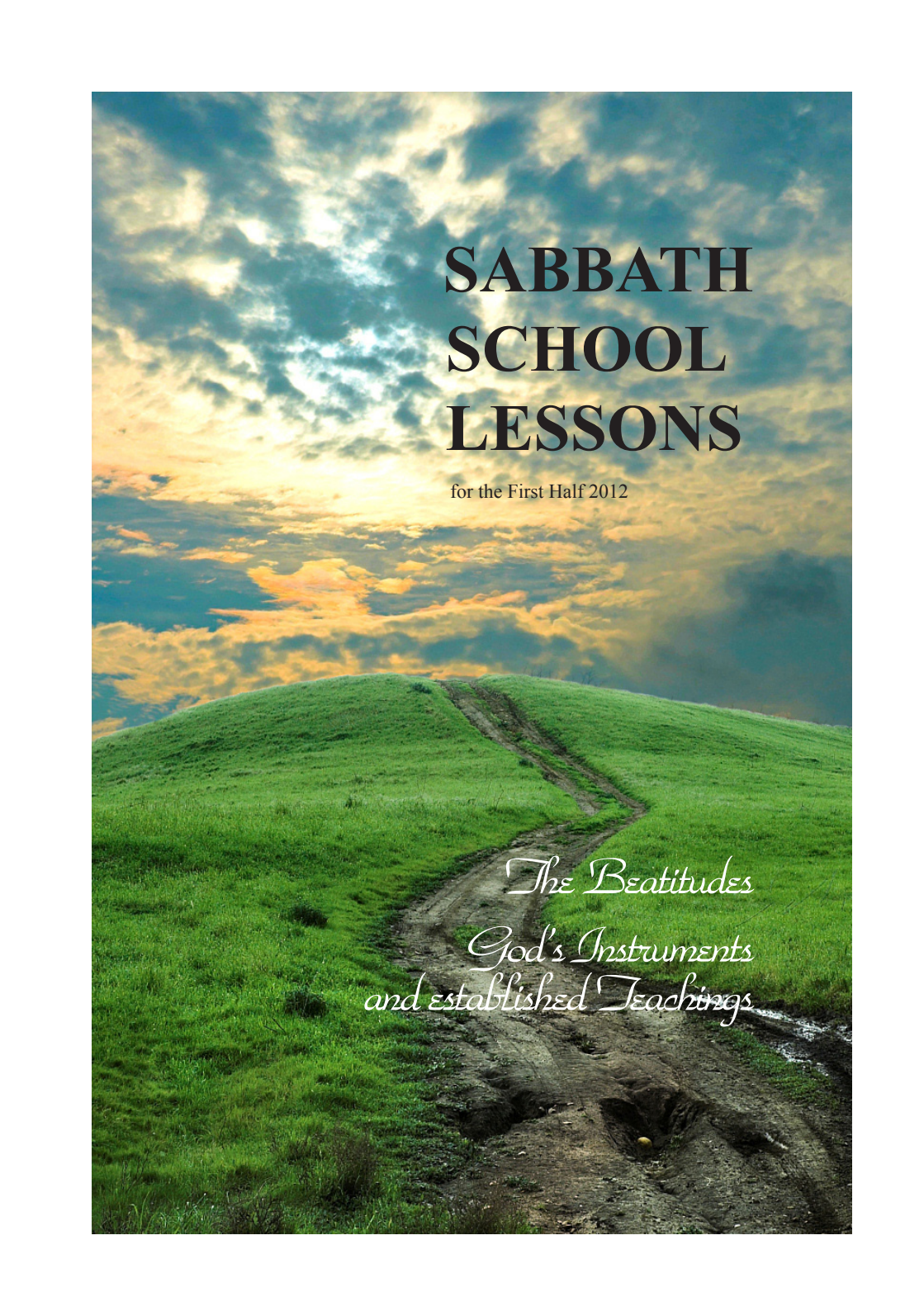




SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

for the First Half 2012

*The Beatitudes
God's Instruments
and established Teachings*

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INTRODUCTION

If you desired to extend to someone your good wishes, what would you say to him? Perhaps, "Happy New Year!" "Get well soon," or even "Have a nice day!" But is this really the best that we can wish a friend or relative? The Lord has much more than that to offer, not for just a year, a period of time, or a day, but for all of human existence.

The "Beatitudes" are more than His greeting card to humanity; they contain the foundation of all blessing and happiness for one's life here on earth and for the entire future, eternal life! Here, in just a few words, is divine thought that will completely change everything. Blessed are they who take the beatitudes to heart!

"Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?" James 2:5.

Dear brothers and sisters, we are children of God because He has chosen us. He has given us the greatest inheritance, and there is no joy greater than following Him, our Master and loving Saviour. When He came to this earth and gave the wonderful Sermon on the Mount, He addressed not just the people who had assembled on the hills of Galilee but everyone in every age who will come to that spiritual Rock, Christ Jesus. Matthew chapters 5, 6, and 7 contain the best possible instruction for those who wish to live the blessed life. Everyone who will incorporate these truths into his thinking and life will see great changes take place.

As we study the Sabbath School Lessons for this quarter, let us look to Jesus, meditating on His love and sacrifice; this will result in great blessing and a wonderful experience. Many inspired messages invite us to make this experience. "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Hebrew 12:2.

"Our conversation is in Heaven," said the apostle; 'from whence also we look for the Saviour.' While others dwarfing the intellect, hardening the heart, and robbing their Maker by devoting themselves to the service of the world, the true Christian lifts his soul above the follies and vanities of earth, seeking God for pardon, peace, and righteousness; for glory, immortality, and eternal life. And he seeks not in vain. His fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. Through this close intercourse with God, the soul becomes transformed. By beholding, we are changed into the divine image."

—*The Signs of the Times*, March 31, 1887.

"We are not only to contemplate the glory of Christ, but also to speak of His excellences. Isaiah not only beheld the glory of Christ, but he also spoke of Him. While David mused, the fire burned; then spoke he with his tongue. While he mused upon the wondrous love of God he could not but speak of that which he saw and felt. Who can by faith behold the wonderful plan of redemption, the glory of the only-begotten Son of God, and not speak of it? Who can contemplate the unfathomable love that was manifested upon the cross of Calvary in the death of Christ, that we might not perish, but have everlasting life—who can behold this and have no words with which to extol the Saviour's glory?"

—*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 43, 44.

May the Lord touch the heart of every student and grant this experience every day. Then we will not just study the Beatitudes for one quarter but make wonderful experiences now and forever by cherishing and applying them.

—*The writer and the brothers and sisters of the General Conference*

**The Special Sabbath School Offering
is dedicated to Haiti**

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

1

Sabbath, January 7, 2012

“Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit”

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:3.

INTRODUCTION

“Christ’s first words to the people on the mount were words of blessing. Happy are they, He said, who recognize their spiritual poverty, and feel their need of redemption. The gospel is to be preached to the poor. Not to the spiritually proud, those who claim to be rich and in need of nothing, is it revealed, but to those who are humble and contrite. One fountain only has been opened for sin, a fountain for the poor in spirit.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 299, 300.

RECOGNIZING ONE’S SPIRITUAL POVERTY.

- 1. What characterized the thinking and actions of the religious leaders in the time of Jesus? Can such a spirit exist today? Luke 18:11; Isaiah 65:5, first part.**

“In the days of Christ the religious leaders of the people felt that they were rich in spiritual treasure. The prayer of the Pharisee, ‘God, I thank Thee, that I am not as the rest of men’ (Luke 18:11, R.V.), expressed the feeling of his class and, to a great degree, of the whole nation.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 6.

2. How did Peter and the other disciples come to recognize their sinfulness and spiritual poverty? Luke 5:8.

“... In the throng that surrounded Jesus there were some who had a sense of their spiritual poverty. When in the miraculous draft of fishes the divine power of Christ was revealed, Peter fell at the Saviour’s feet, exclaiming, ‘Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord’ (Luke 5:8); so in the multitude gathered upon the mount there were souls who, in the presence of His purity, felt that they were ‘wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked’ (Revelation 3:17); and they longed for ‘the grace of God that bringeth salvation’ (Titus 2:11). In these souls, Christ’s words of greeting awakened hope; they saw that their lives were under the benediction of God.” –*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 6, 7.

SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS IS NOT HUMILITY

3. How does the Bible present the condition of those who refuse to recognize their real spiritual condition? How do they relate to Jesus? Revelation 3:17.

“He who feels whole, who thinks that he is reasonably good, and is contented with his condition, does not seek to become a partaker of the grace and righteousness of Christ. Pride feels no need, and so it closes the heart against Christ and the infinite blessings He came to give. There is no room for Jesus in the heart of such a person. Those who are rich and honorable in their own eyes do not ask in faith, and receive the blessing of God. They feel that they are full, therefore they go away empty.” –*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 7.

4. What precedes full forgiveness and blessing from the Lord? Luke 18:13, 14; Isaiah 57:15.

“Those who know that they cannot possibly save themselves, or of themselves do any righteous action, are the ones who appreciate the help that Christ can bestow. They are the poor in spirit, whom He declares to be blessed....

“They see that all they have ever done is mingled with self and sin. Like the poor publican, they stand afar off, not daring to lift up so much as their eyes to heaven, and cry, ‘God, be merciful to me the sinner.’ Luke 18:13, R.V., margin. And they are blessed. There is forgiveness for the penitent; for Christ is ‘the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’ John 1:29. –*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 7, 8.

“The sense of need, the recognition of our poverty and sin, is the very first condition of acceptance with God. ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’ Matthew 5:3.” –*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 152.

- 5. If our desire is genuine, what steps will we take to obtain regeneration? What part does human effort have in accomplishing this? Ezekiel 36:26, 27; Jeremiah 24:7; John 16:8.**

“But we must have a knowledge of ourselves, a knowledge that will result in contrition, before we can find pardon and peace. The Pharisee felt no conviction of sin. The Holy Spirit could not work with him.... We must know our real condition, or we shall not feel our need of Christ’s help. We must understand our danger, or we shall not flee to the refuge. We must feel the pain of our wounds, or we should not desire healing.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 158.

“Whom Christ pardons, He first makes penitent, and it is the office of the Holy Spirit to convince of sin. Those whose hearts have been moved by the convicting spirit of God see that there is nothing good in themselves.... ‘A new heart also will I give you.... And I will put my spirit within you.’ Isaiah 1:18; Ezekiel 36:26, 27.”—*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 7, 8.

- 6. Where do sinners find cleansing from the filth and ravages of sin and receive His pure robe of righteousness? Isaiah 1:18; 45:24.**

Surely, shall [one] say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: [even] to him shall [men] come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed (Isaiah 45:24)

“There is fullness of grace in God, and we may have His spirit and power in large measure. Do not feed on the husks of self-righteousness, but go to the Lord. He has the best robe to put upon you, and His arms are open to receive. Christ will say, ‘Take away the filthy garments from him, and clothe him with a change of raiment.’”—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 328.

“Whatever may have been your past experience, however discouraging your present circumstances, if you will come to Jesus just as you are, weak, helpless, and despairing, our compassionate Saviour will meet you a great way off, and will throw about you His arms of love and His robe of righteousness. He presents us to the Father clothed in the white raiment of His own character. He pleads before God in our behalf, saying: I have taken the sinner’s place. Look not upon this wayward child, but look on Me.... The blood of Christ pleads with greater power.

“Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.... In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.’ Isaiah 45:24, 25.”—*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 9.

EXCHANGING POVERTY FOR RICHES

- 7. What glorious promise is given to the poor in spirit? Matthew 5:3.**

“Of the poor in spirit Jesus says, ‘Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’ This kingdom is not, as Christ’s hearers had hoped, a temporal and earthly dominion. Christ was opening to men the spiritual kingdom of His love, His grace, His righteousness. The ensign of the Messiah’s reign is distinguished by the likeness of the Son of man. His subjects are the poor in spirit, the meek, the persecuted for righteousness’ sake. The kingdom of heaven is theirs. Though not yet fully accomplished, the work is begun in them which will make them ‘meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.’ Colossians 1:12.

“All who have a sense of their deep soul poverty, who feel that they have nothing good in themselves, may find righteousness and strength by looking unto Jesus. He says, ‘Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden.’ Matthew 11:28. He bids you exchange your poverty for the riches of His grace. We are not worthy of God’s love, but Christ, our surety, is worthy, and is abundantly able to save all who shall come unto Him.”
—*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 8, 9.

“He is the only one that can implant in the heart enmity against sin. Every desire for truth and purity, every conviction of our own sinfulness, is an evidence that His spirit is moving upon our hearts.” —*Steps to Christ*, p. 26.

CONCLUSION

“The only reason why we do not have remission of sins that are past is that we are not willing to humble our hearts and comply with the conditions of the word of truth. Explicit instruction is given concerning this matter. Confession of sin, whether public or private, should be heartfelt and freely expressed. It is not to be urged from the sinner. It is not to be made in a flippant and careless way, or forced from those who have no realizing sense of the abhorrent character of sin. The confession that is the outpouring of the inmost soul finds its way to the God of infinite pity. The psalmist says, ‘The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.’ Psalm 34:18.” —*Steps to Christ*, p. 38.

* * *

“Blessed Are They That Mourn”

“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.” Matthew 5:4.

INTRODUCTION

“The mourning here brought to view is true heart sorrow for sin. Jesus says, ‘I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.’ John 12:32. And as one is drawn to behold Jesus uplifted on the cross, he discerns the sinfulness of humanity. He sees that it is sin which scourged and crucified the Lord of glory. He sees that, while he has been loved with unspeakable tenderness, his life has been a continual scene of ingratitude and rebellion. He has forsaken his best friend and abused heaven’s most precious gift. He has crucified himself the son of God a fresh and pierced anew that bleeding and stricken heart. He is separated from God by a gulf of sin that is broad and black and deep and he mourns in brokenness of heart.

“Such mourning ‘shall be comforted.’ God reveals to us our guilt that we may flee to Christ, and through him be set free from the bondage of sin, and rejoice in the liberty of the sons of God. In true contrition we may come to the foot of the cross, and there leave our burdens” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 9, 10.

MOURNING AND CLEANSING

1. Over what should every Christian mourn? Ezekiel 18:20; Deuteronomy 24:16, last part; Acts 3:19; James 4:8-10.

“‘Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.’ By these words Christ does not teach that mourning in itself has power to remove the guilt of sin. He gives no sanction to pretense or to voluntary humility. The mourning of which He speaks does not consist in melancholy and lamentation. While we sorrow on account of sin, we are to rejoice in the precious privilege of being children of God.

“We often sorrow because our evil deeds bring unpleasant consequences to ourselves; but this is not repentance. Real sorrow for sin is the result of the working of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit reveals the ingratitude of the heart that has slighted and grieved the Saviour, and brings us in contrition to the foot of the cross. By every sin Jesus is wounded afresh; and as we look upon Him whom we have pierced, we mourn for the sins that have brought anguish upon Him. Such mourning will lead to the renunciation of sin.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 300.

2. Whose slave is a self-centered person? What does this slave-master not want to give up? John 8:34; Romans 6:16.

“Repentance includes sorrow for sin and a turning away from it. We shall not renounce sin unless we see its sinfulness; until we turn away from it in heart, there will be no real change in the life.” –*Steps to Christ*, p. 23.

“The worldling may pronounce this sorrow a weakness; but it is the strength which binds the penitent to the Infinite One with links that cannot be broken. It shows that the angels of God are bringing back to the soul the graces that were lost through hardness of heart and transgression. The tears of the penitent are only the raindrops that precede the sunshine of holiness. This sorrow heralds a joy which will be a living fountain in the soul. ‘Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God;’ ‘and I will not cause Mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the Lord.’ Jeremiah 3:13, 12.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 300.

CORRECTION AND BLESSING

3. What messages did God send by the prophet Isaiah? What ministry will be carried out by God’s faithful servants? Isaiah 57:15; 66:2.

“And for those also who mourn in trial and sorrow there is comfort. The bitterness of grief and humiliation is better than the indulgences of sin. Through affliction God reveals to us the plague spots in our characters, that by His grace we may overcome our faults. Unknown chapters in regard to ourselves are opened to us, and the test comes, whether we will accept the reproof and the counsel of God. When brought into trial, we are not to fret and complain. We should not rebel, or worry ourselves out of the hand of Christ. We are to humble the soul before God. The ways of the Lord are obscure to him who desires to see things in a light pleasing to himself. They appear dark and joyless to our human nature. But God’s ways are ways of mercy and the end is salvation. Elijah knew not what he was doing when in the desert he said that he had had enough of life, and prayed that he might die. The Lord in His mercy did not take him at his word. There was yet a great work for Elijah to do; and when his work was done, he was not to perish in discouragement and solitude in the wilderness. Not for him the descent into the dust of death, but the ascent in glory, with the convoy of celestial chariots, to the throne on high.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 301.

4. Does God forsake anyone? Isaiah 49:14-16; Matthew 7:9-11.

“The Saviour’s words have a message of comfort to those also who are suffering affliction or bereavement. Our sorrows do not spring out of the ground. God ‘doth not afflict

willingly nor grieve the children of men.’ Lamentations 3:33. When He permits trials and afflictions, it is ‘for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness.’ Hebrews 12:10. If received in faith, the trial that seems so bitter and hard to bear will prove a blessing. The cruel blow that blights the joys of earth will be the means of turning our eyes to heaven. How many there are who would never have known Jesus had not sorrow led them to seek comfort in Him!” –*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p.10.

“Will the Lord forget His people in this trying hour? Did He forget faithful Noah when judgments were visited upon the antediluvian world? Did He forget Lot when the fire came down from heaven to consume the cities of the plain? Did He forget Joseph surrounded by idolaters in Egypt? Did He forget Elijah when the oath of Jezebel threatened him with the fate of the prophets of Baal? Did He forget Jeremiah in the dark and dismal pit of his prison house? Did He forget the three worthies in the fiery furnace? or Daniel in the den of lions?

“‘Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands.’ Isaiah 49:14-16. The Lord of hosts has said: ‘He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye.’ Zechariah 2:8.” –*The Great Controversy*, p. 626.

5. Whom does God chasten? At all times, what are we to do? Revelation 3:19; Hebrews 12:5-11; Job 5:17; Proverbs 3:11, 12.

“Christ lifts up the contrite heart and refines the mourning soul until it becomes His abode.

“But when tribulation comes upon us, how many of us are like Jacob! We think it the hand of an enemy; and in the darkness we wrestle blindly until our strength is spent, and we find no comfort or deliverance. To Jacob the divine touch at break of day revealed the One with whom he had been contending—the Angel of the covenant; and, weeping and helpless, he fell upon the breast of Infinite Love, to receive the blessing for which his soul longed. We also need to learn that trials mean benefit, and not to despise the chastening of the Lord nor faint when we are rebuked of Him.

“‘Happy is the man whom God correcteth: . . . He maketh sore, and bindeth up: He woundeth, and His hands make whole. He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee.’ Job 5:17-19. To every stricken one, Jesus comes with the ministry of healing. The life of bereavement, pain, and suffering may be brightened by precious revealings of His presence.” –*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 11, 12.

UNDER CHRIST’S CONTROL

6. What is the condition of a person who is born of God? 1 John 3:8, 9; 5:18.

“Genuine faith is followed by love, and love by obedience. All the powers and passions of the converted man are brought under the control of Christ. His Spirit is a renewing power, transforming to the divine image all who will receive it. . . .

“‘Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.’ He feels that he is the purchase of the blood of Christ and bound by the most solemn vows to glorify God in his body and in his spirit, which are God’s. The love of sin and the love of self are subdued in him. He daily asks: ‘What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?’ ‘Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?’ The true Christian will never complain that the yoke of Christ is galling to the neck. He accounts the service of Jesus as the truest freedom. The law of God is his delight. Instead of seeking to bring down the divine commands, to accord with his deficiencies, he is constantly striving to rise to the level of their perfection.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 219, 220.

7. What did the Lord Jesus suffer for us? Isaiah 63:9, first part; 53:3-7.

“Blessed are they also who weep with Jesus in sympathy with the world’s sorrow and in sorrow for its sin. In such mourning there is intermingled no thought of self. Jesus was the Man of Sorrows, enduring heart anguish such as no language can portray. His spirit was torn and bruised by the transgressions of men. He toiled with self-consuming zeal to relieve the wants and woes of humanity, and His heart was heavy with sorrow as He saw multitudes refuse to come to Him that they might have life. All who are followers of Christ will share in this experience. As they partake of His love they will enter into His travail for the saving of the lost. They share in the sufferings of Christ, and they will share also in the glory that shall be revealed. One with Him in His work, drinking with Him the cup of sorrow, they are partakers also of His joy.

“It was through suffering that Jesus obtained the ministry of consolation. In all the affliction of humanity He is afflicted; and ‘in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted.’ Isaiah 63:9; Hebrews 2:18. In this ministry every soul that has entered into the fellowship of His sufferings is privileged to share. ‘As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.’ 2 Corinthians 1:5.” –*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 12, 13.

TRUE COMFORT

8. What makes it possible for the Saviour to comfort those who mourn? Matthew 5:4.

“The blessed Saviour stands by many whose eyes are so blinded by tears that they do not discern Him. He longs to clasp our hands, to have us look to Him in simple faith, permitting Him to guide us. His heart is open to our griefs, our sorrows, and our trials. He has loved us with an everlasting love and with loving-kindness compassed us about. We may keep the heart stayed upon Him and meditate upon His loving-kindness all the day. He will lift the soul above the daily sorrow and perplexity, into a realm of peace.

“Think of this, children of suffering and sorrow, and rejoice in hope. ‘This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.’ 1 John 5:4....

“The Lord has special grace for the mourner, and its power is to melt hearts, to win souls. His love opens a channel into the wounded and bruised soul, and becomes a heal-

ing balsam to those who sorrow. ‘The Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort ... comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.’ 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4.” –*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 12, 13.

CONCLUSION

“Confession will not be acceptable to God without sincere repentance and reformation. There must be decided changes in the life; everything offensive to God must be put away. This will be the result of genuine sorrow for sin.” –*Steps to Christ*, p. 39.

* * *

3

Sabbath, January 21, 2012

“Blessed Are the Meek”

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.” Matthew 5:5.

INTRODUCTION

“‘Though the Lord be high, yet hath He respect unto the lowly.’ Psalm 138:6. Those who reveal the meek and lowly spirit of Christ are tenderly regarded by God. They may be looked upon with scorn by the world, but they are of great value in His sight. Not only the wise, the great, the beneficent, will gain a passport to the heavenly courts; not only the busy worker, full of zeal and restless activity. No; the poor in spirit, who crave the presence of an abiding Christ, the humble in heart, whose highest ambition is to do God’s will—these will gain an abundant entrance. They will be among that number who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ‘Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.’ Revelation 7:15.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 301, 302.

FIRST QUALIFICATION FOR JESUS’ KINGDOM

- 1. What did Jesus demonstrate and explain about the meaning of meekness? Matthew 11:29.**

“Those who have felt their need of Christ, those who have mourned because of sin and have sat with Christ in the school of affliction, will learn meekness from the divine Teacher.

“Patience and gentleness under wrong were not characteristics prized by the heathen or by the Jews. The statement made by Moses under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that he was the meekest man upon the earth, would not have been regarded by the people of his time as a commendation; it would rather have excited pity or contempt. But Jesus places meekness among the first qualifications for His kingdom. In His own life and character the divine beauty of this precious grace is revealed.

“Jesus, the brightness of the Father’s glory, thought ‘it not a thing to be grasped to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant.’ Philippians 2:6, 7, R.V., margin. Through all the lowly experiences of life He consented to pass, walking among the children of men, not as a king, to demand homage, but as one whose mission it was to serve others. There was in His manner no taint of bigotry, no cold austerity. The world’s Redeemer had a greater than angelic nature, yet united with His divine majesty were meekness and humility that attracted all to Himself.” –*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp.13, 14.

2. Why is self-centeredness so destructive? What will be the experience of all who become servants of Christ? Philippians 2:3, 4; Luke 14:11.

“The independence and self-supremacy in which we glory are seen in their true vileness as tokens of servitude to Satan. Human nature is ever struggling for expression, ready for contest; but he who learns of Christ is emptied of self, of pride, of love of supremacy, and there is silence in the soul. Self is yielded to the disposal of the Holy Spirit. Then we are not anxious to have the highest place. We have no ambition to crowd and elbow ourselves into notice; but we feel that our highest place is at the feet of our Saviour. We look to Jesus, waiting for His hand to lead, listening for His voice to guide. ...

“If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself” (Matthew 11:29; 16:24); let self be dethroned and no longer hold the supremacy of the soul. ...

“It is the love of self that destroys our peace. While self is all alive, we stand ready continually to guard it from mortification and insult; but when we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God, we shall not take neglects or slights to heart. We shall be deaf to reproach and blind to scorn and insult.” –*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 15, 14-16.

RECEIVING CHRIST IN THE SOUL

3. What does God require? Micah 6:8.

“The words and law of God, written in the soul, and exhibited in a consecrated, holy life, have a powerful influence to convict the world. Covetousness, which is idolatry, and envy, and love of the world, will be rooted from the hearts of those who are obedient to

Christ, and it will be their pleasure to deal justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before God. Oh, how much is comprised in this, walking humbly before God! The law of God, if written in the heart, will bring the mind and will into subjection to the obedience of Christ.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 201.

“When we receive Christ as an abiding guest in the soul, the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. The Saviour’s life on earth, though lived in the midst of conflict, was a life of peace. While angry enemies were constantly pursuing Him, He said, ‘He that sent Me is with Me: the Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him.’ John 8:29. No storm of human or satanic wrath could disturb the calm of that perfect communion with God. And He says to us, ‘Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you.’ ‘Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest.’ John 14:27; Matthew 11:29. Bear with Me the yoke of service for the glory of God and the uplifting of humanity, and you will find the yoke easy and the burden light.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 15, 16.

4. What example did Jesus give throughout His life? What will all who follow Him experience? John 13:4, 5, 14, 15; Philippians 2:8, 9.

“Jesus emptied Himself, and in all that He did, self did not appear. He subordinated all things to the will of His Father. When His mission on earth was about to close, He could say, ‘I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do.’ John 17:4. And He bids us, ‘Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart.’...

“The meekness of Christ, manifested in the home, will make the inmates happy; it provokes no quarrel, gives back no angry answer, but soothes the irritated temper and diffuses a gentleness that is felt by all within its charmed circle. Wherever cherished, it makes the families of earth a part of the one great family above.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 14, 16, 17.

5. What is God’s instruction concerning revenge? How do God’s children treat their enemies? Romans 12:19-21; Proverbs 25:21, 22.

“Far better would it be for us to suffer under false accusation than to inflict upon ourselves the torture of retaliation upon our enemies. The spirit of hatred and revenge originated with Satan, and can bring only evil to him who cherishes it. Lowliness of heart, that meekness which is the fruit of abiding in Christ, is the true secret of blessing. ‘He will beautify the meek with salvation.’ Psalm 149:4.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 17.

A PLACE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

6. What will be the inheritance of the meek? Matthew 5:5; Psalm 37:9, 11.

“The earth promised to the meek will not be like this, darkened with the shadow of death and the curse. ‘We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.’ ‘There shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him.’ 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 22:3.

“There is no disappointment, no sorrow, no sin, no one who shall say, I am sick; there are no burial trains, no mourning, no death, no partings, no broken hearts; but Jesus is there, peace is there. There ‘they shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for He that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall He guide them.’ Isaiah 49:10.” –*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 17, 18.

7. Compare the heavenly home with what this earth is like. Isaiah 49:10.

“Pain cannot exist in the atmosphere of heaven. There will be no more tears, no funeral trains, no badges of mourning. ‘There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying:... for the former things are passed away.’ ‘The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.’ Revelation 21:4; Isaiah 33:24....

“In the City of God ‘there shall be no night.’ None will need or desire repose. There will be no weariness in doing the will of God and offering praise to His name. We shall ever feel the freshness of the morning and shall ever be far from its close....

“‘I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.’ Revelation 21:22. The people of God are privileged to hold open communion with the Father and the Son.” –*The Great Controversy*, p. 676.

CONCLUSION

“Happiness drawn from earthly sources is as changeable as varying circumstances can make it; but the peace of Christ is a constant and abiding peace. It does not depend upon any circumstances in life, on the amount of worldly goods or the number of earthly friends. Christ is the fountain of living water, and happiness drawn from Him can never fail.” –*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p.16.

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Blessed Are They Who Hunger after Righteousness

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” Matthew 5:6.

INTRODUCTION

“Righteousness is holiness, likeness to God, and ‘God is love.’ 1 John 4:16. It is conformity to the law of God, for ‘all Thy commandments are righteousness’ (Psalm 119:172), and ‘love is the fulfilling of the law’ (Romans 13:10). Righteousness is love, and love is the light and the life of God. The righteousness of God is embodied in Christ. We receive righteousness by receiving Him.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 18.

1. What is the process by which one receives righteousness? Matthew 5:6; Zephaniah 2:3, first part.

“Not by painful struggles or wearisome toil, not by gift or sacrifice, is righteousness obtained; but it is freely given to every soul who hungers and thirsts to receive it. ‘Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat,... without money and without price.’ ‘Their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord,’ and, ‘This is His name whereby He shall be called, The Lord Our Righteousness.’ Isaiah 55:1; 54:17; Jeremiah 23:6.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 18.

THE BREAD OF LIFE

2. What sustains spiritual life? John 6:35, 53-56.

“No human agent can supply that which will satisfy the hunger and thirst of the soul. But Jesus says, ‘Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.’ ‘I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst.’ Revelation 3:20; John 6:35.

“As we need food to sustain our physical strength, so do we need Christ, the Bread from heaven, to sustain spiritual life and impart strength to work the works of God. As the body is continually receiving the nourishment that sustains life and vigor, so the soul must be constantly communing with Christ, submitting to Him and depending wholly upon Him.

“As the weary traveler seeks the spring in the desert and, finding it, quenches his burning thirst, so will the Christian thirst for and obtain the pure water of life, of which Christ is the fountain.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 18, 19.

LED BY THE ALMIGHTY GOD

3. Where will the true believer be led in his thirst for righteousness? Isaiah 55:2; Psalm 22:26.

“If you have a sense of need in your soul, if you hunger and thirst after righteousness, this is an evidence that Christ has wrought upon your heart, in order that He may be sought unto to do for you, through the endowment of the Holy Spirit, those things which it is impossible for you to do for yourself. We need not seek to quench our thirst at shallow streams; for the great fountain is just above us, of whose abundant waters we may freely drink, if we will rise a little higher in the pathway of faith.

“The words of God are the wellsprings of life. As you seek unto those living springs you will, through the Holy Spirit, be brought into communion with Christ. Familiar truths will present themselves to your mind in a new aspect, texts of Scripture will burst upon you with a new meaning as a flash of light, you will see the relation of other truths to the work of redemption, and you will know that Christ is leading you, a divine Teacher is at your side.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 19, 20.

CHANGED INTO THE DIVINE IMAGE

4. To whom is the Holy Spirit given in rich measure? What miraculous change does He bring about? Ephesians 1:13; 4:30.

“To Jesus, who emptied Himself for the salvation of lost humanity, the Holy Spirit was given without measure. So it will be given to every follower of Christ when the whole heart is surrendered for His indwelling. Our Lord Himself has given the command, ‘Be filled with the Spirit’ (Ephesians 5:18), and this command is also a promise of its fulfillment. It was the good pleasure of the Father that in Christ should ‘all the fullness dwell,’ and ‘in Him ye are made full.’ Colossians 1:19, R.V.; 2:10, R.V.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 21.

“Only to those who wait humbly upon God, who watch for His guidance and grace, is the Spirit given. The power of God awaits their demand and reception. This promised blessing, claimed by faith, brings all other blessings in its train. It is given according to the riches of the grace of Christ, and He is ready to supply every soul according to the capacity to receive....

“When the Spirit of God takes possession of the heart, it transforms the life. Sinful thoughts are put away, evil deeds are renounced; love, humility, and peace take the place of anger, envy, and strife. Joy takes the place of sadness, and the countenance reflects the light of heaven. No one sees the hand that lifts the burden, or beholds the light descend

from the courts above. The blessing comes when by faith the soul surrenders itself to God. Then that power which no human eye can see creates a new being in the image of God.”
—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 672, 173.

5. How alone can missionary activity—witnessing—be successful? 1 Samuel 10:6; Acts 1:8; Hebrews 2:4; James 2:26.

“It is the absence of the Spirit that makes the gospel ministry so powerless. Learning, talent, eloquence, every natural or acquired endowment, may be possessed; but, without the presence of the Spirit of God, no heart will be touched, no sinner won to Christ. On the other hand, if they are connected with Christ, if the gifts of the Spirit are theirs, the poorest and most ignorant of His disciples will have a power that will tell upon hearts. God makes them channels for the outflowing of the highest influence in the universe....

“Zeal for God moved the disciples to bear witness to the truth with mighty power. Should not this zeal fire our hearts with a determination to tell the story of redeeming love, of Christ and Him crucified? Is not the Spirit of God to come today, in answer to earnest, persevering prayer, and fill men with power for service? Why, then, is the church so weak and spiritless?” —*Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 8, pp. 21, 22.

“When the way is prepared for the Spirit of God, the blessing will come. Satan can no more hinder a shower of blessing from descending upon God’s people than he can close the windows of heaven that rain cannot come upon the earth. Wicked men and devils cannot hinder the work of God, or shut out His presence from the assemblies of His people, if they will, with subdued, contrite hearts, confess and put away their sins, and in faith claim His promises.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 124.

UNENDING JOY

6. How did King David and the prophet Isaiah consider themselves? What is true of every one of us? Psalm 143:2; Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:10.

7. What gave joy to the men of God? Psalm 51:7, 10; Isaiah 1:18.

“David’s prayer should be the petition of every soul: ‘Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.’ Psalm 51:10. And having become partakers of the heavenly gift, we are to go on unto perfection, being ‘kept by the power of God through faith.’ 1 Peter 1:5.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 460.

“The people were not to trust in their own works, in their own righteousness, or in themselves in any way, but in the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world. In Him the Advocate with the Father was revealed. Through Him the invitation was given, ‘Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.’ This invitation comes sounding down along the lines to us today.” —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 239.

“... A very great number of angels bring from the city glorious crowns—a crown for every saint, with his name written thereon. As Jesus called for the crowns, angels presented them to Him, and with His own right hand, the lovely Jesus placed the crowns on the heads of the saints. In the same manner the angels brought the harps, and Jesus presented them also to the saints.” —*Early Writings*, p. 288.

CONCLUSION

“‘Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.’ The sense of unworthiness will lead the heart to hunger and thirst for righteousness, and this desire will not be disappointed. Those who make room in their hearts for Jesus will realize His love. All who long to bear the likeness of the character of God shall be satisfied. The Holy Spirit never leaves unassisted the soul who is looking unto Jesus. He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto him. If the eye is kept fixed on Christ, the work of the Spirit ceases not until the soul is conformed to His image. The pure element of love will expand the soul, giving it a capacity for higher attainments, for increased knowledge of heavenly things, so that it will not rest short of the fullness. ‘Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 302.

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Sabbath, February 4, 2012

“Blessed Are the Merciful”

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.” Matthew 5:7.

INTRODUCTION

“The heart of man is by nature cold and dark and unloving; whenever one manifests a spirit of mercy and forgiveness, he does it not of himself, but through the influence of the divine Spirit moving upon his heart. ‘We love, because He first loved us.’ 1 John 4:19, R.V.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 21, 22.

GOD IS MERCIFUL

- 1. What is present in a person in whom Christ has come to dwell? 1 John 4:16.**

“The merciful are ‘partakers of the divine nature,’ and in them the compassionate love of God finds expression. All whose hearts are in sympathy with the heart of Infinite Love will seek to reclaim and not to condemn. Christ dwelling in the soul is a spring that never runs dry. Where He abides, there will be an overflowing of beneficence.

“To the appeal of the erring, the tempted, the wretched victims of want and sin, the Christian does not ask, Are they worthy? but, How can I benefit them? In the most wretched, the most debased, he sees souls whom Christ died to save and for whom God has given to His children the ministry of reconciliation.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 22.

2. Why does God care so much for us? Exodus 34:6, 7.

“God is Himself the source of all mercy. His name is ‘merciful and gracious.’ Exodus 34:6. He does not treat us according to our desert. He does not ask if we are worthy of His love, but He pours upon us the riches of His love, to make us worthy. He is not vindictive. He seeks not to punish, but to redeem. Even the severity which He manifests through His providences is manifested for the salvation of the wayward. He yearns with intense desire to relieve the woes of men and to apply His balsam to their wounds. It is true that God ‘will by no means clear the guilty’ (Exodus 34:7), but He would take away the guilt.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 22.

MERCY IN PRACTICE

3. How do the Scriptures define and describe acts of mercy? Job 29:12-16; Proverbs 19:17.

“The merciful are those who manifest compassion to the poor, the suffering, and the oppressed.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 22.

“There never was a time when there was greater need for the exercise of mercy than today. The poor are all around us, the distressed, the afflicted, the sorrowing, and those who are ready to perish.” —*Welfare Ministry*, p. 15.

“How many who profess to be followers of Christ climb upon the judgment seat, and pronounce condemnation, magnifying some fault which to finite beings seems to be an offense against God! But this work, that is so pleasing to the great adversary of souls, would all cease if the Spirit of Christ were in the heart. Mercy rejoices not in iniquity.” —*The Signs of the Times*, September 19, 1895.

4. How does God show His love and mercy to lost sinners? John 3:16; Romans 5:5.

“There are many to whom life is a painful struggle; they feel their deficiencies and are miserable and unbelieving; they think they have nothing for which to be grateful. Kind words, looks of sympathy, expressions of appreciation, would be to many a struggling and lonely one as the cup of cold water to a thirsty soul. A word of sympathy, an act of kindness, would lift burdens that rest heavily upon weary shoulders. And every word or deed of unselfish kindness is an expression of the love of Christ for lost humanity.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 23.

SOWING AND REAPING

5. For good or bad, we reap what we sow. Describe some real life experiences demonstrating this law. Psalm 41:1-3.

“The merciful ‘shall obtain mercy.’ ‘The soul of blessing shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.’ Proverbs 11:25, margin. There is sweet peace for the compassionate spirit, a blessed satisfaction in the life of self-forgetful service for the good of others. The Holy Spirit that abides in the soul and is manifest in the life will soften hard hearts and awaken sympathy and tenderness. You will reap that which you sow.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 23.

“Jesus showed His disciples that only as they should partake of His Spirit, and be assimilated to His merciful character, would they be endowed with spiritual discernment and miraculous power. All their strength and wisdom must come from Him. When dealing with obstinately offending members, the holy men of the church were to follow the directions laid down by Christ; this, the only course of safety for the church, has been traced step by step by the apostles with the pen of inspiration.” —*Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 3, p. 246.

6. What did the apostle Paul say about those who are merciful and generous? How are their needs supplied? Philippians 4:19; Psalm 112:4-6.

“He who has given his life to God in ministry to His children is linked with Him who has all the resources of the universe at His command. His life is bound up by the golden chain of the immutable promises with the life of God. The Lord will not fail him in the hour of suffering and need. ‘My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.’ Philippians 4:19. And in the hour of final need the merciful shall find refuge in the mercy of the compassionate Saviour and shall be received into everlasting habitations.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 24.

7. How does this law apply even to our thoughts? What will be the effect of sinful thoughts? Proverbs 23:7.

“The merciful shall find mercy, and the pure in heart shall see God. Every impure thought defiles the soul, impairs the moral sense, and tends to obliterate the impressions of the Holy Spirit. It dims the spiritual vision, so that men cannot behold God. The Lord may and does forgive the repenting sinner; but though forgiven, the soul is marred. All impurity of speech or of thought must be shunned by him who would have clear discernment of spiritual truth.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 302.

ONLY JESUS SAVES

8. What is the result of trying to cover up sin? But what is the result of confessing and forsaking it? Proverbs 28:13.

“The conditions of obtaining mercy of God are simple and just and reasonable. The Lord does not require us to do some grievous thing in order that we may have the forgiveness of sin. We need not make long and wearisome pilgrimages, or perform painful penances, to commend our souls to the God of heaven or to expiate our transgression; but he that confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall have mercy.

“The apostle says, ‘Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.’ James 5:16. Confess your sins to God, who only can forgive them, and your faults to one another. If you have given offense to your friend or neighbor, you are to acknowledge your wrong, and it is his duty freely to forgive you.” —*Steps to Christ*, p. 37.

CONCLUSION

“Shall we not regard the mercy of God? What more could He do? Let us place ourselves in right relation to Him who has loved us with amazing love. Let us avail ourselves of the means provided for us that we may be transformed into His likeness, and be restored to fellowship with the ministering angels, to harmony and communion with the Father and the Son.” —*Steps to Christ*, p. 22.

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“Blessed Are the Pure in Heart”

“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” Matthew 5:8.

INTRODUCTION

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” Psalm 51:10. This purity of heart and loveliness of spirit are more precious than gold, both for time and for eternity. Only the pure in heart shall see God.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 418.

THE HEART IS DECEITFUL

1. **How is the natural state of man’s heart described in the Scriptures? Jeremiah 17:9; Genesis 6:5; Proverbs 6:14.**

“Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.’ Why is this weakness? It is because the animal propensities have been strengthened by exercise until they have gained the ascendancy over the higher powers. Men and women lack principle. They are dying spiritually because they have so long pampered their natural appetites that their power of self-government seems gone. The lower passions of their nature have taken the reins, and that which should be the governing power has become the servant of corrupt passion. The soul is held in lowest bondage. Sensuality has quenched the desire for holiness and withered spiritual prosperity.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 348.

2. **Therefore, what is natural to the human heart? Matthew 15:19; Mark 7:21-23.**

“In his sinless state, man held joyful communion with Him ‘in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.’ Colossians 2:3. But after his sin, he could no longer find joy in holiness, and he sought to hide from the presence of God. Such is still the condition of the unrenewed heart. It is not in harmony with God, and finds no joy in communion with Him. The sinner could not be happy in God’s presence;...”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 17.

“A truly Christian life is a power for good. But, on the other hand, those who associate with men and women of questionable morals, of bad principles and practices, will soon be walking in the same path. The tendencies of the natural heart are downward. He who associates with the skeptic will soon become skeptical; he who chooses the companionship of the vile will most assuredly become vile.”—*The Adventist Home*, pp. 456, 457.

3. What does the apostle Paul say we should put on, and what are we to put off? Colossians 3:5, 12-14; Hebrews 11:5.

“... Enoch’s heart was upon eternal treasures. He had looked upon the celestial city. He had seen the King in His glory in the midst of Zion. The greater the existing iniquity, the more earnest was his longing for the home of God. While still on earth, he dwelt, by faith, in the realms of light.

“‘Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.’ Matthew 5:8. For three hundred years Enoch had been seeking purity of heart, that he might be in harmony with heaven. For three centuries he had walked with God. Day by day he had longed for a closer union; nearer and nearer had grown the communion, until God took him to Himself. He had stood at the threshold of the eternal world, only a step between him and the land of the blest; and now the portals opened, the walk with God, so long pursued on earth, continued, and he passed through the gates of the holy city, the first from among men to enter there....

“To such communion God is calling us.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, pp. 330, 331.

A PURE HEART

4. Can we know what is in the human heart? What did King David recognize? Jeremiah 17:10; Psalm 139:1-4; Romans 8:27; Revelation 2:23, middle part.

“‘Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart’—the human heart, with its conflicting emotions of joy and sorrow; the wandering, wayward heart, which is the abode of so much impurity and deceit. 1 Samuel 16:7. He knows its motives, its very intents and purposes. Go to Him with your soul all stained as it is. Like the psalmist, throw its chambers open to the all-seeing eye, exclaiming, ‘Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.’ Psalm 139:23, 24.

“Many accept an intellectual religion, a form of godliness, when the heart is not cleansed. Let it be your prayer, ‘Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.’ Psalm 51:10. Deal truly with your own soul. Be as earnest, as persistent, as you would be if your mortal life were at stake. This is a matter to be settled between God and your own soul, settled for eternity. A supposed hope, and nothing more, will prove your ruin.”—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 34, 35.

5. What will happen to the person who receives a pure heart? Proverbs 22:11.

“But to hearts that have become purified through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, all is changed. These can know God. Moses was hid in the cleft of the rock when the glory of the Lord was revealed to him; and it is when we are hid in Christ that we behold the love of God.

“He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips the King shall be his friend.” Proverbs 22:11. By faith we behold Him here and now. In our daily experience we discern His goodness and compassion in the manifestation of His providence. We recognize Him in the character of His Son. The Holy Spirit takes the truth concerning God and Him whom He hath sent, and opens it to the understanding and to the heart. The pure in heart see God in a new and endearing relation, as their Redeemer; and while they discern the purity and loveliness of His character, they long to reflect His image. They see Him as a Father longing to embrace a repenting son, and their hearts are filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 26.

WHAT IS NEEDED TO SEE GOD

6. What change of heart do God’s children receive? 1 Chronicles 28:9; 1 Samuel 2:30, second part.

“Choose poverty, reproach, separation from friends, or any suffering rather than to defile the soul with sin. Death before dishonor or the transgression of God’s law should be the motto of every Christian. As a people professing to be reformers, treasuring the most solemn, purifying truths of God’s word, we must elevate the standard far higher than it is at the present time. Sin and sinners in the church must be promptly dealt with, that others may not be contaminated. Truth and purity require that we make more thorough work to cleanse the camp from Achans. Let those in responsible positions not suffer sin in a brother. Show him that he must either put away his sins or be separated from the church.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 147.

7. Of whom does Jesus take special care? Luke 4:18; Psalm 34:18; Isaiah 57:15.

“In describing His earthly mission, Jesus said, The Lord ‘hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.’ Luke 4:18. This was His work. He went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by Satan....

“We can no more repent without the Spirit of Christ to awaken the conscience than we can be pardoned without Christ. Christ is the source of every right impulse.” —*Steps to Christ*, pp. 11, 26.

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“Blessed Are the Peacemakers”

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.” Matthew 5:9.

INTRODUCTION

“Men cannot manufacture peace. Human plans for the purification and uplifting of individuals or of society will fail of producing peace, because they do not reach the heart. The only power that can create or perpetuate true peace is the grace of Christ. When this is implanted in the heart, it will cast out the evil passions that cause strife and dissension.”
—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 305.

PRINCE OF PEACE

1. What does it mean to be a peacemaker? Isaiah 52:7.

“Christ’s followers are sent to the world with the message of peace. Whoever, by the quiet, unconscious influence of a holy life, shall reveal the love of Christ; whoever, by word or deed, shall lead another to renounce sin and yield his heart to God, is a peacemaker.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 28.

2. Why are peacemakers called the children of God? Matthew 5:9; Luke 6:35.

“And ‘blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.’ The spirit of peace is evidence of their connection with heaven. The sweet savor of Christ surrounds them. The fragrance of the life, the loveliness of the character, reveal to the world the fact that they are children of God. Men take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 28.

3. From whom does peace come? Is it free, or must one buy it? Ephesians 2:14; Romans 5:1; Isaiah 53:5.

“Christ is ‘the Prince of Peace’ (Isaiah 9:6), and it is His mission to restore to earth and heaven the peace that sin has broken. ‘Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ Romans 5:1. Whoever consents to renounce sin and open his heart to the love of Christ, becomes a partaker of this heavenly peace.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 27.

4. What meaning is contained in the name Prince of Peace? Isaiah 9:6.

“The germ in the seed grows by the unfolding of the life-principle which God has implanted. Its development depends upon no human power. So it is with the kingdom of Christ. It is a new creation. Its principles of development are the opposite of those that rule the kingdoms of this world. Earthly governments prevail by physical force; they maintain their dominion by war; but the founder of the new kingdom is the Prince of Peace. The Holy Spirit represents worldly kingdoms under the symbol of fierce beasts of prey; but Christ is ‘the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’ John 1:29. In His plan of government there is no employment of brute force to compel the conscience. The Jews looked for the kingdom of God to be established in the same way as the kingdoms of the world. To promote righteousness they resorted to external measures. They devised methods and plans. But Christ implants a principle. By implanting truth and righteousness, He counterworks error and sin.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 77.

5. What do those who love God’s law receive? Psalm 119:165; Proverbs 3:2; John 14:27; Philippians 4:7.

“‘Blessed are the peacemakers.’ The peace of Christ is born of truth. It is harmony with God. The world is at enmity with the law of God; sinners are at enmity with their Maker; and as a result they are at enmity with one another. But the psalmist declares, ‘Great peace have they which love Thy law: and nothing shall offend them.’ Psalm 119:165.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 302, 305.

EVERYONE NEEDS AN UNSELFISH HEART

6. What will make it possible for a person to see God? Hebrews 12:14; Matthew 5:9.

“It is the love of self that destroys our peace. While self is all alive, we stand ready continually to guard it from mortification and insult; but when we are dead, and our life is

hid with Christ in God, we shall not take neglects or slights to heart. We shall be deaf to reproach and blind to scorn and insult.”—*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 16.

“Selfishness prevents us from beholding God. The self-seeking spirit judges of God as altogether such a one as itself. Until we have renounced this, we cannot understand Him who is love. Only the unselfish heart, the humble and trustful spirit, shall see God as ‘merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.’ Exodus 34:6.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 302.

7. With whom do we want to be at peace? Job 22:21; Romans 12:18; Hebrews 12:14.

“Whoever consents to renounce sin and open his heart to the love of Christ, becomes a partaker of this heavenly peace.

“There is no other ground of peace than this. The grace of Christ received into the heart, subdues enmity; it allays strife and fills the soul with love. He who is at peace with God and his fellow men cannot be made miserable. Envy will not be in his heart; evil surmisings will find no room there; hatred cannot exist. The heart that is in harmony with God is a partaker of the peace of heaven and will diffuse its blessed influence on all around. The spirit of peace will rest like dew upon hearts weary and troubled with worldly strife.”—*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 27, 28.

CONCLUSION

“The convicted sinner has something to do. He must repent and show true faith.

“When Jesus speaks of the new heart, He means the mind, the life, the whole being. To have a change of heart is to withdraw the affections from the world, and fasten them upon Christ. To have a new heart is to have a new mind, new purposes, new motives. What is the sign of a new heart? A changed life. There is a daily, hourly dying to selfishness and pride.”—*Messages to Young People*, p. 72.

“There is peace in believing, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Believing brings peace, and trusting in God brings joy. Believe, believe! my soul says, believe. Rest in God. He is able to keep that which you have committed to His trust. He will bring you off more than conqueror through Him who hath loved you.”—*The Faith I Live By*, p. 121.

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“Blessed Are They Which Are Persecuted for Righteousness’ Sake”

“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:10.

INTRODUCTION

“The world loves sin, and hates righteousness, and this was the cause of its hostility to Jesus. All who refuse His infinite love will find Christianity a disturbing element. The light of Christ sweeps away the darkness that covers their sins, and the need of reform is made manifest. While those who yield to the influence of the Holy Spirit begin war with themselves, those who cling to sin war against the truth and its representatives.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 306.

REFLECTING CHRIST

- 1. According to Jesus, to whom is life and the kingdom of heaven promised? Matthew 5:10; Mark 10:29, 30; 2 Timothy 2:10-12.**

“Jesus does not present to His followers the hope of attaining earthly glory and riches, and of having a life free from trial, but He presents to them the privilege of walking with their Master in the paths of self-denial and reproach, because the world knows them not.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 29.

“Jesus has not left you to be amazed at the trials and difficulties you meet. He has told you all about them, and He has told you also not to be cast down and oppressed when trials come. Look to Jesus, your Redeemer, and be cheerful and rejoice. The trials hardest to bear are those that come from our brethren, our own familiar friends; but even these trials may be borne with patience. Jesus is not lying in Joseph’s new tomb. He has risen and has ascended to heaven, there to intercede in our behalf. We have a Saviour who so loved us that He died for us, that through Him we might have hope and strength and courage, and a place with Him upon His throne. He is able and willing to help you whenever you call upon Him.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 128.

2. What may God's children suffer? But what can the wicked not do to them? Matthew 10:28; Luke 12:4.

"In all ages Satan has persecuted the people of God. He has tortured them and put them to death, but in dying they became conquerors. They revealed in their steadfast faith a mightier One than Satan. Satan could torture and kill the body, but he could not touch the life that was hid with Christ in God. He could incarcerate in prison walls, but he could not bind the spirit.

"They could look beyond the gloom to the glory, saying, 'I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.' Romans 8:18." —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 30.

CHRIST OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

3. How did the world treat Jesus Christ? Are His followers treated any differently today? 1 Peter 3:14; 4:13, 14; John 15:20; Luke 23:31.

"He who came to redeem the lost world was opposed by the united forces of the adversaries of God and man. In an unifying confederacy, evil men and evil angels arrayed themselves against the Prince of Peace. Though His every word and act breathed of divine compassion, His unlikeness to the world provoked the bitterest hostility. Because He would give no license for the exercise of the evil passions of our nature, He aroused the fiercest opposition and enmity. So it is with all who will live godly in Christ Jesus. Between righteousness and sin, love and hatred, truth and falsehood, there is an irrepressible conflict. When one presents the love of Christ and the beauty of holiness, he is drawing away the subjects of Satan's kingdom, and the prince of evil is aroused to resist it. Persecution and reproach await all who are imbued with the Spirit of Christ." —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 29.

4. What will the world do to those who obey God's commandments? Matthew 21:33-36.

"The character of the persecution changes with the times, but the principle—the spirit that underlies it—is the same that has slain the chosen of the Lord ever since the days of Abel.

"As men seek to come into harmony with God, they will find that the offense of the cross has not ceased. Principalities and powers and wicked spirits in high places are

arrayed against all who yield obedience to the law of heaven. Therefore, so far from causing grief, persecution should bring joy to the disciples of Christ, for it is an evidence that they are following in the steps of their Master.” –*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 29, 30.

THE PRIVILEGE TO SUFFER FOR CHRIST’S SAKE

- 5. What promise is for all who suffer for the sake of righteousness? Matthew 28:20, second part. Who was with the three righteous men in the fiery furnace? Daniel 3:17, 18, 25.**

“If you are called to go through the fiery furnace for His sake, Jesus will be by your side even as He was with the faithful three in Babylon. Those who love their Redeemer will rejoice at every opportunity of sharing with Him humiliation and reproach. The love they bear their Lord makes suffering for His sake sweet.” –*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 30.

- 6. What will we do well to learn from the faithful patriarchs? Hebrews 11:25, 26, 13-16.**

THE RIGHTEOUS WILL BE GLORIFIED

- 7. What reward is awaiting those who suffer for righteousness’ sake? Revelation 7:13-17; John 16:33; 1 Peter 1:5.**

“The living righteous are changed ‘in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.’ At the voice of God they were glorified; now they are made immortal and with the risen saints are caught up to meet their Lord in the air. Angels ‘gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.’ Little children are borne by holy angels to their mothers’ arms. Friends long separated by death are united, nevermore to part, and with songs of gladness ascend together to the City of God.” –*The Great Controversy*, p. 645.

CONCLUSION

“The less we see to esteem in ourselves, the more we shall see to esteem in the infinite purity and loveliness of our Saviour. A view of our sinfulness drives us to Him who can pardon; and when the soul, realizing its helplessness, reaches out after Christ, He will

reveal Himself in power. The more our sense of need drives us to Him and to the word of God, the more exalted views we shall have of His character, and the more fully we shall reflect His image....

“Christ is the source of every right impulse. He is the only one that can implant in the heart enmity against sin. Every desire for truth and purity, every conviction of our own sinfulness, is an evidence that His Spirit is moving upon our hearts.” —*Steps to Christ*, pp. 65, 26.

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Sabbath, March 3, 2012

Blessed Are You When You Are Reviled

“Blessed are ye, when [men] shall revile you, and persecute [you], and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake.” Matthew 5:11.

INTRODUCTION

“... It is fellowship with God that brings them the world’s enmity. They are bearing the reproach of Christ. They are treading the path that has been trodden by the noblest of the earth. Not with sorrow, but with rejoicing, should they meet persecution. Each fiery trial is God’s agent for their refining. Each is fitting them for their work as collaborators with Him. Each conflict has its place in the great battle for righteousness, and each will add to the joy of their final triumph.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 306.

FACING ATTACKS

1. **What characterizes those who do not maintain communion with the Lord?**
2 Peter 2:10, 11; 2 Timothy 3:3, middle part; Jude 8.

“It should not be regarded as a light thing to speak evil of others or to make ourselves judges of their motives or actions. ‘He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.’ James 4:11. There is but one judge—He ‘who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.’ 1 Corinthians 4:5. And whoever takes it upon himself to judge and condemn his fellow men is usurping the prerogative of the Creator.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 385, 386.

2. What may those who live by faith expect? Matthew 10:22; 1 Peter 2:12; 3:16.

“When God’s messages of warning are brought home to the conscience, Satan leads men to justify themselves and to seek the sympathy of others in their course of sin. Instead of correcting their errors, they excite indignation against the reprover, as if he were the sole cause of difficulty. From the days of righteous Abel to our own time such is the spirit which has been displayed toward those who dare to condemn sin.” *—The Great Controversy*, p. 500.

“As Satan accused Joshua and his people, so in all ages he accuses those who are seeking the mercy and favor of God. In the Revelation he is declared to be the ‘accuser of our brethren,’ ‘which accused them before our God day and night.’ The controversy is repeated over every soul that is rescued from the power of evil and whose name is registered in the Lamb’s book of life. Never is one received from the family of Satan into the family of God without exciting the determined resistance of the wicked one.” *—Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 470.

PURIFYING TESTS

3. What blessing is promised to those who are falsely accused, who suffer for God’s cause and for God Himself? Matthew 5:11; Luke 6:22; 1 Peter 4:14.

“While slander may blacken the reputation, it cannot stain the character. That is in God’s keeping. So long as we do not consent to sin, there is no power, whether human or satanic, that can bring a stain upon the soul. A man whose heart is stayed upon God is just the same in the hour of his most afflicting trials and most discouraging surroundings as when he was in prosperity, when the light and favor of God seemed to be upon him. His words, his motives, his actions, may be misrepresented and falsified, but he does not mind it, because he has greater interests at stake. Like Moses, he endures as ‘seeing Him who is invisible’ (Hebrews 11:27); looking ‘not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen’ (2 Corinthians 4:18).” *—Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 32.

4. What examples are given of individuals who suffered for doing God’s will? James 5:10; Hebrews 11:35-38.

“Christ is acquainted with all that is misunderstood and misrepresented by men. His children can afford to wait in calm patience and trust, no matter how much maligned and despised; for nothing is secret that shall not be made manifest, and those who honor God

shall be honored by Him in the presence of men and angels.” —*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 308.

“‘When men shall revile you, and persecute you,’ said Jesus, ‘rejoice, and be exceeding glad.’ And He pointed His hearers to the prophets who had spoken in the name of the Lord, as ‘an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.’ James 5:10. Abel, the very first Christian of Adam’s children, died a martyr. Enoch walked with God, and the world knew him not. Noah was mocked as a fanatic and an alarmist. ‘Others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment.’ ‘Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection.’ Hebrews 11:36, 35.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 33.

THE CHRISTIAN’S SPECIAL CHARACTER

5. To whom should we look if we face persecution while working for the Lord? Hebrews 12:2, 3; 1 Peter 2:21; Philippians 2:8, 9.

“Ever since his fall, Satan has worked by means of deception. As he has misrepresented God, so, through his agents, he misrepresents the children of God. The Saviour says, ‘The reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon Me.’ Psalm 69:9. In like manner they fall upon His disciples.

“There was never one who walked among men more cruelly slandered than the Son of man. He was derided and mocked because of His unswerving obedience to the principles of God’s holy law. They hated Him without a cause. Yet He stood calmly before His enemies, declaring that reproach is a part of the Christian’s legacy, counseling His followers how to meet the arrows of malice, bidding them not to faint under persecution.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 31, 32.

6. Why did God choose Saul, who participated in the stoning of Stephen, as the apostle to the Gentiles? Acts 8:1, first part; 9:15, 16; 7:58; 22:20; Romans 1:1.

“How often this result has been seen in the history of God’s messengers! When the noble and eloquent Stephen was stoned to death at the instigation of the Sanhedrin council, there was no loss to the cause of the gospel. The light of heaven that glorified his face, the divine compassion breathed in his dying prayer, were as a sharp arrow of conviction to the bigoted Sanhedrist who stood by, and Saul, the persecuting Pharisee, became a chosen vessel to bear the name of Christ before Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 33, 34.

“The Saviour had spoken to Saul through Stephen, whose clear reasoning could not be controverted. The learned Jew had seen the face of the martyr reflecting the light of Christ’s glory—appearing as if ‘it had been the face of an angel.’ Acts 6:15. He had wit-

nessed Stephen's forbearance toward his enemies and his forgiveness of them. He had also witnessed the fortitude and cheerful resignation of many whom he had caused to be tormented and afflicted. He had seen some yield up even their lives with rejoicing for the sake of their faith.

"All these things had appealed loudly to Saul and at times had thrust upon his mind an almost overwhelming conviction that Jesus was the promised Messiah. At such times he had struggled for entire nights against this conviction, and always he had ended the matter by avowing his belief that Jesus was not the Messiah and that His followers were deluded fanatics." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 116, 117.

ADVERSITIES AND THE CROWN OF LIFE

7. How did Jesus respond to false accusations against Himself? What assurance does He give to those who suffer for His sake? Matthew 26:62, 63; Revelation 2:10.

"He who is imbued with the Spirit of Christ abides in Christ. The blow that is aimed at him falls upon the Saviour, who surrounds him with His presence. Whatever comes to him comes from Christ. He has no need to resist evil, for Christ is his defense. Nothing can touch him except by our Lord's permission, and 'all things' that are permitted 'work together for good to them that love God.' Romans 8:28." —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 71.

CONCLUSION

"The word is: Go forward; discharge your individual duty, and leave all consequences in the hands of God. If we move forward where Jesus leads the way we shall see His triumph, we shall share His joy. We must share the conflicts if we wear the crown of victory. Like Jesus, we must be made perfect through suffering. Had Christ's life been one of ease, then might we safely yield to sloth. Since His life was marked with continual self-denial, suffering, and self-sacrifice, we shall make no complaint if we are partakers with Him. We can walk safely in the darkest path if we have the Light of the world for our guide." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 71.

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Blessed Is He Who Is Not Offended

“And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me.” Matthew 11:6.

INTRODUCTION

“So long as the people of God preserve their fidelity to Him, so long as they cling by living faith to Jesus, they are under the protection of heavenly angels, and Satan will not be permitted to exercise his hellish arts upon them to their destruction. But those who separate themselves from Christ by sin are in great peril.” —*Maranatha*, p. 95.

FROM THE DESERT TO PRISON

- 1. What prophecy had been given of the Messiah’s forerunner? How clearly did he introduce the Saviour when the time came? Isaiah 40:3-5; Matthew 3:11; John 1:29, 36.**

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

- 2. What happened to this faithful servant of God when his ministry reached its peak? Mark 6:17, 18.**

“John the Baptist had been first in heralding Christ’s kingdom, and he was first also in suffering. From the free air of the wilderness and the vast throngs that had hung upon his words, he was now shut in by the walls of a dungeon cell. He had become a prisoner in the fortress of Herod Antipas. In the territory east of Jordan, which was under the dominion of Antipas, much of John’s ministry had been spent. Herod himself had listened to the preaching of the Baptist. The dissolute king had trembled under the call to repentance.

‘Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy;... and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.’ John dealt with him faithfully, denouncing his iniquitous alliance with Herodias, his brother’s wife. For a time Herod feebly sought to break the chain of lust that bound him; but Herodias fastened him the more firmly in her toils, and found revenge upon the Baptist by inducing Herod to cast him into prison.”
–*The Desire of Ages*, p. 214.

DOUBT, QUESTION, AND RESPONSE

3. While Jesus’ ministry was progressing and John the Baptist was in prison, what question came to his mind? How did he try to get an answer to this thought? Luke 7:19, 20; Matthew 11:2, 3.

“In his mission the Baptist had stood as a fearless reprover 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. And now from his dungeon he watched for the Lion of the tribe of Judah to cast down the pride of the oppressor, and to deliver the poor and him that cried. But Jesus seemed to content Himself with gathering disciples about Him, and healing and teaching the people. He was eating at the tables of the publicans, while every day the Roman yoke rested more heavily upon Israel, while King Herod and his vile paramour worked their will, and the cries of the poor and suffering went up to heaven.

“To the desert prophet all this seemed a mystery beyond his fathoming. There were hours when the whisperings of demons tortured his spirit, and the shadow of a terrible fear crept over him. Could it be that the long-hoped-for Deliverer had not yet appeared? Then what meant the message that he himself had been impelled to bear?” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 215, 216.

4. What inspiring and comforting response did Jesus give to John’s query? What testimony does the Spirit of prophecy give concerning that difficult experience? Luke 7:21-23.

“The Saviour did not at once answer the disciples’ question.... While He healed their diseases, He taught the people. The poor peasants and laborers, who were shunned by the rabbis as unclean, gathered close about Him, and He spoke to them the words of eternal life....

“Thus the day wore away, the disciples of John seeing and hearing all. At last Jesus called them to Him, and bade them go and tell John what they had witnessed, adding, ‘Blessed is he, whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in Me.’ Luke 7:23, R.V. The evidence of His divinity was seen in its adaptation to the needs of suffering humanity. His glory was shown in His condescension to our low estate....

“But the Baptist did not surrender his faith in Christ. The memory of the voice from heaven and the descending dove, the spotless purity of Jesus, the power of the Holy Spirit that had rested upon John as he came into the Saviour’s presence, and the testimony of the prophetic scriptures—all witnessed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Promised One.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 216, 217.

NATURAL TENDENCY

- 5. Even though they received much light, why have many of God’s people turned again Him? What happens when one gives credence to doubt and unbelief? Isaiah 8:14, 15; Romans 9:32-33.**

“When Christ came to the earth, humanity seemed to be fast reaching its lowest point. The very foundations of society were undermined. Life had become false and artificial. The Jews, destitute of the power of God’s word, gave to the world mind-benumbing, soul-deadening traditions and speculations....

“As they ceased to recognize the Divine, they ceased to regard the human. Truth, honor, integrity, confidence, compassion, were departing from the earth. Relentless greed and absorbing ambition gave birth to universal distrust.... Wealth and power, ease and self-indulgence, were sought as the highest good. Physical degeneracy, mental stupor, spiritual death, characterized the age.” —*Education*, pp. 74, 75.

- 6. What alone can keep personal ideas and prejudice from being obstacles for ourselves and others? 1 Corinthians 1:22-24.**

“The Jewish nation was a symbol of the people of all ages who scorn the pleadings of Infinite Love. The tears of Christ when He wept over Jerusalem were for the sins of all time. In the judgments pronounced upon Israel, those who reject the reproofs and warnings of God’s Holy Spirit, may read their own condemnation.

“In this generation there are many who are treading on the same ground as were the unbelieving Jews. They have witnessed the manifestation of the power of God; the Holy Spirit has spoken to their hearts; but they cling to their unbelief and resistance. God sends them warnings and reproof, but they are not willing to confess their errors, and they reject His message and His messenger. The very means He uses for their recovery becomes to them a stone of stumbling....

“Christ did not fulfill men’s expectations; His life was a rebuke to their sins, and they rejected Him. So now the truth of God’s word does not harmonize with men’s practices and their natural inclination, and thousands reject its light. Men prompted by Satan cast doubt upon God’s word, and choose to exercise their independent judgment. They choose darkness rather than light, but they do it at the peril of their souls. Those who caviled at the words of Christ, found ever-increased cause for cavil, until they turned from the Truth and the Life. So it is now.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 587, 588.

7. What doubts did the disciple Thomas express regarding his Master's resurrection? How did Jesus address those doubts? John 20:25-29.

“At this time Thomas was not present. He would not humbly receive the report of the disciples, but firmly and self-confidently affirmed that he would not believe unless he should put his fingers in the prints of the nails and his hand in the side where the cruel spear was thrust. In this he showed a lack of confidence in his brethren. If all should require the same evidence, none would now receive Jesus and believe in His resurrection. But it was the will of God that the report of the disciples should be received by those who could not themselves see and hear the risen Saviour. God was not pleased with the unbelief of Thomas. When Jesus again met with His disciples, Thomas was with them; and when he beheld Jesus, he believed. But he had declared that he would not be satisfied without the evidence of feeling added to sight, and Jesus gave him the evidence which he had desired. Thomas cried out, ‘My Lord and my God!’ But Jesus reproved him for his unbelief, saying, ‘Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.’” —*Early Writings*, p. 188.

CONCLUSION

“Are we opening the door of the heart to Jesus, and closing every means of entrance to Satan? Are we daily obtaining clearer light, and greater strength, that we may stand in Christ’s righteousness? Are we emptying our hearts of all selfishness, and cleansing them, preparatory to receiving the latter rain from heaven?” —*Maranatha*, p. 95.

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You Are Blessed, Because You Can See

“But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.” Matthew 13:16.

INTRODUCTION

“Do you desire to become a follower of Christ, yet know not how to begin? Are you in darkness and know not how to find the light? Follow the light you have. Set your heart to obey what you do know of the word of God. His power, His very life, dwells in His word. As you receive the word in faith, it will give you power to obey. As you give heed to the light you have, greater light will come. You are building on God’s word, and your character will be builded after the similitude of the character of Christ.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 150.

THE VALUE OF SEEING

- 1. Why is the normal capacity to see and hear insufficient for evaluating divine things? Ecclesiastes 11:7; Matthew 6:22.**

“Singleness of purpose, wholehearted devotion to God, is the condition pointed out by the Saviour’s words. Let the purpose be sincere and unwavering to discern the truth and to obey it at whatever cost, and you will receive divine enlightenment. Real piety begins when all compromise with sin is at an end. Then the language of the heart will be that of the apostle Paul: ‘This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.’ ‘I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.’ Philippians 3:13, 14, 8.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 91.

- 2. Physical sight is a very precious gift. How urgently did two blind men plead with Jesus to give them sight? But how is spiritual sight even more important? Matthew 20:29-31.**

“The gospel of Christ is from beginning to end the gospel of saving grace. It is a distinctive and controlling idea. It will be a help to the needy, light for the eyes that are blind to the truth, and a guide to souls seeking for the true foundation. Full and everlasting salvation is within the reach of every soul. Christ is waiting and longing to speak pardon, and impart the freely offered grace. He is watching and waiting, saying as He said to the blind man at the gate of Jericho, ‘What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?’ I will take away thy sins; I will wash you in My blood.” –*Evangelism*, pp. 552, 553.

OBSTACLES TO SIGHT AND HEARING

3. How did Jesus stress the great danger of spiritual blindness and deafness? Matthew 13:14, 15.

“In the near future it will be seen just who have been walking humbly with God, and who have been obeying His orders. Those who have been walking in the sparks of their own kindling will lie down in sorrow. It will be seen that they have made a terrible mistake. O let us awake! light is now shining; let the windows of the mind and heart be open to welcome the heaven-sent rays. Shall Jesus say of those who profess to obey the truth, and yet who fail to walk in its light, ‘In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them’? Matthew 13:14, 15.” *Christian Education*, p. 141.

4. What spiritual blindness can come over one who yields to sin? Therefore, what did Jesus warn? Matthew 6:23; 5:29; 13:9, 43.

“No soul is ever finally deserted of God, given up to his own ways, so long as there is any hope of his salvation. ‘Man turns from God, not God from him.’ Our heavenly Father follows us with appeals and warnings and assurances of compassion, until further opportunities and privileges would be wholly in vain. The responsibility rests with the sinner. By resisting the Spirit of God today, he prepares the way for a second resistance of light when it comes with mightier power. Thus he passes on from one stage of resistance to another, until at last the light will fail to impress, and he will cease to respond in any measure to the Spirit of God. Then even ‘the light that is in thee’ has become darkness. The very truth we do know has become so perverted as to increase the blindness of the soul.” –*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 93.

- 5. While some were unwilling to hear the Saviour's message, what sincere wish did others express? Luke 19:2-4; John 12:21.**

"How grateful was the sincere desire and confidence of the Greeks to the Master at this time of trial and sorrow. The Greeks wanted to see Him because they had heard of His mighty works, they had heard of His wisdom and truth; and they believed on Him, for they had searched the prophecies and felt assured that He was the desire of their hearts."—*Bible Echo and Signs of the Times*, May 15, 1892.

"No deep-seated love for Jesus can dwell in the heart that does not realize its own sinfulness. The soul that is transformed by the grace of Christ will admire His divine character; but if we do not see our own moral deformity, it is unmistakable evidence that we have not had a view of the beauty and excellence of Christ."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 65.

- 6. What is said of those who see the light and accept the message from Heaven with a sincere heart? What example is given of one who by faith saw the work of the Messiah far in advance? Matthew 13:16; John 8:56-58.**

"Here is where Christ's living agents, those who have tasted and found that the Lord is good, should reveal Him in words, in actions, in cheerfulness, in patience, in longsuffering, in hopefulness, in joyousness. 'Blessed are your eyes, for they see' the marvelous love of God; 'and your ears, for they hear' the precious words of Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. And we must see to some purpose, that we may present the glad tidings—show that it is glad tidings. Put off the spirit of heaviness. Speak of the mercy, the goodness, and the love of Jesus; for 'we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.' Keep your face heavenward. Look at the heavenly attractions, and then you may in truth 'show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.' With all the precious promises given us from the lips of Jesus, let us act our thankfulness. Let us contemplate our duty in the light of the commandments of God."—*The Signs of the Times*, December 7, 1891.

- 7. Who alone can open eyes and ears that have long been closed by sin and prejudice? Although the devout Simeon was very old, what did he see and appreciate concerning the salvation of God? Proverbs 20:12; 2 Kings 6:17; Luke 2:26, 30-32.**

"As Simeon enters the temple, he sees a family presenting their first-born son before the priest. Their appearance bespeaks poverty; but Simeon understands the warnings of

the Spirit, and he is deeply impressed that the infant being presented to the Lord is the Consolation of Israel, the One he has longed to see. To the astonished priest, Simeon appears like a man enraptured. The child has been returned to Mary, and he takes it in his arms and presents it to God, while a joy that he has never before felt enters his soul. As he lifts the infant Saviour toward heaven, he says, ‘Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel.’”

“The spirit of prophecy was upon this man of God...” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 55.

CONCLUSION

“It is a fearful thing to have great light and blessing, to have many opportunities and privileges, and yet make no saving use of them. Those who do not make a saving use of their opportunities, will be condemned by the privileges God has granted to them; but those who walk in the light will have increased light. Those who have had the light of truth, and yet have failed to walk in the light, are under the same sentence of condemnation as were Chorazin and Bethsaida. Shall not these warnings be heeded? Shall not these admonitions have weight with us?” –*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 259.

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12

Sabbath, March 24, 2012

Blessed Are You, Simon

“And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven.” Matthew 16:16, 17.

INTRODUCTION

“No truth does the Bible set forth in clearer light than the peril of even one departure from the right—peril both to the wrongdoer and to all whom his influence shall reach. Example has wonderful power; and when cast on the side of the evil tendencies of our nature, it becomes well-nigh irresistible.” –*Education*, p. 150.

SON OF THE LIVING GOD

1. What question did Jesus ask His disciples one day? 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. Coming closer to the point, what else did He ask? What did Peter reply? Matthew 16:15, 16.

“From the first, Peter had believed Jesus to be the Messiah. Many others who had been convicted by the preaching of John the Baptist, and had accepted Christ, began to doubt as to John’s mission when he was imprisoned and put to death; and they now doubted that Jesus was the Messiah, for whom they had looked so long. Many of the disciples who had ardently expected Jesus to take His place on David’s throne left Him when they perceived that He had no such intention. But Peter and his companions turned not from their allegiance.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 411, 412.

A GREAT BLESSING

3. What did Jesus’ response to Peter’s confession show about man’s limitation in understanding Christ’s divinity? Matthew 16:17.

“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: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.’ 1 Corinthians 2:9, 10. ‘The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him;’ and the fact that Peter discerned the glory of Christ was an evidence that he had been ‘taught of God.’ Psalm 25:14; John 6:45.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 412.

4. On what solid foundation did Jesus build His church? Is it possible to find a better foundation? Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 2:20; 1 Corinthians 3:11.

“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.

“‘Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.’ 1 Corinthians 3:11. ‘Upon this rock,’ said Jesus, ‘I will build My church.’ 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.” *The Desire of Ages*, p. 413.

BLESSING, TEST, AND CONVERSION

5. After Jesus was betrayed, did Peter confess Him as the Son of God during His trial? What lesson is it important for us to learn now in view of upcoming circumstances that will place His cause under trial? Matthew 26:69-75.

“Peter followed his Lord after His betrayal. He was anxious to see what would be done with Jesus. But when he was accused of being one of His disciples, fear for his own safety led him to declare that he knew not the man. The disciples were noted for the purity of their language, and Peter, to convince his accusers that he was not one of Christ’s disciples, denied the charge the third time with cursing and swearing. Jesus, who was at some distance from Peter, turned a sorrowful reproving gaze upon him. Then the disciple remembered the words which Jesus had spoken to him in the upper chamber, and also his own zealous assertion, ‘Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended.’” —*Early Writings*, p. 169.

6. Before Peter’s test, what did Jesus tell His disciple? How did this experience bring about his conversion? Luke 22:32.

“He had denied his Lord, even with cursing and swearing; but that look of Jesus’ melted Peter’s heart and saved him. He wept bitterly and repented of his great sin, and was converted, and then was prepared to strengthen his brethren.” —*Early Writings*, pp. 169, 170.

“He who could not spare His disciple the anguish, left him not alone to its bitterness. His is a love that fails not nor forsakes.

“Human beings, themselves given to evil, are prone to deal untenderly with the tempted and the erring. They cannot read the heart, they know not its struggle and pain. Of the rebuke that is love, of the blow that wounds to heal, of the warning that speaks hope, they have need to learn.” —*Education*, p. 90.

7. How did Jesus encourage His disciple after the resurrection? What precious lesson does this contain for God's people today? John 21:15-17.

“The Lord Jesus said to Peter, ‘When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren’; and after His resurrection, just before His ascension, He said to His disciple, ‘Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith unto him, Feed My lambs.’

“This was a work in which Peter had but little experience; but he could not be complete in Christian life unless he learned to feed the lambs, those who are young in the faith. It would require great care, much patience and perseverance, to give those who are ignorant the suitable teachings, opening up the Scriptures and educating them for usefulness and duty. This is the work that must be done in the church at this day, or the advocates of truth will have a dwarfed experience and will be exposed to temptation and deception. The charge given to Peter should come home to nearly every minister. Again and again the voice of Christ is heard repeating the charge to His undershepherds, ‘Feed My lambs,’ ‘Feed My sheep.’” —*Evangelism*, pp. 345, 346.

CONCLUSION

“We are not only to contemplate the glory of Christ, but also to speak of His excellences. Isaiah not only beheld the glory of Christ, but he also spoke of Him. While David mused, the fire burned; then spoke he with his tongue. While he mused upon the wondrous love of God he could not but speak of that which he saw and felt. Who can by faith behold the wonderful plan of redemption, the glory of the only-begotten Son of God, and not speak of it? Who can contemplate the unfathomable love that was manifested upon the cross of Calvary in the death of Christ, that we might not perish, but have everlasting life—who can behold this and have no words with which to extol the Saviour’s glory?” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 43, 44.

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**Please read the Missionary Report
from Norway on page 53.**

Blessed Is the Faithful and Wise Servant

“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.” Matthew 24:45, 46.

INTRODUCTION

“God proves His people in this world. . . . Here, in this world, in these last days, persons will show what power affects their hearts and controls their actions. If it is the power of divine truth, it will lead to good works. It will elevate the receiver, and make him noblehearted and generous, like his divine Lord. . . .

“Young and old, God is now testing you. You are deciding your own eternal destiny.”
—*Maranatha*, p. 43.

GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANTS

1. What do good and faithful servants do? Matthew 25:20-23.

“Those who watch for the Lord’s coming are not waiting in idle expectancy. The expectation of Christ’s coming is to make men fear the Lord, and fear His judgments upon transgression. It is to awaken them to the great sin of rejecting His offers of mercy. Those who are watching for the Lord are purifying their souls by obedience to the truth. With vigilant watching they combine earnest working. Because they know that the Lord is at the door, their zeal is quickened to cooperate with the divine intelligences in working for the salvation of souls. These are the faithful and wise servants who give to the Lord’s household ‘their portion of meat in due season.’ Luke 12:42. They are declaring the truth that is now specially applicable. As Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Moses each declared the truth for his time, so will Christ’s servants now give the special warning for their generation.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 634.

2. What will happen to one who is careless? What influence does an unbelieving and evil servant have on others? Matthew 25:28, 30.

“The evil servant says in his heart, ‘My lord delayeth His coming.’ He does not say that Christ will not come. He does not scoff at the idea of His second coming. But in his heart and by his actions and words he declares that the Lord’s coming is delayed. He banishes from the minds of others the conviction that the Lord is coming quickly. His influence leads men to presumptuous, careless delay. They are confirmed in their worldliness and stupor. Earthly passions, corrupt thoughts, take possession of the mind. The evil servant eats and drinks with the drunken, unites with the world in pleasure seeking. He smites his fellow servants, accusing and condemning those who are faithful to their Master. He mingles with the world. Like grows with like in transgression. It is a fearful assimilation. With the world he is taken in the snare. ‘The lord of that servant shall come . . . in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites.’—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 635.

THE WORK OF GOD’S CHURCH

- 3. What sacred mission has the Lord entrusted to His church? How broad is the field in which His followers work? For how long will their mission continue? Mark 16:15; Matthew 13:38; Luke 19:13.**

“The church of Christ is God’s appointed agency for the salvation of men. Its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. And the obligation rests upon all Christians. Everyone, to the extent of his talent and opportunity, is to fulfill the Saviour’s commission. The love of Christ, revealed to us, makes us debtors to all who know Him not. God has given us light, not for ourselves alone, but to shed upon them.

“If the followers of Christ were awake to duty, there would be thousands where there is one today proclaiming the gospel in heathen lands. And all who could not personally engage in the work, would yet sustain it with their means, their sympathy, and their prayers. And there would be far more earnest labor for souls in Christian countries.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 81.

- 4. How great is the need of workers in the Lord’s vineyard? Until what hour will a call continue to be made for helpers? What does investment in this work of the Lord include? Matthew 20:1, 2, 6.**

“The Lord Jesus estimates the work done by the spirit in which it is done. At a late hour He will accept penitent sinners who come to Him in humble faith and are obedient to His commandments.”—*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 182.

“True prosperity can never come to the soul that is constantly aspiring to get higher wages, and who yields to the temptation that leads him away from the work that God has appointed him. There never can be prosperity for any man, or any family, or any firm or institution, unless the wisdom of God presides.”—(*Letter 2*, 1898; Tract “To the Leading Men in Our Churches,” p. 4)—*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 183.

5. What is significant about Elijah's question to the people of Israel and their response—for them and for us today? 1 Kings 18:21.

"Elijah, the man of power, had been God's instrument for the overthrow of gigantic evils. Idolatry, which, supported by Ahab and the heathen Jezebel, had seduced the nation, had been cast down. Baal's prophets had been slain. The whole people of Israel had been deeply stirred, and many were returning to the worship of God....

"The lesson is for all. None can know what may be God's purpose in His discipline; but all may be certain that faithfulness in little things is the evidence of fitness for greater responsibilities. Every act of life is a revelation of character, and he only who in small duties proves himself 'a workman that needeth not to be ashamed' (2 Timothy 2:15) will be honored by God with weightier trusts....

"No truth does the Bible set forth in clearer light than the peril of even one departure from the right—peril both to the wrongdoer and to all whom his influence shall reach. Example has wonderful power; and when cast on the side of the evil tendencies of our nature, it becomes well-nigh irresistible."—*Education*, pp. 60, 61, 150.

6. Whom did Joshua and his family choose to serve? Joshua 24:14, 15.

Personal question: *To what cause are you willing to dedicate your service?*

"God has given us the power of choice; it is ours to exercise. We cannot change our hearts, we cannot control our thoughts, our impulses, our affections. We cannot make ourselves pure, fit for God's service. But we can choose to serve God, we can give Him our will; then He will work in us to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus our whole nature will be brought under the control of Christ.

"Through the right exercise of the will, an entire change may be made in the life. By yielding up the will to Christ, we ally ourselves with divine power. We receive strength from above to hold us steadfast. A pure and noble life, a life of victory over appetite and lust, is possible to everyone who will unite his weak, wavering human will to the omnipotent, unwavering will of God."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 176.

7. What lesson can be obtained from the ministry of Enoch, the seventh from Adam? How does our day offer a similar experience to everyone? Jude 14, 15; Hebrews 11:5, 6.

"For three hundred years Enoch had been seeking purity of heart, that he might be in harmony with heaven. For three centuries he had walked with God. Day by day he had

longed for a closer union; nearer and nearer had grown the communion, until God took him to Himself. He had stood at the threshold of the eternal world, only a step between him and the land of the blest; and now the portals opened, the walk with God, so long pursued on earth, continued, and he passed through the gates of the holy city, the first from among men to enter there....

“To such communion God is calling us. As was Enoch’s must be their holiness of character who shall be redeemed from among men at the Lord’s second coming.” —*Marantha*, p. 65.

“We are living in an evil age. The perils of the last days thicken around us. Because iniquity abounds, the love of many waxes cold. Enoch walked with God three hundred years. Now the shortness of time seems to be urged as a motive to seek righteousness. Should it be necessary that the terrors of the day of God be held before us in order to compel us to right action? Enoch’s case is before us. Hundreds of years he walked with God. He lived in a corrupt age, when moral pollution was teeming all around him; yet he trained his mind to devotion, to love purity. His conversation was upon heavenly things.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 121, 122.

CONCLUSION

“The service rendered in sincerity of heart has great recompense. ‘Thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly.’ By the life we live through the grace of Christ, the character is formed. The original loveliness begins to be restored to the soul. The attributes of the character of Christ are imparted, and the image of the Divine begins to shine forth. The faces of men and women who walk and work with God express the peace of heaven. They are surrounded with the atmosphere of heaven. For these souls the kingdom of God has begun. They have Christ’s joy, the joy of being a blessing to humanity. They have the honor of being accepted for the Master’s use; they are trusted to do His work in His name.” —*The Adventist Home*, p. 535.

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Missionary Report from Norway

To be read on Sabbath, March 31, 2012

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

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” Matthew 24:14.

The geography of Norway is characterized by mountain ranges and naked plateau (den Fjells). Twenty six mountains reach up to a height of 2,300 meters [7,500 ft.]. The highest mountain top in the continental part of the country is Galdhøpiggen, 2,469 meters high [8,100ft.]. It belongs to the Jotunheimen range. The Atlantic coast, almost 25,000 kilometers long [15,000 mi lonh] (to which is added the coast of the islands with 80.000 km) is formed by innumerable narrow and deep bays that carry the water of the sea inland. Without those fiords and bays the Atlantic Coast would be only 2,650 kilometers long [1,646 mi.long]. The border of Norway is 1, 619 kilometers long [1,006 mi.] of which 727 kilometers [452 mi.] separate it from Finnland and 196 kilometers [122 mi.] from Russia. Approximately 150.000 islands belong to this country. The best known archipelagos are Lofoten and Vesterålen. In the interior of the country there are waterfalls and rivers with an abundance of fish. Lake Mjøsa, with a surface of 365 km² [140.92 mi²] is the biggest interior lake. The longest river in the country is the Glomma, 601 kilometers [373 mi.] long. In the city of Fredrikstad, it flows into the fiord Oslofjord. Statistics show that the most populated island is Hinnøya (2204 km²) [850.96 mi²] n the north of Norway.

75 % of the inhabitants of the country live in big cities and 25 % in rural regions. The density of population presents a significant difference between the relatively well populated southern and western coasts and the north. Besides the difference between the north and the south, there is a more evident difference between the well populated coastal regions and the uninhabited mountainous interior with densely populated valleys. Besides the city of Oslo (550.000 inhabitants) Norway has other three cities with more than 100.000 inhabitants. They are Bergen, Trondheim and Stavanger. The fifth largest city in Norway is Fredrikstad with 72.000 inhabitants. From the beginning of the XX century, the population of the country has doubled (2,21 millions in 1900 and 4,83 millions in 2009). Nowadays the number of inhabitants increases at a rate of 62.000 persons per year (in 2009). This increase is not only due to the fact that the country has one of the highest birth rates in Europe, but also to the migration of foreign workers and their families and the many wealthy foreign retired people who come to settle down there. 89,4 % of the population are Norwegians, of whom at least one of the parents is born in Norway. Besides there are minority groups: about 40.000 Samen and 10.000 Finnish (Kvenen).

On 1 January 2009 there were 508.199 immigrants in Norway. Immigrants come from the following countries: Poland (44.482 persons), 0,9 % of the total population; Pakistan (30.161), 0,6 %; Sweden (28.730), 0,6 %; Irak (24.505), 0,5 %; Somalia (23.633), 0,5 %; Germany (20.916), 0,4 %; Vietnam (19.726), 0,4 %; Denmark (19.284), 0,4 %; Bosnia and Herzegovina (15.683), 0,3 %; Iran (15.666), 0,3 %; Turkey (15.436) 0,3 %;

The state religion is Evangelic-Lutheran. The highest authority of the state church is the king. Since 1851, all the inhabitants of Norway have the right to practice their religion freely. About 10% take part of religious services and other activities regularly. Division according to their religion: 82,0 % members of the Lutheran state religion, , 3,7 % other protestants, 1,6 % Muslims, 1,1 % Catholics, 0,2 % Buddhists, according to the records of 1 January 2008. In the year 2007 there were about 2000 Jews living in Norway. The prevailing languages in the Norwegian community are: bokmål, nynorsk, neutral.

Norwegian is a North-germanic language in part greatly influenced by northern German. Besides Norwegian, above of all in the north, the languages of the national minorities are spoken: Samisch and Finnish. In the communities where the Samist population predominates, their language is compulsory at school since 1992. Norwegians have the option of learning German or French at school, while English is compulsory.

There are souls that are looking for the truth in every country, and our mission is to preach the message also in this country. Jesus promised that He would be with His servants “[even] unto the end of the world. “ Matthew 28:20. Some years ago we held public conferences in Oslo. The first steps have been taken and now we should continue with the work, in faith and trusting the Lord. At present we have two members and some interested souls, but in order to be able to have a more intensive missionary work we need to rent a meeting place. Literature should be prepared and printed and to begin with we are in need of funds to hire a Bible worker.

Dear brothers and sisters and friends of the truth, the life standard in Norway is quite high, and in order to develop the work we need a good financial support. Our Saviour said: “But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Matthew 6: 20, 21.

Let us support God's work with our offerings and prayers and thus we shall have an imperishable treasure in heaven. May the Lord help us and bless us with new and precious souls in Norway. Do not forget that your donation may give much fruit for eternal life.



“The message of the soon coming of the Saviour must be given in all parts of the world, and a solemn dignity should characterize it in every branch. A large vineyard is to be worked, and the wise husbandman will work it so that every part will produce fruit. If in the medical missionary work the living principles of truth are kept pure, uncontaminated by anything that would dim their luster, the Lord will preside over the work. If those who bear the heavy burdens will stand true and steadfast to the principles of truth, the Lord will uphold and sustain them.” Testimonies, vol. 6., p. 289.

May our Saviour bless the brotherliness and friends of the truth all over the world.

—Vladimir Marinov

General Conference Regional Representative

SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

for the First Half 2012

*God's Instruments
and established Teachings*

Second Quarter

INTRODUCTION

“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.” Romans 6:13.

“The Lord has given you talents to use, and in using these talents as He intended they should be used, you will have increased aptitude and wisdom and clear spiritual eyesight to understand His work. Your mind and eyes must watch for His appearing, your ears open to hear the faintest whisperings of His voice. Your knees He has made; use them in kneeling in prayer. He is your strength. By faith take hold of the Unseen. Let your feet be shod with the preparation of the gospel for running obediently in the way of His commandments. Your tongue and voice are a talent given you of God to tell the story of His life, of His lessons, of His death, of His resurrection, of His ascension. Your bodily strength is to be devoted to the Master in fighting the good fight of faith on the battlefield, overcoming His enemies with ‘It is written.’ Your sympathies and energies belong to God. Use them to glorify your Redeemer. . . .

“Cultivate the thought that you are not alone. All your steps are watched by the Lord. You are encompassed with vigilant angels. . . . As the angels ministered unto Jacob, so certainly will they minister unto all of the Lord’s humble, contrite ones. . . .

“Reach up, higher and still higher, taking hold of one line of faith after another. Walk and work in love to God and the poor oppressed ones, and the Lord will be your helper. ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man’ (John 1:51). Jesus the precious Saviour, the Son of the living God, is the ladder uniting the celestial world with the terrestrial. His divinity lays hold of the throne of God. His humanity touches the earth. His human arm encircles the entire human race. Through Jesus Christ the angelic ministrations in love, in comfort, in reproof, in light, reach us. O thank the Lord, for He is good, and His mercies endure forever!” —*That I May Know Him*, p. 328.

—*The brothers and sisters of the General Conference*

**The Special Sabbath School Offering
is dedicated to Norway**

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

1

Sabbath, April 7, 2012

Abraham in the Hands of God

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.” Hebrews 11:8.

GOD’S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

- 1. How can God’s call to Abraham be explained? Genesis 12:1-3. How did Abraham put himself in God’s hands? Genesis 12:4, 5; Hebrews 11:8.**

“Abraham’s unquestioning obedience is one of the most striking evidences of faith to be found in all the Bible.... It was no light test that was thus brought upon Abraham, no small sacrifice that was required of him. There were strong ties to bind him to his country, his kindred, and his home. But he did not hesitate to obey the call. He had no question to ask concerning the land of promise—whether the soil was fertile and the climate healthful; whether the country afforded agreeable surroundings and would afford opportunities for amassing wealth. God has spoken, and His servant must obey; the happiest place on earth for him was the place where God would have him to be.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 126.

- 2. What can be said about the promise made to Abraham as it related to others? Genesis 12:3; Galatians 3:16-18.**

“The gift to Abraham and his seed included not merely the land of Canaan, but the whole earth. So says the apostle, ‘The promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.’ Romans 4:13. And the Bible plainly teaches that the promises made to Abraham are to be fulfilled through Christ. All that are Christ’s are ‘Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise’—heirs to ‘an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away’—the earth freed from the curse of sin. Galatians 3:29; 1 Peter 1:4. For ‘the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High;’ and ‘the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.’ Daniel 7:27; Psalm 37:11.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 169.

- 3. In addition to making him a promise, what did the Lord show Abraham? How was the covenant between God and Abraham ratified? Genesis 15:1-8, 18; 17:1-4.**

“Then he was led outside his tent, and told to look up to the unnumbered stars glittering in the heavens; and as he did so, the words were spoken, ‘So shall thy seed be.’ ‘Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.’ Romans 4:3.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 136.

ABRAHAM’S FAITH

- 4. How did Abraham show his faith in God among people who worshipped idols? Genesis 12:7, 8; 13:4, 18; 14:21-23; 24:3, 7.**

“The desire for an easy religion that requires no striving, no self-denial, no divorce from the follies of the world, has made the doctrine of faith, and faith only, a popular doctrine; but what saith the word of God? Says the apostle James: ‘What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?... Wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?... Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.’ James 2:14-24.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 472.

- 5. What was Abraham’s great longing? Did he ever see what he was longing for? John 8:56; Genesis 22:2, 12; Hebrews 11:17-19.**

“Abraham had greatly desired to see the promised Saviour. He offered up the most earnest prayer that before his death he might behold the Messiah. And he saw Christ. A supernatural light was given him, and he acknowledged Christ’s divine character. He saw His day, and was glad. He was given a view of the divine sacrifice for sin. Of this sacrifice he had an illustration in his own experience.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 468.

GOD’S PROMISES FULFILLED

6. What is the result of having communion with the Redeemer of the world? Galatians 2:20; 5:24; 2 Corinthians 12:10.

“The Lord Jesus loves His people, and when they put their trust in Him, depending wholly upon Him, He strengthens them. He will live through them, giving them the inspiration of His sanctifying Spirit, imparting to the soul a vital transfusion of Himself.” –*That I May Know Him*, p. 78.

7. How do we show that we are participants in this promise? Romans 4:12, 13, 16; Galatians 3:16, 17; Hebrews 4:16.

“Abraham’s great act of faith stands like a pillar of light, illuminating the pathway of God’s servants in all succeeding ages. . . . He knew that God is just and righteous in all His requirements, and he obeyed the command to the very letter.

“‘Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God.’ James 2:23. And Paul says, ‘They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.’ Galatians 3:7. But Abraham’s faith was made manifest by his works. ‘Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?’ James 2:21, 22.

“There are many who fail to understand the relation of faith and works. They say, ‘Only believe in Christ, and you are safe. You have nothing to do with keeping the law.’ But genuine faith will be manifest in obedience. Said Christ to the unbelieving Jews, ‘If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham.’ John 8:39. And concerning the father of the faithful the Lord declares, ‘Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.’ Genesis 26:5. Says the apostle James, ‘Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.’ James 2:17. And John, who dwells so fully upon love, tells us, ‘This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.’ 1 John 5:3.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 153.

“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 Desire of Ages*, p. 490.

“Many are strongly convinced of the truth, but either husband or wife prevents their stepping out. How can one who is in fellowship with Christ’s sufferings refuse to obey His will and do His work?... It is by following in the path of obedience in simple faith that the character attains perfection....”—*That I May Know Him*, p. 116.

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2

Sabbath, April 14, 2012

Isaac, a Figure of Christ

“By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called.” Hebrews 11:17, 18.

GOD’S PURPOSES

- 1. What did Isaac ask his father when he noticed that there was no lamb for the sacrifice? What was God’s purpose in asking Abraham to sacrifice His son? Genesis 22:2, 7, 8: Isaiah 55:8, 9.**

“Abraham had now fully and nobly borne the test, and by his faithfulness redeemed his lack of perfect trust in God, which lack led him to take Hagar as his wife.”—*The Story of Redemption*, p. 83.

“The offering of Isaac was designed by God to prefigure the sacrifice of His Son. Isaac was a figure of the Son of God, who was offered a sacrifice for the sins of the world. God desired to impress upon Abraham the gospel of salvation of men.... He was made to understand in his own experience how great was the self-denial of the infinite God in giving His Son to rescue man from ruin.”—*That I May Know Him*, p. 20.

2. At what moment did the Lord intervene as Abraham lifted the knife to sacrifice Isaac? When are God's purposes accomplished for mankind? Genesis 22:11-13; Hebrews 11:17-19.

"Father and son build the altar, and the terrible moment comes for Abraham to make known to Isaac that which has agonized his soul all that long journey, that Isaac himself is the victim. Isaac is not a lad; he is a full-grown young man. He could have refused to submit to his father's design had he chosen to do so. He does not accuse his father of insanity, nor does he even seek to change his purpose. He submits. He believes in the love of his father and that he would not make this terrible sacrifice of his only son if God had not bidden him do so. Isaac is bound by the trembling, loving hands of his pitying father because God has said it. The son submits to the sacrifice because he believes in the integrity of his father. But when everything is ready, when the faith of the father and the submission of the son are fully tested, the angel of God stays the uplifted hand of Abraham that is about to slay his son and tells him that it is enough. 'Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from Me.'

"This act of faith in Abraham is recorded for our benefit. It teaches us the great lesson of confidence in the requirements of God, however close and cutting they may be; and it teaches children perfect submission to their parents and to God. By Abraham's obedience we are taught that nothing is too precious for us to give to God." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 368.

3. What was revealed in this example of the willing victim? Could Isaac imagine what God's purpose was for him? Genesis 22:14-18.

"There was Mount Moriah, where the son of promise, an unresisting victim, had been bound to the altar—emblem of the offering of the Son of God. There the covenant of blessing, the glorious Messianic promise, had been confirmed to the father of the faithful. Genesis 22:9, 16-18." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 18.

"Upon Mount Moriah, Abraham had heard the question of his son, 'My father, ... where is the lamb for a burnt offering?' The father answered, 'My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering.' Genesis 22:7, 8. And in the ram divinely provided in the place of Isaac, Abraham saw a symbol of Him who was to die for the sins of men." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 112.

4. What is told about the manner in which Isaac behaved in this most difficult situation? What wonderful promise did the Lord give him? Genesis 26:17-21, 24.

5. Where does the impressive illustration of Isaac and the lamb lead? Isaiah 53:7.

“The Holy Spirit through Isaiah, taking up the illustration, prophesied of the Saviour, ‘He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter,’ ‘and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all’ (Isaiah 53:7, 6); but the people of Israel had not understood the lesson. Many of them regarded the sacrificial offerings much as the heathen looked upon their sacrifices—as gifts by which they themselves might propitiate the Deity. God desired to teach them that from His own love comes the gift which reconciles them to Himself.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 112.

“Not one word did Jesus answer to all this. While the nails were being driven through His hands, and the sweat drops of agony were forced from His pores, from the pale, quivering lips of the innocent Sufferer a prayer of pardoning love was breathed for His murderers: ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.’” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 208, 209.

6. List three critically important things that Christ did for all mankind? Romans 5:11; Hebrews 2:17.

“In becoming man’s substitute, in bearing the curse which should fall upon man, Christ has pledged Himself in behalf of the race to maintain the sacred and exalted honour of His Father’s law.” —*That I May Know Him*, p. 17.

“Christ conquered by divine strength, and so must every tempted soul overcome. God was with Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, and by the experience of Christ we are to learn to trust our heavenly Father; at all times and in all places we are to believe that He is tender, true, and faithful, able to keep that which is committed to His care. In the agonizing struggle of Christ, our Substitute and Surety, the Father was beside His Son, and He is beside every soul that struggles with discouragement and difficulty.” —(*Letter 106*, 1896) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1123.

“On the cross of Calvary, He died a death of shame, that He might make an atonement for the sins of those who receive Him as their Saviour. To those who receive Him, and believe on Him, He promises to give power to become the sons of God.” —*The Upward Look*, p. 179.

FUTURE REALITY WITH THE LAMB

7. What tender care will the Lamb exercise for all the redeemed in the future? Revelation 7:17.

“Those whom the Lamb shall lead by the fountains of living waters, and from whose eyes He shall wipe away all tears, will be those now receiving the knowledge and understanding revealed in the Bible, the Word of God.” –*The Review and Herald*, March 9, 1905.

“With joy unutterable, parents see the crown, the robe, the harp, given to their children. The days of hope and fear are ended. The seed sown with tears and prayers may have seemed to be sown in vain, but their harvest is reaped with joy at last. Their children have been redeemed. Fathers, mothers, shall the voices of your children swell the song of gladness in that day?” –*Child Guidance*, p. 569.

8. Who will sing the song of Moses and the Lamb? Revelation 14:1-5; 15:2, 3.

“In the issue of the contest all Christendom will be divided into two great classes—those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and those who worship the beast and his image and receive his mark. . . . The prophet of Patmos beholds ‘them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God’ and singing the song of Moses and the Lamb.’ Revelation 15:2, 3.” –*The Great Controversy*, p. 450.

“Then I saw Jesus lead the redeemed company to the gate of the city. . . . Within the city there was everything to feast the eye. Rich glory they beheld everywhere. Then Jesus looked upon His redeemed saints; their countenances were radiant with glory; and as He fixed His loving eyes upon them, He said, with His rich, musical voice, ‘I behold the travail of My soul, and am satisfied. This rich glory is yours to enjoy eternally. Your sorrows are ended. There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.’ I saw the redeemed host bow and cast their glittering crowns at the feet of Jesus, and then, as His lovely hand raised them up, they touched their golden harps and filled all heaven with their rich music and songs to the Lamb.” –*Early Writings*, p. 288.

FOR MEDITATION

“Our Heavenly Father surrendered his beloved Son to the agonies of the crucifixion. Legions of angels witnessed the humiliation and soul-anguish of the Son of God, but were not permitted to interpose as in the case of Isaac. No voice was heard to stay the sacrifice. God’s dear Son, the world’s Redeemer, was insulted, mocked at, derided, and tortured, until He bowed His head in death. What greater proof can the Infinite One give us of His divine love and pity. ‘He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?’” –*That I May Know Him*, p. 20.

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Man Transformed by God

“And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.” Genesis 32:28.

JACOB IN HIS NATURAL CONDITION

1. **What do we know about Jacob’s nature? 1 Corinthians 2:14. What do we think of his deceiving his father to receive blessing? Genesis 27:24-29.**

“Jacob and Rebekah succeeded in their purpose, but they gained only trouble and sorrow by their deception. God had declared that Jacob should receive the birthright, and His word would have been fulfilled in His own time had they waited in faith for Him to work for them. But like many who now profess to be children of God, they were unwilling to leave the matter in His hands. Rebekah bitterly repented the wrong counsel she had given her son; it was the means of separating him from her, and she never saw his face again.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 180.

2. **What were the consequences of his actions when he left the promised land? Genesis 27:41, 43; 29:11, 25; 31:41.**

“A homeless fugitive, separated from his mother, whom he never saw again; laboring seven years for her whom he loved, only to be basely cheated; toiling twenty years in the service of a covetous and grasping kinsman; seeing his wealth increasing, and sons rising around him, but finding little joy in the contentious and divided household; distressed by his daughter’s shame, by her brothers’ revenge, by the death of Rachel, by the unnatural crime of Reuben, by Judah’s sin, by the cruel deception and malice practiced toward Joseph—how long and dark is the catalogue of evils spread out to view! Again and again he had reaped the fruit of that first wrong deed.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 237.

3. **Why did God not reject Jacob? Psalm 34:6. What did he experience after he left home, looking for shelter and burdened by a heavy conscience? Genesis 28:12, 13, 20, 21.**

“The darkness of despair pressed upon his soul, and he hardly dared to pray. But he was so utterly lonely that he felt the need of protection from God as he had never felt it before. With weeping and deep humiliation he confessed his sin, and entreated for some evidence that he was not utterly forsaken.... God did not forsake Jacob. His mercy was still extended to His erring, distrustful servant. The Lord compassionately revealed just what Jacob needed—a Saviour....” —*Conflict and Courage*, p. 64.

“Yet Jacob’s history is an assurance that God will not cast off those who have been betrayed into sin, but who have returned unto Him with true repentance. It was by self-surrender and confiding faith that Jacob gained what he had failed to gain by conflict in his own strength.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 202.

CHANGE OF NAME

4. What does the name “Jacob” mean? Genesis 27:36. What does the name “Israel” mean, and why was that name given to him? Genesis 32:24, 26-28.

The meaning of the name Jacob is “supplanter.” See marginal note for Genesis 27:36 in the King James Version: “That is, A supplanter.”

“Jacob, in the great crisis of his life, turned aside to pray. He was filled with one overmastering purpose—to seek for transformation of character. But while he was pleading with God, an enemy, as he supposed, placed his hand upon him, and all night he wrestled for his life. But the purpose of his soul was not changed by peril of life itself. When his strength was nearly spent, the Angel put forth His divine power, and at His touch Jacob knew Him with whom he had been contending. Wounded and helpless, he fell upon the Saviour’s breast, pleading for a blessing. He would not be turned aside nor cease his intercession, and Christ granted the petition of this helpless, penitent soul, according to His promise, ‘Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me.’ Isaiah 27:5. Jacob pleaded with determined spirit, ‘I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.’ Genesis 32:26. This spirit of persistence was inspired by Him who wrestled with the patriarch. It was He who gave him the victory, and He changed his name from Jacob to Israel, saying, ‘As a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.’” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 144.

5. How will every one of the redeemed receive this new nature? 2 Peter 1:4. How can we know that we have received it? Ephesians 4:24.

“When the heart is cleansed from sin, Christ is placed on the throne that self-indulgence and love of earthly treasure once occupied. The image of Christ is seen in the expression of the countenance. The work of sanctification is carried forward in the soul. Self-righteousness is banished. There is seen the putting on of the new man, which after Christ is created in righteousness and true holiness.” —(*The Review and Herald*, September 11, 1900) *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 27.

“The greatest manifestation that men and women can make of the grace and power of Christ is made when the natural man becomes a partaker of the divine nature, and through the power that the grace of Christ imparts, overcomes the corruption that is in the world through lust.” —*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, pp. 251, 252.

BLESSINGS PROMISED AND RECEIVED

6. What great blessings did Jacob receive when he returned to the promised land? Genesis 33:4-10; 35:9-13.

“Jacob had received the blessing for which his soul had longed. His sin as a supplanter and deceiver had been pardoned. The crisis in his life was past. Doubt, perplexity, and remorse had embittered his existence, but now all was changed; and sweet was the peace of reconciliation with God. Jacob no longer feared to meet his brother. God, who had forgiven his sin, could move the heart of Esau also to accept his humiliation and repentance.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 198.

7. What great promise is also given to the people of God at the end of time? Jeremiah 23:6. What wonderful blessings are given to every overcomer? Revelation 3:12.

“Righteousness is holiness, likeness to God, . . . Righteousness is love, and love is the light and the life of God. The righteousness of God is embodied in Christ. We receive righteousness by receiving Him.

“Not by painful struggles or wearisome toil, not by gift or sacrifice, is righteousness obtained; but it is freely given to every soul who hungers and thirsts to receive it. ‘Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat, . . . without money and without price.’ ‘Their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord,’ and, ‘This is His name whereby He shall be called, The Lord Our Righteousness.’ Isaiah 55:1; 54:17; Jeremiah 23:6.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 18.

“And as God spoke the day and the hour of Jesus’ coming and delivered the everlasting covenant to His people, He spoke one sentence, and then paused, while the words were rolling through the earth. The Israel of God stood with their eyes fixed upward, listening to the words as they came from the mouth of Jehovah and rolled through the earth like peals of loudest thunder. It was awfully solemn. At the end of every sentence the saints shouted, ‘Glory! Hallelujah!’ Their countenances were lighted up with the glory of God, and they shone with glory as did the face of Moses when he came down from Sinai. . . . And when the never-ending blessing was pronounced on those who had honored God in keeping His Sabbath, holy, there was a mighty shout of victory over the beast and over his image.” —*Early Writings*, p. 285.

“You who love to speak of the faults of others, arouse, and look into your own hearts. Take your Bibles, and go to God in earnest prayer. Ask Him to teach you to know yourself, to understand your weakness, your sins and follies, in the light of eternity. Ask Him to show you yourself as you stand in the sight of Heaven. This is an individual work.... In humility send your petition to God, and do not rest day nor night until you can say, Hear what the Lord hath done for me—until you can bear a living testimony and tell of victories won.” —*In Heavenly Places*, p. 88.

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4

Sabbath, April 28, 2012

From Slave to Ruler over Egypt

“Joseph’s answer reveals the power of religious principle. He would not betray the confidence of his master on earth, and, whatever the consequences, he would be true to his Master in heaven. Under the inspecting eye of God and holy angels many take liberties of which they would not be guilty in the presence of their fellow men, but Joseph’s first thought was of God. ‘How ... can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?’ he said.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 217.

JOSEPH’S LIFE ILLUSTRATES CHRIST’S LIFE

1. How did Joseph become a slave? Genesis 37:6-8, 9-11, 27, 28.

“It was envy that moved the brothers of Joseph to sell him as a slave; they hoped to prevent him from becoming greater than themselves. And when he was carried to Egypt, they flattered themselves that they were to be no more troubled with his dreams, that they had removed all possibility of their fulfillment. But their own course was overruled by God to bring about the very event that they designed to hinder.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 239.

2. How was that event similar to what happened to Jesus? Matthew 26:14-16; 27:17, 18; Luke 23:34.

“The life of Joseph illustrates the life of Christ.... So the Jewish priests and elders were jealous of Christ, fearing that He would attract the attention of the people from them. They put Him to death, to prevent Him from becoming king, but they were thus bringing about this very result.... As Joseph was sold to the heathen by his own brothers, so Christ was sold to His bitterest enemies by one of His disciples. Joseph was falsely accused and thrust into prison because of his virtue; so Christ was despised and rejected because His righteous, self-denying life was a rebuke to sin; and though guilty of no wrong, He was condemned upon the testimony of false witnesses. And Joseph’s patience and meekness under injustice and oppression, his ready forgiveness and noble benevolence toward his unnatural brothers, represent the Saviour’s uncomplaining endurance of the malice and abuse of wicked men, and His forgiveness, not only of His murderers, but of all who have come to Him confessing their sins and seeking pardon.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 239.

JOSEPH’S GREATNESS

3. **In what society did Joseph live when he was taken to Egypt? Genesis 39:7, 20-23. What did Jacob say about him in his prophetic blessing? Genesis 49:23, 24. What can we learn from his experiences? James 1:12.**

“But Joseph’s faith and integrity were to be tested by fiery trials. His master’s wife endeavored to entice the young man to transgress the law of God. Heretofore he had remained untainted by the corruption teeming in that heathen land; but this temptation, so sudden, so strong, so seductive—how should it be met? Joseph knew well what would be the consequence of resistance. On the one hand were concealment, favor, and rewards; on the other, disgrace, imprisonment, perhaps death. His whole future life depended upon the decision of the moment. Would principle triumph? Would Joseph still be true to God? With inexpressible anxiety, angels looked upon the scene.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 217.

4. **What made it possible for Joseph to preserve his integrity? Hebrews 11:1, 2, 6, 22; 2 Peter 1:4; Genesis 39:8, 9.**

“Loyalty to God, faith in the Unseen, was Joseph’s anchor. In this lay the hiding of his power.... By their wisdom and justice, by the purity and benevolence of their daily life, by their devotion to the interests of the people—and they idolaters—Joseph and Daniel proved themselves true to the principles of their early training, true to Him whose representative they were....” —*Conflict and Courage*, p. 366.

“How precious is the thought that we may indeed become partakers of the divine nature, whereby we may overcome as Christ overcame! Jesus is the fullness of our expectation. He is the melody of our songs, the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. He is living water to the thirsty soul. He is our refuge in the storm. He is our righteousness, our sanctification, our redemption.” —*That I May Know Him*, p. 166.

- 5. How does a person show that he has communion with God? What can we say about Joseph in the midst of many trials and afflictions? Ephesians 4:24; 2 Peter 3:11; 1 Peter 1:15, 16.**

“Joseph’s religion kept his temper sweet and his sympathy with humanity warm and strong, notwithstanding all his trials. There are those who if they feel they are not rightly used, become sour, ungenerous, crabbed and uncourteous in their words and deportment. They sink down discouraged, hateful and hating others. But Joseph was a Christian....

“God was preparing him under this discipline for a situation of great responsibility, honor, and usefulness, and he was willing to learn; he took kindly to the lessons the Lord would teach him. He learned to bear the yoke in his youth. He learned to govern by first learning obedience himself....” —*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 320.

RULER OVER EGYPT

- 6. How did God intervene to accomplish His great purpose and also to set Joseph free from his terrible trial and suffering? Genesis 41:1-8, 14-16.**

“Joseph’s reply to the king reveals his humility and his faith in God. He modestly disclaims the honor of possessing in himself superior wisdom. ‘It is not in me.’ God alone can explain these mysteries.

“‘The dream of Pharaoh is one,’ said Joseph. ‘God hath showed Pharaoh what He is about to do.’ There were to be seven years of great plenty. Field and garden would yield more abundantly than ever before. And this period was to be followed by seven years of famine. ‘And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following; for it shall be very grievous.’ The repetition of the dream was evidence both of the certainty and nearness of the fulfillment. ‘Now therefore,’ he continued, ‘let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.’” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 220.

- 7. What was the king determined to do after he heard the interpretation of his dreams? What do we know about Joseph before he came to this significant moment in his life? Genesis 41:37-44; Psalm 105:16-22; Job 28:28.**

“In his early years he had consulted duty rather than inclination; and the integrity, the simple trust, the noble nature, of the youth bore fruit in the deeds of the man. A pure and simple life had favored the vigorous development of both physical and intellectual powers. Communion with God through His works and the contemplation of the grand truths entrusted to the inheritors of faith had elevated and ennobled his spiritual nature, broadening and strengthening the mind as no other study could do. Faithful attention to duty in every station, from the lowliest to the most exalted, had been training every power for its highest service. He who lives in accordance with the Creator’s will is securing to himself the truest and noblest development of character.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 222.

FOR MEDITATION

“Samson in his peril had the same source of strength as had Joseph. He could choose the right or the wrong as he pleased. But instead of taking hold of the strength of God, he permitted the wild passions of his nature to have full sway. The reasoning powers were perverted, the morals corrupted. God had called Samson to a position of great responsibility, honor, and usefulness; but he must first learn to govern by first learning to obey the laws of God.... Samson, under ... temptations, which he had brought upon himself, gave loose rein to passion. The path which he entered upon he found to end in shame, disaster, and death. What a contrast to the history of Joseph!” —*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 187.

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5

Sabbath, May 5, 2012

An Administrator Guided by God

“An upright character is of greater worth than the gold of Ophir. Without it none can rise to an honorable eminence. But character is not inherited. It cannot be bought. Moral excellence and fine mental qualities are not the result of accident. The most precious gifts are of no value unless they are improved. The formation of a noble character is the work of a lifetime and must be the result of diligent and persevering effort. God gives opportunities; success depends upon the use made of them.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 223.

PREPARATION FOR GOD’S SERVICE

- 1. What is the secret to being a good steward of God’s patrimony? Luke 16:10. What was the guiding purpose of Joseph’s life? 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20.**

“God calls for complete and entire consecration, and anything short of this He will not accept. The more difficult your position the more you need Jesus. The love and fear of God kept Joseph pure and untarnished in the king’s court. He was exalted to great wealth, to the high honor of being next to the king; and this elevation was as sudden as it was great. It is impossible to stand upon a lofty height without danger. The tempest leaves unharmed the modest flower of the valley, while it wrestles with the lofty tree upon the mountaintop. There are many men whom God could have used with wonderful success when pressed with poverty—He could have made them useful here, and crowned them with glory hereafter—but prosperity ruined them; they were dragged down to the pit because they forgot to be humble, forgot that God was their strength, and became independent and self-sufficient.

“Joseph bore the test of character in adversity, and the gold was undimmed by prosperity. He showed the same sacred regard for God’s will when he stood next the throne as when in a prisoner’s cell. Joseph carried his religion everywhere, and this was the secret of his unwavering fidelity.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 544.

2. What guidelines do we need to follow to be good administrators? John 16:13; Psalm 119:165; Romans 1:16, 17.

“Joseph was one of the few who could withstand temptation. He showed that he had an eye single to the glory or God. He evidenced a lofty regard for God’s will, alike when occupying the prisoner’s cell and when standing next the throne. He carried his religion with him wherever he went and in whatever situation he was placed. True religion has an all-pervading power. It gives tone to everything man does. You need not go out of the world in order to be a Christian, but you may carry your religion, with all its sanctifying influences, into all you do and say.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 124.

“But Joseph’s real character shines out, even in the darkness of the dungeon. He held fast his faith and patience; his years of faithful service had been most cruelly repaid, yet this did not render him morose or distrustful. He had the peace that comes from conscious innocence, and he trusted his case with God. He did not brood upon his own wrongs, but forgot his sorrow in trying to lighten the sorrows of others. He found a work to do, even in the prison. God was preparing him in the school of affliction for greater usefulness, and he did not refuse the needful discipline.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 218.

PROFILE OF A GOOD STEWARD

3. How did God prepare Joseph to be a good steward? Genesis 37:1, 2, 4, 28; 39:1-4, 20-23.

“Joseph listened to his father’s instructions and feared the Lord.... He treasured his instructions and, with integrity of heart, loved to obey God.... His hatred of sin was such

that he could not endure to see his brethren sinning against God.”—*The Story of Redemption*, p. 100.

“Here Joseph suffered because he would not yield his integrity. He had placed his reputation and interest in the hands of God. And although he was suffered to be afflicted for a time, to prepare him to fill an important position, yet God safely guarded that reputation that was blackened by a wicked accuser, and afterward, in His own good time, caused it to shine. God made even the prison the way to his elevation. Virtue will in time bring its own reward. The shield which covered Joseph’s heart was the fear of God, which caused him to be faithful and just to his master and true to God.”—*The Story of Redemption*, p. 102.

4. What characterized Joseph’s character, intellect, and education? Genesis 39:5, 6.

“Joseph’s gentleness and fidelity won the heart of the chief captain, who came to regard him as a son rather than a slave. The youth was brought in contact with men of rank and learning, and he acquired a knowledge of science, of languages, and of affairs—an education needful to the future prime minister of Egypt.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 217.

COMMUNION WITH GOD AND DEDICATED, GENEROUS SERVICE

5. How did Joseph carry out his responsibilities in face of the coming famine? How did he use the gifts he had received from God? Genesis 41:46-49; 1 Peter 4:10.

“At the very opening of the fruitful years began the preparation for the approaching famine. Under the direction of Joseph, immense storehouses were erected in all the principal places throughout the land of Egypt, and ample arrangements were made for preserving the surplus of the expected harvest. The same policy was continued during the seven years of plenty, until the amount of grain laid in store was beyond computation.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 224.

6. Although he was very young, what is recorded of Joseph’s administration? Psalm 105:20-22. In both adversity and prosperity, what characterized his life? Matthew 24:45; 1 Corinthians 4:2.

“It was a position of high honor, yet it was beset with difficulty and peril. One cannot stand upon a lofty height without danger.... But Joseph’s character bore the test alike of

adversity and prosperity. The same fidelity to God was manifest when he stood in the palace of the Pharaohs as when in a prisoner's cell. He was still a stranger in a heathen land, separated from his kindred, the worshipers of God; but he fully believed that the divine hand had directed his steps, and in constant reliance upon God he faithfully discharged the duties of his position. Through Joseph the attention of the king and great men of Egypt was directed to the true God;... they learned to respect the principles revealed in the life and character of the worshiper of Jehovah."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 222.

- 7. How many people were benefited by the provisions made for the time of hunger? Genesis 41:54, 57. Did Joseph take for himself any glory for what happened? How did he deal with his brothers when he was in a position of authority? Genesis 41:16, 32; 45:5, 24.**

"No man has a right to call himself his own. And no man possesses any good thing that he can call his own. Every man, every thing, is the property of the Lord. All that man receives from the bounty of heaven is still the Lord's. Whatever we have that is of value, we should use for the benefit of our fellowmen, in order that they shall become valuable workers. Every energy, every endowment, is a talent that should contribute to God's glory by being used in His service. Our God-given capabilities should not be made to serve selfish ends. We should always be willing to impart, letting others know all that we know; and we should rejoice, if they in their work develop an energy and an intelligence superior to that which we possess."—*This Day with God*, p. 132.

FOR MEDITATION

"If we were to cherish an habitual impression that God sees and hears all that we do and say and keeps a faithful record of our words and actions, and that we must meet it all, we would fear to sin. Let the young ever remember that wherever they are, and whatever they do, they are in the presence of God. No part of our conduct escapes observation. We cannot hide our ways from the Most High.... The deepest midnight is no cover for the guilty one. He may think himself alone, but to every deed there is an unseen witness. The very motives of his heart are open to divine inspection. Every act, every word, every thought, is as distinctly marked as though there were only one person in the whole world, and the attention of heaven were centered upon him."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 217.

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Moses' Leadership

“And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? And He said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.” Exodus 3:11, 12.

LEADERSHIP AND SACRIFICE

- 1. What adversities did Moses face, and with whom? How did God prepare him to lead His people? Exodus 5:2; 16:2, 3; Acts 7:39-41.**

“God saw fit to discipline Moses in the school of affliction and poverty before he could be prepared to lead the hosts of Israel to the earthly Canaan. The Israel of God, journeying to the heavenly Canaan, have a Captain who needed no human teaching to prepare Him for His mission as a divine leader; yet He was made perfect through sufferings; and ‘in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted.’ Hebrews 2:10, 18. Our Redeemer manifested no human weakness or imperfection; yet He died to obtain for us an entrance into the Promised Land.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 480.

- 2. From whom did Moses receive instruction? How are integrity and ethics maintained in leadership? Acts 7:38; Psalm 15:1, 2; 2 Corinthians 6:4-8.**

“‘This is he [Moses], that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the Mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us.’ Acts 7:38. This angel was the angel of God’s presence (Isaiah 63:9), the angel in whom was the name of the great Jehovah (Exodus 23:20-23). The expression can refer to no other than the Son of God.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 761.

“The ethics inculcated by the gospel acknowledge no standard but the perfection of God’s mind, God’s will. God requires from His creatures conformity to His will. Imperfection of character is sin, and sin is the transgression of the law....” —*That I May Know Him*, p. 131.

“All he has to do is to follow the leader Jesus Christ who will tell him just what to do. God beckons to you from His throne in heaven, presenting to you a crown of immortal glory, and bids you to fight the good fight of faith and run the race with patience. Trust in God every moment. He is faithful that leadeth forward.”—*Mind, Character and Personality*, vol. 1, p. 105.

LEADERSHIP AND HUMILITY

3. How was Moses’ humility seen in his leadership? What is God’s promise to all who cherish this virtue? Numbers 12:3; Isaiah 57:15.

“He was the meekest of all men. He did not seek to control the Holy Spirit, but was himself controlled by the Spirit...”—*The Upward Look*, p. 227.

“The burden of God’s work, laid upon Moses, made him a man of power. While keeping, for so many years, the flocks of Jethro, he gained an experience that taught him true humility.... The command to deliver Israel seemed overwhelming; but, in the fear of God, Moses accepted the trust. Mark the result: He did not bring the work down to his deficiency; but in the strength of God he put forth the most earnest efforts to elevate and sanctify himself for his sacred mission.”—*Conflict and Courage*, p. 370.

4. Can we say that it was an easy task for Moses to lead such a large company of people under such circumstances? In what risky situation did he sometimes find himself? Exodus 17:4; Numbers 11:14.

“... [The] Angel went before them in all their journeyings and directed all their travels. Because they were so ready to forget that God was leading them by His Angel, and to ascribe to man that which God’s power alone could perform, He had proved them and tested them, to see whether they would obey Him. At every trial they failed. Instead of believing in, and acknowledging, God, who had strewed their path with evidences of His power and signal tokens of His care and love, they distrusted Him and ascribed their leaving Egypt to Moses, charging him as the cause of all their disasters. Moses had borne with their stubbornness with remarkable forbearance. At one time they threatened to stone him.”—*The Story of Redemption*, p. 166.

5. On what was Moses’ success in leadership founded? Exodus 3:11, 12; 4:13. Comparing Moses’ leadership with that of King Saul, what differences are apparent? 1 Samuel 13:13, 14.

“The divine command given to Moses found him self-distrustful, slow of speech, and timid. He was overwhelmed with a sense of his incapacity to be a mouthpiece for God to Israel. But having once accepted the work, he entered upon it with his whole heart, putting all his trust in the Lord. The greatness of his mission called into exercise the best powers of his mind. God blessed his ready obedience, and he became eloquent, hopeful, self-possessed, and well fitted for the greatest work ever given to man. This is an example of what God does to strengthen the character of those who trust Him fully and give themselves unreservedly to His commands.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 255.

A LEADER WITH A VISION

- 6. Considering that he was a prophet, to whom did Moses constantly direct the people’s attention to give them hope? Deuteronomy 18:15-18.**

“Moses was a type of Christ. He himself had declared to Israel, ‘The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him ye shall hearken.’ Deuteronomy 18:15. God saw fit to discipline Moses in the school of affliction and poverty before he could be prepared to lead the hosts of Israel to the earthly Canaan. The Israel of God, journeying to the heavenly Canaan, have a Captain who needed no human teaching to prepare Him for His mission as a divine leader; yet He was made perfect through sufferings; and ‘in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted.’ Hebrews 2:10, 18. Our Redeemer manifested no human weakness or imperfection; yet He died to obtain for us an entrance into the Promised Land.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 480.

- 7. What special testimony do the Scriptures give of Moses and his service at the end of his life and mission? Deuteronomy 34:10-12; Hebrews 3:5.**

“Moses was dead, but his influence did not die with him. It was to live on, reproducing itself in the hearts of his people. The memory of that holy, unselfish life would long be cherished, with silent, persuasive power molding the lives even of those who had neglected his living words. As the glow of the descending sun lights up the mountain peaks long after the sun itself has sunk behind the hills, so the works of the pure, the holy, and the good shed light upon the world long after the actors themselves have passed away. Their works, their words, their example, will forever live. ‘The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.’ Psalm 112:6.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 481.

“... Men are to beware of taking to themselves the glory which is due to their Maker. He could not grant the prayer of Moses that he might share the inheritance of Israel, but He did not forget or forsake His servant. The God of heaven understood the suffering that Moses had endured; He had noted every act of faithful service through those long years of conflict and trial. On the top of Pisgah, God called Moses to an inheritance infinitely more glorious than the earthly Canaan.” —*Conflict and Courage*, p. 111.

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Sabbath, May 19, 2012

Israel and Laodicea

“We may have to remain here in this world because of insubordination many more years, as did the children of Israel; but for Christ’s sake, His people should not add sin to sin by charging God with the consequence of their own wrong course of action.” —(*Letter* 184, 1901) *Evangelism*, p. 696.

BELIEF

- 1. What was built under God’s guidance to be the center of worship in Israel? Exodus 25:8, 9; Hebrews 8:1. To what reality do God’s people look today? Daniel 8:14; Hebrews 8:1.**

“The subject of the sanctuary was the key which unlocked the mystery of the disappointment of 1844. It opened to view a complete system of truth, connected and harmonious, showing that God’s hand had directed the great advent movement and revealing present duty as it brought to light the position and work of His people.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 423.

“As the sanctuary on earth had two apartments, the holy and the most holy, so there are two holy places in the sanctuary in heaven. And the ark containing the law of God, the altar of incense, and other instruments of service found in the sanctuary below, have also their counterpart in the sanctuary above.” —*The Story of Redemption*, p. 377.

- 2. What advice did Moses receive from his father-in-law? Exodus 18:24-27. In addition to these leaders, whom did God commission to help reduce Moses' burden? Numbers 11:16, 17.**

“Moses was not above being instructed by his father-in-law. God had exalted him greatly and wrought wonders by his hand. Yet Moses did not reason that God had chosen him to instruct others, and had accomplished wonderful things by his hand, and he therefore needed not to be instructed. He gladly listened to the suggestions of his father-in-law, and adopted his plan as a wise arrangement.” —*The Story of Redemption*, p. 136.

- 3. What do we notice in comparing the organizational levels of the local church, field conferences, and unions with the organizational structure established in Moses' time? 1 Corinthians 14:33, 40; Colossians 2:5.**

“The order so strikingly displayed in all the works of God was manifest in the Hebrew economy. God was the center of authority and government. Moses, as His representative, was to administer the laws in His name. Then came the council of seventy, then the priests and the princes, under these ‘captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens’ (Numbers 11:16, 17; Deuteronomy 1:15), and, lastly, officers appointed for special duties. The camp was arranged in exact order, the tabernacle, the abiding place of God, in the midst, and around it the tents of the priests and the Levites. Outside of these each tribe encamped beside its own standard.” —*Education*, p. 37.

“He [God] designs that we should learn lessons of order and organization from the perfect order instituted in the days of Moses, for the benefit of the children of Israel.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 653.

“System and order are manifest in all the works of God throughout the universe. Order is the law of heaven, and it should be the law of God's people on the earth.” —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 26.

SPIRITUAL ADVANTAGES

- 4. What great privilege did the people of Israel have? Exodus 19:5, 6; Romans 9:4, 5. What privilege do God's people have today? 1 Peter 2:9, 10.**

“The Lord made a special covenant with ancient Israel: ‘Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine: and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.’ Exodus 19:5, 6. He addresses His commandment-keeping people in these last days, ‘But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.’ ‘Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.’ 1 Peter 2:9, 11.”—*Counsels on Health*, p. 567.

DISAPPOINTMENTS

5. Due to their weak spiritual condition, what great disappointments did the Israelites have to face? Numbers 13:31-33; 16:31-35, 41, 49. In what way were these similar to the disappointment suffered by the Advent Movement in 1844?

“The murmurings of ancient Israel and their rebellious discontent, as well as the mighty miracles wrought in their favor and the punishment of their idolatry and ingratitude, are recorded for our benefit. The example of ancient Israel is given as a warning to the people of God, that they may avoid unbelief and escape His wrath.”—*Conflict and Courage*, p. 8.

“It was not the will of God that Israel should wander forty years in the wilderness; He desired to lead them directly to the land of Canaan and establish them there, a holy, happy people. But ‘they could not enter in because of unbelief.’ Hebrews 3:19. Because of their backsliding and apostasy they perished in the desert, and others were raised up to enter the Promised Land.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 458.

“Had Adventists, after the great disappointment in 1844, held fast their faith and followed on unitedly in the opening providence of God, receiving the message of the third angel and in the power of the Holy Spirit proclaiming it to the world, they would have seen the salvation of God, the Lord would have wrought mightily with their efforts, the work would have been completed, and Christ would have come ere this to receive His people to their reward. But in the period of doubt and uncertainty that followed the disappointment, many of the advent believers yielded their faith.... Thus the work was hindered, and the world was left in darkness. Had the whole Adventist body united upon the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, how widely different would have been our history!”—*Evangelism*, p. 695.

THE REMNANT

6. How did the people of Israel behave very early in their experience? As a consequence, what prophecy was given? Numbers 14:1-4, 29-31.

“For forty years did unbelief, murmuring, and rebellion shut out ancient Israel from the land of Canaan. The same sins have delayed the entrance of modern Israel into the heavenly Canaan. In neither case were the promises of God at fault. It is the unbelief, the worldliness, unconsecration, and strife among the Lord’s professed people that have kept us in this world of sin and sorrow so many years.”—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 69.

7. What process has the church of the seventh period gone through, and what lies ahead? Hebrews 12:25, 26; Haggai 2:6. What great consolation is for the believers today? Daniel 12:1.

The vision of terrible conflicts and bloodshed was given in 1862. This vision was partly fulfilled in the two World Wars, which brought terrible affliction upon God’s people. But the Spirit of prophecy directs our attention to future conflicts.

“I was shown the inhabitants of the earth in the utmost confusion. War, bloodshed, privation, want, famine, and pestilence were abroad in the land.... There seemed to be a little time of peace. Once more the inhabitants of the earth were presented before me; and again everything was in the utmost confusion. Strife, war, and bloodshed, with famine and pestilence, raged everywhere. Other nations were engaged in this war and confusion. War caused famine. Want and bloodshed caused pestilence. And then men’s hearts failed them for fear, ‘and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth.’”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 268.

“Soon God’s people will be tested by fiery trials, and the great proportion of those who now appear to be genuine and true will prove to be base metal. Instead of being strengthened and confirmed by opposition, threats, and abuse, they will cowardly take the side of the opposers. The promise is: ‘Them that honor Me I will honor.’ Shall we be less firmly attached to God’s law because the world at large have attempted to make it void?”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 136.

“The mighty shaking has commenced and will go on, and all will be shaken out who are not willing to take a bold and unyielding stand for the truth and to sacrifice for God and His cause.”—*Early Writings*, p. 50.

FOR MEDITATION

“The church is God’s fortress, His city of refuge, which He holds in a revolted world. Any betrayal of the church is treachery to Him who has bought mankind with the blood of His only-begotten Son. From the beginning, faithful souls have constituted the church on earth. In every age the Lord has had His watchmen, who have borne a faithful testimony to the generation in which they lived. These sentinels gave the message of warning; and when they were called to lay off their armor, others took up the work. God brought these witnesses into covenant relation with Himself, uniting the church on earth with the church in heaven. He has sent forth His angels to minister to His church, and the gates of hell have not been able to prevail against His people.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 11.

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The School in the Wilderness

“... If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” John 7:37, 38.

LOOKING UP

1. **What significant incident presented to Israel a very basic, central gospel truth? Did the people understand the meaning of sin and the way by which one could return to God? Numbers 20:11; 21:7-9.**

“God directed Moses to make a serpent of brass, and place it on high in the midst of the congregation. Then the word was sounded throughout the encampment that all who would look upon the serpent should live. The people well knew that in itself the serpent had no power to help them. It was a symbol of Christ. As the image made in the likeness of the destroying serpents was lifted up for their healing, so One made ‘in the likeness of sinful flesh’ was to be their Redeemer. Romans 8:3. Many of the Israelites regarded the sacrificial service as having in itself virtue to set them free from sin. God desired to teach them that it had no more value than that serpent of brass. It was to lead their minds to the Saviour. Whether for the healing of their wounds or the pardon of their sins, they could do nothing for themselves but show their faith in the Gift of God. They were to look and live.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 174.

2. **When did this illustration become a reality and fulfill what the people experienced in the wilderness? John 3:14; 19:17, 18.**

“Notwithstanding our unworthiness, we are ever to bear in mind that there is One that can take away sin and save the sinner. Every sin acknowledged before God with a contrite heart, He will remove. This faith is the life of the church. As the serpent was lifted up in the wilderness by Moses, and all that had been bitten by the fiery serpents were bidden to look and live, so also the Son of man must be lifted up, that “whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 92.

“When the children of Israel were journeying through the wilderness, the Lord protected them from venomous serpents; but the time came when, because of Israel’s transgression, impenitence, and stubbornness, the Lord removed His restraining power from these reptiles, and many of the people were bitten and died. Then it was that the brazen serpent was uplifted, that all who repented and looked to it in faith might live.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 50.

THE COMING PROPHET

3. What prophecy did Moses give that gave hope to the people? Deuteronomy 18:15, 18; Acts 7:37.

“Through Moses, God’s purpose to send His Son as the Redeemer of the fallen race, was kept before Israel. On one occasion, shortly before his death, Moses declared, ‘The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him ye shall hearken.’ Plainly had Moses been instructed for Israel concerning the work of the Messiah to come. ‘I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee,’ was the word of Jehovah to His servant; ‘and will put My words in His mouth; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him.’ Deuteronomy 18:15, 18.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 684.

THE SMITTEN ROCK AND THE LIVING WATER

4. What happened in the wilderness when the people became very thirsty? Exodus 17:5, 6. Whom do the water and the rock in the wilderness really represent? John 7:37-39.

“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.

“The Saviour made use of this symbolic service to direct the minds of the people to the blessings that He had come to bring them.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 412.

5. By whom was the true Rock smitten and wounded? Isaiah 53:4, 5.

“The smitten rock was a figure of Christ, and through this symbol the most precious spiritual truths are taught. As the life-giving waters flowed from the smitten rock, so from Christ, ‘smitten of God,’ ‘wounded for our transgressions,’ ‘bruised for our iniquities’ (Isaiah 53:4, 5), the stream of salvation flows for a lost race. As the rock had been once smitten, so Christ was to be ‘once offered to bear the sins of many.’ Hebrews 9:28.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 411.

6. Did Israel recognize the spiritual Rock? What does God want His children to understand and believe? 1 Corinthians 10:4, 5; Acts 3:19, 20.

“From the smitten rock in Horeb first flowed the living stream that refreshed Israel in the desert. During all their wanderings, wherever the need existed, they were supplied with water by a miracle of God’s mercy. The water did not, however, continue to flow from Horeb. Wherever in their journeyings they wanted water, there from the clefts of the rock it gushed out beside their encampment.

“It was Christ, by the power of His word, that caused the refreshing stream to flow for Israel. ‘They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ.’ 1 Corinthians 10:4. He was the source of all temporal as well as spiritual blessings. Christ, the true Rock, was with them in all their wanderings. ‘They thirsted not when He led them through the deserts: He caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them; He clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out.’ ‘They ran in the dry places like a river.’ Isaiah 48:21; Psalm 105:41.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 411.

“The Saviour is still carrying forward the same work as when He proffered the water of life to the woman of Samaria. Those who call themselves His followers may despise and shun the outcast ones; but no circumstance of birth or nationality, no condition of life, can turn away His love from the children of men. To every soul, however sinful, Jesus says, If thou hadst asked of Me, I would have given thee living water.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 194.

OUR HOPE

7. Did Moses’ life end at the grave? What do the Scriptures relate concerning His entrance into the heavenly land? What does his death represent for us? Deuteronomy 31:14; 34:1, 5, 6; Matthew 17:2, 3.

“Moses passed under the dominion of death, but he was not to remain in the tomb. Christ Himself called him forth to life. Satan the tempter had claimed the body of Moses because of his sin; but Christ the Saviour brought him forth from the grave. Jude 9.

“Moses upon the mount of transfiguration was a witness to Christ’s victory over sin and death. He represented those who shall come forth from the grave at the resurrection

of the just. Elijah, who had been translated to heaven without seeing death, represented those who will be living upon the earth at Christ's second coming....” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 421.

“We are called to represent to the world the character of God as it was revealed to Moses. In answer to the prayer of Moses, ‘Show me Thy glory,’ the Lord promised, ‘I will make all My goodness pass before thee.’ ‘And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.’ Exodus 33:18, 19; 34:6, 7. This is the fruit that God desires from His people. In the purity of their characters, in the holiness of their lives, in their mercy and loving-kindness and compassion, they are to demonstrate that ‘the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.’ Psalm 19:7.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 221.

FOR MEDITATION

“God’s purpose for His institutions today may also be read in the purpose which He sought to accomplish through the Jewish nation. Through Israel it was His design to impart rich blessings to all peoples. Through them the way was to be prepared for the diffusion of His light to the whole world. The nations of the world, through following corrupt practices, had lost a knowledge of God. Yet in His mercy God did not blot them out of existence. He purposed to give them opportunity for becoming acquainted with Him through His church. He designed that the principles revealed through His people should be the means of restoring in man the moral image of God.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 221.

“If you are the conscious of your wants, do not devote all your powers to representing them and mourning over them, but look and live. Jesus is our only Saviour, and notwithstanding millions who need to be healed will reject His offered mercy, not one who trusts in His merits will be left to perish.... Satan suggests that you are helpless and cannot bless yourself. It is true; you are helpless. But lift up Jesus before him: ‘I have a Saviour. In Him I trust, and He will never suffer me to be confounded. In His name I triumph. He is my righteousness, and my crown of rejoicing.’” —*That I May Know Him*, p. 112.

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Steadfast in Danger

“There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.” Joshua 1:5.

PLANS FOR ISRAEL

1. **How was Israel’s new leader set apart for his great mission? What did God want for the good and spiritual prosperity of His people? Numbers 27:17-20; Deuteronomy 10:12, 13, 16.**

“After the death of Moses, Joshua was to be the leader of Israel, to conduct them to the Promised Land. He had been prime minister to Moses during the greater part of the time the Israelites had wandered in the wilderness. He had seen the wonderful works of God wrought by Moses, and well understood the disposition of the people. He was one of the twelve spies who were sent out to search the Promised Land, and one of the two who gave a faithful account of its richness and who encouraged the people to go up in the strength of God to possess it. He was well qualified for this important office. The Lord promised Joshua to be with him as He had been with Moses, and to make Canaan fall as easy conquest to him, provided he would be faithful to observe all His commandments.”
—*The Story of Redemption*, p. 175.

2. **In addition to others, what consistent promise did Israel receive? Similarly, what is promised to modern Israel? Deuteronomy 9:5, 6. Revelation 21:7.**

“We shall be saved eternally when we enter in through the gates into the city. Then we may rejoice that we are saved, eternally saved. But until then we need to heed the injunction of the apostle, and to ‘fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it’ (Hebrews 4:1). Having a knowledge of Canaan, singing the songs of Canaan, rejoicing in the prospect of entering into Canaan, did not bring the children of Israel into the vineyards and olive groves of the Promised Land. They could make it theirs in truth only by occupation, by complying with the conditions, by exercising living faith in God, by appropriating His promises to themselves....” —*That I May Know Him*, p. 162.

- 3. What encouraging message did Joshua receive just before crossing the Jordan? How does the Spirit of prophecy describe Israel's leader? Joshua 3:7, 10, 11.**

“Joshua was now the acknowledged leader of Israel. He had been known chiefly as a warrior, and his gifts and virtues were especially valuable at this stage in the history of his people. Courageous, resolute, and persevering, prompt, incorruptible, unmindful of selfish interests in his care for those committed to his charge, and, above all, inspired by a living faith in God—such was the character of the man divinely chosen to conduct the armies of Israel in their entrance upon the Promised Land. During the sojourn in the wilderness he had acted as prime minister to Moses, and by his quiet, unpretending fidelity, his steadfastness when others wavered, his firmness to maintain the truth in the midst of danger, he had given evidence of his fitness to succeed Moses, even before he was called to the position by the voice of God.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 481.

- 4. What did the children of Israel set up as a memorial of the miraculous crossing of the Jordan? Joshua 4:5-9.**

“Coming generations were not to be without a witness to this great miracle. While the priests bearing the ark were still in the midst of Jordan, twelve men previously chosen, one from each tribe, took up each a stone from the river bed where the priests were standing, and carried it over to the western side. These stones were to be set up as a monument in the first camping place beyond the river. The people were bidden to repeat to their children and children's children the story of the deliverance that God had wrought for them, as Joshua said, ‘That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the Lord your God forever.’”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 484.

OVERCOMING ANOTHER OBSTACLE

- 5. Forty years after first receiving the bread of heaven, what fruits did the people enjoy? Joshua 5:11, 12.**

“The Lord had now signally manifested His power and favor by leading His people over Jordan on dry land, and their enemies could no longer reproach them. The manna, which had continued up to this time, now ceased; for as the Israelites were about to possess

Canaan, and eat of the fruits of that goodly land, there was no more need of it.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 158.

“Their enemies had triumphed because they had so long wandered in the wilderness, and they proudly lifted themselves up against God, declaring that He was not able to lead them into the land of Canaan. They had now passed over Jordan on dry land, and their enemies could no longer reproach them.

“The manna had continued up to this time, but now as the Israelites were about to possess Canaan and eat of the fruit of the land, they had no more need of it, and it ceased.” –*The Story of Redemption*, pp. 177, 178.

6. What other extraordinary evidences of divine power did Israel experience? Joshua 6:20; 10:12-14.

“The Israelites had not gained the victory by their own power; the conquest had been wholly the Lord’s; and as the first fruits of the land, the city, with all that it contained, was to be devoted as a sacrifice to God. It was to be impressed upon Israel that in the conquest of Canaan they were not to fight for themselves, but simply as instruments to execute the will of God; not to seek for riches or self-exaltation, but the glory of Jehovah their King. Before the capture the command had been given, ‘The city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein.’ ‘Keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed. . . and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it.’” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 491.

“The Spirit of God inspired Joshua’s prayer, that evidence might again be given of the power of Israel’s God. Hence the request did not show presumption on the part of the great leader. Joshua had received the promise that God would surely overthrow these enemies of Israel, yet he put forth as earnest effort as though success depended upon the armies of Israel alone. He did all that human energy could do, and then he cried in faith for divine aid.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 509.

7. What were Joshua’s last words at the end of his mission? Joshua 24:14, 15.

“No stain rested upon the holy character of Joshua. He was a wise leader. His life was wholly devoted to God. Before he died, he assembled the Hebrew host, and, following the example of Moses, he recapitulated their travels in the wilderness, and also the merciful dealings of God with them. He then eloquently addressed them. He related to them that the king of Moab warred against them, and called Balaam to curse them; but God ‘would not hearken unto Balaam, therefore he blessed you still.’ He then said to them, ‘And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.’” –*The Story of Redemption*, p. 181.

“The secret of success is the union of divine power with human effort. Those who achieve the greatest results are those who rely most implicitly upon the Almighty Arm. The man who commanded, ‘Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon,’ is the man who for hours lay prostrate upon the earth in prayer in the camp of Gilgal. The men of prayer are the men of power.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 509.

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10

Sabbath, June 9, 2012

Work and Personal Development

“I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.” Acts 26:9.

HUMAN COMPLEXITY

- 1. How did Paul describe himself on one occasion? What did he specifically mention as identification? Acts 22:27, 28; 22:3.**

“A Roman citizen, born in a Gentile city; a Jew, not only by descent but by lifelong training, patriotic devotion, and religious faith; educated in Jerusalem by the most eminent of the rabbis, and instructed in all the laws and traditions of the fathers, Saul of Tarsus shared to the fullest extent the pride and the prejudices of his nation. While still a young man, he became an honored member of the Sanhedrin. He was looked upon as a man of promise, a zealous defender of the ancient faith.”—*Education*, p. 64.

- 2. In his own words, what had he done? Acts 26:9-11.**

“As many are today, so (before his conversion) Paul was very confident in an hereditary piety; but his confidence was founded on falsehood. It was faith out of Christ, for he trusted in forms and ceremonies. His zeal for the law was disconnected from Christ and was valueless. His boast was that he was blameless in his performance of the deeds of the

law; but the Christ who made the law of any value he refused. He was confident that he was right. He says: 'I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them' (Acts 26:9, 10). For a time Paul did a very cruel work, thinking that he was doing God service; for he says, 'I did it ignorantly in unbelief' (1 Timothy 1:13). But his sincerity did not justify his work, or make error truth." –*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 346.

FROM PERSECUTOR TO PREACHER

3. As Saul was persecuting the Christians, what changed his life and attitude? Acts 9:3-5.

"A general slain in battle is lost to his army, but his death gives no additional strength to the enemy. But when a man of prominence joins the opposing force, not only are his services lost, but those to whom he joins himself gain a decided advantage. Saul of Tarsus, on his way to Damascus, might easily have been struck dead by the Lord, and much strength would have been withdrawn from the persecuting power. But God in His providence not only spared Saul's life, but converted him, thus transferring a champion from the side of the enemy to the side of Christ. An eloquent speaker and a severe critic, Paul, with his stern purpose and undaunted courage, possessed the very qualifications needed in the early church." –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 124.

4. What decision did Saul make after hearing God's voice? Acts 9:4, 5, 20, 21.

"Jesus sends the inquiring Jew to His church, to obtain from them a knowledge of his duty. Christ performed the work of revelation and conviction; and now the penitent was in a condition to learn of those whom God had ordained to teach His truth. Thus Jesus gave sanction to the authority of His organized church, and placed Saul in connection with His representatives on earth. The light of heavenly illumination deprived Saul of sight; but Jesus, the great Healer, did not at once restore it. All blessings flow from Christ, but He had now established a church as His representative on earth, and to it belonged the work of directing the repentant sinner in the way of life. The very men whom Saul had purposed to destroy were to be his instructors in the religion he had despised and persecuted." –*The Story of Redemption*, p. 271.

- 5. After his conversion, how was he led from being a hateful and degraded criminal to becoming an eminent preacher of God's wholly Word? Acts 9:17, 18, 22.**

"The faith of Saul was severely tested during the three days of fasting and prayer at the house of Judas, in Damascus. He was totally blind, and in utter darkness of mind as to what was required of him. He had been directed to go to Damascus, where it would be told him what he was to do. In his uncertainty and distress he cried earnestly to God." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 430.

"It was Saul of Tarsus, one of the most determined enemies of the gospel, who became Paul the devoted minister of Christ. Beneath an appearance of hatred and contempt, even beneath crime and degradation, may be hidden a soul that the grace of Christ will rescue to shine as a jewel in the Redeemer's crown." —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 129.

- 6. How did Paul develop in his service for God? Acts 9:26-29.**

"As Paul continued to appeal to his astonished hearers to 'repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance' (Acts 26:20), he 'increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.' But many hardened their hearts, refusing to respond to his message, and soon their astonishment at his conversion was changed into intense hatred like that which they had shown toward Jesus." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 125.

- 7. How did Paul proceed with his mission in spite of the opposition that he encountered? Acts 9:29-31.**

"Paul was inclined to remain at Jerusalem, where he could face the opposition. To him it seemed an act of cowardice to flee, if by remaining he might be able to convince some of the obstinate Jews of the truth of the gospel message, even if to remain should cost him his life. And so he answered, 'Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on Thee: and when the blood of Thy martyr Stephen was shed, I was also standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.' But it was not in harmony with the purpose of God that His servant should needlessly expose his life; and the heavenly messenger replied, 'Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.' Acts 22:19-21." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 130.

“Christ Himself calls our attention to the growth of the vegetable world as an illustration of the agency of His Spirit in sustaining spiritual life. The sap of the vine, ascending from the root, is diffused to the branches, sustaining growth and producing blossoms and fruit. So the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Saviour, pervades the soul, renews the motives and affections, and brings even the thoughts into obedience to the will of God, enabling the receiver to bear the precious fruit of holy deeds.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 284.

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11

Sabbath, June 16, 2012

A Fruitful System

“Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.” Acts 6:3

FOUNDED ON FAITH AND DEDICATION

- 1. What basic principles are necessary for effective missionary effort? 1 Thesalonians 1:5, 6; Acts 11:24.**

“Physical healing is bound up with the gospel commission. When Christ sent His disciples out on their first missionary journey, 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. And when at the close of His earthly ministry He gave them their commission, He said, ‘These signs shall follow them that believe; In My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.’ Mark 16:17, 18.” —*Counsels on Health*, p. 497.

TEAMWORK

- 2. How was the responsible evangelistic team selected? Mark 6:7; Acts 13:3. How should candidates be selected today? Acts 6:3.**

“Both Paul and Barnabas had been laboring as ministers of Christ, and God had abundantly blessed their efforts, but neither of them had previously been formally ordained to the gospel ministry by prayer and the laying on of hands. They were now authorized by the church not only to teach the truth but to baptize and to organize churches, being invested with full ecclesiastical authority. This was an important era for the church.” —*The Story of Redemption*, p. 303.

IMPACT OF AN EFFECTIVE SYSTEM

3. What experiences did this team make on its first missionary trip to Cyprus? Acts 13:6-8. How did Paul act, and what was the result? Acts 13:9, 11, 12.

“Thus the fallen foe ever works to keep in his ranks men of influence who, if converted, might render effective service in God’s cause. But the faithful gospel worker need not fear defeat at the hand of the enemy; for it is his privilege to be endowed with power from above to withstand every satanic influence....

“The sorcerer had closed his eyes to the evidences of gospel truth, and the Lord, in righteous anger, caused his natural eyes to be closed, shutting out from him the light of day. This blindness was not permanent, but only for a season, that he might be warned to repent and seek pardon of the God whom he had so grievously offended.... The deputy, convinced of the truth of the doctrine taught by the apostles, accepted the gospel.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp 167, 168.

4. What message moved the hearts of the listeners on the first Sabbath spent in Antioch? Acts 13:17, 18, 26, 38, 39. What other results were there? Acts 13:42, 43.

“In all their missionary endeavors Paul and Barnabas sought to follow Christ’s example of willing sacrifice and faithful, earnest labor for souls. Wide awake, zealous, untiring, they did not consult inclination or personal ease, but with prayerful anxiety and unceasing activity they sowed the seed of truth. And with the sowing of the seed, the apostles were careful to give to all who took their stand for the gospel, practical instruction that was of untold value. This spirit of earnestness and godly fear made upon the minds of the new disciples a lasting impression regarding the importance of the gospel message.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 186.

5. What other type of listeners did they meet when they spent another Sabbath in Antioch? Acts 13:45-47. What was the reaction of the Gentiles? Acts 13:48, 50.

“Paul found, in the populous city of Antioch, an excellent field of labor, where his great learning, wisdom, and zeal, combined, wielded a powerful influence over the inhabitants and frequenters of that city of culture.” –*The Story of Redemption*, p. 302.

- 6. What missionary service they perform in Iconia? Acts 14:1, 3. What did some prejudiced men who believed they were serving God do? Acts 14:2, 4, 5.**

“Paul had prided himself upon his Pharisaical strictness; but after the revelation of Christ to him on the road to Damascus the mission of the Saviour and his own work in the conversion of the Gentiles were plain to his mind, and he fully comprehended the difference between a living faith and a dead formalism. Paul still claimed to be one of the children of Abraham, and kept the Ten Commandments in letter and in spirit as faithfully as he had ever done before his conversion to Christianity. But he knew that the typical ceremonies must soon altogether cease, since that which they had shadowed forth had come to pass, and the light of the gospel was shedding its glory upon the Jewish religion, giving a new significance to its ancient rites.” –*The Story of Redemption*, p. 306.

- 7. What impression did the gospel make in Lystra? Acts 14:8-11, 19, 20. Was Paul afraid to return to that city? Acts 14:21, 22.**

“Having made plain these fundamental truths concerning the Creator, the apostles told the Lystrians of the Son of God, who came from heaven to our world because He loved the children of men. They spoke of His life and ministry, His rejection by those He came to save, His trial and crucifixion, His resurrection, and His ascension to heaven, there to act as man’s advocate. Thus, in the Spirit and power of God, Paul and Barnabas preached the gospel in Lystra.” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 180.

- 8. What did the apostle do to strengthen the work in each church? Acts 14:23.**

“The apostles carried a weight of responsibility to enlarge their sphere of labor, to proclaim the gospel in the regions beyond. From their example we learn that there are to be no idlers in the Lord’s vineyard. His servants are constantly to enlarge the circle of their efforts. Constantly they are to do more, never less. The Lord’s work is to widen and broaden until it encircles the world.

“After making a missionary tour, Paul and Barnabas retraced their steps, visiting the churches they had raised up and selecting men to unite with them in the work. Thus God’s

servants are to labor today, selecting and training worthy young men as co-laborers. God help us to sanctify ourselves, that by our example others may be sanctified, enabled to do successful work in winning souls to Christ.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 15.

FOR MEDITATION

“The Lord is calling upon His people to take up different lines of missionary work, to sow beside all waters. We do but a small part of the work that He desires us to do among our neighbors and friends. By kindness to the poor, the sick, or the bereaved we may obtain an influence over them, so that divine truth will find access to their hearts. No such opportunity for service should be allowed to pass unimproved. It is the highest missionary work that we can do. The presentation of the truth in love and sympathy from house to house is in harmony with the instruction of Christ to His disciples when He sent them out on their first missionary tour.”—(*The Review and Herald*, June 6, 1912) *Welfare Ministry*, p. 73.

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12

Sabbath, June 23, 2012

An Administrative System

“‘Ye are the light of the world.’ He made the church the depositary of sacred truth. He left His church a stewardship of sacred truth, and it is the work of the church to carry forward His mission of saving the world. He is the Sun of Righteousness, who is to impart bright rays to His followers; and they, in turn, are to shed His light upon others. They are to be His representatives to the world.”—*Lift Him Up*, p. 210.

THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

- 1. What was a point of contention in the apostle Paul’s days? Acts 15:1, 2. What did the leaders do to solve this difficulty? Acts 15:6.**

“Certain Jews from Judea raised a general consternation among the believing Gentiles by agitating the question of circumcision. They asserted, with great assurance, that none could be saved without being circumcised and keeping the entire ceremonial law.

“This was an important question, and one which affected the church in a very great degree. Paul and Barnabas met it with promptness, and opposed introducing the subject to

the Gentiles. They were opposed in this by the believing Jews of Antioch, who favored the position of those from Judea. The matter resulted in much discussion and want of harmony in the church, until finally the church at Antioch, apprehending that a division among them would occur from any further discussion of the question, decided to send Paul and Barnabas, together with some responsible men of Antioch, to Jerusalem, to lay the matter before the apostles and elders.” —*The Story of Redemption*, pp. 304, 305.

2. What decision was made? On what was it based? Acts 15:13-20.

“The Jews had prided themselves upon their divinely appointed services; and they concluded that as God once specified the Hebrew manner of worship, it was impossible that He should ever authorize a change in any of its specifications. They decided that Christianity must connect itself with the Jewish laws and ceremonies. They were slow to discern to the end of that which had been abolished by the death of Christ, and to perceive that all their sacrificial offerings had but prefigured the death of the Son of God, in which type had met its antitype, rendering valueless the divinely appointed ceremonies and sacrifices of the Jewish religion....

“Paul still claimed to be one of the children of Abraham, and kept the Ten Commandments in letter and in spirit as faithfully as he had ever done before his conversion to Christianity. But he knew that the typical ceremonies must soon altogether cease, since that which they had shadowed forth had come to pass, and the light of the gospel was shedding its glory upon the Jewish religion, giving a new significance to its ancient rites.

“The question thus brought under the consideration of the council seemed to present insurmountable difficulties, viewed in whatever light. But the Holy Ghost had, in reality, already settled this problem, upon the decision of which depended the prosperity, and even the existence, of the Christian church. Grace, wisdom, and sanctified judgment were given to the apostles to decide the vexed question.” —*The Story of Redemption*, pp. 305, 306.

COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

3. How did Peter, Barnabas, Paul, and James, among others, work together in these sessions for God’s honor? Acts 15:6, 7, 10-12.

“In every council the members should speak and act as if the curtain were withdrawn, and they saw themselves transacting business in the presence of the heavenly universe. For this is the fact in the case; all heaven is looking upon the workers. In planning for aggressive warfare, let not self be made prominent; it must be hidden, wholly hidden, in Christ...” —*This Day with God*, p. 13.

“The order that was maintained in the early Christian church made it possible for them to move forward solidly as a well-disciplined army clad with the armor of God. The

companies of believers, though scattered over a large territory, were all members of one body; all moved in concert and in harmony with one another. When dissension arose in a local church, as later it did arise in Antioch and elsewhere, and the believers were unable to come to an agreement among themselves, such matters were not permitted to create a division in the church, but were referred to a general council of the entire body of believers, made up of appointed delegates from the various local churches, with the apostles and elders in positions of leading responsibility. Thus the efforts of Satan to attack the church in isolated places were met by concerted action on the part of all, and the plans of the enemy to disrupt and destroy were thwarted.

“‘God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.’ I Corinthians 14:33. He requires that order and system be observed in the conduct of church affairs today no less than in the days of old. He desires His work to be carried forward with thoroughness and exactness so that He may place upon it the seal of His approval. Christian is to be united with Christian, church with church, the human instrumentality cooperating with the divine, every agency subordinate to the Holy Spirit, and all combined in giving to the world the good tidings of the grace of God.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 95, 96.

4. What system of communication was executed? Acts 15:30-34. How did the apostles continue their active service? Galatians 5:1-4.

“Paul and Barnabas were recommended to them as men who had hazarded their lives for the Lord. Judas and Silas were sent with these apostles to declare to the Gentiles, by word of mouth, the decision of the council. The four servants of God were sent to Antioch with the epistle and message, which put an end to all controversy; for its was the voice of the highest authority upon earth.” —*The Story of Redemption*, p. 308.

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

5. During his second missionary trip, with whom did Paul labor successfully? Acts 15:35, 36, 40, 41.

“Barnabas was ready to go with Paul, but wished to take with them Mark, who had again decided to devote himself to the ministry. To this Paul objected. He ‘thought not good to take ... with them’ one who during their first missionary journey had left them in a time of need. He was not inclined to excuse Mark’s weakness in deserting the work for the safety and comforts of home. He urged that one with so little stamina was unfitted for a work requiring patience, self-denial, bravery, devotion, faith, and a willingness to sacrifice, if need be, even life itself. So sharp was the contention that Paul and Barnabas separated, the latter following out his convictions and taking Mark with him. ‘So Barnabas

took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. . . .

“The circumstances connected with the separation of Paul and Barnabas by the Holy Spirit to a definite line of service show clearly that the Lord works through appointed agencies in His organized church.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 202, 162.

6. How did the apostles develop co-workers for the evangelistic work? Acts 16:1-3.

“Among those who had been converted at Lystra, and who were eyewitnesses of the sufferings of Paul, was one who was afterward to become a prominent worker for Christ and who was to share with the apostle the trials and the joys of pioneer service in difficult fields. This was a young man named Timothy.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 184.

A VERY BLESSED WORK

7. How did God bless the work on Paul’s second trip to Macedonia, beginning with Philippi? Acts 16:9, 10, 13-15.

“Luke is called the ‘beloved physician.’ He labored in connection with Paul in Philippi, and when Paul left that place Luke stayed, doing double service as a physician and a gospel minister. He was indeed a medical missionary, and his medical skill opened the way for the gospel to reach many hearts.”—*Counsels on Health*, p. 498.

8. How did God intervene in adversity? Acts 16:27-31.

“With deep humility he asked the apostles to show him the way of life. ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house,’ they answered; and ‘they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.’ The jailer then washed the wounds of the apostles and ministered to them, after which he was baptized by them, with all his household. A sanctifying influence diffused itself among the inmates of the prison, and the minds of all were opened to listen to the truths spoken by the apostles. They were convinced that the God whom these men served had miraculously released them from bondage.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 217.

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**Please read the Missionary Report
for building Primary Schools on page 104.**

13

Sabbath, June 30, 2012

Moving Forward Despite Difficulties

“... How much is due to the labors of Paul and his fellow workers, as with the gospel of the Son of God they made their unnoticed journey from Asia to the shores of Europe?

“What is it worth to any life to have been God’s instrument in setting in motion such influences of blessing? What will it be worth in eternity to witness the results of such a lifework?” –*Education*, p. 70.

PAUL IN ANTIOCH AND EPHESUS

- 1. What the theme of Paul’s preaching on his various missionary trips? What impact did this message have on the Jews and the pro-consul? Acts 18:5, 12-15.**

“He told them of Christ’s life on this earth and of His cruel death of shame. He told them how the Lord of life had broken the barriers of the tomb and risen triumphant over death. He repeated the Saviour’s commission to His disciples: ‘All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.’ Matthew 28:18, 19. He told them also of Christ’s promise to send the Comforter, through whose power mighty signs and wonders would be wrought, and he described how gloriously this promise had been fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost....

“In consequence of these charges the disciples were repeatedly brought before the authorities; but their defense was so clear and sensible, and their statement of what they were teaching so calm and comprehensive, that a strong influence was exerted in their favor.” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 282, 178.

- 2. What accompanied Paul’s preaching? Acts 20:9-12.**

“God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.’ These manifestations of supernatural power were far more potent than had ever before been witnessed in Ephesus, and were of such a character that they could not be imitated by the skill of the juggler or the enchantments of the sorcerer. As these miracles were wrought in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, the people had opportunity to see that the God of heaven was more powerful than the magicians who were worshipers of the goddess Diana. Thus the Lord exalted His servant, even before the idolaters themselves, immeasurably above the most powerful and favored of the magicians.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 286.

A RIOT AGAINST PAUL

3. Why was Paul accused before the authorities of Ephesus? Acts 19:24-27.

“These words roused the excitable passions of the people ‘They were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.’

“A report of this speech was rapidly circulated. ‘The whole city was filled with confusion.’ Search was made for Paul, but the apostle was not to be found. His brethren, receiving an intimation of the danger, had hurried him from the place. Angels of God had been sent to guard the apostle; his time to die a martyr’s death had not yet come.

“Failing to find the object of their wrath, the mob seized ‘Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul’s companions in travel,’ and with these ‘they rushed with one accord into the theater.’...

“To those who believe, Christ is a sure foundation. Upon this living stone, Jews and Gentiles alike may build. It is broad enough for all and strong enough to sustain the weight and burden of the whole world. This is a fact plainly recognized by Paul himself. In the closing days of his ministry, when addressing a group of Gentile believers who had remained steadfast in their love of the gospel truth, the apostle wrote, ‘Ye ... are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.’ Ephesians 2:19, 20.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 292, 293, 175.

4. What was the deputy’s opinion concerning the case? Acts 19:35-37.

“The decision of the recorder and of others holding honorable offices in the city had set Paul before the people as one innocent of any unlawful act. This was another triumph of Christianity over error and superstition. God had raised up a great magistrate to vindicate His apostle and hold the tumultuous mob in check. Paul’s heart was filled with gratitude to God that his life had been preserved and that Christianity had not been brought into disrepute by the tumult at Ephesus.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 295.

- 5. What was prophesied concerning the apostle Paul? Acts 21:10, 11. Did he give up the idea of traveling to Jerusalem? Acts 21:15, 17, 18, 20.**

“Through the Holy Spirit these disciples were warned of the perils awaiting Paul at Jerusalem, and they urged him ‘that he should not go up to Jerusalem.’ But the apostle allowed not the fear of affliction and imprisonment to turn him from his purpose.

“At the close of the week spent in Tyre, all the brethren, with their wives and children, went with Paul to the ship, and before he stepped on board, they knelt upon the shore and prayed, he for them, and they for him.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 396.

“When Paul received the gospel of Jesus Christ, it made him a new creature. He was transformed; the truth planted in his soul gave him such faith and courage as a follower of Christ that no opposition could move him, no suffering daunt him.”—*Faith and Works*, p. 33.

- 6. How was the prophecy concerning Paul fulfilled? Acts 21:28, 31, 36. What wonderful promises did Jesus give for similar cases? Matthew 5:11, 12.**

“Now as in former ages, the presentation of a truth that reproves the sins and errors of the times will excite opposition. ‘Everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.’ John 3:20. As men see that they cannot maintain their position by the Scriptures, many determine to maintain it at all hazards, and with a malicious spirit they assail the character and motives of those who stand in defense of unpopular truth. It is the same policy which has been pursued in all ages. Elijah was declared to be a troubler in Israel, Jeremiah a traitor, Paul a polluter of the temple. From that day to this, those who would be loyal to truth have been denounced as seditious, heretical, or schismatic. Multitudes who are too unbelieving to accept the sure word of prophecy will receive with unquestioning credulity an accusation against those who dare to reprove fashionable sins. This spirit will increase more and more. And the Bible plainly teaches that a time is approaching when the laws of the state will so conflict with the law of God that whosoever would obey all the divine precepts must brave reproach and punishment as an evildoer.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 458.

PAUL’S DEFENSE AND HOPE

- 7. What was the defense of Heaven’s servant? Acts 22:1-4. With what assurance did he defend himself?**

“Peter, James, and John felt confident that God had appointed them to preach Christ among their own countrymen at home. But Paul had received his commission from God, while praying in the temple, and his broad missionary field had been presented before him with remarkable distinctness. To prepare him for his extensive and important work, God had brought him into close connection with Himself, and had opened before his enraptured vision a glimpse of the beauty and glory of heaven.” —*The Story of Redemption*, p. 302.

“Paul also in his manifold labors was upheld by the sustaining power of His presence. ‘I can do all things,’ he said, ‘through Christ which strengtheneth me.’ ‘Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?... Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing (Rotherham’s translation), shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.’ Philippians 4:13; Romans 8:35-39.” —*Education*, p. 69.

8. What other truths did this man of God proclaim? Acts 26:6-8; 23:6.

“And said Paul: ‘If the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.’ 1 Corinthians 15:16-18. If for four thousand years the righteous had gone directly to heaven at death, how could Paul have said that if there is no resurrection, ‘they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished’? No resurrection would be necessary.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 546.

“Throughout his later ministry, Paul never lost sight of the Source of his wisdom and strength. Hear him, years afterward, still declaring, ‘For to me to live is Christ.’ Philippians 1:21. And again: ‘I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things,... that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings.’ Philippians 3:8-10.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 128.

“The words of the apostle Paul become the language of the soul: ‘I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord:... that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings.’ Philippians 3:8-10.” —*Education*, p. 192.

FOR MEDITATION

“You need now to understand as never before the softening, subduing power of true, Christlike character. You need to understand the warfare in which we are engaged. The power of holy living is far ahead of all doctrinal discourses....

“We need now as never before to pray with heart and voice for the Spirit of Christ to use us in His service through the sanctification of the Spirit. We need to pray that we may by uniting with our fellow workers build up God’s kingdom. We are never to be satisfied with self, but are ever to press upward, seeking to attain higher fervency and greater zeal. Our heart’s greatest desire should be to be found among the meek and lowly people of God. Then we can find souls and win souls.” —*The Voice in Speech and Song*, p. 305.

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Missionary Report for building primary schools

To be read on Sabbath, June 30, 2012

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

“The Holy Scriptures underline the importance of education as it is written in Proverbs 22:6: ‘Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.’ Much more can be done to save and educate the children of those who at present cannot get away from the cities. This is a matter worthy of our best efforts. Church schools are to be established for the children in the cities, and in connection with these schools provision is to be made for the teaching of higher studies, where these are called for. These schools can be managed in such a way, part joining to part, that they will be a complete whole.” —*The Review and Herald*, December 17, 1903. “In every place where there is a church, large or small, there a school should be established.” —(*Letter 108, 1899*) *Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 227.

More than a hundred years ago, God instructed His people through prophetic inspiration that this is the way to do missionary work; and today it is a challenge for the church, for we are living at the end of time. When our children enter schools and colleges that have no Christian principles, they are in danger. “If the child is not instructed aright [in the home], Satan will educate him through agencies of his choosing. How important, then, is the school in the home!” —*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 107.

What is a church school?

- Enlargement of the local church
- Center of children’s missionary instruction
- Practice of lessons learned in the home
- Institution of primary education

What is the purpose of the church school?

- Education in missionary service
- Preaching of the truth
- Help for parents
- Formation at a primary level
- Instruction in religion and general culture

“The Lord would use the church school as an aid to the parents in educating and preparing their children for this time before us. Then let the church take hold of the school work in earnest and make it what the Lord desires it to be.... “The children who are properly instructed will be witnesses to the truth.” –*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, pp. 167, 169.

“This kind of missionary work, I am instructed, will have a most telling influence in extending the light and knowledge of truth.” –*Child Guidance*, p. 310.

“The Lord would have painstaking efforts made in the education of our children.... Shall the members of the church give means to advance the cause of Christ among others and leave their own children to carry on the work and service of Satan?” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 217.

“The working of private interests for the gaining of personal ends is one thing. In this, men may follow their own judgment. But the carrying forward of the Lord’s work in the earth is entirely another matter. When He designates that a certain property should be secured for the advancement of His cause and the building up of His work, whether it be for sanitarium or school work, or for any other branch, He will make the doing of that work possible if those who have experience will show their faith and trust in His purposes, and will move forward promptly to secure the advantages He points out. While we are not to seek to wrest property from any man, yet when advantages are offered, we should be wide awake to see the advantage, that we may make plans for the upbuilding of the work. And when we have done this we should exert every energy to secure the freewill offerings of God’s people for the support of these new plants.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 272.

At the present time, there are a number of schools in Africa, Asia, and Central and South America. But, taking into consideration these solemn statements, the General Conference Education Department appeals to all brothers, sisters, and friends in the whole world to respond to the movings of the Lord Jesus on your hearts and contribute generously so primary schools may be established in Rwanda, Nicaragua, Bolivia, and the Philippines. We put this project in God’s hands, praying that His will may be done. “Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established.” Proverbs 16:3.

–Danilo López Monterroso
Interim Leader of the General Conference Education Department

