may urge now and ever is our utterly helpless condition that makes His redeeming power a necessity. Renouncing all self-dependence, we may look to the cross of Calvary and say—'In my hand no price I bring; Simply to Thy cross I cling.'" —*The Desire of Ages*, 317.

EMERGENCY IN A HEATHEN HOME

- 1. In what critical condition was a servant of a Roman centurion who lived in Capernaum? Luke 7:1, 2.**

"The centurion's servant had been stricken with palsy, and lay at the point of death. Among the Romans the servants were slaves, bought and sold in the market places, and treated with abuse and cruelty; but the centurion was tenderly attached to his servant, and greatly desired his recovery." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 315.

- 2. Was this man convinced that Jesus could heal his servant? Whom did he ask to request this favor from Jesus? Luke 7:3-5.**

"He believed that Jesus could heal him. He had not seen the Saviour, but the reports he heard had inspired him with faith. Notwithstanding the formalism of the Jews, this Roman was convinced that their religion was superior to his own. Already he had broken through the barriers of national prejudice and hatred that separated the conquerors from the conquered people. He had manifested respect for the service of God, and had shown kindness to the Jews as His worshippers. In the teaching of Christ, as it had been reported

to him, he found that which met the need of the soul. All that was spiritual within him responded to the Saviour's words. But he felt unworthy to come into the presence of Jesus, and he appealed to the Jewish elders to make request for the healing of his servant. They were acquainted with the Great Teacher, and would, he thought, know how to approach Him so as to win His favor." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 315, 316.

TESTIFYING TO JESUS' DIVINE POWER

3. What great respect and trust was evident in the message that centurion sent to Jesus? Luke 7:6, 7.

"Jesus immediately set out for the officer's home; but, pressed by the multitude, He advanced slowly. The news of His coming preceded Him, and the centurion, in his self-distrust, sent Him the message, 'Lord, trouble not Thyself: for I am not worthy that Thou shouldest enter under my roof.

"The Jewish elders who recommended the centurion to Christ had shown how far they were from possessing the spirit of the gospel. They did not recognize that our great need is our only claim on God's mercy. In their self-righteousness they commended the centurion because of the favor he had shown to 'our nation.' But the centurion said of himself, 'I am not worthy.' His heart had been touched by the grace of Christ. He saw his own unworthiness; yet he feared not to ask help. He trusted not to his own goodness; his argument was his great need. His faith took hold upon Christ in His true character. He did not believe in Him merely as a worker of miracles, but as the friend and Saviour of mankind." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 316, 317.

4. Knowing how his own commands were immediately obeyed, what authority did he recognize also in Jesus? Luke 7:8.

"As I represent the power of Rome, and my soldiers recognize my authority as supreme, so dost Thou represent the power of the Infinite God, and all created things obey Thy word. Thou canst command the disease to depart, and it shall obey Thee. Thou canst summon Thy heavenly messengers, and they shall impart healing virtue. Speak but the word, and my servant shall be healed." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 316.

JESUS' COMMENDATION

5. What did Jesus say about the centurion's faith? Luke 7:9.

"The Jews had been instructed from childhood concerning the work of the Messiah. The inspired utterances of patriarchs and prophets and the symbolic teaching of the sacrificial service had been theirs. But they had disregarded the light; and now they saw in Jesus nothing to be desired. But the centurion, born in heathenism, educated in the idolatry of imperial Rome, trained as a soldier, seemingly cut off from spiritual life by his education and surroundings, and still further shut out by the bigotry of the Jews, and by the contempt of his own countrymen for the people of Israel—this man perceived the truth to which the children of Abraham were blinded. He did not wait to see whether the Jews themselves would receive the One who claimed to be their Messiah. As the 'light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world' (John 1:9) had shone upon him, he had, though afar off, discerned the glory of the Son of God." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 317.

6. Seeing the faith of the centurion, what answer did Jesus give him? How quickly did the healing occur? Luke 7:10; Matthew 8:13.

"If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.' Mark 9:23. It is faith that connects us with heaven and brings us strength for coping with the powers of darkness. In Christ, God has provided means for subduing every evil trait and resisting every temptation, however strong. But many feel that they lack faith, and therefore they remain away from Christ. Let these souls, in their helpless unworthiness, cast themselves upon the mercy of their compassionate Saviour. Look not to self, but to Christ. He who healed the sick and cast out demons when He walked among men is still the same mighty Redeemer. Then grasp His promises as leaves from the tree of life: 'Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.' John 6:37. As you come to Him, believe that He accepts you, because He has promised. You can never perish while you do this—never.

"God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' Romans 5:8." —*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 65, 66.

HARVEST IN HEATHEN LANDS

- 7. Was this an isolated case, or will there be many who respond with similar faith to the call of Jesus and receive His blessings? Matthew 8:11, 12; Revelation 22:17.**

“To Jesus this was an earnest of the work which the gospel was to accomplish among the Gentiles. With joy He looked forward to the gathering of souls from all nations to His kingdom. With deep sadness He pictured to the Jews the result of their rejection of His grace: ‘I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ Alas, how many are still preparing for the same fatal disappointment! While souls in heathen darkness accept His grace, how many there are in Christian lands upon whom the light shines only to be disregarded.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 317, 318.

GENTILES HEIRS WITH THE JEWS

“Jesus longed to unfold the deep mysteries of the truth which had been hid for ages, that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs with the Jews, and ‘partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel.’ Ephesians 3:6. This truth the disciples were slow to learn, and the divine Teacher gave them lesson upon lesson. In rewarding the faith of the centurion at Capernaum, and preaching the gospel to the inhabitants of Sychar, He had already given evidence that He did not share the intolerance of the Jews. But the Samaritans had some knowledge of God; and the centurion had shown kindness to Israel. Now Jesus brought the disciples in contact with a heathen, whom they regarded as having no reason above any of her people, to expect favor from Him. He would give an example of how such a one should be treated. The disciples had thought that He dispensed too freely the gifts of His grace. He would show that His love was not to be circumscribed to race or nation.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 402.

MISSIONARY REPORT FROM PAPUA NEW GUINEA

To be read on Sabbath, June 27, 2009

The Special Sabbath School Offering
will be gathered on Sabbath, July 4, 2009

Papua New Guinea has a population of 5,172,033 (2002 estimate), giving an overall population density of about 11 people per sq km (29 per sq mi). Around 83 per cent of the people (1998) live in rural areas. The population growth rate was estimated at 2.47 per cent in 2000.

The capital and principal city is Port Moresby, with a population of 193,242 (1990). Other cities include Lae, population 80,655 (1990), and Madang, 27,057 (1990). The country is divided into 20 administrative divisions: 19 provinces and the National Capital District.

Christianity is the main religion of about 95 per cent of the population, of which 22 per cent are Roman Catholics and 16 per cent Lutherans. Traditional local faiths, incorporating strong beliefs in the occult and ancestor reverence remain and coexist with Christianity.

English is the official language of Papua New Guinea and is taught in schools. Over 860 local indigenous languages have been identified in Papua New Guinea. Of these, Hiri Motu and Enga are among the most widely spoken. Melanesian Pidgin is spoken throughout Papua New Guinea, and is often used for communication between members of different ethnic groups.

What little is known about the early history of Papua New Guinea it would seem as though the island has been inhabited by people for many years. Several waves of migration to Papua New Guinea from Asia and through neighboring islands have taken place over the centuries, with each group developing its own language and tribal culture. This cultural diversity has provided Papua New Guinea with a fascinating cultural heritage of sculpture, painting, music, storytelling, and dance. The Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery in Port Moresby exhibits collections of artifacts relating to primitive Papua New Guinean culture and traditional lifestyles, including sculptures, and examples of early basket making.

Agriculture is the most important economic activity in Papua New Guinea and employs over 77 per cent of the working population (1995). However, soils are generally of poor quality, heavily leached, and fertile only in

lowland areas and on some outlying islands. Cultivation is mainly at a subsistence level. Coconuts, sweet potatoes, bananas, and yams are important crops. Fishing and hunting are also important subsistence activities. Commercial crops, raised on plantations, are dominated by coffee, and copra. Papua New Guinea also produces considerable quantities of timber, and fishing (both freshwater and marine) is a sizeable industry.

Two years ago Br. Peter Dakieri visited Australia and came across the IMS. As a result of that visit, Br. Andrade went to Papua New Guinea and accepted into fellowship Br. Dakieri and others who now form the basis of the IMS Reform Movement in Papua New Guinea. Regular contact has led to the formation of a church in Papua New Guinea which sees Br. Dakieri travelling approximately 400km as a round trip to visit those interested in the message of the Reform Movement. As a result there is a growing interest in regards to the IMS which means that a building be purchased as a head quarters for the IMS in Madang.

In July of this year 2008, Br. Henry Andrade and Br. Mike. Brewer visited Papua New Guinea to see how best the Oceania Union could help further the Gospel there and was able along with Br. Dakieri to secure a 90 year lease on land suitable for the erection of a church building. It is essential for the spiritual welfare of this nation that such a church building be built and established to the glory of His name. Sadly funds are not available to go ahead and build a church on this property. We hope that our Br. Peter Dakire will soon move to Madang so as to support the work and have our headquarters there. The land that we aquired is in the town boundaries making it accessible to most people. Br Henry and Br Mike met people who are already become members of the Lord's flog and others are waiting to be fellowshipped into our church so please have it in your hearts to pray that the good Lord will bless us with a church in PNG.

The people in Papua New Guinea are very poor and there are many needs. Clothing, educational, health, spiritual and food are all essential to the survival of these people, but all of which are extremely scarce. Likewise a salaries for Br. Dakieri the elected leader of Papua New Guinea and an appointed Bible Worker, Br. Keppel, is needed to further the work already in progress there.

Please pray earnestly for this country as the needs there are many and great. Likewise I encourage you to give generously to the work in Papua New Guinea.

This is not only as new work for the IMS, but also a sign of great sacrifice and effort to further the Gospel in a significantly poor country in the Pacific Ocean.

May almighty God bless you as you consider your response to the needs and requests in Papua New Guinea.

—Anton Salavov

General Conference Regional Representative and President Oceania Union

