

SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

for the Second Half 2011

4th Quarter

***Life, Work, and
Teachings of Jesus***

Part 2

Issued by the
General Conference
International Missionary Society
Seventh-day Adventist Church
Reform Movement

625 West Avenue
Cedartown, GA 30125
USA

Telephone 770-748-0077 / Fax 770-748-0095
Email info@sda1844.org
www.imssda.org

Author: Antonino Di Franca

Review and editing of content
by the General Conference Ministerial Department

Translation and editing
by the General Conference Publishing Department

Proofreading, design, and distribution
by the American Union
Religious Liberty Publishing Assn.
9999 E. Mississippi Avenue
Denver, CO 80247
Available online at www.sda1888.org

Cover: The Sea of Galilee (iStockphoto LP)

CONTENTS

LIFE, WORK, AND TEACHINGS OF JESUS

Part 2

Introduction	5
1. True Brethren	7
2. Reconciliation	11
3. John the Baptist's Closing Mission	15
4. The One Who Gives Peace	19
5. Calming the Tempest	22
6. Healed by a Touch	25
7. Working as Missionaries	29
8. Food for the Multitude	33
9. Walking on Water	37
10. The Bread of Life	41
11. Cleansing the Conscience	46
12. A Heathen Woman's Faith	50
13. Signs before Faith	54
Missionary Report from Bolivia	59
14. The Church and Its Foundation	61
15. One Who Refuses to Listen	65
16. The Follower of Jesus	70
17. A View of Glory	74
18. Healing the Mentally Ill	78
19. The Temple Contribution	82
20. God Has a Different Perspective	85
21. At the Feast of Tabernacles	89
22. Facing Opposition	93
23. A Forgiven Sinner	97
24. Truth and Liberty	101
25. From Darkness to Light	105
26. Following the True Shepherd	109
27. Other Disciples Sent out	113
Missionary Report from Haiti	117

INTRODUCTION

In the first half of 2009, we began the study of the life, work, and teachings of Jesus. But that six-month study was only part of the blessings to be received from the study of this subject. There are many more precious thoughts waiting to be discovered. We now have the opportunity to study this theme further.

Today there is an enormous amount of information that people can read in books, newspapers, and magazines and on the Internet; beyond that is news on the radio, television, cellular phones, and other media. There are so many voices, chronicles, and ideas that it is virtually impossible to remember everything. But what blessing does one receive from such information? More often than not, the only thing one can conclude at the end of the broadcast is that there was no blessing in it; and, worse, its influence was negative on mind, heart, and soul.

Not so with the gospel, which means “good news”—the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. One day Jesus asked His disciples if they would go away from Him, as others had. Simon Peter’s response showed that they had no doubt in His life and mission: “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:68); and they continued to follow Him and to be His witnesses for all the days of their lives. “... Through good and bad report, through darkness, through all the antagonism of the agencies of Satan, the Sun of Righteousness calmly shines on, searching out evil, repressing sin, and reviving the spirit of the humble and contrite ones. ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.’” —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 284.

“It is the gospel of the grace of God alone that can uplift the soul. The contemplation of the love of God manifested in His Son will stir the heart and arouse the powers of the soul as nothing else can. Christ came that He might re-create the image of God in man....” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 478.

“It is the glory of the gospel that it is founded upon the principle of restoring in the fallen race the divine image by a constant manifestation of benevolence. This work began in the heavenly courts. There God gave to human beings an unmistakable evidence of the love with which He regarded them. He ‘so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ John 3:16. The gift of Christ reveals the Father’s heart. It testifies that, having undertaken our redemption, He will spare nothing, however dear, which

is necessary to the completion of His work.” —*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 14.

The power of the Saviour’s message was recognized not only by His disciples but also by those who had nothing to do with Him. The temple officers who were sent to capture Jesus were not His friends. But after listening to His exceptional message, since they were not prejudiced against Him, they could not help but testify of the holiness and power of His teaching; and instead of carrying out the order to arrest Him, they returned, saying: “Never man spake like this man.” John 7:46. Do we have such a conviction concerning Him?

“The soul that converses with God through the Scriptures, who prays for light and opens the door of his heart to the Saviour, will not have evil imaginings, worldly scheming, or ambitious lust after honor or distinction in any line. He who seeks for the truth as for hidden treasure will find it in God’s means of communication with man, His word.... As the human agent presses forward in the path cast up for the ransomed of the Lord to walk in, as he receives Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour, he will feed on the bread of life. The word is spirit and life, and if it is brought into the daily practice it will ennoble the whole nature of man. There will be opened to his soul such a view of the Saviour’s love as portrayed by the pen of Inspiration that his heart will be melted into tenderness and contrition.” —*Medical Ministry*, p. 124.

Personally the Master affirmed: “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.” John 6:63; Matthew 24:35. And when we read them in the gospel books, we are amazed. This is the heavenly manna that we will have as our spiritual food for the next half year. This study is a wonderful opportunity for all who long for spiritual food. May we all rejoice in it and pray that what we consider will become part of everyone’s experience and life now and for all eternity.

—*The brethren and sisters of the General Conference*

The Special Sabbath School Offering is for
TOGO

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

1

Sabbath, July 2, 2011

True Brethren

“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.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 324.

THE BRETHREN WITH WHOM JESUS LIVED

- 1. What was well known in Nazareth about Jesus’ family? What do the Scriptures mention concerning His brothers and sisters? Matthew 13:55, 56.**

“His brothers, as the sons of Joseph were called, sided with the rabbis. They insisted that the traditions must be heeded, as if they were the requirements of God. They even regarded the precepts of men more highly than the word of God, and they were greatly annoyed at the clear penetration of Jesus in distinguishing between the false and the true. His strict obedience to the law of God they condemned as stubbornness....

“All this displeased His brothers. Being older than Jesus, they felt that He should be under their dictation. They charged Him with thinking Himself superior to them, and reproved Him for setting Himself above their teachers and the priests and rulers of the people. Often they threatened and tried to intimidate Him; but He passed on, making the Scriptures His guide....

“Mary believed in her heart that the holy Child born of her was the long-promised Messiah, yet she dared not express her faith. Throughout His life on earth she was a partaker in His sufferings. She witnessed with sorrow the trials brought upon Him in His childhood and youth.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 86, 87, 90.

- 2. During His ministry, did Jesus have the joy of including His brothers as His followers? They had seen His great works, but did they believe in His sacred mission? John 7:3-5; 2:12.**

“The enmity kindled in the human heart against the gospel was keenly felt by the Son of God, and it was most painful to Him in His home; for His own heart was full of kindness and love, and He appreciated tender regard in the family relation. His brothers desired that He should concede to their ideas, when such a course would have been utterly out of harmony with His divine mission. They looked upon Him as in need of their counsel. They judged Him from their human point of view, and thought that if He would speak only such things as would be acceptable to the scribes and Pharisees, He would avoid the disagreeable controversy that His words aroused. They thought that He was beside Himself in claiming divine authority, and in placing Himself before the rabbis as a reprover of their sins. They knew that the Pharisees were seeking occasion to accuse Him, and they felt that He had given them sufficient occasion....

“At times she [Mary] wavered between Jesus and His brothers, who did not believe that He was the Sent of God; but evidence was abundant that His was a divine character.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 326, 90.

WHO ARE MY BRETHREN?

- 3. Who came to see Jesus but could not get close to Him because of the crowds? Luke 8:19, 20.**

“Often His incessant labor and the conflict with the enmity and false teaching of the rabbis left Him so utterly wearied that His mother and brothers, and even His disciples, feared that His life would be sacrificed.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 55, 56.

“The sons of Joseph were far from being in sympathy with Jesus in His work. The reports that reached them in regard to His life and labors filled them with astonishment and dismay. They heard that He devoted entire nights to prayer, that through the day He was thronged by great companies of people, and did not give Himself time so much as to eat. His friends felt that He was wearing Himself out by His incessant labor; they were unable to account for His attitude toward the Pharisees, and there were some who feared that His reason was becoming unsettled.

“His brothers heard of this, and also of the charge brought by the Pharisees that He cast out devils through the power of Satan. They felt keenly the reproach that came upon them through their relation to Jesus.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 321.

4. How did Jesus respond to the information that His mother and brothers were there to see Him? Matthew 12:48. Why did He answer in this way?

“While Jesus was still teaching the people, His disciples brought the message that His mother and His brothers were without, and desired to see Him. He knew what was in their hearts, and ‘He answered and said unto him that told Him, Who is My mother? and who are My brethren? And He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples, and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother.’...

“What a support Christ would have found in His earthly relatives if they had believed in Him as one from heaven, and had cooperated with Him in doing the work of God! Their unbelief cast a shadow over the earthly life of Jesus. It was a part of the bitterness of that cup of woe which He drained for us.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 325.

BEHOLD MY BRETHREN

5. Whom did Jesus recognize as his true brethren? Matthew 12:49.

Personal question: Have you noticed that spiritual relationships may be even closer than family relationships? How do you see this in your own personal experience?

“All who would receive Christ by faith were united to Him by a tie closer than that of human kinship. They would become one with Him, as He was one with the Father. As a believer and doer of His words, His mother was more nearly and savingly related to Him than through her natural relationship. His brothers would receive no benefit from their connection with Him unless they accepted Him as their personal Saviour.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 325.

6. What makes a person truly a brother, sister, or mother of Jesus? Matthew 12:50. How highly do you value the privilege of having spiritual brothers and sisters? Proverbs 18:24.

“Christ loves the heavenly beings that surround His throne; but what shall account for the great love wherewith He has loved us? We cannot understand it, but we can know it true in our own experience. And if we do hold the relation of kinship to Him, with what tenderness should we regard those who are brethren and sisters of our Lord! Should we not be quick to recognize the claims of our divine relation-

ship? Adopted into the family of God, should we not honor our Father and our kindred?" —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 327.

7. What great change took place in Jesus' brothers after his death, resurrection, and ascension? Acts 1:14; Matthew 28:10; Galatians 1:18, 19.

Thought question: What lesson does this fact convey to us if today our family members do not believe and accept the message?

"It is not God that blinds the eyes of men or hardens their hearts. He sends them light to correct their errors, and to lead them in safe paths; it is by the rejection of this light that the eyes are blinded and the heart hardened. Often the process is gradual, and almost imperceptible. Light comes to the soul through God's word, through His servants, or by the direct agency of His Spirit; but when one ray of light is disregarded, there is a partial benumbing of the spiritual perceptions, and the second revealing of light is less clearly discerned. So the darkness increases, until it is night in the soul. Thus it had been with these Jewish leaders. They were convinced that a divine power attended Christ, but in order to resist the truth, they attributed the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan. In doing this they deliberately chose deception; they yielded themselves to Satan, and henceforth they were controlled by his power." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 322, 323.

FOR MEDITATION

"Those who are called to suffer for Christ's sake, who have to endure misapprehension and distrust, even in their own home, may find comfort in the thought that Jesus has endured the same. He is moved with compassion for them. He bids them find companionship in Him, and relief where He found it, in communion with the Father.

"Those who accept Christ as their personal Saviour are not left as orphans, to bear the trials of life alone. He receives them as members of the heavenly family; He bids them call His Father their Father. They are His 'little ones,' dear to the heart of God, bound to Him by the most tender and abiding ties. He has toward them an exceeding tenderness, as far surpassing what our father or mother has felt toward us in our helplessness as the divine is above the human." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 327.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 84-92, 321-327

After studying the lesson, fill in the key words in the following Bible verse: "But He answered and said unto him that told Him, Who is _____? and who are _____? And He stretched forth His hand _____, and said, Behold My _____ and My _____!"

* * *

Reconciliation

“One of Christ’s last commands to His disciples was ‘Love one another as I have loved you.’ John 13:34. Do we obey this command, or are we indulging sharp, unchristlike traits of character? If we have in any way grieved or wounded others, it is our duty to confess our fault and seek for reconciliation. This is an essential preparation that we may come before God in faith, to ask His blessing.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 144.

MISTAKES CAUSE HURT

1. **Considering the typical weaknesses of human nature, what can happen in our relationships with others? Is this a reason to trifle with our own or others’ mistakes? What should we always remember in our own conduct? Luke 17:1, 2.**

“Why this earnest language, than which none can be stronger? Because ‘the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.’ Shall His disciples show less regard for the souls of their fellow men than the Majesty of heaven has shown? Every soul has cost an infinite price, and how terrible is the sin of turning one soul away from Christ, so that for him the Saviour’s love and humiliation and agony shall have been in vain.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 438.

2. **In what danger are we when we become angry or use offensive language? Matthew 5:21, 22.**

“It is true there is an indignation that is justifiable, even in the followers of Christ. When they see that God is dishonored, and His service brought into disrepute, when they see the innocent oppressed, a righteous indignation stirs the soul. Such anger, born of sensitive morals, is not a sin. But those who at any supposed provocation feel at liberty to indulge anger or resentment are opening the heart to Satan. Bitterness and animosity must be banished from the soul if we would be in harmony with heaven.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 310.

“God’s law reaches the feelings and motives, as well as the outward acts. It reveals the secrets of the heart, flashing light upon things before buried in darkness. God knows every thought, every purpose,

every plan, every motive. The books of heaven record the sins that would have been committed had there been opportunity. God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing. By His law He measures the character of every man.” —(*Signs of the Times*, July 31, 1901) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1085.

IN CASE OF OFFENSE

- 3. What principles will a child of God follow when someone offends him? Leviticus 19:16, 17; Matthew 18:15, first part.**

“When parents, especially mothers, have a true sense of the important, responsible work which God has left for them to do, they will not be so much engaged in the business which concerns their neighbors, with which they have nothing to do. They will not go from house to house to engage in fashionable gossip, dwelling upon the faults, wrongs, and inconsistencies of their neighbors. They will feel so great a burden of care for their own children that they can find no time to take up a reproach against their neighbor. Gossipers and news carriers are a terrible curse to neighborhoods and churches. Two thirds of all the church trials arise from this source.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 465.

“Ministers of Christ should arise and engage in the work of God with all their energies. God’s servants are not excused if they shun pointed testimony. They should reprove and rebuke wrong, and not suffer sin upon a brother.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, pp. 213, 214.

- 4. What did Jesus teach concerning reconciliation in case of offense? Luke 17:3.**

Personal question: How readily do you see and acknowledge your own errors and offenses against others?

“... Sin is not to be lightly regarded. The Lord has commanded us not to suffer wrong upon our brother. He says, ‘If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him.’ Luke 17:3. Sin is to be called by its right name, and is to be plainly laid out before the wrongdoer....

“If a Christian is wronged by his brother, let him ... follow out the instruction Christ has given. Instead of trying to avenge himself, let him seek to save his brother. God will guard the interests of those who love and fear Him, and with confidence we may commit our case to Him who judges righteously.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 248, 249.

- 5. When we have difficulties with another person, how can differences be resolved quickly? What can happen if this is not done? Ephesians 4:26; Matthew 5:25, 26.**

“Sin is sin, whether committed by one sitting on a throne, or by one in the humbler walks of life. The day is coming when all who have committed sin will make confession, even though it is too late for them to receive pardon. God waits long for the sinner to repent. He manifests a wonderful forbearance.” —(Manuscript 147, 1903) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1147.

“One class have come up without self-control; they have not bridled the temper or the tongue; and some of these claim to be Christ’s followers, but they are not. Jesus has set them no such example.... Some are nervous, and if they begin to lose self-control in word or spirit under provocation, they are as much intoxicated with wrath as the inebriate is with liquor. They are unreasonable, and not easily persuaded or convinced. They are not sane; Satan for the time has full control. Every one of these exhibitions of wrath weakens the nervous system and the moral powers, and makes it difficult to restrain anger on another provocation....

“But there is hope for them. Let this life, so stormy with conflicts and worries, be brought into connection with Christ, and then self will no longer clamor for the supremacy....” —*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 142.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

- 6. If offenses are repeated and the offender continues to express his sorrow for them, how should he be treated? What makes it possible for a person to forgive someone sincerely and completely? Luke 17:4; John 16:7, 8.**

“Too often when wrongs are committed again and again, and the wrongdoer confesses his fault, the injured one becomes weary, and thinks he has forgiven quite enough. But the Saviour has plainly told us how to deal with the erring: ‘If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.’ Luke 17:3. Do not hold him off as unworthy of your confidence. Consider ‘thyself, lest thou also be tempted.’ Galatians 6:1.

“If your brethren err, you are to forgive them. When they come to you with confession, you should not say, I do not think they are humble enough. I do not think they feel their confession. What right have you to judge them, as if you could read the heart?...

“We ourselves owe everything to God’s free grace. Grace in the covenant ordained our adoption. Grace in the Saviour effected our redemption, our regeneration, and our exaltation to heirship with Christ. Let this grace be revealed to others.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 249, 250.

7. What are we to do if we offend someone and realize our error? What should be done immediately? Matthew 5:23, 24.

“Many are zealous in religious services, while between them and their brethren are unhappy differences which they might reconcile. God requires them to do all in their power to restore harmony. Until they do this, He cannot accept their services. The Christian’s duty in this matter is clearly pointed out.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 311.

FOR MEDITATION

“Give the erring one no occasion for discouragement.... Let no bitter sneer rise in mind or heart. Let no tinge of scorn be manifest in the voice. If you speak a word of your own, if you take an attitude of indifference, or show suspicion or distrust, it may prove the ruin of a soul. He needs a brother with the Elder Brother’s heart of sympathy to touch his heart of humanity. Let him feel the strong clasp of a sympathizing hand, and hear the whisper, Let us pray. God will give a rich experience to you both. Prayer unites us with one another and with God. Prayer brings Jesus to our side, and gives to the fainting, perplexed soul new strength to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. Prayer turns aside the attacks of Satan.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 250.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- Matthew 18:18-35
- *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 428, 429, 450, 451

KEY CONCEPTS

Express in your own words the key concepts of this very basic lesson.

Complete the following text:

“If thy brother trespass against thee, _____ him; and if he _____ , _____ him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt _____ him.”

* * *

John the Baptist's Closing Mission

“To many minds a deep mystery surrounds the fate of John the Baptist. They question why he should have been left to languish and die in prison. The mystery of this dark providence our human vision cannot penetrate; but it can never shake our confidence in God when we remember that John was but a sharer in the sufferings of Christ. All who follow Christ will wear the crown of sacrifice. They will surely be misunderstood by selfish men, and will be made a mark for the fierce assaults of Satan. It is this principle of self-sacrifice that his kingdom is established to destroy, and he will war against it wherever manifested.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 223.

MESSAGE TO THE KING

1. **What is known about King Herod the tetrarch and the woman with whom he lived? What clear message did John the Baptist give them? Mark 6:18; Luke 3:19.**

“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....

“In his mission the Baptist had stood as a fearless reprove of iniquity, both in high places and in low. He had dared to face King Herod with the plain rebuke of sin. He had not counted his life dear unto himself, that he might fulfill his appointed work.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 214, 215.

2. **Did King Herod and Herodias accept the divine message of reproof? How did Herodias react to it as soon as an opportunity was presented? Mark 6:19, 17.**
3. **Although he did not heed the prophet’s warning, of what was Herod convicted? Mark 6:20; Matthew 14:5.**

“Herod believed John to be a prophet of God, and he fully intended to set him at liberty. But he delayed his purpose from fear of Herodias.

“Herodias knew that by direct measures she could never win Herod’s consent to the death of John, and she resolved to accomplish her purpose by stratagem. On the king’s birthday an entertainment was to be given to the officers of state and the nobles of the court. There would be feasting and drunkenness. Herod would thus be thrown off his guard, and might then be influenced according to her will.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 220, 221.

A TRAP

4. **What occasion offered the perfect setup for Herodias to carry out her diabolical purpose? What was her immediate response to her daughter’s question? Mark 6:21, 22, 24, 25.**

“... Herodias sent her daughter into the banqueting hall to dance for the entertainment of the guests. Salome was in the first flush of womanhood, and her voluptuous beauty captivated the senses of the lordly revelers....

“The king was dazed with wine. Passion held sway, and reason was dethroned. He saw only the hall of pleasure, with its reveling guests, the banquet table, the sparkling wine and the flashing lights, and the young girl dancing before him. In the recklessness of the moment, he desired to make some display that would exalt him before the great men of his realm....

“The oath had been made in honor of his guests, and if one of them had offered a word against the fulfillment of his promise, he would gladly have spared the prophet.... No voice was raised to save the life of Heaven’s messenger. These men occupied high positions of trust in the nation, and upon them rested grave responsibilities; yet they had given themselves up to feasting and drunkenness until the senses were benumbed.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 221, 222.

EXECUTION OF THE INNOCENT PROPHET

5. **What happened on that terrible day, even though the king was very sorry about it? What chain bound him? Mark 6:26-28; Luke 3:19, 20.**

“Herod waited in vain to be released from his oath; then he reluctantly commanded the execution of the prophet. Soon the head of John was brought in before the king and his guests... The revels of one night had cost the life of one of the greatest of the prophets....

“The head of John the Baptist was carried to Herodias, who received it with fiendish satisfaction. She exulted in her revenge, and

flattered herself that Herod's conscience would no longer be troubled. But no happiness resulted to her from her sin. Her name became notorious and abhorred, while Herod was more tormented by remorse than he had been by the warnings of the prophet. The influence of John's teachings was not silenced; it was to extend to every generation till the close of time.

"Herod's sin was ever before him. He was constantly seeking to find relief from the accusings of a guilty conscience,... ever oppressed with the fear that a curse was upon him....

"The sinner's own thoughts are his accusers; and there can be no torture keener than the stings of a guilty conscience, which give him no rest day nor night." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 222, 223.

NONE GREATER THAN JOHN THE BAPTIST

6. What wonderful testimony did Jesus give of this faithful witness for God? What had been declared by an angel before his birth? Matthew 11:11, 14; Luke 1:14-17.

"John the Baptist had been first in heralding Christ's kingdom, and he was first also in suffering....

"Aside from the joy that John found in his mission, his life had been one of sorrow. His voice had been seldom heard except in the wilderness. His was a lonely lot. And he was not permitted to see the result of his own labors. It was not his privilege to be with Christ and witness the manifestation of divine power attending the greater light. It was not for him to see the blind restored to sight, the sick healed, and the dead raised to life. He did not behold the light that shone through every word of Christ, shedding glory upon the promises of prophecy. The least disciple who saw Christ's mighty works and heard His words was in this sense more highly privileged than John the Baptist, and therefore is said to have been greater than he." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 214, 220.

7. What great privilege did John the Baptist have, as did no other prophet? What similar mission do those living just before Jesus' second coming have? Matthew 11:13, 12.

"He was sent to herald the Saviour's advent, and to call upon the people to prepare for His coming. So faithfully did he fulfill his mission, that as the people recalled what he had taught them of Jesus, they could say, 'All things that John spake of this Man were true.' Such witness to Christ every disciple of the Master is called upon to bear.

“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 Desire of Ages*, p. 220.

FOR MEDITATION

“... For the sake of thousands who in after years must pass from prison to death, John was to drink the cup of martyrdom. As the followers of Jesus should languish in lonely cells, or perish by the sword, the rack, or the fagot, apparently forsaken by God and man, what a stay to their hearts would be the thought that John the Baptist, to whose faithfulness Christ Himself had borne witness, had passed through a similar experience!...

“Death itself only placed him forever beyond the power of temptation....

“To John the Baptist, as to those that came after him, was given the assurance, ‘Lo, I am with you all the days, even unto the end.’ Matthew 28:20, R.V., margin.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 224.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- John 3:22-30
- *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 214-224

REVIEW OF THE LESSON

Summarize in a few words the main thoughts of this lesson.

* * *

The One Who Gives Peace

“Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.” 1 Peter 5:7.

“Those who take Christ at His word, and surrender their souls to His keeping, their lives to His ordering, will find peace and quietude. Nothing of the world can make them sad when Jesus makes them glad by His presence. In perfect acquiescence there is perfect rest. The Lord says, ‘Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee.’ Isaiah 26:3.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 331.

MISERY, WORRY, AND TROUBLE

1. **What has characterized the existence of mankind ever since the fall into sin? Job 14:1; 5:6, 7; Psalm 102:3.**

“Whether they know it or not, all are weary and heavy-laden. All are weighed down with burdens that only Christ can remove. The heaviest burden that we bear is the burden of sin. If we were left to bear this burden, it would crush us. But the Sinless One has taken our place. ‘The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.’ Isaiah 53:6. He has borne the burden of our guilt. He will take the load from our weary shoulders. He will give us rest. The burden of care and sorrow also He will bear. He invites us to cast all our care upon Him; for He carries us upon His heart.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 328, 329.

2. **What do people do to escape the burdens facing them every day? Isaiah 55:2; Jeremiah 2:13.**

“God knows that if we were left to follow our own inclinations, to go just where our will would lead us, we should fall into Satan’s ranks and become possessors of his attributes. Therefore the law of God confines us to His will, which is high and noble and elevating. He desires that we shall patiently and wisely take up the duties of service. It is for our present and eternal good to work the works of God. If His will is cheerfully and gratefully accepted, the results will be seen in the service rendered and in the character developed.” —*The Signs of the Times*, July 22, 1897.

3. Who should not be trusted? Psalm 146:3, 4; Jeremiah 17:5.

“Take hold of the arm of God, and say, ‘I am nothing, and Thou art everything. Thou hast said, “Without me ye can do nothing.” Now, Lord, I must have Thee abiding in me, that I may abide in Thee.’ Then advance step by step, by living faith abiding in Jesus Christ. This is wearing His yoke, the yoke of obedience.”—(Manuscript 85, 1901) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1092.

4. In the Old Testament, to whom was happiness promised? With what promise did Jesus confirm this truth? Psalms 146:5; 147:3; Matthew 11:28.

“‘Come unto Me,’ is His invitation. Whatever your anxieties and trials, spread out your case before the Lord. Your spirit will be braced for endurance. The way will be opened for you to disentangle yourself from embarrassment and difficulty. The weaker and more helpless you know yourself to be, the stronger will you become in His strength. The heavier your burdens, the more blessed the rest in casting them upon the Burden Bearer. The rest that Christ offers depends upon conditions, but these conditions are plainly specified. They are those with which all can comply. He tells us just how His rest is to be found.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 329.

5. What other promises reveal God’s great, drawing love? John 6:37; 10:9.

“The Elder Brother of our race is by the eternal throne. He looks upon every soul who is turning his face toward Him as the Saviour. He knows by experience what are the weaknesses of humanity, what are our wants, and where lies the strength of our temptations; for He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. He is watching over you, trembling child of God. Are you tempted? He will deliver. Are you weak? He will strengthen. Are you ignorant? He will enlighten. Are you wounded? He will heal. The Lord ‘telleth the number of the stars;’ and yet ‘He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.’ Psalm 147:4, 3.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 329.

GREAT BLESSINGS FOLLOW SURRENDER TO HIM

6. What responses to God’s loving call will result in relief from the burden of sin? How are the resulting peace and blessing described? Matthew 11:29; Isaiah 55:3; 48:18.

“‘Learn of Me,’ says Jesus; ‘for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest.’ We are to enter the school of Christ, to learn from Him meekness and lowliness. Redemption is that process by which the soul is trained for heaven. This training means a knowledge of Christ. It means emancipation from ideas, habits, and practices that have been gained in the school of the prince of darkness. The soul must be delivered from all that is opposed to loyalty to God.

“In the heart of Christ, where reigned perfect harmony with God, there was perfect peace. He was never elated by applause, nor dejected by censure or disappointment. Amid the greatest opposition and the most cruel treatment, He was still of good courage. But many who profess to be His followers have an anxious, troubled heart, because they are afraid to trust themselves with God. They do not make a complete surrender to Him; for they shrink from the consequences that such a surrender may involve. Unless they do make this surrender, they cannot find peace.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 330.

7. What enormous difference is there between our yoke of sin and His yoke? Matthew 11:30; 1 John 5:3; Isaiah 55:1.

“There is a condition to the rest and peace here offered us by Christ. It is that of yoking up with Him. All who will accept the condition will find that the yoke of Christ will help them to bear every burden needful for them to carry. Without Christ at our side to bear the heaviest part of the load, we must indeed say that it is heavy. But yoked with Him to the car of duty, the burdens of life may all be lightly carried. And just as a man acts in willing obedience to the requirements of God, will come his peace of mind. He will give evidence of clear judgment and a steadfastness of character in cooperating with God to redeem himself through faith in Christ....

“To the true follower of Christ there is a pleasure in doing the things that Christ has done in his behalf. He does not regard the Lord’s requirement as an arbitrary exaction, but a clear specification of his only safety from the advances of the wily foe, who is ever seeking to entangle his feet and make his path difficult.” —*The Signs of the Times*, July 22, 1897.

FOR MEDITATION

“Meekness and humility will characterize all who are obedient to the law of God, all who will wear the yoke of Christ with submission. And these graces will bring the desirable result of peace in the service of Christ. In learning Christ’s meekness and lowliness, we shall submit the entire being to His control. Then the transforming grace of Christ will work upon heart and character, making human beings, fallen in sin, complete in Him.” —*The Signs of the Times*, July 22, 1897.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- Isaiah 26:3; 48:17
- *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 328-332
- *The Signs of the Times*, July 22, 1897

FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

- Which have I chosen—my will, or that of the Lord?
- What obstacles hinder me from surrendering my will to Him?
- What experiences have followed my accepting Jesus' yoke?

* * *

5

Sabbath, July 30, 2011

Calming the Tempest

“We are as helpless here as were the disciples to quiet the raging storm. But He who spoke peace to the billows of Galilee has spoken the word of peace for every soul. However fierce the tempest, those who turn to Jesus with the cry, ‘Lord, save us,’ will find deliverance. His grace, that reconciles the soul to God, quiets the strife of human passion, and in His love the heart is at rest. ‘He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so He bringeth them unto their desired haven.’ Psalm 107:29, 30. ‘Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ ‘The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever.’ Romans 5:1; Isaiah 32:17.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 336, 337.

THE STORM ON THE LAKE

1. **After a long day, what instruction did Jesus give His disciples? Mark 4:35, 36.**
2. **Shortly after their departure, what did Jesus do? What happened all of a sudden? Luke 8:23; Mark 4:37.**

“All day He had been teaching and healing; and as evening came on the crowds still pressed upon Him. Day after day He had ministered to them, scarcely pausing for food or rest. The malicious criticism and misrepresentation with which the Pharisees constantly pursued

Him made His labors much more severe and harassing; and now the close of the day found Him so utterly wearied that He determined to seek retirement in some solitary place across the lake....

"The Saviour was at last relieved from the pressure of the multitude, and, overcome with weariness and hunger, He lay down in the stern of the boat, and soon fell asleep. The evening had been calm and pleasant, and quiet rested upon the lake; but suddenly darkness overspread the sky, the wind swept wildly down the mountain gorges along the eastern shore, and a fierce tempest burst upon the lake." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 333, 334.

MASTER OF WIND AND SEA

3. How desperate did the situation become? What cry expressed the disciples' fear? Luke 8:24, first part; Mark 4:38.

"The sun had set, and the blackness of night settled down upon the stormy sea. The waves, lashed into fury by the howling winds, dashed fiercely over the disciples' boat, and threatened to engulf it. Those hardy fishermen had spent their lives upon the lake, and had guided their craft safely through many a storm; but now their strength and skill availed nothing. They were helpless in the grasp of the tempest, and hope failed them as they saw that their boat was filling.

"Absorbed in their efforts to save themselves, they had forgotten that Jesus was on board. Now, seeing their labor vain and only death before them, they remembered at whose command they had set out to cross the sea. In Jesus was their only hope. In their helplessness and despair they cried, 'Master, Master!' But the dense darkness hid Him from their sight. Their voices were drowned by the roaring of the tempest, and there was no reply. Doubt and fear assailed them. Had Jesus forsaken them? Was He who had conquered disease and demons, and even death, powerless to help His disciples now? Was He unmindful of them in their distress?" —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 334.

4. How did Jesus react to their cries for help? What did His actions reveal about His love and power? Mark 4:39; Luke 8:24, last part.

"Their cry arouses Jesus. As the lightning's glare reveals Him, they see the peace of heaven in His face; they read in His glance self-forgetful, tender love, and, their hearts turning to Him, cry, 'Lord, save us: we perish.'

"Never did a soul utter that cry unheeded. As the disciples grasp their oars to make a last effort, Jesus rises. He stands in the midst of

His disciples, while the tempest rages, the waves break over them, and the lightning illuminates His countenance. He lifts His hand, so often employed in deeds of mercy, and says to the angry sea, 'Peace, be still.'—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 335.

- 5. What did Jesus say to them? What did this emergency reveal? Mark 4:40.**

Thought question: How would we act in a similar situation?

"The storm ceases. The billows sink to rest. The clouds roll away, and the stars shine forth. The boat rests upon a quiet sea. Then turning to His disciples, Jesus asks sorrowfully, 'Why are ye fearful? have ye not yet faith?' Mark 4:40, R.V."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 335.

COMMANDING THE WIND AND SEA

- 6. What showed the disciples' astonishment at their Master's command over wind and sea? Matthew 8:27; Mark 4:41; Luke 8:25.**

Thought question: What is especially important for us in this experience?

"As Jesus rested by faith in the Father's care, so we are to rest in the care of our Saviour. If the disciples had trusted in Him, they would have been kept in peace. Their fear in the time of danger revealed their unbelief. In their efforts to save themselves, they forgot Jesus; and it was only when, in despair of self-dependence, they turned to Him that He could give them help."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 336.

- 7. Besides physical tempests, what other storms is the Lord ready to subdue? What is needed for this to occur? Ephesians 2:14, first part; John 14:27.**

"How often the disciples' experience is ours! When the tempests of temptation gather, and the fierce lightnings flash, and the waves sweep over us, we battle with the storm alone, forgetting that there is One who can help us. We trust to our own strength till our hope is lost, and we are ready to perish. Then we remember Jesus, and if we call upon Him to save us, we shall not cry in vain. Though He sorrowfully reproves our unbelief and self-confidence, He never fails to give us the help we need. Whether on the land or on the sea, if we have the Saviour in our hearts, there is no need of fear. Living faith in the Redeemer will smooth the sea of life, and will deliver us from danger in the way that He knows to be best."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 336.

FOR MEDITATION

“Every man’s experience testifies to the truth of the words of Scripture, ‘The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest.... There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.’ Isaiah 57:20, 21. Sin has destroyed our peace. While self is unsubdued, we can find no rest. The masterful passions of the heart no human power can control.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 336.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 333-337
- *My Life Today*, p. 336

Complete the following text:

“And He _____, and rebuked the _____, and said unto the _____, Peace, be still. And _____, and there was _____.”

* * *

6

Sabbath, August 6, 2011

Healed by a Touch

“Many hold faith as an opinion. Saving faith is a transaction, by which those who receive Christ join themselves in covenant relation with God. A living faith means an increase of vigor, a confiding trust, by which, through the grace of Christ, the soul becomes a conquering power. Faith is a mightier conqueror than death. If the sick can be led to fix their eyes in faith upon the Mighty Healer, we shall see wonderful results. It will bring life to the body and to the soul.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 62.

YEARS OF SEARCH FOR HEALING

- 1. What had one woman suffered for twelve years without finding relief? Mark 5:25, 26.**

“On the way to the ruler’s house, Jesus had met, in the crowd, a poor woman who for twelve years had suffered from a disease that made her life a burden. She had spent all her means upon physicians and remedies, only to be pronounced incurable.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 343.

- 2. What did she believe about Jesus? Matthew 9:21; Mark 5:28.**

“But her hopes revived when she heard of the cures that Christ performed. She felt assured that if she could only go to Him she would be healed. In weakness and suffering she came to the seaside where He was teaching, and tried to press through the crowd, but in vain. Again she followed Him from the house of Levi-Matthew, but was still unable to reach Him. She had begun to despair, when, in making His way through the multitude, He came near where she was.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 343.

FAITH IN ACTION

3. Having heard all about Jesus’ wonderful miracles, what did she do? Mark 5:27.

“The golden opportunity had come. She was in the presence of the Great Physician! But amid the confusion she could not speak to Him, nor catch more than a passing glimpse of His figure. Fearful of losing her one chance of relief, she pressed forward, saying to herself, ‘If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 343.

4. What happened immediately as a consequence of her touch of faith? Mark 5:29; Luke 8:44.

“As He was passing, she reached forward, and succeeded in barely touching the border of His garment. But in that moment she knew that she was healed. In that one touch was concentrated the faith of her life, and instantly her pain and feebleness gave place to the vigor of perfect health.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 343.

TESTIFYING OF JESUS AND HIS POWER

5. What did Jesus notice? Humanly speaking, how logical was His question? Mark 5:30; Luke 8:45, 46.

“With a grateful heart she then tried to withdraw from the crowd; but suddenly Jesus stopped, and the people halted with Him. He turned, and looking about asked in a voice distinctly heard above the confusion of the multitude, ‘Who touched Me?’ The people answered this query with a look of amazement. Jostled upon all sides, and rudely pressed hither and thither, as He was, it seemed a strange inquiry.

“Peter, ever ready to speak, said, ‘Master, the multitude throng Thee and press Thee, and sayest Thou, Who touched Me?’ Jesus answered, ‘Somebody hath touched Me: for I perceive that virtue is

gone out of Me.' The Saviour could distinguish the touch of faith from the casual contact of the careless throng. Such trust should not be passed without comment. He would speak to the humble woman words of comfort that would be to her a wellspring of joy—words that would be a blessing to His followers to the close of time." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 344.

6. How did the Saviour's words and searching love draw a testimony of gratitude from the healed woman? Mark 5:32, 33; Luke 8:47.

"Looking toward the woman, Jesus insisted on knowing who had touched Him. Finding concealment vain, she came forward tremblingly, and cast herself at His feet. With grateful tears she told the story of her suffering, and how she had found relief....

"After healing the woman, Jesus desired her to acknowledge the blessing she had received. The gifts which the gospel offers are not to be secured by stealth or enjoyed in secret. So the Lord calls upon us for confession of His goodness. 'Ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God.' Isaiah 43:12.

"Our confession of His faithfulness is Heaven's chosen agency for revealing Christ to the world. We are to acknowledge His grace as made known through the holy men of old; but that which will be most effectual is the testimony of our own experience. We are witnesses for God as we reveal in ourselves the working of a power that is divine. Every individual has a life distinct from all others, and an experience differing essentially from theirs. God desires that our praise shall ascend to Him, marked by our own individuality. These precious acknowledgments to the praise of the glory of His grace, when supported by a Christ-like life, have an irresistible power that works for the salvation of souls." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 344, 347.

7. What comfort and assurance did Jesus give the trembling woman? What part did her faith have in her being healed? Matthew 9:22; Luke 8:48; Mark 5:34.

Personal question: How do you apply this principle in your life?

"Jesus gently said, 'Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.' He gave no opportunity for superstition to claim healing virtue for the mere act of touching His garments. It was not through the outward contact with Him, but through the faith which took hold on His divine power, that the cure was wrought....

"It is for our own benefit to keep every gift of God fresh in our memory. Thus faith is strengthened to claim and to receive more and

more. There is greater encouragement for us in the least blessing we ourselves receive from God than in all the accounts we can read of the faith and experience of others. The soul that responds to the grace of God shall be like a watered garden. His health shall spring forth speedily; his light shall rise in obscurity, and the glory of the Lord shall be seen upon him. Let us then remember the loving-kindness of the Lord, and the multitude of His tender mercies.... And as we review His dealings with us in our pilgrimage, let us, out of hearts melted with gratitude, declare, 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all His people.' Psalm 116:12-14." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 347, 348.

FOR MEDITATION

"But the suffering woman who touched Him in faith received healing. So in spiritual things does the casual contact differ from the touch of faith. To believe in Christ merely as the Saviour of the world can never bring healing to the soul. The faith that is unto salvation is not a mere assent to the truth of the gospel. True faith is that which receives Christ as a personal Saviour. God gave His only-begotten Son, that I, by believing in Him, 'should not perish, but have everlasting life.' John 3:16. When I come to Christ, according to His word, I am to believe that I receive His saving grace. The life that I now live, I am to 'live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.' Galatians 2:20." —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 62.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 342-348
- *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 59-63

INVITATION

Reaching out to the Saviour's divine power, delay no longer, and exercise the touch of faith.

* * *

Working as Missionaries

“As Jesus ministered to the vast multitudes that gathered about Him, His disciples were in attendance, eager to do His bidding and to lighten His labor. They assisted in arranging the people, bringing the afflicted ones to the Saviour, and promoting the comfort of all. They watched for interested hearers, explained the Scriptures to them, and in various ways worked for their spiritual benefit. They taught what they had learned of Jesus, and were every day obtaining a rich experience. But they needed also an experience in laboring alone. They were still in need of much instruction, great patience and tenderness. Now, while He was personally with them, to point out their errors, and counsel and correct them, the Saviour sent them forth as His representatives.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 349.

THE HIGHEST MISSION

- 1. What divine mission did Jesus entrust to His disciples? What wonderful message were they to proclaim, and what power were they given to carry out their mission? Matthew 10:5-8, 1.**

“The disciples’ message was the same as that of John the Baptist and of Christ Himself: ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ They were to enter into no controversy with the people as to whether Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah; but in His name they were to do the same works of mercy as He had done. He bade them, ‘Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.’...

“These disciples were to be heralds of the truth, to prepare the way for the coming of their Master. The message they had to bear was the word of eternal life, and the destiny of men depended upon their reception or rejection of it.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 350, 352.

- 2. How did Jesus organize them for service? How were their physical necessities to be met? Mark 6:7; Matthew 10:9, 10.**

“None were sent forth alone, but brother was associated with brother, friend with friend. Thus they could help and encourage each other, counseling and praying together, each one’s strength supple-

menting the other's weakness. In the same manner He afterward sent forth the seventy. It was the Saviour's purpose that the messengers of the gospel should be associated in this way. In our own time evangelistic work would be far more successful if this example were more closely followed....

"Their preparation for the journey was to be of the simplest kind. Nothing must be allowed to divert their minds from their great work, or in any way excite opposition and close the door for further labor.... They were not to enter into the synagogues and call the people together for public service; their efforts were to be put forth in house-to-house labor.... They were to enter the dwelling with the beautiful salutation, 'Peace be to this house.' Luke 10:5. That home would be blessed by their prayers, their songs of praise, and the opening of the Scriptures in the family circle." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 350-352.

OPPOSITION AND SUPPORT

3. What kinds of reception did the Master tell them to expect? Matthew 10:14, 16-18. How does His instruction to His disciples apply to us today?

"Now the Saviour's eye penetrates the future.... His prophetic glance takes in the experience of His servants through all the ages till He shall come the second time. He shows His followers the conflicts they must meet; He reveals the character and plan of the battle. He lays open before them the perils they must encounter, the self-denial that will be required. He desires them to count the cost, that they may not be taken unawares by the enemy. Their warfare is not to be waged against flesh and blood.... The Holy Spirit, the representative of the Captain of the Lord's host, comes down to direct the battle. Our infirmities may be many, our sins and mistakes grievous; but the grace of God is for all who seek it with contrition. The power of Omnipotence is enlisted in behalf of those who trust in God.

"Those who are brought in controversy with the enemies of truth have to meet, not only men, but Satan and his agents.... Let them rest in the love of God, and the spirit will be kept calm, even under personal abuse. The Lord will clothe them with a divine panoply. His Holy Spirit will influence the mind and heart, so that their voices shall not catch the notes of the baying of the wolves." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 352, 353.

4. What support was promised to them, particularly when they faced persecution? What opposition would be particularly difficult for His witnesses to bear? Matthew 10:19-21.

“Persecution will spread the light. The servants of Christ will be brought before the great men of the world, who, but for this, might never hear the gospel. The truth has been misrepresented to these men. They have listened to false charges concerning the faith of Christ’s disciples. Often their only means of learning its real character is the testimony of those who are brought to trial for their faith. Under examination these are required to answer, and their judges to listen to the testimony borne. God’s grace will be dispensed to His servants to meet the emergency.... As the Spirit of God illuminates the minds of His servants, the truth will be presented in its divine power and preciousness. Those who reject the truth will stand to accuse and oppress the disciples....

“The servants of Christ were to prepare no set speech to present when brought to trial. Their preparation was to be made day by day in treasuring up the precious truths of God’s word, and through prayer strengthening their faith. When they were brought into trial, the Holy Spirit would bring to their remembrance the very truths that would be needed....

“But if any had neglected to acquaint themselves with the words of Christ..., they could not expect that the Holy Spirit would bring His words to their remembrance.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 354, 355.

VICTORY OVER FEAR

5. What other principles did Jesus convey to His disciples as well as to His witnesses in all ages? Matthew 10:26-28.

“The servants of Christ are called to the same work, and they should beware lest, in seeking to prevent discord, they surrender the truth. They are to ‘follow after the things which make for peace’ (Romans 14:19); but real peace can never be secured by compromising principle. And no man can be true to principle without exciting opposition. A Christianity that is spiritual will be opposed by the children of disobedience.... Those who are true to God need not fear the power of men nor the enmity of Satan. In Christ their eternal life is secure. Their only fear should be lest they surrender the truth, and thus betray the trust with which God has honored them....

“Not even a sparrow falls to the ground without the Father’s notice. Satan’s hatred against God leads him to hate every object of the Saviour’s care. He seeks to mar the handiwork of God, and he delights in destroying even the dumb creatures. It is only through God’s protecting care that the birds are preserved to gladden us with their songs of joy. But He does not forget even the sparrows. ‘Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 356, 357.

- 6. What will be the result for all who spread the good news and confess Jesus' name without fear? How deep is the love of one who puts the heavenly kingdom in first place? Matthew 10:32, 33, 37.**

“He who would confess Christ must have Christ abiding in him. He cannot communicate that which he has not received. The disciples might speak fluently on doctrines, they might repeat the words of Christ Himself; but unless they possessed Christlike meekness and love, they were not confessing Him. A spirit contrary to the spirit of Christ would deny Him, whatever the profession. Men may deny Christ by evilspeaking, by foolish talking, by words that are untruthful or unkind. They may deny Him by shunning life's burdens, by the pursuit of sinful pleasure. They may deny Him by conforming to the world, by uncourteous behavior, by the love of their own opinions, by justifying self, by cherishing doubt, borrowing trouble, and dwelling in darkness. In all these ways they declare that Christ is not in them. And ‘whosoever shall deny Me before men,’ He says, ‘him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 357.

- 7. When a person receives God's messengers and message, whom does he actually receive? What consequence will follow his actions? Matthew 10:40-42.**

“The mission of Christ's servants is a high honor, and a sacred trust. ‘He that receiveth you,’ He says, ‘receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me.’ No act of kindness shown to them in His name will fail to be recognized and rewarded. And in the same tender recognition He includes the feeblest and lowliest of the family of God: ‘Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones’—those who are as children in their faith and their knowledge of Christ—‘a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in nowise lose his reward.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 357, 358.

FOR MEDITATION

“The followers of Christ are to labor as He did. We are to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and comfort the suffering and afflicted. We are to minister to the despairing, and inspire hope in the hopeless. And to us also the promise will be fulfilled, ‘Thy righteousness shall go before thee;

the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward.’ Isaiah 58:8. The love of Christ, manifested in unselfish ministry, will be more effective in reforming the evildoer than will the sword or the court of justice. These are necessary to strike terror to the lawbreaker, but the loving missionary can do more than this. Often the heart will harden under reproof; but it will melt under the love of Christ. The missionary cannot only relieve physical maladies, but he can lead the sinner to the Great Physician, who can cleanse the soul from the leprosy of sin. Through His servants, God designs that the sick, the unfortunate, those possessed of evil spirits, shall hear His voice. Through His human agencies He desires to be a Comforter such as the world knows not.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 350, 351.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- Matthew 10:1-42
- Mark 6:7-11
- Luke 9:1-6; 10:1-24
- *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 349-358

MEMORY VERSE

“He that receiveth you receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me.” Matthew 10:48.

* * *

8

Sabbath, August 20, 2011

Food for the Multitude

“In Christ’s act of supplying the temporal necessities of a hungry multitude is wrapped up a deep spiritual lesson for all His workers. Christ received from the Father; He imparted to the disciples; they imparted to the multitude; and the people to one another. So all who are united to Christ will receive from Him the bread of life, the heavenly food, and impart it to others.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 369.

HEALING AND TEACHING THE PEOPLE

- 1. How did Jesus feel when He saw so many people in need? What motivated them to follow Him? Matthew 14:14; Luke 9:11; John 6:2.**

“He saw a greater necessity demanding His attention as He watched the people coming and still coming. He ‘was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd.’ Leaving His retreat, He found a convenient place where He could minister to them. They received no help from the priests and rulers; but the healing waters of life flowed from Christ as He taught the multitude the way of salvation.

“The people listened to the words of mercy flowing so freely from the lips of the Son of God. They heard the gracious words, so simple and so plain that they were as the balm of Gilead to their souls. The healing of His divine hand brought gladness and life to the dying, and ease and health to those suffering with disease. The day seemed to them like heaven upon earth, and they were utterly unconscious of how long it had been since they had eaten anything.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 364, 365.

2. **As evening drew near after Jesus had spent a long day giving blessed words of comfort to the many people, what did the disciples urge Him to do? Matthew 14:15; Mark 6:36.**

“At length the day was far spent. The sun was sinking in the west, and yet the people lingered. Jesus had labored all day without food or rest. He was pale from weariness and hunger, and the disciples besought Him to cease from His toil. But He could not withdraw Himself from the multitude that pressed upon Him.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 365.

GIVE THEM FOOD

3. **How did the Saviour respond to this suggestion? Matthew 14:16; Mark 6:37, first part. What would be the typical human response to such a statement?**

“He chose a pleasant place in which to accommodate the people and commanded them to sit down. Then He took the five loaves and the two small fishes. No doubt many remarks were made as to the impossibility of satisfying five thousand hungry men....” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 263.

4. **What was Jesus’ purpose in asking Philip where they could purchase bread for the multitude? John 6:5-7.**

“Philip looked over the sea of heads and thought how impossible it would be to provide food for so great a company. He answered that two hundred pennyworth of bread would not be enough to divide among them so that each might have a little.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 45.

“The disciples finally came to Him, urging that for their own sake the people should be sent away. Many had come from far, and had eaten nothing since morning. In the surrounding towns and villages they might be able to buy food. But Jesus said, ‘Give ye them to eat,’ and then, turning to Philip, questioned, ‘Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?’ This He said to test the faith of the disciple. Philip looked over the sea of heads, and thought how impossible it would be to provide food to satisfy the wants of such a crowd. He answered that two hundred pennyworth of bread would not be nearly enough to divide among them, so that each might have a little.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 365.

FOOD FOR THE MULTITUDE

- 5. How many men were there besides all the women and children? What did Jesus do with the small amount of food that was available? Matthew 14:17, 18, 21; Luke 9:14; Matthew 14:19.**

“Jesus directed that these be brought to Him. Then He bade the disciples seat the people on the grass in parties of fifty or a hundred, to preserve order, and that all might witness what He was about to do. When this was accomplished, Jesus took the food, ‘and looking up to heaven, He blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 365.

- 6. What happened to the few loaves of bread after the Lord blessed them? How much did everyone receive from the heavenly storehouse? Matthew 14:20, first part, 21.**

“The scanty provision grew under the hand of Christ, and He had constantly a fresh supply for His servants to distribute to the hungry multitude, until all had a sufficiency.” —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 344, 345.

“No doubt many remarks were made as to the impossibility of satisfying five thousand hungry men, besides women and children, from that scanty store. But Jesus gave thanks and placed the food in the hands of the disciples to be distributed. They gave to the multitude, the food increasing in their hands. And when the multitude had been fed, the disciples themselves sat down and ate with Christ

of the heaven-imparted store. This is a precious lesson for every one of Christ's followers." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 263.

"In feeding the five thousand, Jesus lifts the veil from the world of nature, and reveals the power that is constantly exercised for our good. In the production of earth's harvests God is working a miracle every day. Through natural agencies the same work is accomplished that was wrought in the feeding of the multitude. Men prepare the soil and sow the seed, but it is the life from God that causes the seed to germinate.... It is God who is every day feeding millions from earth's harvest fields." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 367.

7. How many baskets of bread were left over after everyone had eaten? Matthew 14:20, last part; John 6:12. What additional lessons are contained in this miracle?

"And when we are brought into strait places, we are to depend on God. We are to exercise wisdom and judgment in every action of life, that we may not, by reckless movements, place ourselves in trial. We are not to plunge into difficulties, neglecting the means God has provided, and misusing the faculties He has given us. Christ's workers are to obey His instructions implicitly. The work is God's, and if we would bless others His plans must be followed. Self cannot be made a center; self can receive no honor. If we plan according to our own ideas, the Lord will leave us to our own mistakes. But when, after following His directions, we are brought into strait places, He will deliver us. We are not to give up in discouragement, but in every emergency we are to seek help from Him who has infinite resources at His command. Often we shall be surrounded with trying circumstances, and then, in the fullest confidence, we must depend upon God. He will keep every soul that is brought into perplexity through trying to keep the way of the Lord." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 369.

FOR MEDITATION

"The disciples were the channel of communication between Christ and the people. This should be a great encouragement to His disciples today. Christ is the great center, the source of all strength. His disciples are to receive their supplies from Him. The most intelligent, the most spiritually minded, can bestow only as they receive. Of themselves they can supply nothing for the needs of the soul. We can impart only that which we receive from Christ; and we can receive only as we impart to others. As we continue imparting, we continue to receive; and the more we impart, the more we shall receive. Thus we may be constantly believing, trusting, receiving, and imparting." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 370.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- Matthew 14:13-21
- Mark 6:32-44
- Luke 9:10-17
- John 6:1-13
- *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 364-371
- *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 45-50

TRUSTING GOD'S PROVIDENCE

When we have none, how many possibilities does the Lord have?

* * *

9

Sabbath, August 27, 2011

Walking on Water

“Day by day God instructs His children. By the circumstances of the daily life He is preparing them to act their part upon that wider stage to which His providence has appointed them. It is the issue of the daily test that determines their victory or defeat in life’s great crisis.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 382.

A SOLITARY PLACE OF PRAYER

- 1. After Jesus miraculously fed the multitude, what did some people, including the disciples, want to do? What was the Master’s response to this? John 6:14, 15.**

“All day the conviction has strengthened. That crowning act is assurance that the long-looked-for Deliverer is among them. The hopes of the people rise higher and higher. This is He who will make Judea an earthly paradise, a land flowing with milk and honey. He can satisfy every desire. He can break the power of the hated Romans. He can deliver Judah and Jerusalem. He can heal the soldiers who are wounded in battle. He can supply whole armies with food. He can conquer the nations, and give to Israel the long-sought dominion.

“In their enthusiasm the people are ready at once to crown Him king. They see that He makes no effort to attract attention or secure honor to Himself. In this He is essentially different from the priests and rulers, and they fear that He will never urge His claim to David’s

throne. Consulting together, they agree to take Him by force, and proclaim Him the king of Israel. The disciples unite with the multitude in declaring the throne of David the rightful inheritance of their Master. It is the modesty of Christ, they say, that causes Him to refuse such honor. Let the people exalt their Deliverer. Let the arrogant priests and rulers be forced to honor Him who comes clothed with the authority of God.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 377, 378.

2. What else did He do? Matthew 14:22, 23. Why?

“They eagerly arrange to carry out their purpose; but Jesus sees what is on foot, and understands, as they cannot, what would be the result of such a movement.... Calling His disciples, Jesus bids them take the boat and return at once to Capernaum, leaving Him to dismiss the people.

“Never before had a command from Christ seemed so impossible of fulfillment. The disciples had long hoped for a popular movement to place Jesus on the throne; they could not endure the thought that all this enthusiasm should come to nothing. The multitudes that were assembling to keep the Passover were anxious to see the new prophet. To His followers this seemed the golden opportunity to establish their beloved Master on the throne of Israel. In the glow of this new ambition it was hard for them to go away by themselves, and leave Jesus alone upon that desolate shore....

“When left alone, Jesus ‘went up into a mountain apart to pray.’ For hours He continued pleading with God. Not for Himself but for men were those prayers. He prayed for power to reveal to men the divine character of His mission, that Satan might not blind their understanding and pervert their judgment.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 378, 379.

BATTLING THE WAVES

3. As night fell, what happened to the disciples on the sea? Matthew 14:24; Mark 6:47. What lesson did they need to learn?

“Had they, out of the abundance of their hearts, been conversing together in regard to these things [the blessings of the day], they would not have entered into temptation. But their disappointment had absorbed their thoughts.... They were in the midst of troubled waters. Their thoughts were stormy and unreasonable, and the Lord gave them something else to afflict their souls and occupy their minds. God often does this when men create burdens and troubles for themselves....

“They forgot their disaffection, their unbelief, their impatience. Everyone worked to keep the boat from sinking.... Until the fourth watch of the night they toiled at the oars. Then the weary men gave themselves up for lost. In storm and darkness the sea had taught them their own helplessness, and they longed for the presence of their Master.

“Jesus had not forgotten them. The Watcher on the shore saw those fear-stricken men battling with the tempest. Not for a moment did He lose sight of His disciples. With deepest solicitude His eyes followed the storm-tossed boat with its precious burden; for these men were to be the light of the world. As a mother in tender love watches her child, so the compassionate Master watched His disciples.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 380, 381.

- 4. After they had rowed three or four miles against the waves, who came near to them walking on the sea? John 6:19; Matthew 14:25; Mark 6:48.**

“When their hearts were subdued, their unholy ambition quelled, and in humility they prayed for help, it was given them.

“At the moment when they believe themselves lost, a gleam of light reveals a mysterious figure approaching them upon the water. But they know not that it is Jesus.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 381.

SEEING THE SAVIOUR

- 5. What did the disciples see that frightened them? What allayed their fears? Matthew 14:26, 27; Mark 6:49.**

“The One who has come for their help they count as an enemy. Terror overpowers them. The hands that have grasped the oars with muscles like iron let go their hold. The boat rocks at the will of the waves; all eyes are riveted on this vision of a man walking upon the white-capped billows of the foaming sea.

“They think it a phantom that omens their destruction, and they cry out for fear. Jesus advances as if He would pass them; but they recognize Him, and cry out, entreating His help. Their beloved Master turns, His voice silences their fear, ‘Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 381.

WALKING ON WATER

- 6. What did Peter immediately request? What made his boldness turn to fear? Matthew 14:28-31.**

“Looking unto Jesus, Peter walks securely; but as in self-satisfaction he glances back toward his companions in the boat, his eyes are turned from the Saviour.... For a moment Christ is hidden from his view, and his faith gives way. He begins to sink. But while the billows talk with death, Peter lifts his eyes from the angry waters, and fixing them upon Jesus, cries, ‘Lord, save me.’ Immediately Jesus grasps the outstretched hand, saying, ‘O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?’

“Walking side by side, Peter’s hand in that of his Master, they stepped into the boat together. But Peter was now subdued and silent. He had no reason to boast over his fellows, for through unbelief and self-exaltation he had very nearly lost his life. When he turned his eyes from Jesus, his footing was lost, and he sank amid the waves.

“When trouble comes upon us, how often we are like Peter! We look upon the waves, instead of keeping our eyes fixed upon the Saviour....

“Amid the storms of temptation he could walk safely only as in utter self-distrust he should rely upon the Saviour.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 381, 382.

7. What happened right after Jesus and Peter climbed into the ship? Matthew 14:32, 33; Mark 6:51; John 6:21.

“Those who fail to realize their constant dependence upon God will be overcome by temptation. We may now suppose that our feet stand secure, and that we shall never be moved. We may say with confidence, ‘I know in whom I have believed; nothing can shake my faith in God and in His word.’ But Satan is planning to take advantage of our hereditary and cultivated traits of character, and to blind our eyes to our own necessities and defects. Only through realizing our own weakness and looking steadfastly unto Jesus can we walk securely.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 382.

FOR MEDITATION

“... It has been Satan’s determined purpose to eclipse the view of Jesus and lead men to look to man, and trust to man, and be educated to expect help from man. For years the church has been looking to man and expecting much from man, but not looking to Jesus, in whom our hopes of eternal life are centered.... ‘He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.’” —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 93.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- Matthew 14:22-33
- Mark 6:45-52
- John 6:14-21
- *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 377-382
- *Education*, pp. 88, 89

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

- To you, what is the most important lesson to be learned from today's study?
- What encouragement do you find in this amazing story?

* * *

10

Sabbath, September 3, 2011

The Bread of Life

“By looking constantly to Jesus with the eye of faith, we shall be strengthened. God will make the most precious revelations to His hungering, thirsting people. They will find that Christ is a personal Saviour. As they feed upon His word, they find that it is spirit and life. The word destroys the natural, earthly nature, and imparts a new life in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit comes to the soul as a Comforter. By the transforming agency of His grace, the image of God is reproduced in the disciple; he becomes a new creature. Love takes the place of hatred, and the heart receives the divine similitude. This is what it means to live ‘by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.’ This is eating the Bread that comes down from heaven.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 391.

TEMPORAL INTERESTS

1. **What did Jesus say to those who came looking for Him in Capernaum? What was their primary interest? John 6:24-26.**

“They did not seek Him from any worthy motive; but as they had been fed with the loaves, they hoped still to receive temporal benefit by attaching themselves to Him. The Saviour bade them, ‘Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.’ Seek not merely for material benefit. Let it not be the chief effort to provide for the life that now is, but seek for spiritual food, even that wisdom which will endure unto everlasting life. This the Son of God alone can give; ‘for Him hath God the Father sealed.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 384, 385.

- 2. Having been impressed by Jesus' great miracle in multiplying the loaves and fish, what did the people ask Him? What was the main thing He wanted to give them? John 6:28, 29, 33.**

“For the moment the interest of the hearers was awakened. They exclaimed, ‘What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?’ They had been performing many and burdensome works in order to recommend themselves to God; and they were ready to hear of any new observance by which they could secure greater merit. Their question meant, What shall we do that we may deserve heaven? What is the price we are required to pay in order to obtain the life to come?

“‘Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.’ The price of heaven is Jesus. The way to heaven is through faith in ‘the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’ John 1:29....

“The giver of the manna was standing among them. It was Christ Himself who had led the Hebrews through the wilderness, and had daily fed them with the bread from heaven. That food was a type of the real bread from heaven. The life-giving Spirit, flowing from the infinite fullness of God, is the true manna.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 385, 386.

- 3. Who is the bread of eternal life? What will be the result of believing and following Him? John 6:34, 35, 37.**

“The teaching of the prophets made plain the deep spiritual lesson in the miracle of the loaves. This lesson Christ was seeking to open to His hearers in the synagogue. Had they understood the Scriptures, they would have understood His words when He said, ‘I am the bread of life.’ Only the day before, the great multitude, when faint and weary, had been fed by the bread which He had given. As from that bread they had received physical strength and refreshment, so from Christ they might receive spiritual strength unto eternal life. ‘He that cometh to Me,’ He said, ‘shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst.’ But He added, ‘Ye also have seen Me, and believe not.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 386.

- 4. How powerful is prejudice—even against the great Light of the world? What alone opens the mind to receive truth? John 6:41, 43, 44.**

“The prejudice of the Pharisees lay deeper than their questions would indicate; it had its root in the perversity of their hearts. Every word and act of Jesus aroused antagonism in them; for the spirit which they cherished could find in Him no answering chord....

“None will ever come to Christ, save those who respond to the drawing of the Father’s love. But God is drawing all hearts unto Him, and only those who resist His drawing will refuse to come to Christ....

“It was their boast that God was their teacher. But Jesus showed how vain is this claim; for He said, ‘Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me.’ Only through Christ could they receive a knowledge of the Father. Humanity could not endure the vision of His glory. Those who had learned of God had been listening to the voice of His Son, and in Jesus of Nazareth they would recognize Him who through nature and revelation has declared the Father.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 387, 388.

TRUE DAILY BREAD

5. How important is true faith in Jesus? What will be the result of making His life, work, and teaching our daily sustenance? John 6:47, 50, 51, first part.

“Christ became one flesh with us, in order that we might become one spirit with Him. It is by virtue of this union that we are to come forth from the grave—not merely as a manifestation of the power of Christ, but because, through faith, His life has become ours. Those who see Christ in His true character, and receive Him into the heart, have everlasting life. It is through the Spirit that Christ dwells in us; and the Spirit of God, received into the heart by faith, is the beginning of the life eternal....

“The manna could sustain only this earthly existence; it did not prevent the approach of death, nor insure immortality; but the bread of heaven would nourish the soul unto everlasting life. The Saviour said, ‘I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 388.

6. Since physical food will not impart eternal life, what is needed to receive this great gift? How did the Lord explain what the spiritual food is and what it imparts? John 6:53, 54, 63.

“To eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ is to receive Him as a personal Saviour, believing that He forgives our sins, and that we are complete in Him. It is by beholding His love, by dwelling upon it, by drinking it in, that we are to become partakers of His nature. What food is to the body, Christ must be to the soul. Food cannot benefit us unless we eat it, unless it becomes a part of our being. So Christ is of no value to us if we do not know Him as a personal Saviour. A theoretical knowledge will do us no good. We must feed upon Him, receive Him into the heart, so that His life becomes our life. His love, His grace, must be assimilated....

“As the Son of God lived by faith in the Father, so are we to live by faith in Christ... Although tempted in all points like as we are, He stood before the world untainted by the evil that surrounded Him. Thus we also are to overcome as Christ overcame.

“Are you a follower of Christ? Then all that is written concerning the spiritual life is written for you, and may be attained through uniting yourself to Jesus. Is your zeal languishing? Has your first love grown cold? Accept again of the proffered love of Christ. Eat of His flesh, drink of His blood, and you will become one with the Father and with the Son.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 389, 390.

7. What conviction and assurance sustain every believer? John 6:63, 68, 69.

“The life of Christ that gives life to the world is in His word. It was by His word that Jesus healed disease and cast out demons; by His word He stilled the sea, and raised the dead; and the people bore witness that His word was with power. He spoke the word of God, as He had spoken through all the prophets and teachers of the Old Testament. The whole Bible is a manifestation of Christ, and the Saviour desired to fix the faith of His followers on the word. When His visible presence should be withdrawn, the word must be their source of power. Like their Master, they were to live ‘by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.’ Matthew 4:4.

“As our physical life is sustained by food, so our spiritual life is sustained by the word of God. And every soul is to receive life from God’s word for himself. As we must eat for ourselves in order to receive nourishment, so we must receive the word for ourselves. We are not to obtain it merely through the medium of another’s mind. We should carefully study the Bible, asking God for the aid of the Holy Spirit, that we may understand His word. We should take one verse, and concentrate the mind on the task of ascertaining the thought which God has put in that verse for us. We should dwell upon the thought until it becomes our own, and we know ‘what saith the Lord.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 390.

FOR MEDITATION

“Christ had spoken a sacred, eternal truth regarding the relation between Himself and His followers. He knew the character of those who claimed to be His disciples, and His words tested their faith. He declared that they were to believe and act upon His teaching. All who received Him would partake of His nature, and be conformed to His character. This involved the relinquishment of their cherished ambitions. It required the complete surrender of themselves to Jesus. They were called to become self-sacrificing, meek and lowly in heart. They must walk in the narrow path traveled by the Man of Calvary, if they would share in the gift of life and the glory of heaven.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 391.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- John 6:22-71
- *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 18, 19
- *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 575, 576

Complete the text:

“Labour not for the meat which _____, but for that meat which _____ unto _____, which the Son of man _____ unto you: for Him hath God the Father sealed.”

ACCEPTANCE

- Have you accepted the Lord Jesus as your personal Saviour?
- How does the bread of life sustain you?

* * *

Cleansing the Conscience

“The most careful cultivation of the outward proprieties of life is not sufficient to shut out all fretfulness, harsh judgment, and unbecoming speech. True refinement will never be revealed so long as self is considered as the supreme object. Love must dwell in the heart. A thoroughgoing Christian draws his motives of action from his deep heart-love for his Master. Up through the roots of his affection for Christ springs an unselfish interest in his brethren.

“Of all things that are sought, cherished, and cultivated, there is nothing so valuable in the sight of God as a pure heart, a disposition imbued with thankfulness and peace.” —*The Adventist Home*, p. 425.

HUMAN TRADITIONS

- 1. What did the Pharisees require of the people? Of what did they accuse the disciples and Jesus Himself? Mark 7:1, 2, 5.**

“Christ and His disciples did not observe these ceremonial washings, and the spies made this neglect the ground of their accusation. They did not, however, make a direct attack on Christ, but came to Him with criticism of His disciples....

“Whenever the message of truth comes home to souls with special power, Satan stirs up his agents to start a dispute over some minor question. Thus he seeks to attract attention from the real issue. Whenever a good work is begun, there are cavilers ready to enter into dispute over forms or technicalities, to draw minds away from the living realities. When it appears that God is about to work in a special manner for His people, let them not be enticed into a controversy that will work only ruin of souls. The questions that most concern us are, Do I believe with saving faith on the Son of God? Is my life in harmony with the divine law? ‘He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life.’ ‘And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.’ John 3:36; 1 John 2:3.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 396.

- 2. What customs were observed especially by the Pharisees before eating? Mark 7:3, 4.**

“As before, the ground of complaint was His disregard of the traditional precepts that encumbered the law of God. These were professedly designed to guard the observance of the law, but they were regarded as more sacred than the law itself. When they came in collision with the commandments given from Sinai, preference was given to the rabbinical precepts.

“Among the observances most strenuously enforced was that of ceremonial purification. A neglect of the forms to be observed before eating was accounted a heinous sin, to be punished both in this world and in the next; and it was regarded as a virtue to destroy the transgressor.

“The rules in regard to purification were numberless. The period of a lifetime was scarcely sufficient for one to learn them all. The life of those who tried to observe the rabbinical requirements was one long struggle against ceremonial defilement, an endless round of washings and purifications. While the people were occupied with trifling distinctions, and observances which God had not required, their attention was turned away from the great principles of His law.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 395, 396.

LACK OF RESPECT FOR GOD’S LAW

3. While the Jews were extremely particular about observing human traditions, what was their attitude toward God’s holy law—in this case, the fifth commandment? Mark 7:9-13.

“They set aside the fifth commandment as of no consequence, but were very exact in carrying out the traditions of the elders. They taught the people that the devotion of their property to the temple was a duty more sacred than even the support of their parents; and that, however great the necessity, it was sacrilege to impart to father or mother any part of what had been thus consecrated. An undutiful child had only to pronounce the word ‘Corban’ over his property, thus devoting it to God, and he could retain it for his own use during his lifetime, and after his death it was to be appropriated to the temple service. Thus he was at liberty, both in life and in death, to dishonor and defraud his parents, under cover of a pretended devotion to God.

“Never, by word or deed, did Jesus lessen man’s obligation to present gifts and offerings to God. It was Christ who gave all the directions of the law in regard to tithes and offerings.... The people were deceived by them. They were bearing heavy burdens which God had not imposed. Even the disciples of Christ were not wholly free from the yoke that had been bound upon them by inherited prejudice and rabbinical authority. Now, by revealing the true spirit of the rabbis, Jesus sought to free from the bondage of tradition all who were really desirous of serving God.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 396, 397.

- 4. Whenever human ideas, wishes, or customs have the preeminence, what happens to the principles of God's holy law? How does the Lord consider such attitudes? Mark 7:6-8.**

"The words of Christ were an arraignment of the whole system of Pharisaism. He declared that by placing their requirements above the divine precepts the rabbis were setting themselves above God.

"The deputies from Jerusalem were filled with rage. They could not accuse Christ as a violator of the law given from Sinai, for He spoke as its defender against their traditions. The great precepts of the law, which He had presented, appeared in striking contrast to the petty rules that men had devised." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 397.

CORRECT EVALUATION

- 5. What did the Pharisees consider as defiling a person? What did Jesus teach regarding external things, as well as that which is moral and spiritual? Matthew 15:10, 11.**

Emphasizing where spiritual defilement comes from, one Bible version gives the following translation of Mark 7:15: "It's not what goes into your body that defiles you; you are spiritually defiled by what comes from your heart." —*New Living Translation*.

"To the multitude, and afterward more fully to His disciples, Jesus explained that defilement comes not from without, but from within. Purity and impurity pertain to the soul. It is the evil deed, the evil word, the evil thought, the transgression of the law of God, not the neglect of external, man-made ceremonies, that defiles a man." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 397.

SOURCE AND CLEANSING OF DEFILEMENT

- 6. Ultimately, what will happen with every precept, tradition, or custom that is contrary to God's law? What is the difference between physical pollution and spiritual defilement? Matthew 15:13, 15-20; Mark 7:17-23.**

"The customs and traditions so highly valued by the rabbis were of this world, not from heaven.... Every human invention that has been substituted for the commandments of God will be found worthless in that day when 'God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.' Ecclesiastes 12:14.

“The substitution of the precepts of men for the commandments of God has not ceased. Even among Christians are found institutions and usages that have no better foundation than the traditions of the fathers. Such institutions, resting upon mere human authority, have supplanted those of divine appointment. Men cling to their traditions, and revere their customs, and cherish hatred against those who seek to show them their error. In this day, when we are bidden to call attention to the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, we see the same enmity as was manifested in the days of Christ....

“Let all who accept human authority, the customs of the church, or the traditions of the fathers, take heed to the warning conveyed in the words of Christ, ‘In vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 398.

7. In the light of Jesus’ teaching, what is more important—external things, or moral and spiritual purity of heart and mind? How alone is it possible to have right priorities? Matthew 23:24-26; 5:8; Psalms 24:4; 51:2; 1 John 1:9.

“These denunciations are given as a warning to all who ‘outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within’ ‘are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.’ They say, We are delivered to do all these things.” —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 79.

“Not long since I heard a mother say that she liked to see a house fitly constructed, that defects in the arrangement and mismatched woodwork in the finishing annoyed her. I do not condemn nice taste in this respect, but as I listened to her, I regretted that this nicety could not have been brought into her methods of managing her children. These were buildings for whose framing she was responsible; yet their rough, uncourteous ways, their passionate, selfish natures, and uncontrolled wills, were painfully apparent to others. Ill-formed characters, mismatched pieces of humanity, indeed they were, yet the mother was blind to it all. The arrangement of her house was of more consequence to her than the symmetry of her children’s character.” —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 157.

FOR MEDITATION

“God has a special work for the men of experience to do. They are to guard the cause of God. They are to see that the work of God is not committed to men who feel it their privilege to move out on their own independent judgment, to preach whatever they please, and to be responsible to no one for their instructions or work. Let this spirit of self-sufficiency once rule in our midst, and there will be no harmony of action, no unity of spirit, no safety for the work, and no healthful growth in the cause. There will be false teachers, evil workers who will, by insinuating error, draw away

souls from the truth. Christ prayed that His followers might be one as He and the Father were one.” —(*Review and Herald*, May 29, 1888) *Evangelism*, pp. 212, 213.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- Luke 11:37-40
- Psalms 24:5; 51:2
- *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 395-398

TESTING OUR CONSCIENCE

- Where do many defiling problems originate—within or outside of us?
- How may we have a clean conscience?

* * *

12

Sabbath, September 17, 2011

A Heathen Woman’s Faith

“There is no danger that the Lord will neglect the prayers of His people. The danger is that in temptation and trial they will become discouraged, and fail to persevere in prayer.

“The Saviour manifested divine compassion toward the Syrophenician woman. His heart was touched as He saw her grief. He longed to give her an immediate assurance that her prayer was heard; but He desired to teach His disciples a lesson, and for a time He seemed to neglect the cry of her tortured heart. When her faith had been made manifest, He spoke to her words of commendation and sent her away with the precious boon she had asked. The disciples never forgot this lesson, and it is placed on record to show the result of persevering prayer.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 175.

AT THE PHOENICIAN BORDER

- 1. Continuing His mission, to what region did Jesus travel with His disciples? Matthew 15:21; Mark 7:24.**

“After the encounter with the Pharisees, Jesus withdrew from Capernaum, and crossing Galilee, repaired to the hill country on the borders of Phoenicia. Looking westward, He could see, spread out upon the plain below, the ancient cities of Tyre and Sidon, with their heathen temples, their magnificent palaces and marts of trade, and

the harbors filled with shipping. Beyond was the blue expanse of the Mediterranean, over which the messengers of the gospel were to bear its glad tidings to the centers of the world's great empire. But the time was not yet. The work before Him now was to prepare His disciples for their mission. In coming to this region He hoped to find the retirement He had failed to secure at Bethsaida. Yet this was not His only purpose in taking this journey." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 399.

2. Who came to Him to plead for help for her mentally ill daughter? To what nation did she belong? Matthew 15:22; Mark 7:25, 26.

"Behold, a Canaanitish woman came out from those borders, and cried, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.' Matthew 15:22, R.V. The people of this district were of the old Canaanite race. They were idolaters, and were despised and hated by the Jews. To this class belonged the woman who now came to Jesus. She was a heathen, and was therefore excluded from the advantages which the Jews daily enjoyed. There were many Jews living among the Phoenicians, and the tidings of Christ's work had penetrated to this region. Some of the people had listened to His words and had witnessed His wonderful works. This woman had heard of the prophet, who, it was reported, healed all manner of diseases. As she heard of His power, hope sprang up in her heart. Inspired by a mother's love, she determined to present her daughter's case to Him. It was her resolute purpose to bring her affliction to Jesus. He must heal her child. She had sought help from the heathen gods, but had obtained no relief. And at times she was tempted to think, What can this Jewish teacher do for me? But the word had come, He heals all manner of diseases, whether those who come to Him for help are rich or poor. She determined not to lose her only hope." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 399, 400.

JESUS' RETICENCE

3. Sometimes Jesus asked people what their request was; but in this case, how did He respond? What was the disciples' attitude? Matthew 15:23.

"Christ knew this woman's situation. He knew that she was longing to see Him, and He placed Himself in her path. By ministering to her sorrow, He could give a living representation of the lesson He designed to teach. For this He had brought His disciples into this region. He desired them to see the ignorance existing in cities and villages close to the land of Israel. The people who had been given every

opportunity to understand the truth were without a knowledge of the needs of those around them. No effort was made to help souls in darkness. The partition wall which Jewish pride had erected, shut even the disciples from sympathy with the heathen world. But these barriers were to be broken down.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 400.

4. When Jesus first sent out the disciples, what instruction had He given them? Matthew 10:6. Now what did He say to His disciples about this woman? Matthew 15:24. Why did He do this?

“Christ did not immediately reply to the woman’s request. He received this representative of a despised race as the Jews would have done. In this He designed that His disciples should be impressed with the cold and heartless manner in which the Jews would treat such a case, as evinced by His reception of the woman, and the compassionate manner in which He would have them deal with such distress, as manifested by His subsequent granting of her petition.

“But although Jesus did not reply, the woman did not lose faith. As He passed on, as if not hearing her, she followed Him, continuing her supplications. Annoyed by her importunities, the disciples asked Jesus to send her away. They saw that their Master treated her with indifference, and they therefore supposed that the prejudice of the Jews against the Canaanites was pleasing to Him. But it was a pitying Saviour to whom the woman made her plea, and in answer to the request of the disciples, Jesus said, ‘I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’ Although this answer appeared to be in accordance with the prejudice of the Jews, it was an implied rebuke to the disciples, which they afterward understood as reminding them of what He had often told them—that He came to the world to save all who would accept Him.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 400, 401.

PERSEVERANCE

5. Did the woman give up when Jesus did not respond positively to her request? Matthew 15:25, 26; Mark 7:27.

“The woman urged her case with increased earnestness, bowing at Christ’s feet, and crying, ‘Lord, help me.’ Jesus, still apparently rejecting her entreaties, according to the unfeeling prejudice of the Jews, answered, ‘It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs.’ This was virtually asserting that it was not just to lavish the blessings brought to the favored people of God upon strangers and aliens from Israel. This answer would have utterly discouraged a less earnest seeker. But the woman saw that her opportunity had

come. Beneath the apparent refusal of Jesus, she saw a compassion that He could not hide. ‘Truth, Lord,’ she answered, ‘yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.’ While the children of the household eat at the father’s table, even the dogs are not left unfed. They have a right to the crumbs that fall from the table abundantly supplied. So while there were many blessings given to Israel, was there not also a blessing for her? She was looked upon as a dog, and had she not then a dog’s claim to a crumb from His bounty?” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 401.

6. What did her reply and yearning perseverance reveal? Matthew 15:27; Mark 7:28.

“Here Christ meets one of an unfortunate and despised race, that has not been favored with the light of God’s word; yet she yields at once to the divine influence of Christ, and has implicit faith in His ability to grant the favor she asks. She begs for the crumbs that fall from the Master’s table. If she may have the privilege of a dog, she is willing to be regarded as a dog. She has no national or religious prejudice or pride to influence her course, and she immediately acknowledges Jesus as the Redeemer, and as being able to do all that she asks of Him.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 401.

HER REQUEST GRANTED

7. Seeing her great faith, what did Jesus do for her? Matthew 15:28; Mark 7:29, 30; Luke 18:1.

Thought question: What should we learn from this wonderful experience?

“The Saviour is satisfied. He has tested her faith in Him. By His dealings with her, He has shown that she who has been regarded as an outcast from Israel is no longer an alien, but a child in God’s household. As a child it is her privilege to share in the Father’s gifts. Christ now grants her request, and finishes the lesson to the disciples. Turning to her with a look of pity and love, He says, ‘O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.’ From that hour her daughter became whole. The demon troubled her no more. The woman departed, acknowledging her Saviour, and happy in the granting of her prayer.

“This was the only miracle that Jesus wrought while on this journey. It was for the performance of this act that He went to the borders of Tyre and Sidon. He wished to relieve the afflicted woman, and at the same time to leave an example in His work of mercy toward one of a despised people for the benefit of His disciples when He should no longer be with them. He wished to lead them from their Jewish

exclusiveness to be interested in working for others besides their own people.” —The Desire of Ages, pp. 401, 402.

FOR MEDITATION

“It was Christ Himself who put into that mother’s heart the persistence which would not be repulsed. It was Christ who gave the pleading widow courage and determination before the judge. It was Christ who, centuries before, in the mysterious conflict by the Jabbok, had inspired Jacob with the same persevering faith. And the confidence which He Himself had implanted, He did not fail to reward.

“He who dwells in the heavenly sanctuary judges righteously. His pleasure is more in His people, struggling with temptation in a world of sin, than in the host of angels that surround His throne.” —Christ’s Object Lessons, pp. 175, 176.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 399-403
- Luke 18:1-8
- *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 42

FOR SELF-EXAMINATION

- How strong is our faith?
- How may we develop a faith similar to that of the Phoenician woman?

* * *

***Please read the Missionary Report
from Bolivia on page 59***

13

Sabbath, September 24, 2011

Signs before Faith?

“If we regard iniquity in our hearts the Lord will not hear us. He can do what He will with His own. He will glorify Himself by working in and through them who wholly follow Him, so that it shall be known that it is the Lord and that their works are wrought in God. Said Christ: ‘If any man serve Me, him will My Father honor.’ When we come to Him we should pray that we may enter into and accomplish His purpose, and that our desires and interests may be lost in His. We should acknowledge our acceptance of His will, not praying Him to concede to ours. It is better for us that

God does not always answer our prayers just when we desire, and in just the manner we wish. He will do more and better for us than to accomplish all our wishes, for our wisdom is folly.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 148.

ASKING FOR SIGNS

- 1. Although the Lord had performed many great miracles, what did the Pharisees and Sadducees ask Him to do one day? Matthew 16:1; Mark 8:11. What was behind this request?**

“A deputation of Pharisees had been joined by representatives from the rich and lordly Sadducees, the party of the priests, the skeptics and aristocracy of the nation. The two sects had been at bitter enmity. The Sadducees courted the favor of the ruling power in order to maintain their own position and authority. The Pharisees, on the other hand, fostered the popular hatred against the Romans, longing for the time when they could throw off the yoke of the conqueror. But Pharisee and Sadducee now united against Christ. Like seeks like; and evil, wherever it exists, leagues with evil for the destruction of the good.

“Now the Pharisees and Sadducees came to Christ, asking for a sign from heaven. When in the days of Joshua Israel went out to battle with the Canaanites at Bethhoron, the sun had stood still at the leader’s command until victory was gained; and many similar wonders had been manifest in their history. Some such sign was demanded of Jesus. But these signs were not what the Jews needed. No mere external evidence could benefit them. What they needed was not intellectual enlightenment, but spiritual renovation.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 405, 406.

- 2. If they could figure out what the weather would be from looking at the sky, what other basic things should they have been able to discern? Matthew 16:2, 3.**

“‘O ye hypocrites,’ said Jesus, ‘ye can discern the face of the sky’—by studying the sky they could foretell the weather—but can ye not discern the signs of the times?’ Christ’s own words, spoken with the power of the Holy Spirit that convicted them of sin, were the sign that God had given for their salvation. And signs direct from heaven had been given to attest the mission of Christ. The song of the angels to the shepherds, the star that guided the wise men, the dove and the voice from heaven at His baptism, were witnesses for Him.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 406.

3. What made Jesus deeply sorrowful? Mark 8:12, first part.

Personal question: How do we also grieve Him?

“O how much we need a more intimate acquaintance with the Lord Jesus. We need to enter into His will and carry out His purposes, saying with the whole heart, ‘Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?’ O how I long to see our churches in a condition different from the condition in which they now are—grieving the Holy Spirit day by day with their lukewarm religious life, a life neither cold nor hot. Christ says, ‘I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth.’ Revelation 3:15, 16.” —*This Day with God*, p. 64.

“Every miracle that Christ performed was a sign of His divinity. He was doing the very work that had been foretold of the Messiah; but to the Pharisees these works of mercy were a positive offense. The Jewish leaders looked with heartless indifference on human suffering. In many cases their selfishness and oppression had caused the affliction that Christ relieved. Thus His miracles were to them a reproach.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 406.

4. Why was Jesus displeased with their request that He perform a miracle? How did He rebuke their pride and unbelief? Matthew 16:4, first part.

“When the message of truth is presented in our day, there are many who, like the Jews, cry, Show us a sign. Work us a miracle. Christ wrought no miracle at the demand of the Pharisees. He wrought no miracle in the wilderness in answer to Satan’s insinuations. He does not impart to us power to vindicate ourselves or to satisfy the demands of unbelief and pride. But the gospel is not without a sign of its divine origin. Is it not a miracle that we can break from the bondage of Satan? Enmity against Satan is not natural to the human heart; it is implanted by the grace of God. When one who has been controlled by a stubborn, wayward will is set free, and yields himself wholeheartedly to the drawing of God’s heavenly agencies, a miracle is wrought; so also when a man who has been under strong delusion comes to understand moral truth. Every time a soul is converted, and learns to love God and keep His commandments, the promise of God is fulfilled, ‘A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.’ Ezekiel 36:26. The change in human hearts, the transformation of human characters, is a miracle that reveals an ever-living Saviour, working to rescue souls. A consistent life in Christ is a great miracle.

In the preaching of the word of God, the sign that should be manifest now and always is the presence of the Holy Spirit, to make the word a regenerating power to those that hear. This is God's witness before the world to the divine mission of His Son." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 407.

OUR DESIRES AND GOD'S ANSWER

5. What was the only sign that Jesus gave these people? What did He do? Matthew 16:4, last part; Mark 8:13.

"As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, Christ was to be the same time 'in the heart of the earth.' And as the preaching of Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so Christ's preaching was a sign to His generation. But what a contrast in the reception of the word! The people of the great heathen city trembled as they heard the warning from God. Kings and nobles humbled themselves; the high and the lowly together cried to the God of heaven, and His mercy was granted unto them. 'The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation,' Christ had said, 'and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.' Matthew 12:40, 41." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 406.

6. What earnest instruction did Jesus give His disciples in regard to the mind-set of the leading men of His day? Matthew 16:6, 11, 12.

Thought question: What makes it so hard for some people to receive the truths of the holy Scriptures?

"The Jews had been accustomed since the days of Moses to put away leaven from their houses at the Passover season, and they had thus been taught to regard it as a type of sin....

"The leaven placed in the meal works imperceptibly, changing the whole mass to its own nature. So if hypocrisy is allowed to exist in the heart, it permeates the character and the life. A striking example of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, Christ had already rebuked in denouncing the practice of 'Corban,' by which a neglect of filial duty was concealed under a pretense of liberality to the temple. The scribes and Pharisees were insinuating deceptive principles. They concealed the real tendency of their doctrines, and improved every occasion to instill them artfully into the minds of their hearers. These false principles, when once accepted, worked like leaven in the meal, permeating and transforming the character. It was this deceptive teaching that made it so hard for the people to receive the words of Christ." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 408.

NOT MY WILL

7. **What is especially important to learn from this incident? If we request something of the Lord without a contrite heart and spirit, what may we expect? James 4:2, first part, 3; Psalm 66:18.**

“What God promises He is able at any time to perform, and the work which He gives His people to do He is able to accomplish by them. If they will live according to every word He has spoken, every good word and promise will be fulfilled unto them. But if they come short of perfect obedience, the great and precious promises are afar off, and they cannot reach the fulfillment.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 148.

FOR MEDITATION

“Let none deceive themselves with the belief that God will pardon and bless them while they are trampling upon one of His requirements. The willful commission of a known sin silences the witnessing voice of the Spirit, and separates the soul from God. Whatever may be the ecstasies of religious feeling, Jesus cannot abide in the heart that disregards the divine law. God will honor those only who honor Him.” —*Messages to Young People*, p. 114.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- Matthew 12:38-45
- Luke 11:16, 29-32
- Isaiah 1:15-18
- *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 404-409
- *Messages to Young People*, p. 114

SUMMARY

Summarize the most important concepts of this lesson:

- _____
- _____
- _____

* * *

MISSIONARY REPORT FROM **BOLIVIA**

To be read on Sabbath, September 24, 2011
The Special Sabbath School Offering
will be gathered on Sabbath, October 1, 2011

Located in the middle of the South American continent, Bolivia covers 1,098,581 square kilometers (424,164 square miles) and has a population of 9,427,219 million. The country is politically very unstable.

The Reform message entered the country in 1939 with Pastor Carlos Kozel's visit; and one year later, in 1940, two Peruvian missionaries (Brothers José Carmen León and Heraclio Begazo) were sent to work in the country. By 1943 there were 30 interested souls attending church services. After the first church was organized in the capital city of La Paz, the message was taken to most cities. On December 23, 1963, the Bolivian Field of the Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement was legally registered as a missionary field of the General Conference with its headquarters in Germany at the time.

In 1975, the General Conference put the Bolivian Field under the Peruvian Union; and then in 1986 Bolivia once again became a missionary field under the General Conference.

From January 1992 to 1995, when there were already 324 members, the church had a collapse that brought about great difficulties. Only 205 members remained firm in the true faith. Due to this problem, the work had to start over with three churches, one vehicle, and 10% of the publications of the publishing house. The situation was very precarious.

But now, thanks to God and the sacrifices made by local and foreign Bible workers and pastors, the Bolivian Field has 317 members and was recently organized as a Union. Although it is weak financially, some donations and the cooperation of our brethren have made it possible to purchase a piece of land measuring 1,700 square meters (18,299 square feet) in the city of Cochabamba for the purpose of constructing a headquarters building.

We appeal to all the believers in the world to help us carry out our construction plans, for we cannot do this by ourselves. As it is written, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Acts 20:35.

“Self-denial will bring into the treasury of God the means necessary to advance His work. Thus we may act in copartnership with Christ.” —*In Heavenly Places*, p. 300.

May your offerings be very special for the work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We pray that He will multiply what you generously give for His cause in this place.

—*Alfonso Reto Rueda*
General Conference Regional Representative for South America

The Special Sabbath School Offering is for
BOLIVIA

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

14

Sabbath, October 1, 2011

The Church and Its Foundation

“The church of Christ, enfeebled and defective as it may be, is the only object on earth on which He bestows His supreme regard.... The Lord has a people, a chosen people, His church, to be His own, His own fortress, which He holds in a sin-stricken, revolted world.” —*In Heavenly Places*, p. 284.

“The church is God’s fortress, His city of refuge, which He holds in a revolted world. Any betrayal of her sacred trust is treachery to Him who has bought her with the precious blood of His only begotten Son. All down through the history of the world, faithful souls have constituted the church on earth.” —*Our High Calling*, p. 172.

CONFESSING JESUS AS GOD’S SON

- 1. Although Jesus preached and healed openly in fulfillment of the Scriptures, what limited concept did the people of His day have of who He was? Matthew 16:13, 14.**

“Sadly the disciples were forced to acknowledge that Israel had failed to recognize their Messiah. Some indeed, when they saw His miracles, had declared Him to be the Son of David. The multitudes that had been fed at Bethsaida had desired to proclaim Him king of Israel. Many were ready to accept Him as a prophet; but they did not believe Him to be the Messiah.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 411.

- 2. But whom did His disciples believe He was? Who made it possible for them to understand this? Matthew 16:15-17.**

“The truth which Peter had confessed is the foundation of the believer’s faith. It is that which Christ Himself has declared to be eternal life. But the possession of this knowledge was no ground for self-

glorification. Through no wisdom or goodness of his own had it been revealed to Peter. Never can humanity, of itself, attain to a knowledge of the divine. 'It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?' Job 11:8. Only the spirit of adoption can reveal to us the deep things of God, which 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man.' 'God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit....' 1 Corinthians 2:9, 10." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 412.

THE CHURCH'S ORIGIN

- 3. What did Jesus reveal to the disciples on the basis of Peter's inspired confession? What plan did this introduce? Matthew 16:18, first part.**

"The word Peter signifies a stone—a rolling stone. Peter was not the rock upon which the church was founded. The gates of hell did prevail against him when he denied his Lord with cursing and swearing. The church was built upon One against whom the gates of hell could not prevail.

"Centuries before the Saviour's advent Moses had pointed to the Rock of Israel's salvation. The psalmist had sung of 'the Rock of my strength.' Isaiah had written, 'Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation.' Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 62:7; Isaiah 28:16. Peter himself, writing by inspiration, applies this prophecy to Jesus. He says, 'If ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious: unto whom coming, a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house.' 1 Peter 2:3-5, R.V." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 413.

- 4. What astonishing declaration did Jesus make concerning the existence of His church? Matthew 16:18, last part.**

"In the presence of God, and all the heavenly intelligences, in the presence of the unseen army of hell, Christ founded His church upon the living Rock. That Rock is Himself—His own body, for us broken and bruised. Against the church built upon this foundation, the gates of hell shall not prevail.

"How feeble the church appeared when Christ spoke these words! There was only a handful of believers, against whom all the power of demons and evil men would be directed; yet the followers of Christ were not to fear. Built upon the Rock of their strength, they could not be overthrown.

“For six thousand years, faith has builded upon Christ. For six thousand years the floods and tempests of satanic wrath have beaten upon the Rock of our salvation; but it stands unmoved.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 413.

KEYS OF THE KINGDOM

5. How is the term, “the keys of the kingdom of heaven,” to be understood? Matthew 16:19.

“The keys of the kingdom of heaven’ are the words of Christ. All the words of Holy Scripture are His, and are here included. These words have power to open and to shut heaven. They declare the conditions upon which men are received or rejected. Thus the work of those who preach God’s word is a savor of life unto life or of death unto death. Theirs is a mission weighted with eternal results.

“The Saviour did not commit the work of the gospel to Peter individually. At a later time, repeating the words that were spoken to Peter, He applied them directly to the church. And the same in substance was spoken also to the twelve as representatives of the body of believers. If Jesus had delegated any special authority to one of the disciples above the others, we should not find them so often contending as to who should be the greatest. They would have submitted to the wish of their Master, and honored the one whom He had chosen.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 413, 414.

6. What principle did Jesus lay down when He spoke about the church, or the congregation of the believers, the second time? Matthew 18:17.

“Our Lord teaches that matters of difficulty between Christians are to be settled within the church. They should not be opened before those who do not fear God. If a Christian is wronged by his brother, let him not appeal to unbelievers in a court of justice. Let him follow out the instruction Christ has given. Instead of trying to avenge himself, let him seek to save his brother. God will guard the interests of those who love and fear Him, and with confidence we may commit our case to Him who judges righteously.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 248, 249.

“Christ gives power to the voice of the church. ‘Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.’ No such thing is countenanced as one man’s starting out upon his own individual responsibility and advocating what views he chooses, irrespective of the judgment of the church. God has bestowed the highest power

under heaven upon His church. It is the voice of God in His united people in church capacity which is to be respected.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 450, 451.

AN UNMOVABLE FOUNDATION

7. How is the solid foundation of the church portrayed in other New Testament verses? Ephesians 2:20-22; Colossians 1:18.

“The head of every man is Christ.’ God, who put all things under the Saviour’s feet, ‘gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.’ 1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:22, 23. The church is built upon Christ as its foundation; it is to obey Christ as its head. It is not to depend upon man, or be controlled by man. Many claim that a position of trust in the church gives them authority to dictate what other men shall believe and what they shall do. This claim God does not sanction. The Saviour declares, ‘All ye are brethren.’ All are exposed to temptation, and are liable to error. Upon no finite being can we depend for guidance. The Rock of faith is the living presence of Christ in the church. Upon this the weakest may depend, and those who think themselves the strongest will prove to be the weakest, unless they make Christ their efficiency. ‘Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm.’ The Lord ‘is the Rock, His work is perfect.’ ‘Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.’ Jeremiah 17:5; Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 2:12.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 414.

FOR MEDITATION

“The church of Christ is in constant peril. Satan is seeking to destroy the people of God, and one man’s mind, one man’s judgment, is not sufficient to be trusted. Christ would have His followers brought together in church capacity, observing order, having rules and discipline, and all subject one to another, esteeming others better than themselves. Union and confidence are essential to the prosperity of the church. If each member of the church feels at liberty to move independently of the others, taking his own peculiar course, how can the church be in any safety in the hour of danger and peril? The prosperity and very existence of a church depend upon the prompt, united action and mutual confidence of its members. When, at a critical time, one sounds the alarm of danger, there is need of prompt and active work, without stopping to question and canvass the whole subject from end to end, thus letting the enemy gain every advantage by delay, when united action might save many souls from perdition.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 445.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- Matthew 16:13-19
- Mark 8:27-30
- Luke 9:18-20
- *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 11, 111
- *Prophets and Kings*, p. 566

COMPARISON

Compare your own personal concept of the church with that presented in the messages of Jesus.

* * *

15

Sabbath, October 8, 2011

If One Refuses to Listen

“The Lord desires His followers to exercise great care in dealing with one another. They are to lift up, to restore, to heal. But there is to be in the church no neglect of proper discipline. The members are to regard themselves as pupils in a school, learning how to form characters worthy of their high calling. In the church here below, God’s children are to be prepared for the great reunion in the church above. Those who here live in harmony with Christ may look forward to an endless life in the family of the redeemed.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 264.

IF A BROTHER FALLS

- 1. What is the responsibility of the believers in the church if a brother is overcome by sin? How is he to be treated? Galatians 6:1; James 5:19, 20.**

“If Christ is in you ‘the hope of glory,’ you will have no disposition to watch others, to expose their errors. Instead of seeking to accuse and condemn, it will be your object to help, to bless, and to save. In dealing with those who are in error, you will heed the injunction, Consider ‘thyself, lest thou also be tempted.’ Galatians 6:1. You will call to mind the many times you have erred and how hard it was to find the right way when you had once left it. You will not push your brother into greater darkness, but with a heart full of pity will tell him of his danger.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 128.

"I saw that many have taken advantage of what God has shown in regard to the sins and wrongs of others.... With tender compassion should brother deal with brother. Delicately should he deal with feelings. It is the nicest and most important work that ever yet was done to touch the wrongs of another. With the deepest humility should a brother do this, considering his own weakness, lest he also should be tempted."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 166.

2. What promise is for all who humble themselves, owning up to their mistakes through the grace and righteousness of Christ? Proverbs 28:13.

"How mistaken are those who imagine that confession of sin will detract from their dignity, and lessen their influence among their fellow men. Clinging to this erroneous idea, though seeing their faults, many fail to confess them, but rather pass by the wrongs they have done others, so embittering their own lives, and shadowing the lives of others. It will not hurt your dignity to confess your sins. Away with this false dignity. Fall on the Rock and be broken, and Christ will give you the true and heavenly dignity. Let not pride, self-esteem, or self-righteousness keep anyone from confessing his sin, that he may claim the promise.... Keep nothing back from God, and neglect not the confession of your faults to your brethren. 'Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed' (James 5:16). Many a sin is left unconfessed to confront the sinner in the day of final account; better far to confront your sins now, to confess them and put them away, while the atoning Sacrifice pleads in your behalf. Do not fail to learn the will of God on this subject. The health of your soul and the salvation of others depends upon the course you pursue in this matter. 'Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon Him: for He careth for you.' 1 Peter 5:6, 7. The humble and broken heart can appreciate something of the love of God and the cross of Calvary. Ample will be the blessing experienced by him who meets the condition by which he may become a partaker of the favor of God."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 326, 327.

IN THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

3. What specific instruction has the Lord given for bringing back to Him one who has fallen into sin? Matthew 18:15; Proverbs 25:9, 10.

"Do not tell others of the wrong. One person is told, then another, and still another; and continually the report grows, and the evil

increases, till the whole church is made to suffer. Settle the matter 'between thee and him alone.' This is God's plan." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 260; *Gospel Workers*, p. 498.

"You have excused yourself for speaking evil of your brother or sister or neighbor to others before going to him and taking the steps which God has absolutely commanded. You say: 'Why, I did not speak to anyone until I was so burdened that I could not refrain.' What burdened you? Was it not a plain neglect of your own duty, of a thus saith the Lord? You were under the guilt of sin because you did not go and tell the offender his fault between you and him alone. If you did not do this, if you disobeyed God, how could you be otherwise than burdened unless your heart was hardened while you were trampling the command of God underfoot, and in your heart hating your brother or neighbor? And what way have you found to unburden yourself? God reproves you for a sin of omission in not telling your brother his fault, and you excuse and comfort yourself by a sin of commission by telling your brother's faults to another person! Is this the right way to purchase ease—by committing sin?" —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 53.

4. What counsel did the Saviour give in the event that a brother refuses to listen and continues in transgression? Matthew 18:16.

"'But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' Matthew 18:16. Take with you those who are spiritually minded, and talk with the one in error in regard to the wrong. He may yield to the united appeals of his brethren. As he sees their agreement in the matter, his mind may be enlightened." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 262.

"In a trial for murder the accused was not to be condemned on the testimony of one witness, even though circumstantial evidence might be strong against him. The Lord's direction was, 'Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die.' Numbers 35:30. It was Christ who gave to Moses these directions for Israel; and when personally with His disciples on earth, as He taught them how to treat the erring, the Great Teacher repeated the lesson that one man's testimony is not to acquit or condemn. One man's views and opinions are not to settle disputed questions. In all these matters two or more are to be associated, and together they are to bear the responsibility, 'that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' Matthew 18:16." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 516.

- 5. According to Jesus, who should help one who has fallen into sin if he refuses to accept counsel from close brethren? Matthew 18:17, first part.**

“The Lord is testing and proving His people. You may be just as severe and critical with your own defective character as you please; but be kind, pitiful, and courteous toward others. Inquire every day: Am I sound to the core, or am I false-hearted? Entreat the Lord to save you from all deception on this point. Eternal interests are involved. While so many are panting after honor and greedy of gain, do you, my beloved brethren, be eagerly seeking the assurance of the love of God and crying: Who will show me how to make my calling and election sure?” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 97.

- 6. However, what should be the result if one who has walked away from obedience will not heed the counsel of the church as a body? Matthew 18:17, last part; 1 Corinthians 5:1, 9, 11.**

“‘And if he shall neglect to hear them,’ what then shall be done? Shall a few persons in a board meeting take upon themselves the responsibility of disfellowshipping the erring one?... Let the church take action in regard to its members....

“If he will not heed the voice of the church, if he refuses all the efforts made to reclaim him, upon the church rests the responsibility of separating him from fellowship. His name should then be stricken from the books.

“No church officer should advise, no committee should recommend, nor should any church vote, that the name of a wrongdoer shall be removed from the church books, until the instruction given by Christ has been faithfully followed. When this instruction has been followed, the church has cleared herself before God. The evil must then be made to appear as it is, and must be removed, that it may not become more and more widespread. The health and purity of the church must be preserved, that she may stand before God unsullied, clad in the robes of Christ’s righteousness.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, pp. 262, 263.

SEEK FOR RECONCILIATION

- 7. Although the one who has fallen into sin may have been set outside the body of believers, what is still necessary? 2 Thessalonians 3:13-15.**

“If the erring one repents and submits to Christ’s discipline, he is to be given another trial. And even if he does not repent, even if he stands outside the church, God’s servants still have a work to do for him. They are to seek earnestly to win him to repentance. And, however aggravated may have been his offense, if he yields to the striving of the Holy Spirit and, by confessing and forsaking his sin, gives evidence of repentance, he is to be forgiven and welcomed to the fold again. His brethren are to encourage him in the right way, treating him as they would wish to be treated were they in his place, considering themselves lest they also be tempted.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 263.

FOR MEDITATION

“All your efforts to save the erring may be unavailing. They may repay you evil for good. They may be enraged rather than convinced. What if they hear to no good purpose, and pursue the evil course they have begun? This will frequently occur. Sometimes the mildest and tenderest reproof will have no good effect. In that case the blessing you wanted another to receive by pursuing a course of righteousness, ceasing to do evil and learning to do well, will return into your own bosom.

“If the erring persist in sin, treat them kindly, and leave them with your heavenly Father. You have delivered your soul; their sin no longer rests upon you; you are not now partaker of their sin. But if they perish, their blood is upon their own head.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 53, 54.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- 1 John 1:8-10; 2:1, 2
- 1 Corinthians 5:1-11
- 1 Thessalonians 5:14
- 1 Timothy 5:19
- *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 52-54
- *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, pp. 260-264
- *Gospel Workers*, pp. 498-502
- *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 248, 249

Complete the verse:

“If thy brother shall _____ against thee, go and tell him his fault
 _____ : if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained
 thy brother.”

* * *

The Follower of Jesus

“There is work for you to do in the church and out of the church. ‘Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.’ The fruit we bear is the only test of the character of the tree before the world. This is the proof of our discipleship. If our works are of such a character that as branches of the living Vine we bear rich clusters of precious fruit, then we wear before the world God’s own badge as His sons and daughters. We are living epistles, known and read of all men.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 348.

DENYING ONESELF

1. **In addition to His work of healing and preaching, what did Jesus try to explain to His disciples that He would face at the end of His mission on earth? Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22. Nevertheless, what did the disciples imagine about His future? What similar situation exists today?**

“Before His crucifixion the Saviour explained to His disciples that He was to be put to death and to rise again from the tomb, and angels were present to impress His words on minds and hearts. But the disciples were looking for temporal deliverance from the Roman yoke, and they could not tolerate the thought that He in whom all their hopes centered should suffer an ignominious death. The words which they needed to remember were banished from their minds; and when the time of trial came, it found them unprepared. The death of Jesus as fully destroyed their hopes as if He had not forewarned them. So in the prophecies the future is opened before us as plainly as it was opened to the disciples by the words of Christ. The events connected with the close of probation and the work of preparation for the time of trouble, are clearly presented. But multitudes have no more understanding of these important truths than if they had never been revealed. Satan watches to catch away every impression that would make them wise unto salvation, and the time of trouble will find them unready.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 594.

2. **With what was the privilege of being Jesus’ disciple connected? What two actions are part of discipleship? Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23. Who is naturally able to do this?**

“... Jesus bade His followers take up the cross and bear it after Him. To the disciples His words, though dimly comprehended, pointed to their submission to the most bitter humiliation—submission even unto death for the sake of Christ. No more complete self-surrender could the Saviour’s words have pictured. But all this He had accepted for them. Jesus did not count heaven a place to be desired while we were lost. He left the heavenly courts for a life of reproach and insult, and a death of shame. He who was rich in heaven’s priceless treasure, became poor, that through His poverty we might be rich. We are to follow in the path He trod.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 416.

“Those who would gain the blessing of sanctification must first learn the meaning of self-sacrifice. The cross of Christ is the central pillar on which hangs the ‘far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.’ ‘If any man will come after Me,’ Christ says, ‘let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.’ 2 Corinthians 4:17; Matthew 16:24. It is the fragrance of our love for our fellow men that reveals our love for God. It is patience in service that brings rest to the soul. It is through humble, diligent, faithful toil that the welfare of Israel is promoted. God upholds and strengthens the one who is willing to follow in Christ’s way.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 560.

ETERNAL VALUES

3. **What did Jesus teach concerning those who do not follow Him—who put themselves in first place (as if they would thus save themselves)? But what is assured to those who put Jesus and His glory first? Matthew 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24.**

“‘Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it.’ Selfishness is death. No organ of the body could live should it confine its service to itself. The heart, failing to send its lifeblood to the hand and the head, would quickly lose its power. As our lifeblood, so is the love of Christ diffused through every part of His mystical body. We are members one of another, and the soul that refuses to impart will perish. And ‘what is a man profited,’ said Jesus, ‘if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 417.

4. **What choice must every person on earth make? What are the costs and risks? Matthew 16:26; Mark 8:36; Luke 9:25.**

“And today men are eagerly seeking for earthly treasure. Their minds are filled with selfish, ambitious thoughts. For the sake of gain-

ing worldly riches, honor, or power, they place the maxims, traditions, and requirements of men above the requirements of God. From them the treasures of His word are hidden.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 106.

“In view of the glorious inheritance that may be his, ‘what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?’ Matthew 16:26. He may be poor, yet he possesses in himself a wealth and dignity that the world could never bestow. The soul redeemed and cleansed from sin, with all its noble powers dedicated to the service of God, is of surpassing worth; and there is joy in heaven in the presence of God and the holy angels over one soul redeemed, a joy that is expressed in songs of holy triumph.” —*Steps to Christ*, p. 126.

5. What in the world is worth more than eternal life? Mark 8:37.

“There is danger of losing all in the pursuit of worldly gain; for in the feverish eagerness for earthly treasure, higher interests are forgotten. The care and perplexity that are involved in laying up treasures upon the earth, leave no time nor desire to estimate the value of eternal riches.... ‘Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.’ Your thoughts, your plans, your motives, will have an earthly mold, and your soul will be defiled with covetousness and selfishness. ‘What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?’...” —*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 217.

“This is a question that demands consideration by every parent, every teacher, every student—by every human being, young or old. No scheme of business or plan of life can be sound or complete that embraces only the brief years of this present life and makes no provision for the unending future. Let the youth be taught to take eternity into their reckoning. Let them be taught to choose the principles and seek the possessions that are enduring—to lay up for themselves that ‘treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth;’ to make to themselves friends ‘by means of the mammon of unrighteousness,’ that when it shall fail, these may receive them ‘into the eternal tabernacles.’ Luke 12:33; 16:9, R.V.” —*Education*, p. 145.

JOY IN SERVICE

6. Having chosen to be a disciple of Christ, what service gives one joy every day? What future glory will eclipse everything that happens on this earth? Matthew 19:28, 29; 16:27.

“There are men and women who have left all for Christ’s sake. Their own temporal interests, their own enjoyment of society and of family and friends, are made of less importance than the interests of the kingdom of God. They have not made houses and lands, and relatives and friends however dear, first in their affections, and God’s cause second. And those who do this, who devote their lives to the advancement of the truth, to bringing many sons and daughters to God, have the promise that they shall have a hundredfold in this life and in the world to come life everlasting. Those who work from a noble standpoint and with unselfish motives will be consecrated to God, body, soul, and spirit. They will not exalt self; they will not feel competent to take responsibilities; but they will not refuse to bear burdens, for they will have a desire to do all that they are capable of doing. These will not study their own convenience; the question with them will be: What is duty?” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 428.

- 7. By contrast, what result will there be for those who center in themselves and deny the Saviour? But to what may those who are not ashamed of Jesus look forward? Mark 8:38; Matthew 16:28.**

“Jesus had told His disciples that there were some standing with Him who should not taste of death till they should see the kingdom of God come with power. At the transfiguration this promise was fulfilled. The countenance of Jesus was there changed and shone like the sun. His raiment was white and glistening.... The disciples beheld with astonishment and fear the excellent majesty of Jesus and the cloud that overshadowed them, and heard the voice of God in terrible majesty, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son; hear Him.’” —*Early Writings*, p. 164.

FOR MEDITATION

“Says Christ, the beloved Teacher: ‘Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.’ Yes, follow Him through evil as well as through good report. Follow Him in befriending the most needy and friendless. Follow Him in being forgetful of self, abundant in acts of self-denial and self-sacrifice to do others good; when reviled, reviling not again; manifesting love and compassion for the fallen race. He counted not His life dear, but gave it up for us all. Follow Him from the lowly manger to the cross. He was our example. He tells you that if you would be His disciple you must take the cross, the despised cross, and follow Him. Can ye drink of the cup? Can ye be baptized with the baptism?” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 177.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- Luke 22:28-30
- *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 416-418
- *Our High Calling*, p. 144

DISCIPLESHIP AND SERVICE

Relate an experience of blessing in the Lord's service.

* * *

17

Sabbath, October 22, 2011

A View of Glory

"The faith of the disciples was greatly strengthened at the transfiguration, when they were permitted to behold Christ's glory and to hear the voice from heaven testifying to His divine character. God chose to give the followers of Jesus strong proof that He was the promised Messiah, that in their bitter sorrow and disappointment at His crucifixion, they would not entirely cast away their confidence. At the transfiguration the Lord sent Moses and Elijah to talk with Jesus concerning His sufferings and death. Instead of choosing angels to converse with His Son, God chose those who had themselves experienced the trials of earth." —*Early Writings*, p. 162.

A PRIVATE PLACE OF PRAYER

- 1. Where did Jesus go one day with His three closest disciples, and for what purpose? Matthew 17:1; Luke 9:28.**

"The disciples do not venture to ask Christ whither He is going, or for what purpose. He has often spent entire nights in the mountains in prayer. He whose hand formed mountain and valley is at home with nature, and enjoys its quietude. The disciples follow where Christ leads the way; yet they wonder why their Master should lead them up this toilsome ascent when they are weary, and when He too is in need of rest.

"Presently Christ tells them that they are now to go no farther. Stepping a little aside from them, the Man of Sorrows pours out His supplications with strong crying and tears. He prays for strength to endure the test in behalf of humanity. He must Himself gain a fresh hold on Omnipotence, for only thus can He contemplate the future." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 419, 420.

2. As He prayed, what change occurred in Him? Who joined Him? Matthew 17:2, 3.

“His prayer is heard. While He is bowed in lowliness upon the stony ground, suddenly the heavens open, the golden gates of the city of God are thrown wide, and holy radiance descends upon the mount, enshrouding the Saviour’s form. Divinity from within flashes through humanity, and meets the glory coming from above. Arising from His prostrate position, Christ stands in godlike majesty. The soul agony is gone. His countenance now shines ‘as the sun,’ and His garments are ‘white as the light.’

“The disciples, awaking, behold the flood of glory that illuminates the mount. In fear and amazement they gaze upon the radiant form of their Master. As they become able to endure the wondrous light, they see that Jesus is not alone....

“Upon Mount Pisgah fifteen centuries before, Moses had stood gazing upon the Land of Promise. But because of his sin at Meribah, it was not for him to enter there.... Moses passed under the dominion of death, but he was not to remain in the tomb. Christ Himself called him forth to life....

“Moses upon the mount of transfiguration was a witness to Christ’s victory over sin and death.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 421.

3. About what did Moses and Elijah speak with Jesus? Why were the disciples unable to hear their conversation? Luke 9:31, 32.

“And He pours out His heart longings for His disciples, that in the hour of the power of darkness their faith may not fail. The dew is heavy upon His bowed form, but He heeds it not. The shadows of night gather thickly about Him, but He regards not their gloom. So the hours pass slowly by. At first the disciples unite their prayers with His in sincere devotion; but after a time they are overcome with weariness, and, even while trying to retain their interest in the scene, they fall asleep....

“Through being overcome with sleep, the disciples heard little of what passed between Christ and the heavenly messengers. Failing to watch and pray, they had not received that which God desired to give them—a knowledge of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. They lost the blessing that might have been theirs through sharing His self-sacrifice. Slow of heart to believe were these disciples, little appreciative of the treasure with which Heaven sought to enrich them.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 420, 425.

- 4. After they awoke and beheld the glorious scene, what did Peter propose? Matthew 17:4; Luke 9:33. What line of thinking was he following?**

“The disciples do not yet comprehend the scene; but they rejoice that the patient Teacher, the meek and lowly One, who has wandered to and fro a helpless stranger, is honored by the favored ones of heaven. They believe that Elijah has come to announce the Messiah’s reign, and that the kingdom of Christ is about to be set up on the earth. The memory of their fear and disappointment they would banish forever. Here, where the glory of God is revealed, they long to tarry. Peter exclaims, ‘Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.’ The disciples are confident that Moses and Elijah have been sent to protect their Master, and to establish His authority as king.”
—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 422.

- 5. While Peter was speaking, what happened? What did the disciples hear? Matthew 17:5; Mark 9:7.**

“Yet they received great light. They were assured that all heaven knew of the sin of the Jewish nation in rejecting Christ. They were given a clearer insight into the work of the Redeemer. They saw with their eyes and heard with their ears things that were beyond the comprehension of man. They were ‘eyewitnesses of His majesty’ (2 Peter 1:16), and they realized that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, to whom patriarchs and prophets had witnessed, and that He was recognized as such by the heavenly universe.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 425.

- 6. What impression did this make on them? How did Jesus comfort them after the cloud disappeared and the sound rolled away? Matthew 17:6-8.**

“As they beheld the cloud of glory, brighter than that which went before the tribes of Israel in the wilderness; as they heard the voice of God speak in awful majesty that caused the mountain to tremble, the disciples fell smitten to the earth. They remained prostrate, their faces hidden, till Jesus came near, and touched them, dispelling their fears with His well-known voice, ‘Arise, and be not afraid.’ Venturing to lift up their eyes, they saw that the heavenly glory had passed away, the forms of Moses and Elijah had disappeared. They were upon the mount, alone with Jesus.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 425.

7. What promise of Jesus was fulfilled by the transfiguration and the glorious heavenly kingdom portrayed in miniature? Matthew 16:28; Mark 9:1.

“Jesus has told them of His sufferings; He has taken them with Him that they might unite with Him in prayer; even now He is praying for them. The Saviour has seen the gloom of His disciples, and has longed to lighten their grief by an assurance that their faith has not been in vain. Not all, even of the twelve, can receive the revelation He desires to give. Only the three who are to witness His anguish in Gethsemane have been chosen to be with Him on the mount. Now the burden of His prayer is that they may be given a manifestation of the glory He had with the Father before the world was, that His kingdom may be revealed to human eyes, and that His disciples may be strengthened to behold it. He pleads that they may witness a manifestation of His divinity that will comfort them in the hour of His supreme agony with the knowledge that He is of a surety the Son of God and that His shameful death is a part of the plan of redemption....

“Jesus was clothed with the light of heaven, as He will appear when He shall come ‘the second time without sin unto salvation.’ For He will come ‘in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.’ Hebrews 9:28; Mark 8:38. 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*, pp. 420-422.

FOR MEDITATION

“The only-begotten Son of God clothed His divinity with humanity, and came to our world as a teacher, an instructor, to reveal truth in contrast with error. Truth, saving truth, never languished on His tongue, never suffered in His hands, but was made to stand out plainly and clearly defined amid the moral darkness prevailing in our world. For this work He left the heavenly courts. He said of Himself, ‘For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.’ The truth came from His lips with freshness and power, as a new revelation. He was the way, the truth, and the life. His life, given for this sinful world, was full of earnestness and momentous results; for His work was to save perishing souls. He came forth to be the True Light, shining amid the moral darkness of superstition and error, and was announced by a voice from heaven, proclaiming, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ And at His transfiguration this voice from heaven was again heard, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him.’” —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 405.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- *Early Writings*, pp. 162-164
- *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 419-425

* * *

18

Sabbath, October 29, 2011

Healing the Mentally Ill

“If you have faith like this [a mustard seed], you will lay hold upon God’s word, and upon all the helpful agencies He has appointed. Thus your faith will strengthen, and will bring to your aid the power of heaven. The obstacles that are piled by Satan across your path, though apparently as insurmountable as the eternal hills, shall disappear before the demand of faith. ‘Nothing shall be impossible unto you.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 431.

INABILITY OF THE DISCIPLES

- 1. What situation had confronted the other nine while Jesus and His three disciples were away? Mark 9:14, 15; Luke 9:37.**

“As the people on the plain caught sight of Jesus, they ran to meet Him, greeting Him with expressions of reverence and joy. Yet His quick eye discerned that they were in great perplexity. The disciples appeared troubled. A circumstance had just occurred that had caused them bitter disappointment and humiliation.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 427.

- 2. What incident produced discussion among the multitude and great perplexity on the part of the disciples? Matthew 17:14-16.**

“While they were waiting at the foot of the mountain, a father had brought to them his son, to be delivered from a dumb spirit that tormented him. Authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, had been conferred on the disciples when Jesus sent out the twelve to preach through Galilee. As they went forth strong in faith, the evil spirits had obeyed their word. Now in the name of Christ they commanded the torturing spirit to leave his victim; but the demon only mocked them by

a fresh display of his power. The disciples, unable to account for their defeat, felt that they were bringing dishonor upon themselves and their Master. And in the crowd there were scribes who made the most of this opportunity to humiliate them. Pressing around the disciples, they plied them with questions, seeking to prove that they and their Master were deceivers. Here, the rabbis triumphantly declared, was an evil spirit that neither the disciples nor Christ Himself could conquer. The people were inclined to side with the scribes, and a feeling of contempt and scorn pervaded the crowd.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 427.

FAITHLESS GENERATION

3. Reading the people’s hearts and their constant inclination to doubt and criticize, what did Jesus say? Matthew 17:17.

“Jesus looked about Him upon the awe-stricken multitude, the caviling scribes, the perplexed disciples. He read the unbelief in every heart; and in a voice filled with sorrow He exclaimed, ‘O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?’ Then He bade the distressed father, ‘Bring thy son hither.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 428.

BROUGHT TO THE REDEEMER

4. As in the past, what happened to the boy when he was brought to the Master? Mark 9:20-22.

“The boy was brought, and as the Saviour’s eyes fell upon him, the evil spirit cast him to the ground in convulsions of agony. He lay wallowing and foaming, rending the air with unearthly shrieks.

“Again the Prince of life and the prince of the powers of darkness had met on the field of battle—Christ in fulfillment of His mission to ‘preach deliverance to the captives,... to set at liberty them that are bruised’ (Luke 4:18), Satan seeking to hold his victim under his control. Angels of light and the hosts of evil angels, unseen, were pressing near to behold the conflict. For a moment, Jesus permitted the evil spirit to display his power, that the beholders might comprehend the deliverance about to be wrought.

“The multitude looked on with bated breath, the father in an agony of hope and fear. Jesus asked, ‘How long is it ago since this came unto him?’ The father told the story of long years of suffering, and then, as if he could endure no more, exclaimed, ‘If Thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.’ ‘If Thou canst!’ Even now the father questioned the power of Christ.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 428.

- 5. What divine principle did the father need to grasp if his child was to be healed? What did he acknowledge as his weakness? Mark 9:23, 24.**

“Jesus answers, ‘If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.’ There is no lack of power on the part of Christ; the healing of the son depends upon the father’s faith. With a burst of tears, realizing his own weakness, the father casts himself upon Christ’s mercy, with the cry, ‘Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 428.

- 6. What did Jesus do after hearing the father’s answer? How was the evil spirit’s cruelty demonstrated? Mark 9:25-27; Luke 9:43, first part.**

“Jesus turns to the suffering one, and says, ‘Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.’ There is a cry, an agonized struggle. The demon, in passing, seems about to rend the life from his victim. Then the boy lies motionless, and apparently lifeless. The multitude whisper, ‘He is dead.’ But Jesus takes him by the hand, and lifting him up, presents him, in perfect soundness of mind and body, to his father. Father and son praise the name of their Deliverer. The multitude are ‘amazed at the mighty power of God,’ while the scribes, defeated and crestfallen, turn sullenly away.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 428, 429.

REASON FOR DEFEAT

- 7. Why had the disciples been unable to carry out Jesus’ previous commission to them to cast out devils? Matthew 17:19-21. How does this important lesson apply to us today?**

“Their unbelief, that shut them out from deeper sympathy with Christ, and the carelessness with which they regarded the sacred work committed to them, had caused their failure in the conflict with the powers of darkness.

“The words of Christ pointing to His death had brought sadness and doubt. And the selection of the three disciples to accompany Jesus to the mountain had excited the jealousy of the nine. Instead of strengthening their faith by prayer and meditation on the words of Christ, they had been dwelling on their discouragements and personal grievances. In this state of darkness they had undertaken the conflict with Satan.

“In order to succeed in such a conflict they must come to the work in a different spirit. Their faith must be strengthened by fervent prayer and fasting, and humiliation of heart. They must be emptied of self, and be filled with the Spirit and power of God. Earnest, persevering supplication to God in faith—faith that leads to entire dependence upon God, and unreserved consecration to His work—can alone avail to bring men the Holy Spirit’s aid in the battle against principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, and wicked spirits in high places.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 430, 431.

FOR MEDITATION

“If Thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.’ How many a sin-burdened soul has echoed that prayer. And to all, the pitying Saviour’s answer is, ‘If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.’ 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 sinful 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 the same mighty Redeemer today. Faith comes by the word of God. Then grasp His promise, ‘Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.’ John 6:37. Cast yourself at His feet with the cry, ‘Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.’ You can never perish while you do this—never.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 429.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- Mark 11:22-24
- James 1:5-7
- *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 426-431
- *Prophets and Kings*, p. 595

THOUGHT QUESTION

Why was freedom from the shackles of the evil spirit possible for the boy only through God’s power?

* * *

The Temple Contribution

“All who would be soldiers of the cross of Christ, must gird on the armor and prepare for conflict. They should not be intimidated by threats, or terrified by dangers. They must be cautious in peril, yet firm and brave in facing the foe and doing battle for God. The consecration of Christ’s follower must be complete. Father, mother, wife, children, houses, lands, everything, must be held secondary to the work and cause of God. He must be willing to bear patiently, cheerfully, joyfully, whatever in God’s providence he may be called to suffer. His final reward will be to share with Christ the throne of immortal glory.” —*Conflict and Courage*, p. 128.

A REQUIREMENT

1. **What was required of the men who were counted in Israel, to be used for upkeep of the tabernacle? Exodus 30:12, 13; 38:26.**

“The tithe was to be exclusively devoted to the use of the Levites, the tribe that had been set apart for the service of the sanctuary. But this was by no means the limit of the contributions for religious purposes. The tabernacle, as afterward the temple, was erected wholly by freewill offerings; and to provide for necessary repairs and other expenses, Moses directed that as often as the people were numbered, each should contribute a half shekel for ‘the service of the tabernacle.’ In the time of Nehemiah a contribution was made yearly for this purpose. See Exodus 30:12-16; 2 Kings 12:4, 5; 2 Chronicles 24:4-13; Nehemiah 10:32, 33. From time to time sin offerings and thank offerings were brought to God. These were presented in great numbers at the annual feasts. And the most liberal provision was made for the poor.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 526.

2. **What was done in the time of King Joash (836-797 B.C.) to provide funds to restore the house of the Lord? 2 Chronicles 24:8, 9.**

A CONUNDRUM

3. **Was this contribution collected in the time of Jesus? What did the collector ask Peter? Matthew 17:24.**

“Soon after they reached the town, the collector of the temple revenue came to Peter with the question, ‘Doth not your Master pay tribute?’ This tribute was not a civil tax, but a religious contribution, which every Jew was required to pay annually for the support of the temple. A refusal to pay the tribute would be regarded as disloyalty to the temple—in the estimation of the rabbis a most grievous sin. The Saviour’s attitude toward the rabbinical laws, and His plain reproofs to the defenders of tradition, afforded a pretext for the charge that He was seeking to overthrow the temple service. Now His enemies saw an opportunity of casting discredit upon Him. In the collector of the tribute they found a ready ally.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 432, 433.

4. What did Peter reply without first consulting Jesus? Matthew 17:25, first part. Did he fully understand the motive of the questioner?

“Peter saw in the collector’s question an insinuation touching Christ’s loyalty to the temple. Zealous for his Master’s honor, he hastily answered, without consulting Him, that Jesus would pay the tribute.

“But Peter only partially comprehended the purpose of his questioner. There were some classes who were held to be exempt from the payment of the tribute. In the time of Moses, when the Levites were set apart for the service of the sanctuary, they were given no inheritance among the people. The Lord said, ‘Levi hath no part nor inheritance with his brethren; the Lord is his inheritance.’ Deuteronomy 10:9. In the days of Christ the priests and Levites were still regarded as especially devoted to the temple, and were not required to make the annual contribution for its support. Prophets also were exempted from this payment. In requiring the tribute from Jesus, the rabbis were setting aside His claim as a prophet or teacher, and were dealing with Him as with any commonplace person. A refusal on His part to pay the tribute would be represented as disloyalty to the temple; while, on the other hand, the payment of it would be taken as justifying their rejection of Him as a prophet.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 433.

CLARIFICATION AND SOLUTION

5. How did Jesus help Peter see things differently in this matter? Matthew 17:25, 26.

“When Peter entered the house, the Saviour made no reference to what had taken place,... While the people of a country are taxed for the maintenance of their king, the monarch’s own children are exempt. So Israel, the professed people of God, were required to maintain His ser-

vice; but Jesus, the Son of God, was under no such obligation. If priests and Levites were exempt because of their connection with the temple, how much more He to whom the temple was His Father's house.

"If Jesus had paid the tribute without a protest, He would virtually have acknowledged the justice of the claim, and would thus have denied His divinity. But while He saw good to meet the demand, He denied the claim upon which it was based. In providing for the payment of the tribute He gave evidence of His divine character. It was made manifest that He was one with God, and therefore was not under tribute as a mere subject of the kingdom." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 433, 434.

6. What was Jesus' principle in dealing with sensitive issues such as this? Matthew 17:27, first part. How does this apply today?

"While Jesus made it plain that He was under no obligation to pay the tribute, He entered into no controversy with the Jews in regard to the matter; for they would have misinterpreted His words, and turned them against Him. Lest He should give offense by withholding the tribute, He did that which He could not justly be required to do. This lesson would be of great value to His disciples. Marked changes were soon to take place in their relation to the temple service, and Christ taught them not to place themselves needlessly in antagonism to established order. So far as possible, they were to avoid giving occasion for misinterpretation of their faith. While Christians are not to sacrifice one principle of truth, they should avoid controversy whenever it is possible to do so." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 434.

7. How did He resolve this matter, again showing His lordship over heaven and earth? Matthew 17:27, second part. What lesson of trust is particularly important for every Christian in every area of life?

"The humblest and poorest of the disciples of Jesus can be a blessing to others. They may not realize that they are doing any special good, but by their unconscious influence they may start waves of blessing that will widen and deepen, and the blessed results they may never know until the day of final reward. They do not feel or know that they are doing anything great. They are not required to weary themselves with anxiety about success. They have only to go forward quietly, doing faithfully the work that God's providence assigns, and their life will not be in vain. Their own souls will be growing more and more into the likeness of Christ; they are workers together with God in this life, and are thus fitting for the higher work and the unshadowed joy of the life to come." —*Steps to Christ*, p. 83.

“Though He had clothed His divinity with humanity, in this miracle He revealed His glory. It was evident that this was He who through David had declared, ‘Every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains; and the wild beasts of the field are Mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is Mine, and the fullness thereof.’ Psalm 50:10-12.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 434.

FOR MEDITATION

“God speaks to us through His providential workings, and through the influence of His Spirit upon the heart. In our circumstances and surroundings, in the changes daily taking place around us, we may find precious lessons if our hearts are but open to discern them. The psalmist, tracing the work of God’s providence, says, ‘The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.’ ‘Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord.’ Psalm 33:5; 107:43.” —*Christian Education*, p. 56.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- Matthew 22:15-22
- Romans 13:1-7
- *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 131

* * *

20

Sabbath, November 12, 2011

God Has a Different Perspective

“Again Jesus explained to the disciples that His kingdom is not characterized by earthly dignity and display. At the feet of Jesus all these distinctions are forgotten. The rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant, meet together, with no thought of caste or worldly preeminence. All meet as blood-bought souls, alike dependent upon One who has redeemed them to God.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 437.

PREPARATION FOR THE COMING DAYS

1. **What did the Lord tell His disciples a number of times to prepare them for the coming trial? Mark 9:31, 32; Matthew 17:22, 23.**

“On the journey through Galilee, Christ had again tried to prepare the minds of His disciples for the scenes before Him. He told them that He was to go up to Jerusalem to be put to death and to rise again. And He added the strange and solemn announcement that He was to be betrayed into the hands of His enemies. The disciples did not even now comprehend His words. Although the shadow of a great sorrow fell upon them, a spirit of rivalry found a place in their hearts.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 432.

STRIFE FOR FIRST PLACE

- 2. Even though Jesus did everything possible to prepare them for their mission, what dominated their thoughts and discussions? How did He bring up the subject at an appropriate time? Luke 9:46; Mark 9:33, 34.**

“This strife they thought to conceal from Jesus, and they did not, as usual, press close to His side, but loitered behind, so that He was in advance of them as they entered Capernaum. Jesus read their thoughts, and He longed to counsel and instruct them. But for this He awaited a quiet hour, when their hearts should be open to receive His words....

“When Christ and the disciples were alone in the house, while Peter was gone to the sea, Jesus called the others to Him, and asked, ‘What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?’ The presence of Jesus, and His question, put the matter in an entirely different light from that in which it had appeared to them while they were contending by the way. Shame and self-condemnation kept them silent. Jesus had told them that He was to die for their sake, and their selfish ambition was in painful contrast to His unselfish love.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 432, 434, 435.

JESUS’ PERSPECTIVE

- 3. What principle, which was exemplified in His own life and actions, did He lay out before them? Mark 9:35.**

“Before honor is humility. To fill a high place before men, Heaven chooses the worker who, like John the Baptist, takes a lowly place before God. The most childlike disciple is the most efficient in labor for God. The heavenly intelligences can cooperate with him who is seeking, not to exalt self, but to save souls. He who feels most deeply his need of divine aid will plead for it; and the Holy Spirit will give unto him glimpses of Jesus that will strengthen and uplift the soul. From communion with Christ he will go forth to work for those who are per-

ishing in their sins. He is anointed for his mission; and he succeeds where many of the learned and intellectually wise would fail.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 436.

4. **Knowing their thoughts, what example did He present to illustrate what constitutes true greatness? Luke 9:47; Matthew 18:2, 3.**

“It was not enough for the disciples of Jesus to be instructed as to the nature of His kingdom. What they needed was a change of heart that would bring them into harmony with its principles. Calling a little child to Him, Jesus set him in the midst of them; then tenderly folding the little one in His arms He said, ‘Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.’ The simplicity, the self-forgetfulness, and the confiding love of a little child are the attributes that Heaven values. These are the characteristics of real greatness.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 437.

5. **How did He link humility and greatness in the heavenly kingdom? Matthew 18:4.**

“But when men exalt themselves, feeling that they are a necessity for the success of God’s great plan, the Lord causes them to be set aside. It is made evident that the Lord is not dependent upon them. The work does not stop because of their removal from it, but goes forward with greater power....

“The religion of Christ is sincerity itself. Zeal for God’s glory is the motive implanted by the Holy Spirit; and only the effectual working of the Spirit can implant this motive. Only the power of God can banish self-seeking and hypocrisy. This change is the sign of His working. When the faith we accept destroys selfishness and pretense, when it leads us to seek God’s glory and not our own, we may know that it is of the right order. ‘Father, glorify Thy name’ (John 12:28), was the keynote of Christ’s life, and if we follow Him, this will be the keynote of our life. He commands us to ‘walk, even as He walked;’ and ‘hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.’ 1 John 2:6, 3.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 436, 409.

WHAT GOD APPRECIATES

6. **Instead of being concerned about who would occupy the first place, what were they to learn to appreciate? Matthew 18:5; Mark 9:36, 37.**

“The sincere, contrite soul is precious in the sight of God. He places His own signet upon men, not by their rank, not by their wealth, not by their intellectual greatness, but by their oneness with Christ. The Lord of glory is satisfied with those who are meek and lowly in heart. ‘Thou hast also given me,’ said David, ‘the shield of Thy salvation:... and Thy gentleness’—as an element in the human character—hath made me great.’ Psalm 18:35.

“‘Whosoever shall receive one of such children in My name,’ said Jesus, ‘receiveth Me: and whosoever shall receive Me, receiveth not Me, but Him that sent Me.’ ‘Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool:... but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word.’ Isaiah 66:1, 2.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 437.

7. Therefore, to God, who is truly great? Luke 9:48.

Personal question: How has God helped you live out this important principle?

“Not by their wealth, their education, or their position does God estimate men. He estimates them by their purity of motive and their beauty of character. He looks to see how much of His Spirit they possess and how much of His likeness their life reveals. To be great in God’s kingdom is to be as a little child in humility, in simplicity of faith, and in purity of love.

“‘Ye know,’ Christ said, ‘that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Not so shall it be among you: but whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister.’ Matthew 20:25, 26, A.R.V.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 477, 478.

FOR MEDITATION

“If any are qualified for a higher position, the Lord will lay the burden, not alone on them, but on those who have tested them, who know their worth, and who can understandingly urge them forward. It is those who perform faithfully their appointed work day by day, who in God’s own time will hear His call, ‘Come up higher.’” —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 477.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- Luke 14:11; 18:14
- *The Sanctified Life*, pp. 55, 56
- *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 638

PERSPECTIVE

Find a Bible verse that shows the contrast between God’s perspective and human perspective.

* * *

At the Feast of Tabernacles

“The cry of Christ to the thirsty soul is still going forth, and it appeals to us with even greater power than to those who heard it in the temple on that last day of the feast. The fountain is open for all. The weary and exhausted ones are offered the refreshing draught of eternal life. Jesus is still crying, ‘If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 454.

DIFFERENCE OF VIEWS

1. Where did Jesus carry out His ministry for a while, and why? What feast lay ahead? John 7:1, 2.

“The Feast of Tabernacles was the closing gathering of the year. It was God’s design that at this time the people should reflect on His goodness and mercy. The whole land had been under His guidance, receiving His blessing. Day and night His watchcare had continued....

“The feast continued for seven days, and for its celebration the inhabitants of Palestine, with many from other lands, left their homes, and came to Jerusalem.... Everything that could please the eye, and give expression to the universal joy, was brought from the woods; the city bore the appearance of a beautiful forest.

“This feast was not only the harvest thanksgiving, but the memorial of God’s protecting care over Israel in the wilderness. In commemoration of their tent life, the Israelites during the feast dwelt in booths or tabernacles of green boughs. These were erected in the streets, in the courts of the temple, or on the housetops. The hills and valleys surrounding Jerusalem were also dotted with these leafy dwellings, and seemed to be alive with people.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 447, 448.

2. What did His brothers want Jesus to do? Why? John 7:3-5. What clouded their view of the situation?

“As the sons of Joseph made preparation to attend the Feast of Tabernacles, they saw that Christ made no movement signifying His intention of attending....

“So anxious were they about this that they urged Christ to go to Jerusalem. ‘... If Thou do these things, show Thyself to the world.’ The ‘if’ expressed doubt and unbelief. They attributed cowardice and weak-

ness to Him. If He knew that He was the Messiah, why this strange reserve and inaction? If He really possessed such power, why not go boldly to Jerusalem, and assert His claims? Why not perform in Jerusalem the wonderful works reported of Him in Galilee? Do not hide in secluded provinces, they said, and perform Your mighty works for the benefit of ignorant peasants and fishermen. Present yourself at the capital, win the support of the priests and rulers, and unite the nation in establishing the new kingdom.

“These brothers of Jesus reasoned from the selfish motive so often found in the hearts of those ambitious for display. This spirit was the ruling spirit of the world.... They were greatly disappointed when so many of His disciples forsook Him. They themselves turned from Him to escape the cross of acknowledging what His works revealed—that He was the Sent of God.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 450, 451.

3. Explain the meaning of Jesus’ response to His brothers’ prodding. Why did He not go to the feast with them? John 7:6, 8-10.

“His brothers had spoken to Him in a tone of authority, prescribing the course He should pursue. He cast their rebuke back to them, classing them not with His self-denying disciples, but with the world. ‘The world cannot hate you,’ He said, ‘but Me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.’ The world does not hate those who are like it in spirit; it loves them as its own.

“The world for Christ was not a place of ease and self-aggrandizement. He was not watching for an opportunity to seize its power and its glory. It held out no such prize for Him. It was the place into which His Father had sent Him. He had been given for the life of the world, to work out the great plan of redemption. He was accomplishing His work for the fallen race. But He was not to be presumptuous, not to rush into danger, not to hasten a crisis. Each event in His work had its appointed hour. He must wait patiently. He knew that He was to receive the world’s hatred; He knew that His work would result in His death; but to prematurely expose Himself would not be the will of His Father.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 451.

4. What did the Jews think of Jesus? Therefore, what do such people think of those who follow Him? John 7:11, 12; 15:20.

“From Jerusalem the report of Christ’s miracles had spread wherever the Jews were dispersed; and although for many months He had been absent from the feasts, the interest in Him had not abated. Many from all parts of the world had come up to the Feast of Tabernacles in

the hope of seeing Him. At the beginning of the feast many inquiries were made for Him. The Pharisees and rulers looked for Him to come, hoping for an opportunity to condemn Him. They anxiously inquired, 'Where is He?' but no one knew. The thought of Him was uppermost in all minds. Through fear of the priests and rulers, none dared acknowledge Him as the Messiah, but everywhere there was quiet yet earnest discussion concerning Him. Many defended Him as one sent from God, while others denounced Him as a deceiver of the people." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 451, 452.

WATER FOR THOSE WHO THIRST

- 5. Although it was risky for Jesus to appear openly among the people, what did He do? What message did He earnestly proclaim in the temple court? John 7:14, 15, 37.**

"Meanwhile Jesus had quietly arrived at Jerusalem. He had chosen an unfrequented route by which to go, in order to avoid the travelers who were making their way to the city from all quarters.... It was to avoid this that He chose to make the journey alone.

"In the midst of the feast, when the excitement concerning Him was at its height, He entered the court of the temple in the presence of the multitude....

"He had given them every possible proof that He came forth from God, and made every possible effort to bring them to repentance....

"The condition of the people made this appeal very forcible. They had been engaged in a continued scene of pomp and festivity, their eyes had been dazzled with light and color, and their ears regaled with the richest music; but there had been nothing in all this round of ceremonies to meet the wants of the spirit, nothing to satisfy the thirst of the soul for that which perishes not. Jesus invited them to come and drink of the fountain of life, of that which would be in them a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 452-454.

- 6. What value is the performance of a ceremony without knowing its meaning? What will happen to those who believe in Jesus? John 7:38.**

"The priest had that morning performed the ceremony which commemorated the smiting of the rock in the wilderness. That rock was a symbol of Him who by His death would cause living streams of salvation to flow to all who are athirst. Christ's words were the water of life. There in the presence of the assembled multitude He set Himself apart to be smitten, that the water of life might flow to the world. In

smiting Christ, Satan thought to destroy the Prince of life; but from the smitten rock there flowed living water. As Jesus thus spoke to the people, their hearts thrilled with a strange awe, and many were ready to exclaim, with the woman of Samaria, 'Give me this water, that I thirst not.' John 4:15." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 454.

ONE MORE PROMISE

- 7. What great gift will all who truly believe in Him receive?
John 7:39; 16:13; Acts 1:8.**

FOR MEDITATION

"Jesus knew the wants of the soul. Pomp, riches, and honor cannot satisfy the heart. 'If any man thirst, let him come unto Me.' The rich, the poor, the high, the low, are alike welcome. He promises to relieve the burdened mind, to comfort the sorrowing, and to give hope to the despondent. Many of those who heard Jesus were mourners over disappointed hopes, many were nourishing a secret grief, many were seeking to satisfy their restless longing with the things of the world and the praise of men; but when all was gained, they found that they had toiled only to reach a broken cistern, from which they could not quench their thirst. Amid the glitter of the joyous scene they stood, dissatisfied and sad. That sudden cry, 'If any man thirst,' startled them from their sorrowful meditation, and as they listened to the words that followed, their minds kindled with a new hope. The Holy Spirit presented the symbol before them until they saw in it the offer of the priceless gift of salvation." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 454.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- John 14:16,17; 15:26
- *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 447-454
- *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 130
- *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 233, 234

CONCEPTS

List the concepts in this lesson that you find of greatest interest.

- _____
- _____
- _____

* * *

Facing Opposition

“Whenever it is necessary for the advancement of the cause of truth and the glory of God, that an opponent be met, how carefully, and with what humility should they [the advocates of truth] go into the conflict. With heartsearching, confession of sin, and earnest prayer, and often fasting for a time, they should entreat that God would especially help them, and give His saving, precious truth a glorious victory, that error might appear in its true deformity, and its advocates be completely discomfited.”
—*Evangelism*, p. 165.

DIVINE TEACHINGS

1. What did Jesus say about what He taught? John 7:16-18. What might He say about our teachings?

“All the while Jesus was at Jerusalem during the feast He was shadowed by spies. Day after day new schemes to silence Him were tried. The priests and rulers were watching to entrap Him. They were planning to stop Him by violence....

“On the first day of His presence at the feast, the rulers had come to Him, demanding by what authority He taught. They wished to divert attention from Him to the question of His right to teach, and thus to their own importance and authority....

“The question of these cavilers Jesus met, not by answering the cavil, but by opening up truth vital to the salvation of the soul. The perception and appreciation of truth, He said, depends less upon the mind than upon the heart. Truth must be received into the soul; it claims the homage of the will. If truth could be submitted to the reason alone, pride would be no hindrance in the way of its reception. But it is to be received through the work of grace in the heart; and its reception depends upon the renunciation of every sin that the Spirit of God reveals....

“He now gave a test by which the true teacher might be distinguished from the deceiver: ‘He that speaketh from himself seeketh his own glory....’” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 455, 456.

ERRONEOUS VIEWS

2. What showed that Jesus could read their thoughts and feelings? John 7:19, 24-26.

Personal question: How would we react if someone told us our secret thoughts?

“Jesus gave the rabbis an evidence of His divinity by showing that He read their hearts. Ever since the healing at Bethesda they had been plotting His death. Thus they were themselves breaking the law which they professed to be defending. ‘Did not Moses give you the law,’ He said, ‘and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill Me?’...

“He went on to show that His work of healing at Bethesda was in harmony with the Sabbath law, and that it was justified by the interpretation which the Jews themselves put upon the law. He said, ‘Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision;... and ye on the Sabbath day circumcise a man.’ According to the law, every child must be circumcised on the eighth day. Should the appointed time fall upon the Sabbath, the rite must then be performed. How much more must it be in harmony with the spirit of the law to make a man ‘every whit whole on the Sabbath day.’ And He warned them to ‘judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 456, 457.

3. What unfounded ideas did some have concerning the Messiah’s coming? How did Jesus refute them? John 7:27-29.

Thought question: Where do speculative ideas come from?

“Many among Christ’s hearers who were dwellers at Jerusalem, and who were not ignorant of the plots of the rulers against Him, felt themselves drawn to Him by an irresistible power. The conviction pressed upon them that He was the Son of God. But Satan was ready to suggest doubt; and for this the way was prepared by their own erroneous ideas of the Messiah and His coming. It was generally believed that Christ would be born at Bethlehem, but that after a time He would disappear, and at His second appearance none would know whence He came. There were not a few who held that the Messiah would have no natural relationship to humanity. And because the popular conception of the glory of the Messiah was not met by Jesus of Nazareth, many gave heed to the suggestion, ‘Howbeit we know this Man whence He is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence He is.’

“... They claimed a knowledge of what the origin of Christ should be, but they were in utter ignorance of it. If they had lived in accordance with the will of God, they would have known His Son when He was manifested to them.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 457.

- 4. Despite the opposition and misleading influence of the Pharisees, what did many people believe? Since the Light of Life was with them for a very short time, what should they have done? John 7:31-34.**

“The hearers could not but understand Christ’s words. Clearly they were a repetition of the claim He had made in the presence of the Sanhedrin many months before, when He declared Himself the Son of God. As the rulers then tried to compass His death, so now they sought to take Him; but they were prevented by an unseen power, which put a limit to their rage, saying to them, Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther.

“Among the people many believed on Him, and they said, ‘When Christ cometh, will He do more miracles than these which this Man hath done?’ The leaders of the Pharisees, who were anxiously watching the course of events, caught the expressions of sympathy among the throng. Hurrying away to the chief priests, they laid their plans to arrest Him. They arranged, however, to take Him when He was alone;...

“All day long He had stretched forth His hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people; yet He would be found of them that sought Him not; among a people that had not called upon His name He would be manifest. Romans 10:20, 21.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 457, 458.

- 5. What influence did the rabbis’ opinions concerning the Messiah have on the people? After hearing His divine message, what did even the officers sent to capture Jesus recognize? John 7:40, 41, 45, 46. Does the Lord force anyone who is not willing to believe in Him?**

“Many who were convinced that Jesus was the Son of God were misled by the false reasoning of the priests and rabbis. These teachers had repeated with great effect the prophecies concerning the Messiah, that He would ‘reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously;’ that He would ‘have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.’ Isaiah 24:23; Psalm 72:8.... The very words of prophecy were so perverted as to sanction error....

“God does not compel men to give up their unbelief. Before them are light and darkness, truth and error. It is for them to decide which they will accept. The human mind is endowed with power to discriminate between right and wrong. God designs that men shall not decide

from impulse, but from weight of evidence, carefully comparing scripture with scripture....

“Many are deceived today in the same way as were the Jews. Religious teachers read the Bible in the light of their own understanding and traditions; and the people do not search the Scriptures for themselves, and judge for themselves as to what is truth; but they yield up their judgment, and commit their souls to their leaders.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 458, 459.

A VOICE OF CAUTION

- 6. How did the leaders challenge their officers who had been convicted by Jesus’ message? How disrespectfully did they speak of the common people? John 7:47-49.**

“Those to whom the message of truth is spoken seldom ask, ‘Is it true?’ but, ‘By whom is it advocated?’ Multitudes estimate it by the numbers who accept it; and the question is still asked, ‘Have any of the learned men or religious leaders believed?’ Men are no more favorable to real godliness now than in the days of Christ. They are just as intently seeking earthly good, to the neglect of eternal riches; and it is not an argument against the truth, that large numbers are not ready to accept it, or that it is not received by the world’s great men, or even by the religious leaders.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 459, 460.

- 7. After the Pharisees and rulers cast aside the testimony of their own officers and others, through whom else did the Lord warn the leaders not to judge Jesus unjustly? John 7:50-52.**

“Again the priests and rulers proceeded to lay plans for arresting Jesus. It was urged that if He were longer left at liberty, He would draw the people away from the established leaders, and the only safe course was to silence Him without delay. In the full tide of their discussion, they were suddenly checked. Nicodemus questioned, ‘Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?’ Silence fell on the assembly. The words of Nicodemus came home to their consciences. They could not condemn a man unheard. But it was not for this reason alone that the haughty rulers remained silent, gazing at him who had dared to speak in favor of justice. They were startled and chagrined that one of their own number had been so far impressed by the character of Jesus as to speak a word in His defense. Recovering from their astonishment, they addressed Nicodemus with cutting sarcasm, ‘Art thou also of Galilee? Search and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 460.

FOR MEDITATION

“Every true Christian is a living fountain, ever receiving of the unfailing streams of grace, ever refreshed and ever refreshing those that are around him. Those who are co-workers with God manifest a missionary spirit; for they are ever receiving, that they may ever be giving to others the light and blessing of heaven. Those who open their hearts to receive largely will be able to give largely.” —*Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 66.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- 1 Timothy 6:20
- 2 Timothy 2:16, 23
- *The Desire of Ages*, p. 21
- *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 75, 76, 165

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- When you present the message, what is your interest—your own or the Lord’s glory?
- Do you read the Bible in the light of your own understanding, or do you pray earnestly and humbly to be guided by the Holy Spirit?

* * *

23

Sabbath, December 3, 2011

A Forgiven Sinner

“It is not Christ’s follower that, with averted eyes, turns from the erring, leaving them unhindered to pursue their downward course. Those who are forward in accusing others, and zealous in bringing them to justice, are often in their own lives more guilty than they. Men hate the sinner, while they love the sin. Christ hates the sin, but loves the sinner. This will be the spirit of all who follow Him. Christian love is slow to censure, quick to discern penitence, ready to forgive, to encourage, to set the wanderer in the path of holiness, and to stay his feet therein.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 462.

CAUGHT IN ADULTERY

- 1. Who was brought before Jesus as He was teaching in the temple? John 8:2, 3.**

“From the excitement and confusion of the city, from the eager crowds and the treacherous rabbis, Jesus turned away to the quiet of the olive groves, where He could be alone with God. But in the early morning He returned to the temple, and as the people gathered about Him, He sat down and taught them.

“He was soon interrupted. A group of Pharisees and scribes approached Him, dragging with them a terror-stricken woman, whom with hard, eager voices they accused of having violated the seventh commandment.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 460.

2. What was the accusation brought against her? John 8:4.

THE ACCUSERS’ INTENTION

3. What question did they pose to Jesus, and for what purpose? John 8:5, 6, first part; Leviticus 20:10.

“Having pushed her into the presence of Jesus, they said to Him, with a hypocritical show of respect, ‘Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest Thou?’

“Their pretended reverence veiled a deep-laid plot for His ruin. They had seized upon this opportunity to secure His condemnation, thinking that whatever decision He might make, they would find occasion to accuse Him. Should He acquit the woman, He might be charged with despising the law of Moses. Should He declare her worthy of death, He could be accused to the Romans as one who was assuming authority that belonged only to them.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 460, 461.

4. How did Jesus respond? John 8:6, last part.

“Jesus looked for a moment upon the scene—the trembling victim in her shame, the hard-faced dignitaries, devoid of even human pity. His spirit of stainless purity shrank from the spectacle. Well He knew for what purpose this case had been brought to Him. He read the heart, and knew the character and life history of everyone in His presence. These would-be guardians of justice had themselves led their victim into sin, that they might lay a snare for Jesus. Giving no sign that He had heard their question, He stooped, and fixing His eyes upon the ground, began to write in the dust.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 461.

JESUS’ POSITION

5. As they clamored for an answer, what did Jesus say? Then, what did He resume doing? John 8:7, 8.

“Impatient at His delay and apparent indifference, the accusers drew nearer, urging the matter upon His attention. But as their eyes, following those of Jesus, fell upon the pavement at His feet, their countenances changed. There, traced before them, were the guilty secrets of their own lives. The people, looking on, saw the sudden change of expression, and pressed forward to discover what it was that they were regarding with such astonishment and shame.

“With all their professions of reverence for the law, these rabbis, in bringing the charge against the woman, were disregarding its provisions. It was the husband’s duty to take action against her, and the guilty parties were to be punished equally. The action of the accusers was wholly unauthorized. Jesus, however, met them on their own ground. The law specified that in punishment by stoning, the witnesses in the case should be the first to cast a stone. Now rising, and fixing His eyes upon the plotting elders, Jesus said, ‘He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.’ And stooping down, He continued writing on the ground.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 461.

6. What caused the Pharisees and scribes to withdraw from the scene? John 8:9.

“He had not set aside the law given through Moses, nor infringed upon the authority of Rome. The accusers had been defeated. Now, their robe of pretended holiness torn from them, they stood, guilty and condemned, in the presence of Infinite Purity. They trembled lest the hidden iniquity of their lives should be laid open to the multitude; and one by one, with bowed heads and downcast eyes, they stole away, leaving their victim with the pitying Saviour.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 461.

7. Finally, what did Jesus ask about the tempters and accusers? Instead of being condemned to death, what double blessing did the repentant woman receive? What instruction did Jesus give her? John 8:10, 11.

“The woman had stood before Jesus, cowering with fear. His words, ‘He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone,’ had come to her as a death sentence. She dared not lift her eyes to the Saviour’s face, but silently awaited her doom. In astonishment she saw her accusers depart speechless and confounded; then those words of hope fell upon her ear, ‘Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.’ Her heart was melted, and she cast herself at the feet of Jesus, sobbing out her grateful love, and with bitter tears confessing her sins.

“This was to her the beginning of a new life, a life of purity and peace, devoted to the service of God. In the uplifting of this fallen soul,

Jesus performed a greater miracle than in healing the most grievous physical disease; He cured the spiritual malady which is unto death everlasting. This penitent woman became one of His most steadfast followers. With self-sacrificing love and devotion she repaid His forgiving mercy.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 462.

FOR MEDITATION

“In His act of pardoning this woman and encouraging her to live a better life, the character of Jesus shines forth in the beauty of perfect righteousness. While He does not palliate sin, nor lessen the sense of guilt, He seeks not to condemn, but to save. The world had for this erring woman only contempt and scorn; but Jesus speaks words of comfort and hope. The Sinless One pities the weakness of the sinner, and reaches to her a helping hand. While the hypocritical Pharisees denounce, Jesus bids her, ‘Go, and sin no more.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 462.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- John 5:14
- Deuteronomy 22:22
- *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 86-89
- *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, pp. 96, 279

LEARNING FROM JESUS

What lessons do you find in the following verses?

- “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.”
- “... Go, and sin no more.”

* * *

Truth and Liberty

“When once the restraints of God’s word and His Spirit are rejected, no man knows to what depths of degradation he may sink. Secret sin or master passion may hold him a captive....

“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.

RECEIVING LIGHT

- 1. What did Jesus declare about Himself and those who follow Him? What could the people see in fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 49:6? John 8:12.**

“God is light; and in the words, ‘I am the light of the world,’ Christ declared His oneness with God, and His relation to the whole human family. It was He who at the beginning had caused ‘the light to shine out of darkness.’ 2 Corinthians 4:6.... He was the spiritual light that in symbol and type and prophecy had shone upon Israel. But not to the Jewish nation alone was the light given. As the sunbeams penetrate to the remotest corners of the earth, so does the light of the Sun of Righteousness shine upon every soul....

“As the moon and the stars of the solar system shine by the reflected light of the sun, so, as far as their teaching is true, do the world’s great thinkers reflect the rays of the Sun of Righteousness. Every gem of thought, every flash of the intellect, is from the Light of the world....

“This prophecy [Isaiah 49:6] was generally understood as spoken of the Messiah, and when Jesus said, ‘I am the light of the world,’ the people could not fail to recognize His claim to be the Promised One.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 464, 465.

- 2. What was the reason why the Pharisees and rulers asked Jesus, “Who art Thou?” If they had been honest and spiritually minded, what truth would they have recognized in His reply? John 8:25-27.**

“To the Pharisees and rulers this claim seemed an arrogant assumption. That a man like themselves should make such pretensions they could not tolerate. Seeming to ignore His words, they demanded, ‘Who art Thou?’ They were bent upon forcing Him to declare Himself the Christ. His appearance and His work were so at variance with the expectations of the people, that, as His wily enemies believed, a direct announcement of Himself as the Messiah would cause Him to be rejected as an impostor.

“But to their question, ‘Who art Thou?’ Jesus replied, ‘Even that which I have also spoken unto you from the beginning.’ John 8:25, R.V. That which had been revealed in His words was revealed also in His character. He was the embodiment of the truths He taught.... He did not attempt to prove His Messianic claim, but showed His unity with God. If their minds had been open to God’s love, they would have received Jesus.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 465.

TRAGICALLY WRONG OPINIONS

3. When Jesus spoke of being free, what did the Pharisees and rulers—because of their mind-set—think He meant? What wonderful message did He have for those who longed for freedom from sin? John 8:31-34.

“They were in the worst kind of bondage—ruled by the spirit of evil.

“Every soul that refuses to give himself to God is under the control of another power. He is not his own. He may talk of freedom, but he is in the most abject slavery. He is not allowed to see the beauty of truth, for his mind is under the control of Satan. While he flatters himself that he is following the dictates of his own judgment, he obeys the will of the prince of darkness. Christ came to break the shackles of sin-slavery from the soul....

“Under the influence of the Spirit of God, man is left free to choose whom he will serve. In the change that takes place when the soul surrenders to Christ, there is the highest sense of freedom. The expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself. True, we have no power to free ourselves from Satan’s control; but when we desire to be set free from sin, and in our great need cry out for a power out of and above ourselves, the powers of the soul are imbued with the divine energy of the Holy Spirit, and they obey the dictates of the will in fulfilling the will of God.

“The only condition upon which the freedom of man is possible is that of becoming one with Christ. ‘The truth shall make you free,’ and Christ is the truth. Sin can triumph only by enfeebling the mind, and destroying the liberty of the soul.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 466.

4. What is the difference between being a blood relative of Abraham and being his spiritual child? John 8:37-40.

“The Pharisees had declared themselves the children of Abraham. Jesus told them that this claim could be established only by doing the works of Abraham. The true children of Abraham would live, as he did, a life of obedience to God. They would not try to kill One who was speaking the truth that was given Him from God. In plotting against Christ, the rabbis were not doing the works of Abraham. A mere lineal descent from Abraham was of no value. Without a spiritual connection with him, which would be manifested in possessing the same spirit, and doing the same works, they were not his children.

“This principle bears with equal weight upon a question that has long agitated the Christian world—the question of apostolic succession. Descent from Abraham was proved, not by name and lineage, but by likeness of character. So the apostolic succession rests not upon the transmission of ecclesiastical authority, but upon spiritual relationship. A life actuated by the apostles’ spirit, the belief and teaching of the truth they taught, this is the true evidence of apostolic succession. This is what constitutes men the successors of the first teachers of the gospel.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 466, 467.

THE REDEEMER’S NATURE AND PREEXISTENCE

5. In spite of all the temptations with which Satan and the Pharisees and rulers under his control tried to trap Jesus, what fact remained? John 8:46, 47.

“Day by day for three years His enemies had been following Christ, trying to find some stain in His character. Satan and all the confederacy of evil had been seeking to overcome Him; but they had found nothing in Him by which to gain an advantage. Even the devils were forced to confess, ‘Thou art the Holy One of God.’ Mark 1:24. Jesus lived the law in the sight of heaven, in the sight of unfallen worlds, and in the sight of sinful men. Before angels, men, and demons, He had spoken, unchallenged, words that from any other lips would have been blasphemy: ‘I do always those things that please Him.’

“The fact that although they could find no sin in Christ the Jews would not receive Him proved that they themselves had no connection with God. They did not recognize His voice in the message of His Son. They thought themselves passing judgment on Christ; but in rejecting Him they were pronouncing sentence upon themselves. ‘He that is of God,’ said Jesus, ‘heareth God’s words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 467, 468.

6. What privilege was granted to Abraham many centuries earlier? What vision did he have of the future Redeemer? John 8:55, 56.

“Through his own suffering, Abraham was enabled to behold the Saviour’s mission of sacrifice. But Israel would not understand that which was so unwelcome to their proud hearts.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 469.

7. What statement concerning His preexistence did the Lord make? Where and under what circumstances did this sacred name first appear in the Scriptures? John 8:58; Exodus 3:13, 14.

“With solemn dignity Jesus answered, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM.’

“Silence fell upon the vast assembly. The name of God, given to Moses to express the idea of the eternal presence, had been claimed as His own by this Galilean Rabbi. He had announced Himself to be the self-existent One, He who had been promised to Israel, ‘whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity.’ Micah 5:2, margin....

“His claim to be one with God had before stirred them to take His life, and a few months later they plainly declared, ‘For a good work we stone Thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God.’ John 10:33....

“The Light was shining in darkness; but ‘the darkness apprehended it not.’ John 1:5, R.V.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 469, 470.

FOR MEDITATION

“The lesson is true for all time. Many a man who delights to quibble, to criticize, seeking for something to question in the word of God, thinks that he is thereby giving evidence of independence of thought, and mental acuteness. He supposes that he is sitting in judgment on the Bible, when in truth he is judging himself. He makes it manifest that he is incapable of appreciating truths that originate in heaven, and that compass eternity.... He whose heart has responded to the divine touch will be seeking for that which will increase his knowledge of God, and will refine and elevate the character. As a flower turns to the sun, that the bright rays may touch it with tints of beauty, so will the soul turn to the Sun of Righteousness, that heaven’s light may beautify the character with the graces of the character of Christ.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 468.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- John 3:19-21; 8:12-59; 1:7-10
- *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 463-470

FOR SPIRITUAL CONSIDERATION

After asking God for His guidance, consider the deep meaning of the following sentences:

- “Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.”
- “... The truth shall make you free.”

* * *

25

Sabbath, December 17, 2011

From Darkness to Light

“Through faith in the power of God, it is wonderful how strong a weak man may become, how decided his efforts, how prolific of great results. He who begins with a little knowledge, in a humble way, and tells what he knows, while seeking diligently for further knowledge, will find the whole heavenly treasure awaiting his demand. The more he seeks to impart light, the more light he will receive. The more one tries to explain the word of God to others, with a love for souls, the plainer it becomes to himself. The more we use our knowledge and exercise our powers, the more knowledge and power we shall have.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 354.

REASONS FOR BLINDNESS

- 1. What did the disciples ask Jesus when they saw a man who had been born blind? What was His answer? John 9:1-3.**

“It was generally believed by the Jews that sin is punished in this life. Every affliction was regarded as the penalty of some wrongdoing, either of the sufferer himself or of his parents. It is true that all suffering results from the transgression of God’s law, but this truth had become perverted. Satan, the author of sin and all its results, had led men to look upon disease and death as proceeding from God—as punishment arbitrarily inflicted on account of sin. Hence one upon whom some great affliction or calamity had fallen had the additional burden of being regarded as a great sinner....

“God had given a lesson designed to prevent this. The history of Job had shown that suffering is inflicted by Satan, and is overruled by God for purposes of mercy. But Israel did not understand the lesson. The same error for which God had reproved the friends of Job was repeated by the Jews in their rejection of Christ.

“The belief of the Jews in regard to the relation of sin and suffering was held by Christ’s disciples. While Jesus corrected their error, He did not explain the cause of the man’s affliction, but told them what would be the result.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 471.

OUT OF DARKNESS

- 2. With what words concerning using present opportunities did Jesus give sight to the blind man? What comparison between physical blindness and spiritual blindness became apparent in this incident? John 9:4, 6, 7, 14.**

“The Pharisees hoped to make Jesus out to be a sinner, and therefore not the Messiah. They knew not that it was He who had made the Sabbath and knew all its obligation, who had healed the blind man. They appeared wonderfully zealous for the observance of the Sabbath, yet were planning murder on that very day. But many were greatly moved at hearing of this miracle, and were convicted that He who had opened the eyes of the blind was more than a common man....

“Again the rabbis appealed to the blind man, ‘What sayest thou of Him, that He hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet.’ The Pharisees then asserted that he had not been born blind and received his sight. They called for his parents, and asked them, saying, ‘Is this your son, who ye say was born blind?’

“There was the man himself, declaring that he had been blind, and had had his sight restored; but the Pharisees would rather deny the evidence of their own senses than admit that they were in error. So powerful is prejudice, so distorting is Pharisaical righteousness.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 472.

- 3. What did the Pharisees conclude solely because Jesus had healed the man on the Sabbath day? How did this keep them from accepting what was obvious? John 9:16-18.**

“The dilemma in which the Pharisees were placed, their questioning and prejudice, their unbelief in the facts of the case, were opening the eyes of the multitude, especially of the common people. Jesus had frequently wrought His miracles in the open street, and His work was always of a character to relieve suffering. The question in many minds was, Would God do such mighty works through an impostor, as the Pharisees insisted that Jesus was? The controversy was becoming very earnest on both sides....

“With many words they tried to confuse him, so that he might think himself deluded. Satan and his evil angels were on the side of the Pharisees, and united their energies and subtlety with man’s rea-

soning in order to counteract the influence of Christ. They blunted the convictions that were deepening in many minds. Angels of God were also on the ground to strengthen the man who had had his sight restored.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 473.

- 4. What contrast could be clearly seen between the faith of those who had studied and taught God’s word for many years and that of the blind man who had never had the opportunity to read the Scriptures? John 9:24-27.**

“Divine light shone into the chambers of the blind man’s soul. As these hypocrites tried to make him disbelieve, God helped him to show, by the vigor and pointedness of his replies, that he was not to be ensnared. He answered, ‘I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be His disciples? Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art His disciple; but we are Moses’ disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence He is.’

“The Lord Jesus knew the ordeal through which the man was passing, and He gave him grace and utterance, so that he became a witness for Christ.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 474.

- 5. What clear reasoning did the blind man present concerning how God works? John 9:30-33.**

“He answered the Pharisees in words that were a cutting rebuke to his questioners. They claimed to be the expositors of Scripture, the religious guides of the nation; and yet here was One performing miracles, and they were confessedly ignorant as to the source of His power, and as to His character and claims....

“The man had met his inquisitors on their own ground. His reasoning was unanswerable. The Pharisees were astonished, and they held their peace—spellbound before his pointed, determined words. For a few moments there was silence. Then the frowning priests and rabbis gathered about them their robes, as though they feared contamination from contact with him; they shook off the dust from their feet, and hurled denunciations against him—‘Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?’ And they excommunicated him.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 474.

DOUBLE LIGHT

- 6. What did Jesus do after the priests rejected the man who had been given sight? What additional light now shone upon him? John 9:35-38.**

“For the first time the blind man looked upon the face of his Restorer. Before the council he had seen his parents troubled and perplexed; he had looked upon the frowning faces of the rabbis; now his eyes rested upon the loving, peaceful countenance of Jesus. Already, at great cost to himself, he had acknowledged Him as a delegate of divine power; now a higher revelation was granted him.

“To the Saviour’s question, ‘Dost thou believe on the Son of God?’ the blind man replied by asking, ‘Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?’ And Jesus said, ‘Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee.’ The man cast himself at the Saviour’s feet in worship. Not only had his natural sight been restored, but the eyes of his understanding had been opened. Christ had been revealed to his soul, and he received Him as the Sent of God.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 474, 475.

7. How did Jesus describe His mission? What was the result for those who rejected the light of Heaven? John 9:39-41.

“Christ had come to open the blind eyes, to give light to them that sit in darkness. He had declared Himself to be the light of the world, and the miracle just performed was in attestation of His mission. The people who beheld the Saviour at His advent were favored with a fuller manifestation of the divine presence than the world had ever enjoyed before. The knowledge of God was revealed more perfectly. But in this very revelation, judgment was passing upon men. Their character was tested, their destiny determined.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 475.

FOR MEDITATION

“The manifestation of divine power that had given to the blind man both natural and spiritual sight had left the Pharisees in yet deeper darkness. Some of His hearers, feeling that Christ’s words applied to them, inquired, ‘Are we blind also?’ Jesus answered, ‘If ye were blind, ye should have no sin.’ If God had made it impossible for you to see the truth, your ignorance would involve no guilt. ‘But now ye say, We see.’ You believe yourselves able to see, and reject the means through which alone you could receive sight. To all who realized their need, Christ came with infinite help. But the Pharisees would confess no need; they refused to come to Christ, and hence they were left in blindness—a blindness for which they were themselves guilty. Jesus said, ‘Your sin remaineth.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 475.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- Luke 12:35-48
- *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 354, 355
- *The Desire of Ages*, p. 471

MAKING A CONNECTION

What connection do you see between Ezekiel 18:4, 20 and this lesson?

* * *

Following the True Shepherd

“... Those who claim to be led of God, and go right away from Him and His law, do not search the Scriptures. But the Lord will lead His people; for He says that His sheep will follow if they hear His voice, but a stranger will they not follow.” —*Faith and Works*, p. 56.

LIFE FROM THE SHEPHERD

- 1. What did the Lord use to illustrate what His ministry was to the world? John 10:11, 14, first part.**

“Again Jesus found access to the minds of His hearers by the pathway of their familiar associations. He had likened the Spirit’s influence to the cool, refreshing water. He had represented Himself as the light, the source of life and gladness to nature and to man. Now in a beautiful pastoral picture He represents His relation to those that believe on Him. No picture was more familiar to His hearers than this, and Christ’s words linked it forever with Himself. Never could the disciples look on the shepherds tending their flocks without recalling the Saviour’s lesson. They would see Christ in each faithful shepherd. They would see themselves in each helpless and dependent flock.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 476.

- 2. How did the prophets use the same picture to represent God’s loving care for His people? Psalm 23:1; Isaiah 40:11. To whom did Jesus apply these prophecies?**

“Christ applied these prophecies to Himself, and He showed the contrast between His own character and that of the leaders in Israel. The Pharisees had just driven one from the fold, because he dared to bear witness to the power of Christ. They had cut off a soul whom the True Shepherd was drawing to Himself. In this they had shown themselves ignorant of the work committed to them, and unworthy of their trust as shepherds of the flock. Jesus now set before them the contrast between them and the Good Shepherd, and He pointed to Himself as the real keeper of the Lord’s flock. Before doing this, however, He speaks of Himself under another figure.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 477.

3. In contrast to the ceremonies and systems of men, how does one enter the eternal, heavenly fold? John 10:9, 1, 2.

“Christ is the door to the fold of God. Through this door all His children, from the earliest times, have found entrance. In Jesus, as shown in types, as shadowed in symbols, as manifested in the revelation of the prophets, as unveiled in the lessons given to His disciples, and in the miracles wrought for the sons of men, they have beheld ‘the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world’ (John 1:29), and through Him they are brought within the fold of His grace. Many have come presenting other objects for the faith of the world; ceremonies and systems have been devised by which men hope to receive justification and peace with God, and thus find entrance to His fold. But the only door is Christ, and all who have interposed something to take the place of Christ, all who have tried to enter the fold in some other way, are thieves and robbers....

“In all ages, philosophers and teachers have been presenting to the world theories by which to satisfy the soul’s need.... Christ came that He might re-create the image of God in man; and whoever turns men away from Christ is turning them away from the source of true development; he is defrauding them of the hope and purpose and glory of life. He is a thief and a robber.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 477, 478.

4. What does the true Shepherd do besides providing food and water for the sheep? John 10:10. Why does the Lord represent His people as a flock of sheep?

“Of all creatures the sheep is one of the most timid and helpless, and in the East the shepherd’s care for his flock is untiring and incessant. Anciently as now there was little security outside of the walled towns. Marauders from the roving border tribes, or beasts of prey from their hiding places in the rocks, lay in wait to plunder the flocks. The shepherd watched his charge, knowing that it was at the peril of his own life. Jacob, who kept the flocks of Laban in the pasture grounds of Haran, describing his own unwearied labor, said, ‘In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes.’ Genesis 31:40. And it was while guarding his father’s sheep that the boy David, single-handed, encountered the lion and the bear, and rescued from their teeth the stolen lamb.

“As the shepherd leads his flock over the rocky hills, through forest and wild ravines, to grassy nooks by the riverside; as he watches them on the mountains through the lonely night, shielding from robbers, caring tenderly for the sickly and feeble, his life comes to be one with

theirs. A strong and tender attachment unites him to the objects of his care. However large the flock, the shepherd knows every sheep. Every one has its name, and responds to the name at the shepherd's call." –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 478, 479.

5. How close is the relationship between the sheep and the Shepherd? John 10:14, 15; Isaiah 43:1.

"As an earthly shepherd knows his sheep, so does the divine Shepherd know His flock that are scattered throughout the world. 'Ye My flock, the flock of My pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord God.' Jesus says, 'I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine.' 'I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands.' Ezekiel 34:31; Isaiah 43:1; 49:16.

"Jesus knows us individually, and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He knows us all by name. He knows the very house in which we live, the name of each occupant. He has at times given directions to His servants to go to a certain street in a certain city, to such a house, to find one of His sheep." –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 479.

HEARERS AND FOLLOWERS

6. What did Jesus say about His sheep? What do they do? John 10:3, second part, 27; Revelation 14:4, second part.

Personal question: Are you following the good Shepherd?

"Every soul is as fully known to Jesus as if he were the only one for whom the Saviour died. The distress of every one touches His heart. The cry for aid reaches His ear. He came to draw all men unto Himself. He bids them, 'Follow Me,' and His Spirit moves upon their hearts to draw them to come to Him. Many refuse to be drawn. Jesus knows who they are. He also knows who gladly hear His call, and are ready to come under His pastoral care.... He cares for each one as if there were not another on the face of the earth....

"Though now He has ascended to the presence of God, and shares the throne of the universe, Jesus has lost none of His compassionate nature. Today the same tender, sympathizing heart is open to all the woes of humanity. Today the hand that was pierced is reached forth to bless more abundantly His people that are in the world. 'And they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.' The soul that has given himself to Christ is more precious in His sight than the whole world. The Saviour would have passed through the agony of Calvary that one might be saved in His kingdom. He will never abandon one for whom He has died. Unless His followers choose to leave Him, He will hold them fast." –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 480, 483.

7. What did Jesus say about other sheep who were not in His fold? What was He going to do for His sheep? John 10:16, 17; 11:51, 52.

“The lost sheep of God’s fold are scattered in every place, and the work that should be done for them is being neglected. From the light given me I know that where there is one canvasser in the field, there should be one hundred. Canvassers should be encouraged to take hold of this work, not to canvass for storybooks, but to bring before the world the books containing truth essential for this time.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 315.

FOR MEDITATION

“When the storm of persecution really breaks upon us, the true sheep will hear the true Shepherd’s voice. Self-denying efforts will be put forth to save the lost, and many who have strayed from the fold will come back to follow the great Shepherd.” —(*Australian Signs of the Times*, Supplement, January 26, 1903) *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 401.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- Matthew 18:11-14
- *Gospel Workers*, pp. 181-184
- *Lift Him Up*, p. 196
- *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, pp. 261, 262

* * *

***Please read the Missionary Report
from Haiti on page 117***

Other Disciples Sent out

“The evangelization of the world is the work that God has given to those who go forth in His name. They are to be co-laborers with Christ, revealing to those ready to perish His tender, pitying love. God calls for thousands to work for Him, not by preaching to those who know the truth, going over and over the same ground, but by warning those who have never heard the last message of mercy. Work with a heart filled with an earnest longing for souls. Do medical missionary work. Thus you will gain access to the hearts of the people. The way will be prepared for more decided proclamation of the truth. You will find that relieving their physical suffering gives an opportunity to minister to their spiritual needs.” —*A Call to Medical Evangelism*, p. 7.

ORGANIZED SERVICE

- 1. On another occasion, how many disciples did the Lord send out to preach the gospel and prepare the way for Him? What was their mission, and what opposition would they meet? Luke 10:1-3.**

“As He had sent out the twelve, so He ‘appointed seventy others, and sent them two and two before His face into every city and place, whither He Himself was about to come.’ Luke 10:1, R.V. These disciples had been for some time with Him, in training for their work. When the twelve were sent out on their first separate mission, other disciples accompanied Jesus in His journey through Galilee. Thus they had the privilege of intimate association with Him, and direct personal instruction. Now this larger number also were to go forth on a separate mission.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 488.

“The world is to be warned, and no soul should rest satisfied with a superficial knowledge of truth. You know not to what responsibility you may be called. You know not where you may be called upon to give your witness of truth. Many will have to stand in the legislative courts; some will have to stand before kings and before the learned of the earth, to answer for their faith. Those who have only a superficial understanding of truth will not be able clearly to expound the Scriptures, and give definite reasons for their faith. They will become confused, and will not be workmen that need not to be ashamed. Let no one imagine that he has no need to study, because he is not to preach in the sacred desk. You know not what God may require of you.” —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 217.

- 2. What was unusual about their preparations for the mission? Who would provide their sustenance? Why were they instructed to avoid common greetings? Luke 10:4, 7, 8; 9:3; Matthew 10:10, last part.**

“My brother, you have not taken a course to encourage men to give themselves to the ministry. Instead of bringing the expense of the work down to a low figure, it is your duty to bring the minds of the people to understand that “the laborer is worthy of his hire.”

“There is important work to be done aside from that of preaching. Had this been done, as God designed it should be, there would have been many more laborers in the field than there now are. And had the ministers done their duty in educating every member, whether rich or poor, to give as God has prospered him, there would be a full treasury from which to pay the honest debts to the workers; and this would greatly advance missionary work in all their borders.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 375.

“Nothing must be allowed to divert their minds from their great work, or in any way excite opposition and close the door for further labor.... They were not to waste time in needless salutations, or in going from house to house for entertainment.... They were to enter the dwelling with the beautiful salutation, ‘Peace be to this house.’ Luke 10:5. That home would be blessed by their prayers, their songs of praise, and the opening of the Scriptures in the family circle.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 351, 352.

- 3. What special blessings were contained in the greetings expressed when they entered a home? Luke 10:5, 6.**

“All over the field of Christ’s labor there were souls awakened to their need, and hungering and thirsting for the truth. The time had come to send the tidings of His love to these longing hearts. To all these the disciples were to go as His representatives. The believers would thus be led to look upon them as divinely appointed teachers, and when the Saviour should be taken from them they would not be left without instructors.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 351.

- 4. What work of mercy were they to carry out? What was special about the message they were to preach? Luke 10:9; 9:2.**

“When Christ sent out the twelve disciples on their first missionary tour, He bade them, ‘As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.’ Matthew 10:7, 8.

“To the Seventy sent forth later He said: ‘Into whatsoever city ye enter,... heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.’ Luke 10:8, 9. The presence and power of Christ was with them, ‘and the Seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Thy name.’ Verse 17.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 139.

- 5. What was to be their approach toward people who were not interested in or were opposed to their message? How serious was the invitation they were extending? Luke 10:10-16.**

“In sending out the seventy, Jesus bade them, as He had bidden the twelve, not to urge their presence where they were unwelcome. ‘Into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not,’ He said, ‘go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.’ They were not to do this from motives of resentment or through wounded dignity, but to show how grievous a thing it is to refuse the Lord’s message or His messengers. To reject the Lord’s servants is to reject Christ Himself.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 489.

WONDERFUL RESULTS

- 6. What excellent results did they experience in carrying out their holy mission? What did Jesus see in this? Luke 10:17, 18.**

“The scenes of the past and the future were presented to the mind of Jesus. He beheld Lucifer as he was first cast out from the heavenly places. He looked forward to the scenes of His own agony, when before all the worlds the character of the deceiver should be unveiled. He heard the cry, ‘It is finished’ (John 19:30), announcing that the redemption of the lost race was forever made certain, that heaven was made eternally secure against the accusations, the deceptions, the pretensions, that Satan would instigate.

“Beyond the cross of Calvary, with its agony and shame, Jesus looked forward to the great final day, when the prince of the power of the air will meet his destruction in the earth so long marred by his rebellion. Jesus beheld the work of evil forever ended, and the peace of God filling heaven and earth.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 490.

7. How great was the power they received? But what were they to regard as their greatest joy? Luke 10:19, 20.

“The omnipotent power of the Holy Spirit is the defense of every contrite soul. Not one that in penitence and faith has claimed His protection will Christ permit to pass under the enemy’s power. The Saviour is by the side of His tempted and tried ones. With Him there can be no such thing as failure, loss, impossibility, or defeat; we can do all things through Him who strengthens us. When temptations and trials come, do not wait to adjust all the difficulties, but look to Jesus, your helper....

“The rainbow of promise encircling the throne on high is an everlasting testimony that ‘God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ John 3:16. It testifies to the universe that God will never forsake His people in their struggle with evil. It is an assurance to us of strength and protection as long as the throne itself shall endure....

“Rejoice not in the possession of power, lest you lose sight of your dependence upon God.... The less you cherish self, the more distinct and full will be your comprehension of the excellence of your Saviour. The more closely you connect yourself with the source of light and power, the greater light will be shed upon you, and the greater power will be yours to work for God.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 490, 493.

FOR MEDITATION

“The True Witness says, ‘Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.’ Revelation 3:20. Every warning, reproof, and entreaty in the word of God or through His messengers is a knock at the door of the heart. It is the voice of Jesus asking for entrance. With every knock unheeded, the disposition to open becomes weaker. The impressions of the Holy Spirit if disregarded today, will not be as strong tomorrow. The heart becomes less impressible, and lapses into a perilous unconsciousness of the shortness of life, and of the great eternity beyond. Our condemnation in the judgment will not result from the fact that we have been in error, but from the fact that we have neglected heaven-sent opportunities for learning what is truth.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 489, 490.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

- Matthew 10:1-42
- Mark 16:15-18

“The Lord will give you success in this work, for the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, when it is interwoven with the practical life, when it is lived and practiced. The union of Christlike work for the body and Christlike work for the soul is the true interpretation of the gospel.” —(*An Appeal for the Medical Missionary College*, pp. 14, 15) *A Call to Medical Evangelism*, p. 7.

* * *

MISSIONARY REPORT FROM HAITI

To be read on Sabbath, December 31, 2011

*The Special Sabbath School Offering
will be gathered on Sabbath, January 7, 2012*

When a magnitude 7.0 earthquake struck Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti, at 4:53 p.m. on Tuesday, January 12, 2010, the city and its surrounding area were decimated. It was the worst earthquake to strike the country in 200 years, and no one was prepared for it. Pictures of the destruction showed countless collapsed structures, made all the worse because they had been built with little or no steel reinforcement; and little infrastructure was left to facilitate the distribution of aid.

Over the centuries, numerous outside nations have sought to dominate, subdue, and populate Haiti. Today 95% of Haitians are descendants of freed slaves of West African descent. The country's history has been marked by war, political upheaval, cruelty, oppression, exploitation, and even genocide. By almost any economic measurement, Haiti is the poorest country in the Americas and is ranked as 149th out of 182 countries so ranked in the world. About 80% of its 9 million people live in poverty, and half of them are illiterate.

While most Haitians can be categorized as Catholic (80%) or Protestant (16%), many also believe in and practice Voodoo, an amalgamation of various African spiritualistic traditions. It is reported that many people practice Voodoo and Catholicism side by side, but evangelical Protestants are bitter enemies of Voodoo and constantly denounce it as devil worship. Many of them claim that Haiti's misery is because the country is being punished by God for the sins of this worship.

It is strange that many who believe in Satan's first lie, "Ye shall not surely die" (Genesis 3:4), condemn the practices of that lie carried to its logical conclusion. "Through the two great errors, the immortality of the soul, and Sunday sacredness, Satan will bring the people under his deceptions. While the former lays the foundation of Spiritualism, the latter creates a bond of sympathy with Rome. The Protestants of the United States will be foremost in

stretching their hands across the gulf to grasp the hand of Spiritualism; they will reach over the abyss to clasp hands with the Roman power; and under the influence of this threefold union, this country will follow in the steps of Rome in trampling on the rights of conscience.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 588.

While most Protestants condemn Voodoo, they are hard pressed to counteract its influence. Having turned away from the clear truths of the Bible in this and other matters, they can’t help but be swept into the vortex of spiritualism.

Recently the work of Reformation has dramatically expanded in Haiti, seeking to bring the gospel of salvation to minds darkened by the sophistries and errors of Satan. This outreach first began with Haitians living in the Dominican Republic and the United States. They in turn contacted friends and relatives in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. From there the message has mushroomed in Haiti, especially in regions outside of Port-au-Prince. For this reason, many visits have been made by paid workers and volunteers in order to share more of the message with those who hunger for the true Advent doctrines. Brother Martin Lagunas, from Mexico, the Assistant Regional Representative for North America, and others have made several visits there to better establish the new contacts in present truth.

We thank God for the willing sacrifice of individuals who have already given willingly of their means and time to reach souls in Haiti. The beginning of any work has special difficulties. The life and death of our Lord reveals the spirit of sacrifice and service; so it will be with both the beginning and the progress of the work of God! More seminars, conferences, and evangelistic campaigns need to be held; a headquarters needs to be established; more printed materials must be prepared and distributed in the French language; and a well-thought-out humanitarian and educational work needs to be established in this country, which is poor in both physical resources and a knowledge of the true God of heaven and His Son. Jesus encouraged us to help in this work when He said twice: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.” Matthew 25:40, 45.

With the disaster from the earthquake still surrounding the people there, it is an opportunity to open the Scriptures and present the light of the gospel with power and grace. It is hard even to conceive of what these people face every day and what it would be like to have been born into their situation. Nevertheless, the great Creator has blessed us and put in our hearts a desire to help, so let us help generously and sacrificially. He promised that “He that

hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will He pay him again.” Proverbs 19:17.

May God give each of us that inspiration and dedication to His service that will use the blessings He has entrusted to us both to save souls and to honor Him through our own tests in the coming days.

—Larry Watts
General Conference Regional Representative for North America

American Union Headquarters

Mailing Address: 9999 E. Mississippi Ave. • Denver, CO 80247

Phone: 877-467-1914 Email: info@sda1888.org

American Union Churches/Meeting Places

CA, Huntington Park Church
2877 E. Florence Avenue
Huntington Park, CA 90255
Phone: 323-583-5444

CA, Riverside Church
7631 Philbin Ave.
Riverside, CA 92503-1971
Phone: 951-543-4304

CA, Sacramento Church
"Faith Community United Church of Christ"
7486 Center Parkway
Sacramento, CA 95823
Phone: 916-386-1166

CA, San Francisco Bay Area Church
Alum Rock Southern Baptist Church
2962 Story Road
San Jose, CA 95127
Phone: 510-427-5713

CA, Vista Church
For information call Oscar Valles: 951-907-0611

CO, Denver Church
9999 E. Mississippi Ave.
Denver, CO 80247-1927
Phone: 303-361-9999

DC, Washington Church
"Metropolitan Memorial United Methodist Church"
3401 Nebraska Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20016
Phone: 571-212-5488

FL, Miami Church
"First Hungarian United Church"
2230 NW 14th Street
Miami, FL 33125
Phone: 305-643-1392

FL, Orlando Church
"Iglesia Pentecostal Sembrando la Palabra"
3908 Curry Ford Rd.
Orlando, FL 32806
Phone: 407-678-3165

FL, St. Petersburg Church
Faith Lutheran Church, Fellowship Hall
2519 49th Street North
St. Petersburg, FL 33710
Phone: 813-767-5429

FL, Tampa Church
10306 N. Nebraska Ave.
Tampa, FL 33612-6823
Phone: 813-872-8590

FL, West Palm Beach Church
"Palm Beach Baptist Church"
6201 S. Militarg Trail
Lake Worth, FL 33463
Phone: 954-865-7506

GA, Acworth Church
6880 Rock Ridge Road
Acworth, GA 30102
Phone: 770-318-6015

GA, Cedartown Church
625 West Avenue
Cedartown, GA 30125
Phone: 770-748-0077

GA, Marietta Church
1152 Gann Road
Marietta, GA 30008
Phone: 404-704-4463

IL, Chicago Church
For information call Rufo Samano: 847-221-2362

NY, Bronx Church
2808 Middletown Road
Bronx, NY 10461-5301
Phone: 718-931-0592

NY, Brooklyn
For information call Nidya Sanchez: 718-645-7668

PR, Camuy Church
Barrio "Cibao," Sec., Cuchillas
Carretera 456 (Km. 6.5 interior)
Camuy, PR 00627
Phone: 787-429-4810

PR, Fajardo Church
Calle Quiñónez Carb. 209
Barriada Obrera
Fajardo, PR 00738
Phone: 787-673-0067

PR, Hormigueros Church
Carretera Nueva 344 (Km 2.7)
Hormigueros, PR 00660
Phone: 787-673-0067

PR, Santurce Church
Ernesto Vigoreaux 502
Barrio Obrero
San Juan, PR 00916
Phone: 787-565-5060

RI, Providence Church
"Iglesia de Dios Peniel"
91 Montgomery Ave.
Pawtucket, RI 02860-5556
Phone: 401-943-0131

TX, Houston Church
"Presbyterian Church"
3788 Richmond Ave.
Houston, TX 77046
Phone: 713-478-7480 or 832-605-4304

TX, Plano Church
1805 Rigsbee Drive
Plano, TX 75074
Phone: 909-754-1882

VA, Richmond
For information call Louise Hazelhoff: 804-598-2539