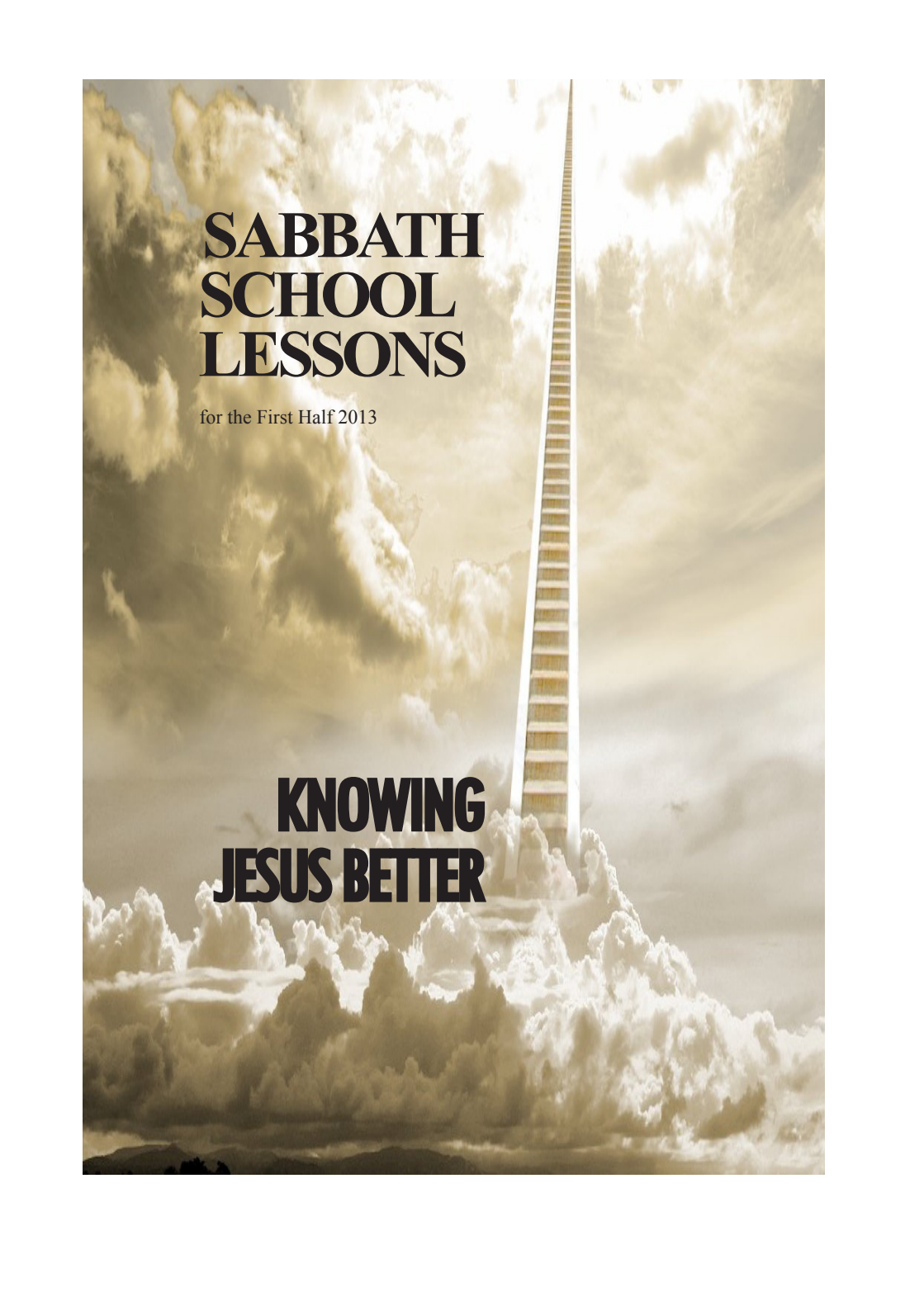




SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

for the First Half 2013

KNOWING JESUS BETTER

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KNOWING JESUS BETTER

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INTRODUCTION

Speaking to a man who, after years of blindness, had been healed just one or two hours before, Jesus asked him: “Dost thou believe on the Son of God?” Since this was the man’s first opportunity to see Him, his answer was: “Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?” John 9:35, 36.

People are interested in investigating many things in the world; they want to know what is in the bowels of the earth, to explore the depths of the sea, and to discover and examine heavenly bodies in the great expanse of the universe. They like to study about the mechanics of nature and the laws and principles of God’s handiwork, but they devote very little effort to knowing the One who created so many wonderful things.

If the investigation of realities in the earth, sea, and sky provides so much scientific knowledge, how much more people would achieve if they acquired a knowledge of their Creator. It is with good reason that the wise thinker has written: “... The knowledge of the Holy is understanding.” Proverbs 9:10. In reality this is the first and most important knowledge that we should search for; as Jesus said, it is eternal life: “And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.” John 17:3.

Our knowledge of the Son of God is limited, and our experience is often superficial. We need to know Him better to comprehend more completely His true identity, His attributes, and His work for us. This will be a great experience and blessing for everyone.

As in the time of the apostles, when they were asked, “‘Who is this?’ the disciples, filled with the spirit of inspiration, answer this question. In eloquent strains they repeat the prophecies concerning Christ:

“Adam will tell you, It is the seed of the woman that shall bruise the serpent’s head.

“Ask Abraham, he will tell you, It is ‘Melchizedek King of Salem,’ King of Peace.

“Jacob will tell you, He is Shiloh of the tribe of Judah.

“Isaiah will tell you, ‘Immanuel,’ ‘Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.’

“Jeremiah will tell you, The Branch of David, ‘the Lord our Righteousness.’

“Daniel will tell you, He is the Messiah.

“Hosea will tell you, He is ‘the Lord God of hosts; the Lord is His memorial.’

“John the Baptist will tell you, He is ‘the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’

“The great Jehovah has proclaimed from His throne, ‘This is My beloved Son.’

“We, His disciples, declare, This is Jesus, the Messiah, the Prince of life, the Redeemer of the world.

“And the prince of the powers of darkness acknowledges Him, saying, ‘I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God.’” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 578, 579.

The objective of these lessons, then, is that we ourselves may so identify with the Son of God and the Son of man that we may more fully reveal Him in our lives so men may glorify our Father in heaven. This can be accomplished only if we come nearer to Him. Therefore the title of the lessons for this half year is “Knowing Jesus Better.”

Great blessings are in store for the earnest student. Let us therefore study these lessons every day, at last one hour every day, as the Spirit of prophecy recommends—not just at the last moment—because by beholding holiness and love we will be transformed.

“The heavenly world would open its chambers of grace and glory for exploration,” writes the Spirit of prophecy. “Human beings would be altogether different from what they now are, for by exploring the mines of truth men would be ennobled. The mystery of redemption, the incarnation of Christ, His atoning sacrifice, would not be as they are now, vague in our minds. They would be not only better understood, but altogether more highly appreciated.

“In His prayer to the Father, Christ gave to the world a lesson which should be graven on mind and soul. ‘This is life eternal,’ He said, ‘that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.’ John 17:3. This is true education. It imparts power. The experimental knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent, transforms man into the image of God. It gives to man the mastery of himself, bringing every impulse and passion of the lower nature under the control of the higher powers of the mind. It makes its possessor a son of God and an heir of heaven. It brings him into communion with the mind of the Infinite, and opens to him the rich treasures of the universe.

“This is the knowledge which is obtained by searching the word of God. And this treasure may be found by every soul who will give all to obtain it.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 114.

May the acquisition of such knowledge be a wonderful experience for all who study these lessons.

—*The brothers and sisters of the General Conference*

**The Special Sabbath School Offering
is dedicated to the General Conference Canvassing Department**

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

1

Sabbath, January 5, 2013

The Son of God

“God is the Father of Christ; Christ is the Son of God. To Christ has been given an exalted position. He has been made equal with the Father. All the counsels of God are opened to His Son.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 268.

HIS PREEXISTENCE

1. Where do we find testimonies in the Scriptures concerning the preexistence of God’s Son? John 1:1, 2; Micah 5:2; Colossians 1:16.

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

“Christ, the Word, the only begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father—one in nature, in character, in purpose—the only being that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God. ‘His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.’ Isaiah 9:6.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 34.

2. What declarations confirm Jesus is God’s Son? Luke 3:22; Psalm 2:7; Hebrews 1:5.

“The Scriptures clearly indicate the relation between God and Christ, and they bring to view as clearly the personality and individuality of each.

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness

of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee? And again, I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son? Hebrews 1:1-5.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 268.

AN INCALCULABLE GIFT

3. How did God express His supreme love for fallen mankind? John 3:16; 1 John 4:9, 10, 14.

“We have everything we could ask to inspire us with faith and trust in God. In earthly courts, when a king would make his greatest pledge to assure men of his truth, he gives his child as a hostage, to be redeemed on the fulfillment of his promise; and behold what a pledge of the Father’s faithfulness; for when He would assure men of the immutability of His council, He gave His only-begotten Son to come to earth, to take the nature of man, not only for the brief years of life, but to retain his nature in the heavenly courts, an everlasting pledge of the faithfulness of God. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and love of God!” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 258.

THE ENEMY OF GOD’S SON

4. Just as Satan did not accept the authority of the Son of God in heaven, how did he continue his fight against Christ on earth, and why? Matthew 4:3, 6.

“But again he was filled with pride in his own glory. His desire for supremacy returned, and envy of Christ was once more indulged.... ‘Why,’ questioned this mighty angel, ‘should Christ have the supremacy? Why is He honored above Lucifer?’” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 36.

“If Christ’s confidence in God could be shaken, Satan knew that the victory in the whole controversy would be his. He could overcome Jesus. He hoped that under the force of despondency and extreme hunger, Christ would lose faith in His Father, and work a miracle in His own behalf. Had He done this, the plan of salvation would have been broken.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 119.

THE SON OF GOD ON EARTH

5. On what occasions did God reveal His kinship to Christ? Matthew 3:16, 17; 17:5.

“At the baptism and at the transfiguration the voice of God had been heard proclaiming Christ as His Son....

“The Saviour’s glance seems to penetrate heaven as He pours out His soul in prayer.... He asks for the witness that God accepts humanity in the person of His Son....

“Of the vast throng at the Jordan, few except John discerned the heavenly vision. Yet the solemnity of the divine Presence rested upon the assembly. The people stood silently gazing upon Christ. His form was bathed in the light that ever surrounds the throne of God. His upturned face was glorified as they had never before seen the face of man. From the open heavens a voice was heard saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’

“These words of confirmation were given to inspire faith in those who witnessed the scene, and to strengthen the Saviour for His mission. Notwithstanding that the sins of a guilty world were laid upon Christ, notwithstanding the humiliation of taking upon Himself our fallen nature, the voice from heaven declared Him to be the Son of the Eternal.”
—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 764, 111, 112.

6. To whom was it given to know and believe that Jesus was the Son of God? John 1:49; Matthew 16:15-17; 14:33.

“Jesus now put a second question, relating to the disciples themselves: ‘But whom say ye that I am?’ Peter answered, ‘Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ From the first, Peter had believed Jesus to be the Messiah....

“He waited not for kingly honors to crown his Lord, but accepted Him in His humiliation....

“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.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 411, 412.

CONDEMNED TO DIE

7. Having declared Himself the Son of God, what awaited Jesus? Matthew 26:63, 64; John 10:36; 19:7.

“To this appeal Christ could not remain silent. There was a time to be silent, and a time to speak. He had not spoken until directly questioned. He knew that to answer now would make His death certain....

“And so by the third condemnation of the Jewish authorities, Jesus was to die.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 706, 714.

“Satan hoped that such mockery and violence would call forth from the Son of God some complaint or murmur; or that He would manifest His divine power and wrench Himself from the grasp of the multitude, and that thus the plan of salvation might at last fail.”—*The Story of Redemption*, p. 213.

FOR MEDITATION

“Those who in derision uttered the words, ‘He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God,’ little thought that their testimony would sound down the ages. But although spoken in mockery, these words led men

to search the Scriptures as they had never done before. Wise men heard, searched, pondered, and prayed. There were those who never rested until, by comparing scripture with scripture, they saw the meaning of Christ's mission. Never before was there such a general knowledge of Jesus as when He hung upon the cross. Into the hearts of many who beheld the crucifixion scene, and who heard Christ's words, the light of truth was shining."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 749.

FOR PERSONAL STUDY

- 2 Peter 1:16-18
- John 12:28-30; 11:27; 5:36, 37

"He was equal with God, infinite and omnipotent.... He is the eternal, self-existent Son."—(*Manuscript 101*, 1897) *Evangelism*, p. 615.

"The Father wrought by His Son in the creation of all heavenly beings. 'By Him were all things created,... whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him.' Colossians 1:16."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 34.

* * *

2

Sabbath, January 12, 2013

The Son of Man

"The doctrine of the incarnation of Christ in human flesh is a mystery, 'even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations.' Colossians 1:26. It is the great and profound mystery of godliness. 'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.' John 1:14. Christ took upon Himself human nature, a nature inferior to His heavenly nature. Nothing so shows the wonderful condescension of God as this. He 'so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.' John 3:16."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 246, 247.

INCARNATION OF THE SON OF GOD

1. How was the Son of God able to become the Son of man? John 1:14; Hebrews 2:14; 10:5-7.

"Nearly two thousand years ago, a voice of mysterious import was heard in heaven, from the throne of God, 'Lo, I come.' 'Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me.... Lo, I come (in the volume of the Book it is written of Me,) to do Thy will, O God.' Hebrews 10:5-7. In these words is announced the fulfillment of the purpose that had been hidden from eternal ages. Christ was about to visit our world, and to become incarnate. He says, 'A body hast Thou prepared Me.' Had He appeared with the glory that was His with the Father before the world was, we could not have endured the

light of His presence. That we might behold it and not be destroyed, the manifestation of His glory was shrouded. His divinity was veiled with humanity—the invisible glory in the visible human form.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 23.

2. How was the incarnation of the Son of God announced? Matthew 1:21-23; Luke 1:30-35.

“Christ did not make believe take human nature; He did verily take it. He did in reality possess human nature. ‘As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same.’ Hebrews 2:14. He was the son of Mary; He was of the seed of David according to human descent. He is declared to be a man, even the Man Christ Jesus....

“Christ brought men and women power to overcome. He came to this world in human form, to live a man amongst men. He assumed the liabilities of human nature, to be proved and tried. In His humanity He was a partaker of the divine nature. In His incarnation He gained in a new sense the title of the Son of God. Said the angel to Mary, ‘The power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God’ (Luke 1:35). While the Son of a human being, He became the Son of God in a new sense. Thus He stood in our world—the Son of God, yet allied by birth to the human race.”—*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 247, 226, 227.

HIS SONSHIP

3. During His childhood, whom did Jesus recognize as His Father? Luke 2:49.

“With deep earnestness the mother of Jesus watched the unfolding of His powers, and beheld the impress of perfection upon His character. With delight she sought to encourage that bright, receptive mind. Through the Holy Spirit she received wisdom to cooperate with the heavenly agencies in the development of this child, who could claim only God as His Father....

“In the school of the rabbis they found Jesus. Rejoiced as they were, they could not forget their grief and anxiety. When He was with them again, the mother said, in words that implied reproof, ‘Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing.’

“‘How is it that ye sought Me?’ answered Jesus. ‘Wist ye not that I must be about My Father’s business?’ And as they seemed not to understand His words, He pointed upward. On His face was a light at which they wondered. Divinity was flashing through humanity.... She Mary knew that He had disclaimed kinship to Joseph, and had declared His Sonship to God.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 69, 81, 82.

4. As the Son of man, how did Jesus reveal His Sonship to God? Matthew 11:27; John 15:9, 10; 20:17.

“The Son of God came from heaven to make manifest the Father. ‘No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.’ John 1:18. ‘Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.’ Matthew 11:27. When one of the disciples made the request, ‘Show us the Father,’ Jesus answered, ‘Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?’ John 14:8, 9.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 11.

“By His humanity, Christ touched humanity; by His divinity, He lays hold upon the throne of God. As the Son of man, He gave us an example of obedience; as the Son of God, He gives us power to obey.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 24.

THE SON OF MAN, LORD OF THE SABBATH

5. How is the day of rest referred to in the Holy Scriptures? How did Jesus confirm that the Sabbath belongs to Him? Isaiah 58:13, first part; Matthew 12:8.

“‘Wherefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.’ These words are full of instruction and comfort. Because the Sabbath was made for man, it is the Lord’s day. It belongs to Christ. For ‘all things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.’ John 1:3. Since He made all things, He made the Sabbath. By Him it was set apart as a memorial of the work of creation. It points to Him as both the Creator and the Sanctifier. It declares that He who created all things in heaven and in earth, and by whom all things hold together, is the head of the church, and that by His power we are reconciled to God.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 288.

THE SON OF MAN FORGIVES AND CURES

6. How could the Son of man assert His power to forgive sin and heal the sick? Mark 2:10-12.

“Jesus came to ‘destroy the works of the devil.’ ‘In Him was life,’ and He says, ‘I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.’ He is ‘a quickening spirit.’ 1 John 3:8; John 1:4; 10:10; 1 Corinthians 15:45. And He still has the same life-giving power as when on earth He healed the sick, and spoke forgiveness to the sinner. He ‘forgiveth all thine iniquities,’ He ‘healeth all thy diseases.’ Psalm 103:3....

“The angels of God are ever passing from earth to heaven, and from heaven to earth. The miracles of Christ for the afflicted and suffering were wrought by the power of God through the ministration of the angels. And it is through Christ, by the ministration of His heavenly messengers, that every blessing comes from God to us. In taking upon Himself humanity, our Saviour unites His interests with those of the fallen sons and daughters of Adam, while through His divinity He grasps the throne of God. And thus Christ is the medium of communication of men with God, and of God with men.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 270, 143.

7. As the Son of man, how did Jesus perform the miracle of calming the tempest? What did the disciples recognize as they saw Him walking on the sea and calming the winds? Matthew 8:27; 14:32, 33; John 5:30, first part.

“But He rested not in the possession of almighty power. It was not as the ‘Master of earth and sea and sky’ that He reposed in quiet. That power He had laid down, and He says, ‘I can of Mine own self do nothing.’ John 5:30. He trusted in the Father’s might. It was in faith—faith in God’s love and care—that Jesus rested, and the power of that word which stilled the storm was the power of God.

“As Jesus rested by faith in the Father’s care, so we are to rest in the care of our Saviour.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 336.

FOR MEDITATION

“‘God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son.’ He gave Him not only to live among men, to bear their sins, and die their sacrifice. He gave Him to the fallen race. Christ was to identify Himself with the interests and needs of humanity. He who was one with God has linked Himself with the children of men by ties that are never to be broken. Jesus is ‘not ashamed to call them brethren’ (Hebrews 2:11); He is our Sacrifice, our Advocate, our Brother, bearing our human form before the Father’s throne, and through eternal ages one with the race He has redeemed—the Son of man. And all this that man might be uplifted from the ruin and degradation of sin that he might reflect the love of God and share the joy of holiness.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 14.

FOR PERSONAL STUDY

- Mark 2:28
- Matthew 9:6

* * *

3

Sabbath, January 19, 2013

The King of Glory

“‘My kingdom is not of this world,’ He said; ‘if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto Him, Art Thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth My voice.’”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 727.

1. How did the King of glory reveal His love for fallen humanity? Philippians 2:5-8.

“From His high position, Christ, the King of glory, the Majesty of heaven, saw the condition of men. He pitied human beings in their weakness and sinfulness, and came to this earth to reveal what God is to men. Leaving the royal courts, and clothing His divinity with humanity, He came to the world Himself, in our behalf to work out a perfect character. He did not choose His dwelling among the rich of the earth.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 185.

“The King of glory stooped low to take humanity. Rude and forbidding were His earthly surroundings. His glory was veiled, that the majesty of His outward form might not become an object of attraction. He shunned all outward display. Riches, worldly honor, and human greatness can never save a soul from death; Jesus purposed that no attraction of an earthly nature should call men to His side.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 43.

2. As a man, what did the King of glory become? Matthew 20:28; Luke 22:27; John 13:4, 5.

“‘But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.’ Again and again Christ had taught that true greatness is measured by moral worth. In the estimation of heaven, greatness of character consists in living for the welfare of our fellow men, in doing works of love and mercy. Christ the King of glory was a servant to fallen man....

“Laying aside the outer garment that would have impeded His movements, He took a towel, and girded Himself. With surprised interest the disciples looked on, and in silence waited to see what was to follow. ‘After that He poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded.’...

He had a full consciousness of His divinity; but He had laid aside His royal crown and kingly robes, and had taken the form of a servant. One of the last acts of His life on earth was to gird Himself as a servant, and perform a servant’s part.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 613, 644.

RECOGNIZED BY SOME AND DESPISED BY OTHERS

3. On what occasion was Jesus recognized as King of glory, and by whom? Luke 19:37, 38; Matthew 21:5; Mark 11:9, 10.

“He who has so long refused royal honors now comes to Jerusalem as the promised heir to David’s throne....

“Never before had the world seen such a triumphal procession....

“The blind whom He had restored to sight were leading the way. The dumb whose tongues He had loosed shouted the loudest hosannas. The cripples whom He had healed

bounded with joy, and were the most active in breaking the palm branches and waving them before the Saviour. Widows and orphans were exalting the name of Jesus for His works of mercy to them. The lepers whom He had cleansed spread their untainted garments in His path, and hailed Him as the King of glory. Those whom His voice had awakened from the sleep of death were in that throng. Lazarus, whose body had seen corruption in the grave, but who now rejoiced in the strength of glorious manhood, led the beast on which the Saviour rode.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 569, 572.

4. What did Jesus answer when Pilate asked him if He was a king? John 18:33, 36, 37.

“Jesus did not directly answer this question.... While He did not directly answer Pilate’s question, He plainly stated His own mission. He gave Pilate to understand that He was not seeking an earthly throne... Pilate therefore said unto Him, Art Thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth My voice.”

“Christ affirmed that His word was in itself a key which would unlock the mystery to those who were prepared to receive it. It had a self-commending power, and this was the secret of the spread of His kingdom of truth.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 726, 727.

THE KING OF GLORY RETURNS TO HEAVEN

5. After His ascension to heaven, how was Jesus received as King of glory? John 16:28; Psalm 24:7-10.

“Christ came to earth as God in the guise of humanity. He ascended to heaven as the King of saints. His ascension was worthy of His exalted character. He went as One mighty in battle, a conqueror, leading captivity captive. He was attended by the heavenly host, amid shouts and acclamations of praise and celestial song.” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 49.

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

THE KING OF GLORY WILL RETURN

6. How will the King of glory return to earth the second time? Revelation 19:11, 16.

“Then I saw Jesus lay off His priestly attire and clothe Himself with His most kingly robes. Upon His head were many crowns, a crown within a crown. Surrounded by the angelic host, He left heaven....

“His crown looked brilliant and glorious. It was a crown within a crown, seven in number.” —*Early Writings*, pp. 281, 53, 54.

“When Christ shall come to the earth again, not as a prisoner surrounded by a rabble will men see Him. They will see Him then as heaven’s King. Christ will come in His own glory, in the glory of His Father, and the glory of the holy angels. Ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of angels, the beautiful and triumphant sons of God, possessing surpassing loveliness and glory, will escort Him on His way. Then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations. Then every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him. In the place of a crown of thorns, He will wear a crown of glory—a crown within a crown. In place of that old purple kingly robe, He will be clothed in raiment of whitest white, ‘so as no fuller on earth can white them.’ Mark 9:3. And on His vesture and on His thigh a name will be written, ‘King of kings, and Lord of lords.’ Revelation 19:16.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 739.

7. What will be the privilege of the redeemed at the second coming of the King of glory? Matthew 25:31-34; 16:27; Revelation 22:12.

“But when Jesus comes, He confers immortality upon His people; and then He calls them to inherit the kingdom of which they have hitherto been only heirs....

“The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven,’ is about to be given to the heirs of salvation, and Jesus is to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords.’...

“Rapture unutterable thrills every heart, and each voice is raised in grateful praise: ‘Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.’ Revelation 1:5, 6.

“Then that voice, richer than any music that ever fell on mortal ear, is heard, saying: ‘Your conflict is ended.’ ‘Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 322, 613, 646.

FOR MEDITATION

“In that day the redeemed will shine forth in the glory of the Father and the Son. The angels, touching their golden harps, will welcome the King and His trophies of victory—those who have been washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. A song of triumph will peal forth, filling all heaven. Christ has conquered. He enters the heavenly courts, accompanied by His redeemed ones, the witnesses that His mission of suffering and sacrifice has not been in vain....”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 285, 286.

FOR PERSONAL STUDY

“There stood the Son of God, wearing the robe of mockery and the crown of thorns. Stripped to the waist, His back showed the long, cruel stripes, from which the blood flowed freely. His face was stained with blood, and bore the marks of exhaustion and pain; but never had it appeared more beautiful than now.... Every feature expressed gentleness and resignation and the tenderest pity for His cruel foes. In His manner there was no cowardly weakness, but the strength and dignity of long-suffering.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 735.

“Soon we shall witness the coronation of our King. Those whose lives have been hidden with Christ, those who on this earth have fought the good fight of faith, will shine forth with the Redeemer’s glory in the kingdom of God.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 287.

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4

Sabbath, January 26, 2013

Messiah and Saviour

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Acts 4:12.

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

1. **How does the Old Testament present the Redeemer? Job 19:25; Isaiah 59:20. How did the patriarchs know about His coming? Genesis 3:15.**

“He then made known to the angelic host that a way of escape had been made for lost man. He told them that He had been pleading with His Father, and had offered to give His life a ransom, to take the sentence of death upon Himself, that through Him man might find pardon; that through the merits of His blood, and obedience to the law of God, they could have the favor of God and be brought into the beautiful garden and eat of the fruit of the tree of life.” –*The Story of Redemption*, pp. 42, 43.

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

2. **Who were first informed of the Saviour’s coming to the earth? Luke 2:8-11.**

“In the fields where the boy David had led his flock, shepherds were still keeping watch by night. Through the silent hours they talked together of the promised Saviour and prayed for the coming of the King to David’s throne. ‘And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.’

“At these words, visions of glory fill the minds of the listening shepherds. The Deliverer has come to Israel!” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 47.

3. **Who recognized Jesus as the Saviour of the world and the Messiah? Luke 1:67-69; John 1:41; 4:42.**

“Andrew sought to impart the joy that filled his heart. Going in search of his brother Simon, he cried, ‘We have found the Messiah.’...

“Yet many received Him. In their new joy they said to the woman, ‘Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.’

“The Samaritans believed that the Messiah was to come as the Redeemer, not only of the Jews, but of the world.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 139, 192, 193.

SAVIOUR OF ALL MANKIND

4. For whom is Jesus the Saviour? 1 Timothy 1:15; Hebrews 7:25; Matthew 18:11.

“‘As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,’ even so was ‘the Son of man ... lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.’ John 3:14, 15. If you are conscious of your sins, do not devote all your powers to mourning over them, but look and live. Jesus is our only Saviour; and although millions who need to be healed will reject His offered mercy, not one who trusts in His merits will be left to perish. While we realize our helpless condition without Christ, we must not be discouraged; we must rely upon a crucified and risen Saviour. Poor, sin-sick, discouraged soul, look and live. Jesus has pledged His word; He will save all who come unto Him.”—*Gospel Workers* (1892), p. 413.

5. What great work did Jesus do as the Redeemer of the world? 1 Peter 2:24; Ephesians 1:5-7; Romans 3:24.

“Jesus became the world’s Redeemer, rendering perfect obedience to every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. He redeemed Adam’s disgraceful fall, uniting the earth, that had been divorced from God by sin, to the continent of heaven.”—(*Signs of the Times*, March 26, 1894) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1084.

“The Lord saw our fallen condition; He saw our need of grace, and because He loved our souls, He has given us grace and peace. Grace means favor to one who is undeserving, to one who is lost. The fact that we are sinners, instead of shutting us away from the mercy and love of God, makes the exercise of His love to us a positive necessity in order that we may be saved.”—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 347.

TO SAVE THEM FROM THEIR SINS

6. Christ came to save sinners, but what does He ask us to do with our sins? Matthew 1:21; 1 John 1:9; Proverbs 28:13.

“And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.’ ‘If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and

to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.’ The conditions of obtaining mercy from God are simple and reasonable. The Lord does not require us to do some grievous thing in order to gain forgiveness. 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. He that ‘confesseth and forsaketh’ his sin ‘shall have mercy.’ Proverbs 28:13.” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 552.

“He [Satan] has claimed ... that men can come to Christ, not to be saved from their sins but in their sins.” –*Faith and Works*, p. 90.

7. Just as the faithful ones expected the first coming of the Saviour and made it known to their fellowmen, what will the faithful ones do while waiting for His second coming? Philippians 3:20; 2 Corinthians 5:20; 2 Peter 2:9.

“A world is to be warned. Watch, wait, pray, work, and let nothing be done through strife and vainglory.... There is a great work to be done yet, and every effort possible must be made to reveal Christ as the sin-pardoning Saviour, Christ as the sin-bearer, Christ as the bright and morning star, and the Lord will give us favor before the world until our work is done.” –*Evangelism*, p. 65.

FOR MEDITATION

“Jesus said of the Old Testament Scriptures—and how much more is it true of the New—‘They are they which testify of Me,’ the Redeemer, Him in whom our hopes of eternal life are centered. John 5:39. Yes, the whole Bible tells of Christ. From the first record of creation—for ‘without Him was not anything made that was made’—to the closing promise, ‘Behold, I come quickly,’ we are reading of His works and listening to His voice. John 1:3; Revelation 22:12. If you would become acquainted with the Saviour, study the Holy Scriptures.” –*Steps to Christ*, p. 88.

FOR PERSONAL STUDY

- 1 Timothy 4:10.

“Jesus alone can cleanse us from all sin. He does not save us by law, neither will He save us in disobedience to law.” –*Faith and Works*, p. 95.

“God’s holy law is the only thing by which we can determine whether we are keeping His way or not. If we are disobedient, our characters are out of harmony with God’s moral rule of government, and it is stating a falsehood to say, ‘I am saved.’ No one is saved who is a transgressor of the law of God, which is the foundation of His government in heaven and in earth.” –*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 315.

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The Prince of Peace

“The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined...

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 11:1-5; 9:2-6.

THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

1. **What is the good news that Jesus proclaimed and that we have to make known? Following His message, what experience did believers make? Ephesians 2:17; 6:15.**

“‘With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them.’ Acts 4:33. Under their labors there were added to the church chosen men, who, receiving the word of life, consecrated their lives to the work of giving to others the hope that had filled their hearts with peace and joy.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 20.

“The gospel of Christ is the Good News of grace, or favor, by which man may be released from the condemnation of sin and enabled to render obedience to the law of God. The gospel points to the moral code as a rule of life. That law, by its demands for unevading obedience, is continually pointing the sinner to the gospel for pardon and peace.” —*Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 563.

2. **However, what did Jesus Himself declare? How is this to be understood? Matthew 10:34; Luke 12:52, 53.**

“Christ declared, ‘I came not to send peace, but a sword.’ Why? Because men would not receive the word of life. Because they warred against the message sent them to bring them joy and hope and life.

“We look upon the Jews as inexcusable because they rejected and crucified Christ. But today the messages that the Lord sends are often received in a manner similar to the way in which the Jews received Christ’s message. If the instruction of the Lord does not harmonize with the opinions of men, anger takes control of reason, and men play into the enemy’s hands by opposing the message that God sends. Satan uses them as sharp instruments to oppose the progress of truth.” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1089.

“He was now, upon a wider stage, entering on the conflict of His life. Though He was the Prince of Peace, His coming must be as the unsheathing of a sword.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 111.

3. If the gospel is a message of peace, why is it not received by all nations yearning for peace? John 3:19; 10:25-27.

“‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.’ Luke 2:14. There is a seeming contradiction between these prophetic declarations and the words of Christ: ‘I came not to send peace, but a sword.’ Matthew 10:34. But, rightly understood, the two are in perfect harmony. The gospel is a message of peace. Christianity is a system which, received and obeyed, would spread peace, harmony, and happiness throughout the earth. The religion of Christ will unite in close brotherhood all who accept its teachings. It was the mission of Jesus to reconcile men to God, and thus to one another. But the world at large are under the control of Satan, Christ’s bitterest foe. The gospel presents to them principles of life which are wholly at variance with their habits and desires, and they rise in rebellion against it. They hate the purity which reveals and condemns their sins, and they persecute and destroy those who would urge upon them its just and holy claims. It is in this sense—because the exalted truths it brings occasion hatred and strife—that the gospel is called a sword.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 46, 47.

PERFECT PEACE

4. What was the last legacy Jesus bequeathed to His disciples before leaving them? John 14:27.

“The peace that Christ calls His peace, and which He bequeathed to His disciples, is not a peace which prevents all divisions; but it is a peace which is given and enjoyed in the midst of divisions. The peace that the faithful defender of the cause of Christ has is the consciousness that he is doing the will of God and reflecting His glory in good works. It is an internal rather than an external peace. Without are wars and fightings through the opposition of avowed enemies, and the coldness and suspicion of those even who claim to be friends.”—*The Upward Look*, p. 220.

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

5. If we desire this peace, what do we have to do? Matthew 11:28, 29; Isaiah 26:3; Psalm 119:165.

“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*, p. 27.

6. Is it possible to lose this heavenly peace? How? In such a case, how can one find it again? Isaiah 59:1, 2; 1 John 2:1; Romans 5:1.

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

“The sense of sin has poisoned the springs of life. But Christ says, ‘I will take your sins; I will give you peace. I have bought you with My blood. You are Mine. My grace shall strengthen your weakened will; your remorse for sin I will remove.’ When temptations assail you, when care and perplexity surround you, when, depressed and discouraged, you are ready to yield to despair, look to Jesus, and the darkness that encompasses you will be dispelled by the bright shining of His presence.... Never feel that Christ is far away. He is always near. His loving presence surrounds you. Seek Him as One who desires to be found of you.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 85.

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

7. Are we among the peacemakers? If we are, what will be our experience? Matthew 5:9.

“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.

“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.

FOR MEDITATION

“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. 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*, pp. 304, 305.

- Isaiah 32:17.

“They are to ‘follow after the things which make for peace’ (Romans 14:19); but real peace can never be secured by compromising principle. And no man can be true to principle without exciting opposition. A Christianity that is spiritual will be opposed by the children of disobedience. But Jesus bade His disciples, ‘Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.’ Those who are true to God need not fear the power of men nor the enmity of Satan.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 356.

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6

Sabbath, February 9, 2013

Our Brother

“He who is ‘holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,’ is not ashamed to call us brethren. Hebrews 7:26; 2:11. In Christ the family of earth and the family of heaven are bound together. Christ glorified is our brother.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 25, 26.

JESUS’ BROTHERS

- 1. Who, according to the teachings of Jesus, are His brothers? Mark 3:31-35; Matthew 7:21; Galatians 3:26.**

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

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

THE LOVE OF OUR ELDER BROTHER

- 2. As our elder Brother, how did Jesus express His wonderful love for us? Philipians 2:7, 8; Hebrews 2:17.**

“If our salvation depended on our own efforts, we could not be saved; but it depends on the One who is behind all the promises. Our grasp on Him may seem feeble, but His love is that of an elder brother; so long as we maintain our union with Him, no one can pluck us out of His hand.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 552.

HIS FATHER, OUR FATHER

3. What assurance do we have that through Jesus we are accepted by the Father? Hebrews 2:11, 12.

“Jesus teaches us to call His Father our Father. He is not ashamed to call us brethren. Hebrews 2:11. So ready, so eager, is the Saviour’s heart to welcome us as members of the family of God, that in the very first words we are to use in approaching God He places the assurance of our divine relationship, ‘Our Father.’” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 103.

“In the apostasy, man alienated himself from God. The separation is wide and fearful; but Christ has made provision again to connect use with Himself. The power of evil is so identified with human nature that no man can overcome except by union with Christ. Through this union we receive moral and spiritual power. If we have the spirit of Christ we shall bring forth the fruit of righteousness, fruit that will honor and bless men, and glorify God.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 230.

4. On what occasion did Jesus refer to this special relationship with His disciples? Matthew 28:10; Mark 16:7.

“But Christ raised His hand, saying, Detain Me not; ‘for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God.’ And Mary went her way to the disciples with the joyful message....

“Christ’s first work on earth after His resurrection was to convince His disciples of His undiminished love and tender regard for them. To give them proof that He was their living Saviour, that He had broken the fetters of the tomb, and could no longer be held by the enemy death; to reveal that He had the same heart of love as when He was with them as their beloved Teacher, He appeared to them again and again. He would draw the bonds of love still closer around them. Go tell My brethren, He said, that they meet Me in Galilee.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 790, 793.

BECOMING MEMBERS OF THE HEAVENLY FAMILY

5. How can we become children of God and brethren of Jesus? John 1:12:13; 1 John 5:1, 2; Romans 8:14.

“But if you call God your Father you acknowledge yourselves His children, to be guided by His wisdom and to be obedient in all things, knowing that His love is change-

less. You will accept His plan for your life. As children of God, you will hold His honor, His character, His family, His work, as the objects of your highest interest. It will be your joy to recognize and honor your relation to your Father and to every member of His family. You will rejoice to do any act, however humble, that will tend to His glory or to the well-being of your kindred.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 105, 106.

“All who have been born into the heavenly family are in a special sense the brethren of our Lord. The love of Christ binds together the members of His family, and wherever that love is made manifest there the divine relationship is revealed.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 638.

6. What desire did Jesus express in His intercessory prayer addressed to His Father in our behalf? John 17:21, 24.

“The Lord desires His chosen servants to learn how to unite together in harmonious effort. It may seem to some that the contrast between their gifts and the gifts of a fellow laborer is too great to allow them to unite in harmonious effort; but when they remember that there are varied minds to be reached, and that some will reject the truth as it is presented by one laborer, only to open their hearts to God’s truth as it is presented in a different manner by another laborer, they will hopefully endeavor to labor together in unity. Their talents, however diverse, may all be under the control of the same Spirit. In every word and act, kindness and love will be revealed; and as each worker fills his appointed place faithfully, the prayer of Christ for the unity of His followers will be answered, and the world will know that these are His disciples.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 145.

CO-HEIRS WITH CHRIST

7. If we are the brethren of Jesus, what will be our inheritance? Galatians 3:29; Romans 8:17; Matthew 25:34.

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.’ What a precious privilege is this, that we may be sons and daughters of the Most High, heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 315.

“God loves His obedient children. He has a kingdom prepared, not for disloyal subjects, but for His children whom He has tested and tried in a world marred and corrupted by sin. As obedient children, we have the privilege of relationship with God. ‘If children,’ He says, ‘then heirs’ to an immortal inheritance.... Christ and His people are one.” — (*Letter 119*, 1897) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1077.

FOR MEDITATION

“Those who accept Christ as their personal Saviour are not left as orphans, to bear the trials of life alone. He receives them as members of the heavenly family; He bids them call His Father their Father. They are His ‘little ones,’ dear to the heart of God, bound to Him by the most tender and abiding ties....

“And if we do hold the relation of kinship to Him, with what tenderness should we regard those who are brethren and sisters of our Lord! Should we not be quick to recognize the claims of our divine relationship? Adopted into the family of God, should we not honor our Father and our kindred?” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 327.

FOR PERSONAL STUDY

“To those who receive Him He gives power to become the sons of God, that at last God may receive them as His, to dwell with Him throughout eternity. If during this life they are loyal to God, they will at last ‘see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads.’ Revelation 22:4. And what is the happiness of heaven but to see God? What greater joy could come to the sinner saved by the grace of Christ than to look upon the face of God and know Him as Father?” —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 421.

“God loves us as He loves His Son. This is what Jesus said in His last prayer for His disciples, Thou ‘hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me.’ John 17:23.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 104.

• Hebrews 1:2.

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7

Sabbath, February 16, 2013

The Good Shepherd

“‘He that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.’ Christ is both the door and the shepherd. He enters in by Himself. It is through His own sacrifice that He becomes the shepherd of the sheep. ‘To Him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear His voice: and He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him: for they know His voice.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 478.

PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE DIVINE SHEPHERD

1. How does Jesus present Himself? What is His mission? John 10:11.

“Christ, the great example for all ministers, likens Himself to a shepherd. ‘I am the good shepherd,’ He declares; ‘the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.’ ‘I am the good shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine. As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep.’ John 10:11, 14, 15.” —*Gospel Workers*, p. 181.

“‘Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again.’ That is, My Father has so loved you, that He even loves Me more for giving My life to redeem you. In becoming your substitute and surety, by surrendering My life, by taking your liabilities, your transgressions, I am endeared to My Father.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 483, 484.

2. Who prophesied in the Old Testament about the divine Shepherd? Isaiah 40:11; Psalm 23:1.

“This figure the prophet Isaiah had applied to the Messiah’s mission, in the comforting words, . . . ‘He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom.’ Isaiah 40:9-11. David had sung, ‘The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.’ Psalm 23:1. And the Holy Spirit through Ezekiel had declared: ‘I will set up one Shepherd over them, and He shall feed them.’ ‘I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick.’ ‘And I will make with them a covenant of peace.’ ‘And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen; . . . but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid.’ Ezekiel 34:23, 16, 25, 28.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 476, 477.

THE SHEPHERD AND DOOR OF THE SHEEPFOLD

3. How does Jesus, the divine Shepherd, explain that He is also the door to the fold? John 10:9.

“Christ is the door to the fold of God. Through this door all His children, from the earliest times, have found entrance. In Jesus, as shown in types, as shadowed in symbols, as manifested in the revelation of the prophets, as unveiled in the lessons given to His disciples, and in the miracles wrought for the sons of men, they have beheld ‘the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world’ (John 1:29), and through Him they are brought within the fold of His grace. Many have come presenting other objects for the faith of the world; ceremonies and systems have been devised by which men hope to receive justification and peace with God, and thus find entrance to His fold. But the only door is Christ, and all who have interposed something to take the place of Christ, all who have tried to enter the fold in some other way, are thieves and robbers.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 477, 478.

4. Is it encouraging to know that Jesus Christ knows His flock? Ezekiel 34:31; Isaiah 43:1; 49:16, first part.

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

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

5. If we go astray, what will the divine Shepherd do? Luke 15:4; 19:10.

“But in the parable of the lost sheep, Christ teaches that salvation does not come through our seeking after God but through God’s seeking after us. ‘There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way.’ Romans 3:11, 12. We do not repent in order that God may love us, but He reveals to us His love in order that we may repent....

“The sheep that has strayed from the fold is the most helpless of all creatures. It must be sought for by the shepherd, for it cannot find its way back. So with the soul that has wandered away from God; he is as helpless as the lost sheep, and unless divine love had come to his rescue he could never find his way to God.... He makes every effort to find that one lost sheep...At last his effort is rewarded; the lost is found....” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 189, 187, 188).

6. Just as the shepherd who finds his lost sheep utters a joyful cry, what happens in heaven when a lost soul is found? Luke 15:7.

“‘Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.’ Luke 15:6. So when a wanderer is found by the Great Shepherd of the sheep, heavenly angels respond to the Shepherd’s note of joy. When the lost is found, heaven and earth unite in thanksgiving and rejoicing. ‘Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.’ Luke 15:7.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 339.

LOOKING FOR THE LOST SHEEP

7. The purpose of Jesus is to gather His flock. Are we ready to labor with Him to look for other sheep as well—for the lost and those who have strayed? What message can we give them? John 10:16; Isaiah 56:8.

“How many of the wandering ones have you, reader, sought for and brought back to the fold? When you turn from those who seem unpromising and unattractive, do you realize that you are neglecting the souls for whom Christ is seeking? At the very time when you turn from them, they may be in the greatest need of your compassion. In every assembly for worship, there are souls longing for rest and peace. They may appear to be living careless lives, but they are not insensible to the influence of the Holy Spirit. Many among them might be won for Christ.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 191.

“If Christ left the ninety and nine, that He might seek and save the one lost sheep, can we be justified in doing less? Is not a neglect to work even as Christ worked, to sacrifice as He sacrificed, a betrayal of sacred trusts, an insult to God?” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 22.

“Are you, who have this example before you, cooperating with Him who is seeking to save the lost? Are you co-laborers with Christ? Can you not for His sake endure suffering, sacrifice, and trial? There is opportunity for doing good to the souls of the youth and the erring. If you see one whose words or attitude shows that he is separated from God, do not blame him. It is not your work to condemn him, but come close to his side to give him help. Consider the humility of Christ, and His meekness and lowliness, and work as He worked, with a heart full of sanctified tenderness.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 125.

FOR PERSONAL STUDY

“Let us remember that Jesus knows us individually and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He knows the wants of each of His creatures and reads the hidden, unspoken grief of every heart. If one of the little ones for whom He died is injured, He sees it and calls the offender to account. Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He cares for His feeble, sickly, wandering sheep. He knows them all by name. The distress of every sheep and every lamb of His flock touches His heart of sympathizing love, and the cry for aid reaches His ear.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 345.

“Thank God, He has presented to our imagination no picture of a sorrowful shepherd returning without the sheep. The parable does not speak of failure but of success and joy in the recovery. Here is the divine guarantee that not even one of the straying sheep of God’s fold is overlooked, not one is left unsuccored. Every one that will submit to be ransomed, Christ will rescue from the pit of corruption and from the briars of sin.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 188.

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8

Sabbath, February 23, 2013

The Lamb of God

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

TYPE OF THE LAMB OF GOD

- 1. When was the Lamb of God first announced and by what type? Genesis 3:15; 4:4; Exodus 29:38, 39.**

“The sacrificial offerings were ordained by God to be to man a perpetual reminder and a penitential acknowledgment of his sin and a confession of his faith in the promised Redeemer. They were intended to impress upon the fallen race the solemn truth that it was sin that caused death. To Adam, the offering of the first sacrifice was a most painful ceremony. His hand must be raised to take life, which only God could give. It was the first time he had ever witnessed death, and he knew that had he been obedient to God, there would have been no death of man or beast. As he slew the innocent victim, he trembled at the thought that his sin must shed the blood of the spotless Lamb of God. This scene gave him a deeper and more vivid sense of the greatness of his transgression, which nothing but the death of God’s dear Son could expiate....

“He brought the slain victim, the sacrificed life, thus acknowledging the claims of the law that had been transgressed. Through the shed blood he looked to the future sacrifice, Christ dying on the cross of Calvary; and trusting in the atonement that was there to be made, he had the witness that he was righteous, and his offering accepted.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 68, 72.

2. What parallel can be established between the sacrifice asked of Abraham and the Lamb of God? Genesis 22:7-16.

“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....

“Abraham learned of God the greatest lesson ever given to mortal. His prayer that he might see Christ before he should die was answered. He saw Christ; he saw all that mortal can see, and live. By making an entire surrender, he was able to understand the vision of Christ, which had been given him. He was shown that in giving His only-begotten Son to save sinners from eternal ruin, God was making a greater and more wonderful sacrifice than ever man could make.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 112, 469.

THE PASSOVER LAMB

3. At the right time, who would become the Passover Lamb? Exodus 12:5, 6, 11; 1 Corinthians 5:7.

“In the upper chamber of a dwelling at Jerusalem, Christ was sitting at table with His disciples. They had gathered to celebrate the Passover. The Saviour desired to keep this feast alone with the twelve. He knew that His hour was come; He Himself was the true paschal lamb, and on the day the Passover was eaten He was to be sacrificed. He was about to drink the cup of wrath; He must soon receive the final baptism of suffering.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 642.

“The Passover was to be both commemorative and typical, not only pointing back to the deliverance from Egypt, but forward to the greater deliverance which Christ was to accomplish in freeing His people from the bondage of sin. The sacrificial lamb represents ‘the Lamb of God,’ in whom is our only hope of salvation. Says the apostle, ‘Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.’ 1 Corinthians 5:7.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 277.

4. What changes would the sacrifice of the true Passover Lamb bring about? When did all typical sacrifices end? Luke 22:13-20; 23:45, 46.

“Christ was standing at the point of transition between two economies and their two great festivals. He, the spotless Lamb of God, was about to present Himself as a sin offering, that He would thus bring to an end the system of types and ceremonies that for four thousand years had pointed to His death. As He ate the Passover with His disciples, He instituted in its place the service that was to be the memorial of His great sacrifice. The national festival of the Jews was to pass away forever. The service which Christ established was to be observed by His followers in all lands and through all ages.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 652.

“The ceremonies connected with the services of the temple, prefiguring Christ in types and shadows, were taken away at the time of the crucifixion, because on the cross type met antitype in the death of the true and perfect offering, the Lamb of God.” —(*MS 72*, 1901) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1115.

THE LAMB OF GOD OFFERS HIMSELF

5. How were the words of the prophet Isaiah fulfilled? Isaiah 53:4-7.

“Caiaphas was desperate. One last resort remained; Christ must be forced to condemn Himself. The high priest started from the judgment seat, his face contorted with passion, his voice and demeanor plainly indicating that were it in his power he would strike down the prisoner before him. ‘Answerest Thou nothing?’ he exclaimed; ‘what is it which these witness against Thee?’...”

“Jesus held His peace. ‘He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth.’ Isaiah 53:7....

“One stain upon His Jesus’ human life, one failure of His humanity to endure the terrible test, and the Lamb of God would have been an imperfect offering, and the redemption of man a failure. But He who by a command could bring the heavenly host to His aid—He who could have driven that mob in terror from His sight by the flashing forth of His divine majesty—submitted with perfect calmness to the coarsest insult and outrage.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 706, 734.

6. What characterized both the sacrificial lamb and the Lamb of God? Leviticus 22:20; 1 Peter 1:19.

“God expressly directed that every offering presented for the service of the sanctuary should be ‘without blemish.’ Exodus 12:5. The priests were to examine all animals brought as a sacrifice, and were to reject every one in which a defect was discovered. Only an offering ‘without blemish’ could be a symbol of His perfect purity who was to offer Himself as ‘a lamb without blemish and without spot.’” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 352.

“The offerings presented to the Lord were to be without blemish. These offerings represented Christ, and from this it is evident that Jesus Himself was free from physical deformity. He was the ‘lamb without blemish and without spot.’ 1 Peter 1:19. His physical structure was not marred by any defect; His body was strong and healthy. And throughout His lifetime He lived in conformity to nature’s laws. Physically as well as spiritually, He was an example of what God designed all humanity to be through obedience to His laws.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 50, 51.

THE LAMB OF GOD ON MOUNT ZION

7. Where do we again find the Lamb of God? What will make it possible for one to be among the elect at His side? Revelation 14:1-5.

“John saw a Lamb on Mount Zion, and with Him 144,000 having His Father’s name written in their foreheads. They bore the signet of heaven. They reflected the image of God. They were full of the light and the glory of the Holy One. If we would have the image and superscription of God upon us, we must separate ourselves from all iniquity. We must forsake every evil way, and then we must trust our cases in the hands of Christ. While we are working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, God will work in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure.” —(*Review and Herald*, March 19, 1889)

“We need not wait till we are translated to follow Christ. God’s people may do this here below. We shall follow the Lamb of God in the courts above only if we follow Him here. Following Him in heaven depends on our keeping His commandments now. We are not to follow Christ fitfully or capriciously, only when it is for our advantage.” —(*Review and Herald*, April 12, 1898) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 978.

FOR MEDITATION

“Let the repenting sinner fix his eyes upon ‘the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world’ (John 1:29); and by beholding, he becomes changed. His fear is turned to joy, his doubts to hope. Gratitude springs up. The stony heart is broken. A tide of love sweeps into the soul. Christ is in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life. When we see Jesus, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, working to save the lost, slighted, scorned, derided, driven from city to city till His mission was accomplished; when we behold Him in Gethsemane, sweating great drops of blood, and on the cross dying in agony—when we see this, self will no longer clamor to be recognized. Looking unto Jesus, we shall be ashamed of our coldness, our lethargy, our self-seeking. We shall be willing to be anything or nothing, so that we may do heart service for the Master. We shall rejoice to bear the cross after Jesus, to endure trial, shame, or persecution for His dear sake.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 439, 440.

FOR PERSONAL STUDY

“In the temple the morning and the evening sacrifice daily pointed to the Lamb of God; yet even here was no preparation to receive Him. The priests and teachers of the nation knew not that the greatest event of the ages was about to take place.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 44.

“The ram offered in the place of Isaac represented the Son of God, who was to be sacrificed in our stead. When man was doomed to death by transgression of the law of God, the Father, looking upon His Son, said to the sinner, ‘Live: I have found a ransom.’” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 154.

“While the people were assembling at Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, He, the antitypical Lamb, by a voluntary act set Himself apart as an oblation. It would be needful for His church in all succeeding ages to make His death for the sins of the world a subject of deep thought and study....

“The lamb representing Christ had been brought to be slain.... All is terror and confusion. The priest is about to slay the victim; but the knife drops from his nerveless hand, and the lamb escapes. Type has met antitype in the death of God’s Son. The great sacrifice has been made. The way into the holiest is laid open. A new and living way is prepared for all.... There is now an end to all sacrifices and offerings for sin.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 571, 756, 757.

“The lamb was to be prepared whole, not a bone of it being broken: so not a bone was to be broken of the Lamb of God, who was to die for us. John 19:36. Thus was also represented the completeness of Christ’s sacrifice.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 277.

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9

Sabbath, March 2, 2013

Our Great High Priest

“Our great High Priest completed the sacrificial offering of Himself when He suffered without the gate. Then a perfect atonement was made for the sins of the people. Jesus is our Advocate, our High Priest, our Intercessor.... Type met antitype in the death of Christ, the Lamb slain for the sins of the world. The great High Priest has made the only sacrifice that will be of any value.” —(*MS 128*, 1897) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 913.

SET APART FOR THE PRIESTHOOD

1. Who appointed Jesus as the great High Priest? Hebrews 5:5, 6, 9, 10

“Christ glorified not Himself in being made High Priest. God gave Him His appointment to the priesthood. He was to be an example to all the human family. He qualified Himself to be, not only the representative of the race, but their Advocate, so that every soul if he will may say, I have a Friend at court. He is a High Priest that can be touched with the feelings of our infirmities.” —(*MS 101*, 1897) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 930.

2. On what basis was the new covenant established under which Jesus became man's great High Priest forever? Hebrews 8:5, 6; 7:21, 22.

"Though this covenant was made with Adam and renewed to Abraham, it could not be ratified until the death of Christ. It had existed by the promise of God since the first intimation of redemption had been given; it had been accepted by faith; yet when ratified by Christ, it is called a new covenant. The law of God was the basis of this covenant, which was simply an arrangement for bringing men again into harmony with the divine will, placing them where they could obey God's law....

"The 'new covenant' was established upon 'better promises'—the promise of forgiveness of sins and of the grace of God to renew the heart and bring it into harmony with the principles of God's law."—*God's Amazing Grace*, pp. 133, 136.

3. Although tempted as we are, how did our great High Priest emerge from his conflict with sin? Having already made certain experiences, what is He able to do? Hebrews 4:15; 2:18; 7:26.

"Jesus cares for each one as though there were not another individual on the face of the earth. As Deity He exerts mighty power in our behalf, while as our Elder Brother He feels for all our woes. The Majesty of heaven held not Himself aloof from degraded, sinful humanity. We have not a high priest who is so high, so lifted up, that He cannot notice us or sympathize with us, but one who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 346, 347.

"... Christ, the great High Priest, pleading His blood before the Father in the sinner's behalf, bears upon His heart the name of every repentant, believing soul. Says the psalmist, 'I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me.' Psalm 40:17."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 351.

IN THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY

4. When did Jesus enter the heavenly sanctuary to carry out His office as High Priest? Mark 16:19; Hebrews 8:1, 2.

"After His ascension, our Saviour was to begin His work as our High Priest. Says Paul, 'Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.' Hebrews 9:24.... Christ at His ascension appeared in the presence of God to plead His blood in behalf of penitent believers,...

"The blood of Christ, while it was to release the repentant sinner from the condemnation of the law, was not to cancel the sin; it would stand on record in the sanctuary until the final atonement; ...

"In the great day of final award ... by virtue of the atoning blood of Christ, the sins of all the truly penitent will be blotted from the books of heaven."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 357.

- 5. After His ascension, our great High Priest began His ministry in the holy place and then moved into the most holy place in 1844. In addition to pleading the merits of His blood for repentant sinners, what other work did He start that is soon to be ended? 2 Timothy 4:1; 1 Peter 4:17.**

“We are in the great day of atonement, when our sins are, by confession and repentance, to go beforehand to judgment....

“In 1844 our great High Priest entered the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary, to begin the work of the investigative judgment. The cases of the righteous dead have been passing in review before God. When that work shall be completed, judgment is to be pronounced upon the living. How precious, how important are these solemn moments! Each of us has a case pending in the court of heaven. We are individually to be judged according to the deeds done in the body.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 125.

OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST’S MINISTRY

- 6. Why else is it so important that Jesus be our great High Priest? Revelation 8:3, 4.**

“The religious services, the prayers, the praise, the penitent confession of sin ascend from true believers as incense to the heavenly sanctuary, but passing through the corrupt channels of humanity, they are so defiled that unless purified by blood, they can never be of value with God. They ascend not in spotless purity, and unless the Intercessor, who is at God’s right hand, presents and purifies all by His righteousness, it is not acceptable to God. All incense from earthly tabernacles must be moist with the cleansing drops of the blood of Christ. He holds before the Father the censer of His own merits, in which there is no taint of earthly corruption. He gathers into this censer the prayers, the praise, and the confessions of His people, and with these He puts His own spotless righteousness. Then, perfumed with the merits of Christ’s propitiation, the incense comes up before God wholly and entirely acceptable. Then gracious answers are returned.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 344.

- 7. For how long will Jesus intercede for sinners in the sanctuary? What will happen when He ceases to intercede for His people? Revelation 16:7; 22:11; 6:17.**

“When the third angel’s message closes, mercy no longer pleads for the guilty inhabitants of the earth.... Then Jesus ceases His intercession in the sanctuary above. He lifts His hands and with a loud voice says, ‘It is done;... Christ has made the atonement for His people and blotted out their sins....

“Now, while our great High Priest is making the atonement for us, we should seek to become perfect in Christ....

“When Christ ceases His intercession in the sanctuary, the unmingled wrath threatened against those who worship the beast and his image and receive his mark (Revelation 14:9, 10), will be poured out.” —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 613, 614, 623, 627.

FOR MEDITATION

“Those who are living upon the earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above are to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator. Their robes must be spotless, their characters must be purified from sin by the blood of sprinkling. Through the grace of God and their own diligent effort they must be conquerors in the battle with evil. While the investigative judgment is going forward in heaven, while the sins of penitent believers are being removed from the sanctuary, there is to be a special work of purification, of putting away of sin, among God’s people upon earth.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 425.

FOR PERSONAL STUDY

- Hebrews 5:9.
- Ephesians 1:20.

“As the high priest laid aside his gorgeous pontifical robes, and officiated in the white linen dress of the common priest, so Christ took the form of a servant, and offered sacrifice, Himself the priest, Himself the victim.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 25.

“The sacrifices and offerings of the Mosaic ritual were ever pointing toward a better service, even a heavenly. The earthly sanctuary was ‘a figure for the time then present,’ in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices; its two holy places were ‘patterns of things in the heavens;’ for Christ, our great High Priest, is today ‘a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.’ Hebrews 9:9, 23; 8:2.” —*Prophecies and Kings*, p. 684.

“All can now approach God through the merits of Christ. It is because the veil has been rent that men can draw nigh to God. They need not depend on priest or ceremonial sacrifice. Liberty is given to all to go directly to God through a personal Saviour.” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 155.

“Oh, that all may see that everything in obedience, in penitence, in praise and thanksgiving, must be placed upon the glowing fire of the righteousness of Christ. The fragrance of this righteousness ascends like a cloud around the mercy seat.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 344.

“Christ is the fragrance, the holy incense which makes your petition acceptable to the Father.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 332.

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Intercessor and Substitute

“The world’s Redeemer possessed the power to draw men to Himself, to quiet their fears, to dispel their gloom, to inspire them with hope and courage, to enable them to believe in the willingness of God to receive them through the merits of the divine Substitute. As subjects of the love of God we ever should be grateful that we have a mediator, an advocate, an intercessor in the heavenly courts, who pleads in our behalf before the Father.”—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 258.

MEDIATOR BETWEEN MEN AND GOD

1. At what point did Jesus become the Mediator between God and man? 1 Timothy 2:5.

“Christ was appointed to the office of Mediator from the creation of God, set up from everlasting to be our substitute and surety. Before the world was made, it was arranged that the divinity of Christ should be enshrouded in humanity.”—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 250.

“Since the sin of our first parents, there has been no direct communication between God and man. The Father has given the world into the hands of Christ, that through His mediatorial work He may redeem man and vindicate the authority and holiness of the law of God. All the communion between heaven and the fallen race has been through Christ.”—*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 43.

OUR INTERCESSOR

2. What makes it possible for prayer to be answered? John 16:26, 27; 15:16.

“... To pray in the name of Jesus is something more than a mere mention of that name at the beginning and the ending of a prayer. It is to pray in the mind and spirit of Jesus, while we believe His promises, rely upon His grace, and work His works.”—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 100, 101.

“Christ is the connecting link between God and man. He has promised His personal intercession. He places the whole virtue of His righteousness on the side of the suppliant. He pleads for man, and man, in need of divine help, pleads for himself in the presence of God, using the influence of the One who gave His life for the life of the world. As we acknowledge before God our appreciation of Christ’s merits, fragrance is given to our intercessions. As we approach God through the virtue of the Redeemer’s merits, Christ places us close by His side, encircling us with His human arm, while with His divine arm He grasps the throne of the Infinite. He puts His merits, as sweet incense, in the censer in our hands, in order to encourage our petitions. He promises to hear and answer our supplications.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 178.

3. What prayer contains one of the most beautiful intercessions of Jesus for His followers? John 17:7-9, 17, 20, 24.

“This chapter contains the intercessory prayer offered by Christ to His Father just before His trial and crucifixion. This prayer is a lesson regarding the intercession that the Saviour would carry on within the veil, when His great sacrifice in behalf of men, the offering of Himself, should have been completed. Our Mediator gave His disciples this illustration of His ministration in the heavenly sanctuary in behalf of all who will come to Him in meekness and humility, emptied of all selfishness, and believing in His power to save.” —(*MS 29*, 1906) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1145.

4. Knowing that He is alive to intercede for us and is ever ready to grant His promises, how can we appropriate for ourselves by faith the blessings contained in Jesus’ prayer? Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:34.

“... He is in heaven as our advocate, to make intercession for us. We must always take comfort and hope as we think of this. He is thinking of those who are subject to temptations in this world. He thinks of us individually, and knows our every necessity. When tempted, just say, He cares for me, He makes intercession for me, He loves me, He has died for me. I will give myself unreservedly to Him. We grieve the heart of Christ when we go mourning over ourselves as though we were our own savior. No; we must commit the keeping of our souls to God as unto a faithful Creator. He ever lives to make intercession for the tried, tempted ones.” —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 391.

SUBSTITUTE AND SURETY

5. How, in behalf of men, does God face the claims of His holy law? Romans 8:3, 4.

“God could not alter one jot or tittle of His holy law to meet man in his fallen condition; for this would reflect discredit upon the wisdom of God in making a law by which to govern heaven and earth. But God could give His only-begotten Son to become man’s Substitute and Surety, to suffer the penalty that was merited by the transgressor, and to impart to the repentant soul His perfect righteousness. Christ became the sinless sacrifice for a guilty race, making men prisoners of hope, so that through repentance toward God because they had broken His holy law, and through faith in Christ as their Substitute, Surety, and righteousness, they might be brought back to loyalty to God and to obedience to His holy law.” —*Faith and Works*, pp. 117, 118.

6. What was necessary for Jesus to become man’s perfect Substitute and Surety? How can one receive the benefits of His intercessory service? John 15:10; 6:38, 39; Hebrews 5:9.

“Man’s substitute and surety must have man’s nature, a connection with the human family whom he was to represent, and, as God’s ambassador, he must partake of the divine nature, have a connection with the Infinite, in order to manifest God to the world, and be a mediator between God and man.” –*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 257.

“In the intercessory prayer of Jesus with His Father, He claimed that He had fulfilled the conditions which made it obligatory upon the Father to fulfill His part of the contract made in heaven, with regard to fallen man. He prayed: ‘I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do. That is, He had wrought out a righteous character on earth as an example for men to follow. And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.’” –(*Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 3, p. 260) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1146.

THE TIME OF PROBATION WILL END

7. Will Christ’s intercession continue indefinitely? Why is it so important to repent, to forsake our sins now, and to receive Christ’s forgiveness and healing? Hebrews 3:14, 15; 2 Corinthians 6:2.

“God will soon vindicate His justice before the universe. His justice requires that sin shall be punished; His mercy grants that sin shall be pardoned through repentance and confession. Pardon can come only through His only begotten Son; Christ alone can expiate sin—and then only when sin is repented of and forsaken. Man has severed his connection with God, and his soul has become palsied and strengthless by the deadly poison of sin. But there was a time when the proclamation sounded through the heavenly courts, I have found a ransom! A divine life is given as man’s ransom; One equal with the Father has become man’s substitute.” –*The Upward Look*, p. 49.

FOR MEDITATION

“Everyone who will break from the slavery and service of Satan, and will stand under the blood-stained banner of Prince Immanuel will be kept by Christ’s intercessions. Christ, as our Mediator, at the right hand of the Father, ever keeps us in view, for it is as necessary that He should keep us by His intercessions as that He should redeem us with His blood. If He lets go His hold of us for one moment, Satan stands ready to destroy. Those purchased by His blood, He now keeps by His intercession.” –(*MS 73*, 1893) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1078.

FOR PERSONAL STUDY

- John 17:1-3, 14-16

“As soon as there was sin, there was a Saviour. Christ knew that He would have to suffer, yet He became man’s substitute. As soon as Adam sinned, the Son of God presented Himself as surety for the human race, with just as much power to avert the doom pronounced upon the guilty as when He died upon the cross of Calvary.” –*The Faith I Live By*, p. 75.

”As Jesus moved out of the most holy place, I heard the tinkling of the bells upon His garment; and as He left, a cloud of darkness covered the inhabitants of the earth. There was then no mediator between guilty man and an offended God. While Jesus had been standing between God and guilty man, a restraint was upon the people; but when He stepped out from between man and the Father, the restraint was removed and Satan had entire control of the finally impenitent. It was impossible for the plagues to be poured out while Jesus officiated in the sanctuary; but as His work there is finished, and His intercession closes, there is nothing to stay the wrath of God, and it breaks with fury upon the shelterless head of the guilty sinner, who has slighted salvation and hated reproof. In that fearful time, after the close of Jesus’ mediation, the saints were living in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor. Every case was decided, every jewel numbered.” —*Early Writings*, p. 280.

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11

Sabbath, March 16, 2013

Witness, Judge, and Advocate

“The world has been committed to Christ, and through Him has come every blessing from God to the fallen race. He was the Redeemer before as after His incarnation. As soon as there was sin, there was a Saviour. He has given light and life to all, and according to the measure of light given, each is to be judged. And He who has given the light, He who has followed the soul with tenderest entreaty, seeking to win it from sin to holiness, is in one its advocate and judge. From the opening of the great controversy in heaven, Satan has maintained his cause through deception; and Christ has been working to unveil his schemes and to break his power. It is He who has encountered the deceiver, and who through all the ages has been seeking to wrest the captives from his grasp, who will pass judgment upon every soul.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 210.

JESUS AS THE FAITHFUL WITNESS

1. What very significant name of Christ is found in Revelation 1:5 and Revelation 3:14?

“One thing will certainly be understood from the study of Revelation —that the connection between God and His people is close and decided. John writes, ‘Grace be unto you, and peace from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before His throne: and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth.’” —*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 18, pp. 24, 25.

2. In what manner does the Faithful Witness address the church of Laodicea? Revelation 3:15, 17.

“The message to the Laodicean church is applicable to all who have had great light and many opportunities, and yet have not appreciated them.” –*The Faith I Live By*, p. 306.

“The True Witness says of a cold, lifeless, Christless church, ‘I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth.’ Revelation 3:15, 16. Mark the following words: ‘Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.’ Revelation 3:17. Here is represented a people who pride themselves in their possession of spiritual knowledge and advantages. But they have not responded to the unmerited blessings that God has bestowed upon them...” –*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 357.

3. What counsel does the Faithful Witness give? Revelation 3:18.

“Heed the counsel of the True Witness. Buy gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and eyesalve that thou mayest see. Make some effort. These precious treasures will not drop upon us without some exertion on our part. We must buy—“be zealous and repent” of our lukewarm state. We must be awake to see our wrongs, to search for our sins, and to zealously repent of them.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 142.

“Let us consider our condition before God; let us heed the counsel of the True Witness. Let none of us be filled with prejudice, as were the Jews, that light may not come into our hearts. Let it not be necessary for Christ to say of us as He did of them, ‘Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life.’ John 5:40.” –*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 358.

JESUS AS JUDGE

4. How did Christ become Judge of all mankind? John 5:22, 26, 27, 30.

“And God ‘hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man.’ Because He has tasted the very dregs of human affliction and temptation, and understands the frailties and sins of men; because in our behalf He has victoriously withstood the temptations of Satan, and will deal justly and tenderly with the souls that His own blood has been poured out to save—because of this, the Son of man is appointed to execute the judgment.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 210.

“Christ humbled Himself to stand at the head of humanity, to meet the temptations and endure the trials that humanity must meet and endure. He must know what humanity has to meet from the fallen foe, that He might know how to succor those who are tempted.

“And Christ has been made our Judge. The Father is not the Judge. The angels are not. He who took humanity upon Himself, and in this world lived a perfect life, is to judge us. He only can be our Judge.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 185.

5. First of all, what was the purpose of Jesus for mankind? In reality, how does each individual judge himself? John 3:17, 18; 12:47.

“But Christ’s mission was not for judgment, but for salvation. ‘God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.’ John 3:17. And before the Sanhedrin Jesus declared, ‘He that heareth My word, and believeth Him that sent Me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life.’ John 5:24, R.V....

“In their attitude toward Christ, all would show on which side they stood. And thus everyone passes judgment on himself....

“‘Hereafter,’ said Jesus, ‘shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.’ In these words Christ presented the reverse of the scene then taking place. He, the Lord of life and glory, would be seated at God’s right hand. He would be the judge of all the earth, and from His decision there could be no appeal. Then every secret thing would be set in the light of God’s countenance, and judgment be passed upon every man according to his deeds.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 210, 211, 57, 707, 708.

JESUS OUR ADVOCATE

6. As sinners accused by Satan before God, whom can we choose to defend us? 1 John 2:1; Romans 8:34.

“Satan stands at our right hand to accuse us, and our advocate stands at God’s right hand to plead for us. He has never lost a case that has been committed to him. We may trust in our advocate; for he pleads his own merits in our behalf.” —(*Review and Herald*, August 15, 1893) *Our High Calling*, p. 49.

“In all our acts of true devotion, we fix our eye of faith upon our Advocate, who is standing between man and the eternal throne, waiting to meet our every effort, and by His Spirit assist us to a more perfect knowledge of God.” —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 123.

7. How can the repentant sinner approach the throne of grace? Hebrews 4:16.

“You are to come to God as a repenting sinner, through the name of Jesus, the divine Advocate, to a merciful, forgiving Father, believing that He will do just as He has promised. Let those who desire the blessing of God knock, and wait at the throne of mercy, with firm assurance, saying, ‘For thou, O Lord, hast said, ‘For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.’ The Lord longs to have those who seek after God believe in Him who is able to do all things....

“It is only through Jesus, whom the Father gave for the life of the world, that the sinner may find access to God. Jesus alone is our Redeemer, our Advocate and Mediator; in Him is our only hope for pardon, peace, and righteousness. It is by virtue of the blood of Christ that the sin-stricken soul can be restored to soundness. Christ is the fragrance, the holy incense which makes your petition acceptable to the Father.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 328, 329, 332, 333.

FOR MEDITATION

“By His spotless life, His obedience, His death on the cross of Calvary, Christ interceded for the lost race. And now, not as a mere petitioner does the Captain of our salvation intercede for us, but as a Conqueror claiming His victory. His offering is complete, and as our Intercessor He executes His self-appointed work, holding before God the censer containing His own spotless merits and the prayers, confessions, and thanksgiving of His people. Perfumed with the fragrance of His righteousness, these ascend to God as a sweet savor. The offering is wholly acceptable, and pardon covers all transgression.” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 174.

FOR PERSONAL STUDY

“The message to the church of the Laodiceans is a startling denunciation, and is applicable to the people of God at the present time.

“... While those addressed are flattering themselves that they are in an exalted spiritual condition, the message of the True Witness breaks their security by the startling denunciation of their true condition of spiritual blindness, poverty, and wretchedness. The testimony, so cutting and severe, cannot be a mistake, for it is the True Witness who speaks, and His testimony must be correct.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 252, 253.

* * *

12

Sabbath, March 23, 2013

Christ Our Righteousness

“Righteousness is obedience to the law. The law demands righteousness, and this the sinner owes to the law; but he is incapable of rendering it. The only way in which he can attain to righteousness is through faith. By faith he can bring to God the merits of Christ, and the Lord places the obedience of His Son to the sinner’s account. Christ’s righteousness is accepted in place of man’s failure, and God receives, pardons, justifies, the repentant, believing soul, treats him as though he were righteous, and loves him as He loves His Son. This is how faith is accounted righteousness; and the pardoned soul goes on from grace to grace, from light to a greater light.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 367.

THE LAW BRINGS THE SINNER TO CHRIST

- 1. Knowing that our own righteousness is as filthy garment, what brings us to Christ and His righteousness? Isaiah 64:6; Galatians 3:24-26; Titus 3:5-7.**

“As the sinner looks to the law, his guilt is made plain to him, and pressed home to his conscience, and he is condemned. His only comfort and hope is found in looking to

the cross of Calvary. As he ventures upon the promises, taking God at His word, relief and peace come to his soul. He cries, ‘Lord, Thou hast promised to save all who come unto Thee in the name of Thy Son. I am a lost, helpless, hopeless soul. Lord, save, or I perish.’ His faith lays hold on Christ, and he is justified before God.” –*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 365, 356.

“The law condemns, but it cannot pardon the transgressor. The penitent, believing soul does not look to the law for justification, but to Christ, the atoning sacrifice, who is able to impart his righteousness to the sinner, and make his efforts acceptable before God.” –*Signs of the Times*, August 5, 1889.

VITAL FAITH

2. What is necessary for the sinner to appropriate Christ’s righteousness? Romans 4:3-5; 3:24-26; Ephesians 2:8.

“Faith is the condition upon which God has seen fit to promise pardon to sinners; not that there is any virtue in faith whereby salvation is merited, but because faith can lay hold of the merits of Christ, the remedy provided for sin. Faith can present Christ’s perfect obedience instead of the sinner’s transgression and defection. When the sinner believes that Christ is his personal Saviour, then according to His unfailing promises, God pardons his sin and justifies him freely. The repentant soul realizes that his justification comes because Christ, as his Substitute and Surety, has died for him, is his atonement and righteousness.” –*Faith and Works*, pp. 100, 101.

3. Who must work in us so we may be transformed to stand before God in the spotless garment of Christ’s imputed righteousness? Psalm 15:1, 2; Romans 12:2; John 16:7, 8.

“In order to meet the requirements of the law, our faith must grasp the righteousness of Christ, accepting it as our righteousness. Through union with Christ, through acceptance of His righteousness by faith, we may be qualified to work the works of God, to be co-laborers with Christ. If you are willing to drift along with the current of evil, and do not cooperate with the heavenly agencies in restraining transgression in your family, and in the church, in order that everlasting righteousness may be brought in, you do not have faith. Faith works by love and purifies the soul. Through faith the Holy Spirit works in the heart to create holiness therein; but this cannot be done unless the human agent will work with Christ. We can be fitted for heaven only through the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart; for we must have Christ’s righteousness as our credentials if we would find access to the Father. In order that we may have the righteousness of Christ, we need daily to be transformed by the influence of the Spirit, to be a partaker of the divine nature. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to elevate the taste, to sanctify the heart, to ennoble the whole man.” –*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 374.

4. What will faith produce in the justified believer? James 2:24, 17; Colossians 1:10.

“Grace is unmerited favor, and the believer is justified without any merit of his own, without any claim to offer to God. He is justified through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, who stands in the courts of heaven as the sinner’s substitute and surety. But while he is justified because of the merit of Christ, he is not free to work unrighteousness. Faith works by love and purifies the soul. Faith buds and blossoms and bears a harvest of precious fruit. Where faith is, good works appear. The sick are visited, the poor are cared for, the fatherless and the widows are not neglected, the naked are clothed, the destitute are fed. Christ went about doing good, and when men are united with Him, they love the children of God, and meekness and truth guide their footsteps. The expression of the countenance reveals their experience, and men take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus and learned of Him. Christ and the believer become one, and His beauty of character is revealed in those who are vitally connected with the Source of power and love. Christ is the great depository of justifying righteousness and sanctifying grace.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 398.

5. What kind of faith produces justification? Romans 6:16-18; 1 Peter 2:16.

“But while God can be just, and yet justify the sinner through the merits of Christ, no man can cover his soul with the garments of Christ’s righteousness while practicing known sins, or neglecting known duties. God requires the entire surrender of the heart, before justification can take place; and in order for man to retain justification, there must be continual obedience, through active, living faith that works by love and purifies the soul....

“In order for man to be justified by faith, faith must reach a point where it will control the affections and impulses of the heart; and it is by obedience that faith itself is made perfect....

“The apostle says, ‘With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.’ Romans 10:10. No one can believe with the heart unto righteousness, and obtain justification by faith, while continuing the practice of those things which the Word of God forbids, or while neglecting any known duty.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 366, 396.

REPENTANCE

6. What is associated with faith in receiving Christ’s righteousness? Acts 20:21; 13:38, 39; Ezekiel 18:31.

“Repentance, as well as forgiveness, is the gift of God through Christ. It is through the influence of the Holy Spirit that we are convicted of sin, and feel our need of pardon. None but the contrite are forgiven; but it is the grace of God that makes the heart penitent. He is acquainted with all our weaknesses and infirmities, and he will help us.” —*Gospel Workers* (1892), p. 414; *Faith and Works*, p. 38.

“No repentance is genuine that does not work reformation. The righteousness of Christ is not a cloak to cover unconfessed and unforsaken sin; it is a principle of life that transforms the character and controls the conduct. Holiness is wholeness for God; it is the entire surrender of heart and life to the indwelling of the principles of heaven.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 555, 556.

PEACE WITH GOD

7. What does the sinner experience when he is justified by the merits of Jesus? Romans 5:1, 2; Isaiah 32:17.

“We have a living Saviour. He is not in Joseph’s new tomb; He is risen from the dead and has ascended on high as a Substitute and Surety for every believing soul. ‘Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ Romans 5:1. The sinner is justified through the merits of Jesus, and this is God’s acknowledgment of the perfection of the ransom paid for man. That Christ was obedient even unto the death of the cross is a pledge of the repenting sinner’s acceptance with the Father. Then shall we permit ourselves to have a vacillating experience of doubting and believing, believing and doubting? Jesus is the pledge of our acceptance with God. We stand in favor before God, not because of any merit in ourselves, but because of our faith in ‘the Lord our righteousness.’” —*Faith and Works*, p. 107.

FOR MEDITATION

“He lived on earth amid trials and temptations such as we have to meet. He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ’s character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned....

“So we have nothing in ourselves of which to boast. We have no ground for self-exaltation. Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and in that wrought by His Spirit working in and through us.” —*Steps to Christ*, pp. 62, 63.

FOR PERSONAL STUDY

- Revelation 19:8
- Ephesians 2:10

“It was impossible for the sinner to keep the law of God, which was holy, just, and good; but this impossibility was removed by the impartation of the righteousness of Christ to the repenting, believing soul. The life and death of Christ in behalf of sinful man were for the purpose of restoring the sinner to God’s favor, through imparting to him the righteousness that would meet the claims of the law and find acceptance with the Father.” —*Faith and Works*, p. 118.

“Justification is a full, complete pardon of sin. The moment a sinner accepts Christ by faith, that moment he is pardoned. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to him, and he is no more to doubt God’s forgiving grace.

“There is nothing in faith that makes it our saviour. Faith cannot remove our guilt. Christ is the power of God unto salvation to all them that believe. The justification comes through the merits of Jesus Christ. He has paid the price for the sinner’s redemption. Yet it is only through faith in His blood that Jesus can justify the believer.” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1071.

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Please read the Missionary Report from Arab Countries on page 51.

13

Sabbath, March 30, 2013

The Bridegroom

“In view of the event of Christ’s soon coming, we must be vigilantly working to prepare our own souls, to keep our own lamps trimmed and burning, and to urge upon others the necessity of getting ready for the coming of the Bridegroom. Watching and working must go together; faith and works must be united, or our characters will not be symmetrical and well-balanced, perfect in Christ Jesus.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 138, 139.

JOHN THE BAPTIST, FRIEND OF THE BRIDEGROOM

1. Who introduced the Bridegroom and in what terms? John 1:29; 3:27-29.

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

“John represented himself as the friend who acted as a messenger between the betrothed parties, preparing the way for the marriage. When the bridegroom had received his bride, the mission of the friend was fulfilled. He rejoiced in the happiness of those whose union he had promoted.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 112, 179.

2. Would the Bridegroom remain with His disciples? Matthew 9:15; Luke 9:51; John 14:2, 3.

“He said, ‘when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.’ When they should see their Lord betrayed and crucified, the disciples would mourn and fast. In His last words to them in the upper chamber, He said, ‘A little while, and ye shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see Me. Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.’ John 16:19, 20.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 277.

3. When the Bridegroom was taken away? Where did He go? Mark 16:19; Acts 7:55, 56; Hebrews 9:12.

“The time had come for Christ to ascend to His Father’s throne. As a divine conqueror He was about to return with the trophies of victory to the heavenly courts.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 829.

“The ministration of the priest throughout the year in the first apartment of the sanctuary, ‘within the veil’ which formed the door and separated the holy place from the outer court, represents the work of ministration upon which Christ entered at His ascension.... So did Christ plead His blood before the Father in behalf of sinners, and present before Him also, with the precious fragrance of His own righteousness, the prayers of penitent believers.... Thither the faith of Christ’s disciples followed Him as He ascended from their sight....

For eighteen centuries this work of ministration continued in the first apartment of the sanctuary. The blood of Christ, pleaded in behalf of penitent believers, secured their pardon and acceptance with the Father....”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 420, 421.

THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING

4. What happened at the beginning of the Advent Movement as the seventh angel began to sound his trumpet? How is the wedding represented? What parable refers to this event? Revelation 11:15; Matthew 25:1-13.

“So Christ had only completed one part of His work as our intercessor, to enter upon another portion of the work, and He still pleaded His blood before the Father in behalf of sinners....

“Christ had come, not to the earth, as they expected, but, as foreshadowed in the type, to the most holy place of the temple of God in heaven....

“The proclamation, ‘Behold, the Bridegroom cometh,’ in the summer of 1844, led thousands to expect the immediate advent of the Lord. At the appointed time the Bridegroom came, not to the earth, as the people expected, but to the Ancient of Days in heaven, to the marriage, the reception of His kingdom. ‘They that were ready went in with Him

to the marriage: and the door was shut.’ They were not to be present in person at the marriage; for it takes place in heaven, while they are upon the earth. The followers of Christ are to ‘wait for their Lord, when He will return from the wedding.’ Luke 12:36. But they are to understand His work, and to follow Him by faith as He goes in before God. It is in this sense that they are said to go in to the marriage.” —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 429, 424, 427.

THE BRIDE AND THE GUESTS

5. What is said about the bride and the guests? Revelation 21:9, 10; 19:9.

“In the parable, when the bridegroom came, ‘they that were ready went in with him to the marriage.’ The coming of the bridegroom, here brought to view, takes place before the marriage. The marriage represents the reception by Christ of His kingdom. The Holy City, the New Jerusalem, which is the capital and representative of the kingdom, is called ‘the bride, the Lamb’s wife.’ Said the angel to John: ‘Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife.’ ‘He carried me away in the spirit,’ says the prophet, ‘and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.’ Revelation 21:9, 10. Clearly, then, the bride represents the Holy City, and the virgins that go out to meet the bridegroom are a symbol of the church. In the Revelation the people of God are said to be the guests at the marriage supper. Revelation 19:9. If guests, they cannot be represented also as the bride. Christ, as stated by the prophet Daniel, will receive from the Ancient of Days in heaven, ‘dominion, and glory, and a kingdom;’ He will receive the New Jerusalem, the capital of His kingdom, ‘prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.’ Daniel 7:14; Revelation 21:2.” —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 426, 427.

THE WEDDING FEAST

6. When will the Bridegroom come to take the saints with Him to the wedding supper of the Lamb? How will He be attired? Revelation 19:16; Matthew 24:44.

“Then I saw Jesus, who had been ministering before the ark containing the ten commandments, throw down the censer. He raised His hands, and with a loud voice said, ‘It is done.’...”

“Every case had been decided for life or death. While Jesus had been ministering in the sanctuary, the judgment had been going on for the righteous dead, and then for the righteous living. Christ had received His kingdom, having made the atonement for His people and blotted out their sins. The subjects of the kingdom were made up. The marriage of the Lamb was consummated. And the kingdom, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, was given to Jesus and the heirs of salvation, and Jesus was to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords.” —*Early Writings*, pp. 279, 280.

“The coming of the bridegroom was at midnight—the darkest hour. So the coming of Christ will take place in the darkest period of this earth’s history.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 414.

7. What is said about those to whom it will be granted to partake of the marriage supper of the Lamb? Revelation 19:9; Ephesians 5:27.

“By the king’s examination of the guests at the feast is represented a work of judgment. The guests at the gospel feast are those who profess to serve God, those whose names are written in the book of life....

“By the wedding garment in the parable is represented the pure, spotless character which Christ’s true followers will possess. To the church it is given ‘that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white,’ ‘not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.’ Revelation 19:8; Ephesians 5:27. The fine linen, says the Scripture, ‘is the righteousness of saints.’ Revelation 19:8. It is the righteousness of Christ, His own unblemished character, that through faith is imparted to all who receive Him as their personal Saviour....

“Only the covering which Christ Himself has provided can make us meet to appear in God’s presence. This covering, the robe of His own righteousness, Christ will put upon every repenting, believing soul. ‘I counsel thee,’ He says, ‘to buy of Me ... white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear.’ Revelation 3:18.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 310, 311.

FOR MEDITATION

“We are to give to men the last call to the gospel feast, the last invitation to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 64.

“Those who wait for the Bridegroom’s coming are to say to the people, ‘Behold your God.’ The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love. The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 415, 416.

FOR PERSONAL STUDY

“Having received the kingdom, He will come in His glory, as King of kings and Lord of lords, for the redemption of His people, who are to ‘sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob,’ at His table in His kingdom (Matthew 8:11; Luke 22:30), to partake of the marriage supper of the Lamb.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 426.

* * *

Missionary Report from Arab Countries

To be read on Sabbath, March 30, 2013

The Special Sabbath School Offering will be gathered on Sabbath, April 6, 2013

In Biblical times, countries in the Middle East had the great privilege of seeing the hand of God leading His people, particularly when they left Egypt and entered the promised land under His mighty, miracle-working power. Among Biblical references to the Arab countries is 2 Chronicles 9:14, which told about the kings of Arabia recognizing Solomon's wisdom and God's power and bringing gifts to Jerusalem. "And all the kings of Arabia and governors of the country brought gold and silver to Solomon."

Through the passing years, and especially since the seventh century A.D., the light of God's truth has been obscured by the Muslim powers, which cruelly persecuted the Christians, almost completely destroying them. Today very few Christians live in most Arab countries.

Nevertheless these countries stretch over a wide region extending from the Atlantic Ocean on the west to the Arabian Sea on the east, and from the Mediterranean Sea on the north to the Horn of Africa and the Indian Ocean on the south. This vast territory has a population of approximately 340 million people in some twenty-two countries covering North Africa and the Middle East. Many of them have Arabic as one of their official languages.

By God's grace, the message of the Reform Movement has reached the first souls in this challenging region. In 2010 the first door opened in Sudan through the outreach of the General Conference website. Contact was established by email, and students from Sudan visited the missionary school in Kenya, after which the first baptisms took place and the church was established in Sudan under the leadership of Pastors Parmenas Shirima and Sevith Moyo.

In February 2012 God opened another door through the General Conference website, this time in Yemen. Ahmed, a young man who was interested in the present truth, requested materials for assistance in developing the Christian faith in Yemen. In consideration of the limitations of Christianity in that country, study materials were sent and arrangements were made for this young man to visit the seminar organized for workers in Ethiopia in April 2012. The Lord worked in a wonderful manner in the life of Ahmed, and he made the decision to follow the truth he learned. He immediately devoted his talents to translating the Principles of Faith, Church Manual, and Sabbath School Lessons for distribution to other Christians in Yemen.

Ahmed is helping to spread the message of truth not just in Yemen but also to friends and acquaintances in Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and other Arab coun-

tries. In addition, the Lord led another person in Somalia to contact the General Conference through the website and request spiritual help.

In spite of our human limitations, God is working through His Spirit and opening doors. This constitutes a call for His people to participate in penetrating the dense darkness by giving generous offerings to support those who are willing to risk their lives for Christ and His truth. Financial assistance is needed to produce publications in Arabic and to develop health centers. This will allow the right arm of the three angels' messages, health reform, to reach souls who would otherwise be held back by the restrictions to Christianity imposed in these countries. A seminar is planned to help the truth reach Arab Christians who are seeking divine truth.

May God impress each heart to give generously and thus support the work of present truth in reaching faithful souls in the Arab countries. Also, please pray for those servants of God who risk their lives every day so the gospel truth can be proclaimed.

—Pablo Hunger
Secretary of the General Conference

SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

for the First Half 2013

KNOWING JESUS BETTER

Part 2

**The Special Sabbath School Offering
is dedicated to Arab Countries**

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

14

Sabbath, April 6, 2013

The Sun of Righteousness

“He whose heart has responded to the divine touch will be seeking for that which will increase his knowledge of God, and will refine and elevate the character. As a flower turns to the sun, that the bright rays may touch it with tints of beauty, so will the soul turn to the Sun of Righteousness, that heaven’s light may beautify the character with the graces of the character of Christ.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 468.

THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS ENLIGHTENS MAN PROGRESSIVELY

1. How is the Sun of Righteousness revealed? What is His purpose? 2 Corinthians 4:6; Luke 1:78, 79.

“The Sun of Righteousness did not burst upon the world in splendor, to dazzle the senses with His glory. It is written of Christ, ‘His going forth is prepared as the morning.’ Hosea 6:3. Quietly and gently the daylight breaks upon the earth, dispelling the darkness and waking the world to life. So did the Sun of Righteousness arise, ‘with healing in His wings.’ Malachi 4:2.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 32.

“As the sunbeams penetrate to the remotest corners of the earth, so does the light of the Sun of Righteousness shine upon every soul.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 464.

2. What will those who seize the rays of the Sun of Righteousness do? Philipians 2:15; Daniel 12:3.

“He who draws nigh to Christ need not try to shine. As he beholds the Saviour, he catches the divine rays of light from the Sun of Righteousness, and he cannot help shining. The light that is in him shines forth in clear, bright rays, in words and works of righteousness. Christ’s grace dwells in him richly, and heaven’s light shines through him. He honors Christ by complete obedience. He is stimulated to more vigorous action in the cause of

God as he imparts that which the Lord gives him. He is a light bearer to the world, shedding light on those who are in the darkness of error.”—*The Upward Look*, p. 322.

“While Christ is dwelling in the heart it is impossible to conceal the light of His presence, or for that light to grow dim. On the contrary, it will grow brighter and brighter as day by day the mists of selfishness and sin that envelop the soul are dispelled by the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 134.

THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS’ BRIGHT BEAMS

3. How will the Sun of Righteousness aid us in the study of the Holy Scriptures? John 14:26; 16:13.

“We need the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit in order to discern the truths in God’s word. The lovely things of the natural world are not seen until the sun, dispelling the darkness, floods them with its light. So the treasures in the word of God are not appreciated until they are revealed by the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness.

“The Holy Spirit, sent from heaven by the benevolence of infinite love, takes the things of God and reveals them to every soul that has an implicit faith in Christ. By His power the vital truths upon which the salvation of the soul depends are impressed upon the mind, and the way of life is made so plain that none need err therein. As we study the Scriptures, we should pray for the light of God’s Holy Spirit to shine upon the word, that we may see and appreciate its treasures.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 113.

4. Why do we have to open our souls to the Sun of Righteousness? Psalm 51:12; 2 Corinthians 7:1.

“Every room in the soul temple has become more or less defiled, and needs cleansing. The cobwebbed closet of conscience is to be entered. The windows of the soul are to be closed earthward and thrown wide open heavenward that the bright beams of the Sun of righteousness may have free access. The memory is to be refreshed by Bible principles. The mind is to be kept clear and pure that it may distinguish between good and evil. As you repeat the prayer Christ taught His disciples, and then strive to answer it in the daily life, the Holy Spirit will renew the mind and heart and will give you strength to carry out high and holy purposes.”—(*MS 24*, 1901) *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 1, pp. 327, 328.

“Blessed and beneficent are the rays of light from the Sun of Righteousness who is now pouring His enlightening, healing beams upon everyone who will open the windows of the soul heavenward.”—*The Upward Look*, p. 257.

5. How does the Sun of Righteousness affect the formation of one’s character? 2 Corinthians 3:18.

“As the mind dwells upon Christ, the character is molded after the divine similitude. The thoughts are pervaded with a sense of His goodness, His love. We contemplate His character, and thus He is in all our thoughts. His love encloses us. If we gaze even a

moment upon the sun in its meridian glory, when we turn away our eyes the image of the sun will appear in everything upon which we look.

“Thus it is when we behold Jesus; everything we look upon reflects His image, the Sun of Righteousness. We cannot see anything else, or talk of anything else. His image is imprinted upon the eye of the soul, and affects every portion of our daily life, softening and subduing our whole nature. By beholding, we are conformed to the divine similitude, even the likeness of Christ. To all with whom we associate we reflect the bright and cheerful beams of His righteousness. We have become transformed in character; for heart, soul, mind, are irradiated by the reflection of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. Here again there is the realization of a personal, living influence dwelling in our hearts by faith.”
—*Messages to Young People*, p. 160.

HEALING UNDER THE BENEFICIAL EFFECTS OF THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

6. More than the sun as a healing agency, what can be said about the Sun of Righteousness? Malachi 4:2, first part; Psalm 103:2-4.

“When the gospel is received in its purity and power, it is a cure for the maladies that originated in sin. The Sun of Righteousness arises, ‘with healing in His wings.’ Malachi 4:2. Not all this world bestows can heal a broken heart, or impart peace of mind, or remove care, or banish disease. Fame, genius, talent—all are powerless to gladden the sorrowful heart or to restore the wasted life. The life of God in the soul is man’s only hope.

“The love which Christ diffuses through the whole being is a vitalizing power. Every vital part—the brain, the heart, the nerves—it touches with healing. By it the highest energies of the being are roused to activity. It frees the soul from the guilt and sorrow, the anxiety and care, that crush the life forces. With it come serenity and composure. It implants in the soul, joy that nothing earthly can destroy—joy in the Holy Spirit—health-giving, life-giving joy.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 115.

7. Like the sun behind the clouds, are we always able to see the light of the Sun of righteousness? Psalm 102:1, 2; 27:9; 6:2, 3.

“The time will never come when the shadow of Satan will not be cast athwart our pathway. Thus the enemy seeks to hide the light shining from the Sun of Righteousness. But our faith should pierce this shadow.”—*Gospel Workers*, pp. 265, 266.

“When you are deeply shadowed, it is because Satan has interposed himself between you and the bright rays of the Sun of righteousness. In times of trouble the brightness is eclipsed, and we do not understand why the assurance seems to be withdrawn. We are led to look at self and the shadow of the cross, and this prevents us from seeing the consolation there is for us. We complain of the way and withdraw the hand from the hand of Christ. But sometimes God’s favor breaks suddenly upon the soul, and the gloom is dispelled. Let us live in the sunlight of the cross of Calvary. Let us no longer dwell in the shadow, complaining of our sorrows, for this only deepens our trouble.”—*Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 811.

“Christ is pleased with His followers when they show that, though human, they are partakers of the divine nature. They are not statues, but living men and women. Their hearts, refreshed by the dews of divine grace, open and expand to the Sun of Righteousness. The light that shines upon them they reflect upon others in works that are luminous with the love of Christ.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 153.

“Christians are Christ’s jewels, bought with an infinite price. They are to shine brightly for Him, shedding forth the light of His loveliness. And ever they are to remember that all the luster that Christian character possesses is received from the Sun of Righteousness.” —*The Upward Look*, p. 372.

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15

Sabbath, April 13, 2013

The Way, the Truth, and the Life

“There is only one true religion, only one way to heaven; only one light to illuminate the way as the pilgrims press on. As we follow on to know the Lord, we shall acknowledge at every step that Christ is the Light of the world, that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; and we shall find that the path that He bids us follow is ‘as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.’ Proverbs 4:18.” —*The Upward Look*, p. 233.

THE WAY

1. How did Jesus refer to Himself in response to a question of His disciples? John 14:6.

“There are not many ways to heaven. Each one may not choose his own way. Christ says, ‘I am the way: . . . no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.’ Since the first gospel sermon was preached, when in Eden it was declared that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head, Christ had been uplifted as the way, the truth, and the life. He was the way when Adam lived, when Abel presented to God the blood of the slain lamb, representing the blood of the Redeemer. Christ was the way by which patriarchs and prophets were saved. He is the way by which alone we can have access to God.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 663.

2. Why is it important to follow that unique path? Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5, 6.

“God is approached through Jesus Christ, the Mediator, the only way through which He forgives sins. God cannot forgive sins at the expense of His justice, His holiness, and His truth. But He does forgive sins and that fully. There are no sins He will not forgive in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the sinner’s only hope, and if he rests here in sincere faith, he is sure of pardon and that full and free. There is only one channel and that is accessible to all, and through that channel a rich and abundant forgiveness awaits the penitent, contrite soul and the darkest sins are forgiven.” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 912, 913.

THE TRUTH

3. Who is the foundation of all truth? John 14:6; 18:37; 1:14.

“Those who claim to be lovers of truth can afford to be meek and lowly of heart, as was the Great Teacher. Those who have been diligently working in the mines of God’s Word, and have discovered the precious ore in the rich veins of truth, in the divine mysteries that have been hidden for ages, will exalt the Lord Jesus, the Source of all truth, by revealing in their characters the sanctifying power of what they believe. Jesus and His grace must be enshrined in the inner sanctuary of the soul. Then He will be revealed in words, in prayer, in exhortation, in the presentation of sacred truth, for this is the great secret of spiritual success.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 405.

4. Who can instruct and guide us to remain in the truth? John 15:26; 16:13; 1 John 5:6.

“The Holy Spirit exalts and glorifies the Saviour. It is His office to present Christ, the purity of His righteousness, and the great salvation that we have through Him. Jesus says, ‘He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you.’ John 16:14. The Spirit of truth is the only effectual teacher of divine truth. How must God esteem the human race, since He gave His Son to die for them and appoints His Spirit to be man’s teacher and continual guide!” —*Steps to Christ*, p. 91.

“‘When He the Spirit of truth is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.’ The preaching of the word will be of no avail without the continual presence and aid of the Holy Spirit. This is the only effectual teacher of divine truth. Only when the truth is accompanied to the heart by the Spirit will it quicken the conscience or transform the life.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 671, 672.

5. When Jesus, the Truth, lives in the Christian, how is this revealed? Ephesians 5:9; 1 John 3:18, 19.

“When the truth of God is an abiding principle in the heart, it will be like a living spring. Attempts may be made to repress it, but it will gush forth in another place; it is there and cannot be repressed. The truth in the heart is a wellspring of life. It refreshes the weary and restrains vile thought and utterance.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 600, 601.

6. In whom is also the precious energy of life? John 1:1-4; 5:26; 1 John 5:11.

“‘In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.’ John 1:4. It is not physical life that is here specified, but immortality, the life which is exclusively the property of God. The Word, who was with God, and who was God, had this life. Physical life is something which each individual receives. It is not eternal or immortal; for God, the Life-giver, takes it again. Man has no control over his life. But the life of Christ was unborrowed. No one can take this life from Him. ‘I lay it down of myself’ (John 10:18), He said. In Him was life, original, unborrowed, underived. This life is not inherent in man. He can possess it only through Christ. He cannot earn it; it is given him as a free gift if he will believe in Christ as His personal Saviour. ‘This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.’ John 17:3. This is the open fountain of life for the world.”—(*Signs of the Times*, February 13, 1912) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1130.

“Jesus declared, ‘I am the resurrection, and the life.’ In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived. ‘He that hath the Son hath life.’ The divinity of Christ is the believer’s assurance of eternal life.”—*Evangelism*, p. 616; *The Faith I Live By*, p. 187.

7. When the heavenly Prince gave His life for sinners, was He going to lose it? What is God’s free gift to the repentant sinner? John 10:17, 18; 20:31; Romans 6:23.

“When the voice of the mighty angel was heard at Christ’s tomb, saying, Thy Father calls Thee, the Saviour came forth from the grave by the life that was in Himself. Now was proved the truth of His words, ‘I lay down My life, that I might take it again. . . . I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.’ . . .

“To the believer, Christ is the resurrection and the life. In our Saviour the life that was lost through sin is restored; for He has life in Himself to quicken whom He will. He is invested with the right to give immortality. The life that He laid down in humanity, He takes up again, and gives to humanity.

“... The life is hid with Christ in God, and ‘when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.’ Colossians 3:4.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 785-787.

FOR MEDITATION

“But in vain are men’s dreams of progress, in vain all efforts for the uplifting of humanity, if they neglect the one Source of hope and help for the fallen race. ‘Every good gift and every perfect gift’ (James 1:17) is from God. There is no true excellence of character apart from Him. And the only way to God is Christ. He says, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.’ John 14:6.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 21.

“The Comforter is called ‘the Spirit of truth.’ His work is to define and maintain the truth. He first dwells in the heart as the Spirit of truth, and thus He becomes the Comforter. There is comfort and peace in the truth, but no real peace or comfort can be found in falsehood. It is through false theories and traditions that Satan gains his power over the mind. By directing men to false standards, he misshapes the character. Through the Scriptures the Holy Spirit speaks to the mind, and impresses truth upon the heart. Thus He exposes error, and expels it from the soul. It is by the Spirit of truth, working through the word of God, that Christ subdues His chosen people to Himself.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 671.

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16

Sabbath, April 20, 2013

The Bread of Life

“The knowledge that comes from God is the bread of life. It is the leaves of the tree of life which are for the healing of the nations. The current of spiritual life thrills the soul as the words of Christ are believed and practiced. Thus it is that we are made one with Christ. The experience that was weak and feeble becomes strong. It is eternal life to us if we hold the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end.

“All truth is to be received as the life of Jesus. Truth cleanses us from all impurity, and prepares the soul for Christ’s presence. Christ is formed within, the hope of glory.” —*The Upward Look*, p. 224.

THE SHOWBREAD

1. What did the showbread symbolize in the sanctuary services? Exodus 25:30.

“The showbread was kept ever before the Lord as a perpetual offering. Thus it was a part of the daily sacrifice. It was called showbread, or ‘bread of the presence,’ because it was ever before the face of the Lord. It was an acknowledgment of man’s dependence upon God for both temporal and spiritual food, and that it is received only through the mediation of Christ. God had fed Israel in the wilderness with bread from heaven, and they were still dependent upon His bounty, both for temporal food and spiritual blessings. Both the manna and the showbread pointed to Christ, the living Bread, who is ever in the presence of God for us.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 354.

THE LIVING BREAD

2. What did Christ call Himself when people were interested to follow Him to obtain temporal food? John 6:35, 51.

“The giver of the manna was standing among them. It was Christ Himself who had led the Hebrews through the wilderness, and had daily fed them with the bread from heaven. That food was a type of the real bread from heaven. The life-giving Spirit, flowing from the infinite fullness of God, is the true manna. Jesus said, ‘The bread of God is that which cometh down out of heaven, and giveth life unto the world.’ John 6:33, R.V.

“Still thinking that it was temporal food to which Jesus referred, some of His hearers exclaimed, ‘Lord, evermore give us this bread.’ Jesus then spoke plainly: ‘I am the bread of life.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 385, 386.

3. After spending forty days without food in the wilderness, what answer did Jesus give to Satan’s temptation? Matthew 4:4.

“Every promise in God’s word is ours. ‘By every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God’ are we to live. When assailed by temptation, look not to circumstances or to the weakness of self, but to the power of the word. All its strength is yours. . . .

“The life of Christ that gives life to the world is in His word. It was by His word that Jesus healed disease and cast out demons; by His word He stilled the sea, and raised the dead; and the people bore witness that His word was with power. He spoke the word of God, as He had spoken through all the prophets and teachers of the Old Testament. The whole Bible is a manifestation of Christ, and the Saviour desired to fix the faith of His followers on the word. When His visible presence should be withdrawn, the word must be their source of power. Like their Master, they were to live ‘by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.’ Matthew 4:4.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 123, 390.

4. As bread sustains earthly existence, what is the spiritual nutrition for eternal life? John 6:47-50.

“The Saviour said, ‘I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever.’ To this figure Christ now adds another. Only through dying could He impart life to men, and in the words that follow He points to His death as the means of salvation. He says, ‘The bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 388.

“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.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 19.

HOLY COMMUNION

5. On what occasion did Jesus invite His disciples to eat bread? What did that bread of the Lord’s supper represent? 1 Corinthians 11:23, 24.

“And how much more are Christ’s words true of our spiritual nature. He declares, ‘Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life.’ It is by receiving the life for us poured out on Calvary’s cross, that we can live the life of holiness. And this life we receive by receiving His word, by doing those things which He has commanded. Thus we become one with Him. ‘He that eateth My flesh,’ He says, ‘and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me.’ John 6:54, 56, 57. To the holy Communion this scripture in a special sense applies. As faith contemplates our Lord’s great sacrifice, the soul assimilates the spiritual life of Christ. That soul will receive spiritual strength from every Communion. The service forms a living connection by which the believer is bound up with Christ, and thus bound up with the Father. In a special sense it forms a connection between dependent human beings and God.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 660, 661.

6. What does it mean to eat the flesh and drink the blood of Jesus? John 6:52-54, 40, 47; 1 Corinthians 11:26.

“To eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ is to receive Him as a personal Saviour, believing that He forgives our sins, and that we are complete in Him. It is by beholding His love, by dwelling upon it, by drinking it in, that we are to become partakers of His nature. What food is to the body, Christ must be to the soul. Food cannot benefit us unless we eat it, unless it becomes a part of our being. So Christ is of no value to us if we do not know Him as a personal Saviour. A theoretical knowledge will do us no good. We must feed upon Him, receive Him into the heart, so that His life becomes our life. His love, His grace, must be assimilated.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 389.

“If we practice the teachings He has given in His Word, these principles become a part of the life. This is what is meant by eating Christ’s flesh and drinking His blood. In this world we are daily to prepare for the higher life; and when we unite with the family above, we shall not be given new lessons, but a continuation of the lessons that Christ gave His disciples when He was here.” –*The Upward Look*, p. 246.

LET US SHARE OUR BREAD

7. Is it enough to ask our heavenly Father for our daily bread? When we receive our daily bread, what do we need to do? Matthew 6:11, 33; Ecclesiastes 11:1, 2.

“The prayer for daily bread includes not only food to sustain the body, but that spiritual bread which will nourish the soul unto life everlasting. Jesus bids us, ‘Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.’ John 6:27.

“... We are to pray day by day that as we read His word, God will send His Spirit to reveal to us the truth that will strengthen our souls for the day’s need.

“In teaching us to ask every day for what we need—both temporal and spiritual blessings—God has a purpose to accomplish for our good. He would have us realize our dependence upon His constant care.” –*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 112, 113.

“In Christ’s act of supplying the temporal necessities of a hungry multitude is wrapped up a deep spiritual lesson for all His workers. Christ received from the Father; He imparted

to the disciples; they imparted to the multitude; and the people to one another. So all who are united to Christ will receive from Him the bread of life, the heavenly food, and impart it to others.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 369.

FOR MEDITATION

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

FOR PERSONAL STUDY

“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.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 18, 19.

“Following right principle means the faithful doing of the first four and the last six commandments. In obedience to these divine commands, we eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ, appropriating all that is embraced in the atonement made on Calvary. Christ will stand by the side of all who receive Him as their Saviour. To them He will give power to become the sons of God.” —*The Upward Look*, p. 196.

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The Water of Life

“‘Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.’ Isaiah 41:17; 44:3; 35:6; 55:1. And in the closing pages of the Sacred Word this invitation is echoed. The river of the water of life, ‘clear as crystal,’ proceeds from the throne of God and the Lamb; and the gracious call is ringing down through the ages, ‘Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.’ Revelation 22:17.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 413.

THE SPRING OF PURE WATER

1. What invitation did the Lord extend many years ago to those who are thirsty? Who is the true spring of pure water? Isaiah 55:1, first part.

“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....

“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.

2. What will this water become for everyone who drinks it, believing in the Lord? John 4:13, 14.

“The divine grace which He alone can impart, is as living water, purifying, refreshing, and invigorating the soul.

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

3. What other prophet presented the great promise of cleansing and healing water, and what properties does it contain? Zechariah 13:1.

“Christ came as the Great Physician to heal the wounds that sin has made in the human family; and His Spirit, working through His servants, imparts to sin-sick, suffering human beings a mighty healing power that is efficacious for the body and the soul. ‘In that day,’ says the Scriptures, ‘there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.’ Zechariah 13:1. The waters of this fountain contain medicinal properties that will heal both physical and spiritual infirmities.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 227.

4. On what occasion did Jesus recall this symbol of the living water? John 7:37-39.

“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. ‘In the last day, that great day of the feast,’ His voice was heard in tones that rang through the temple courts, ‘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.’ ‘This,’ said John, ‘spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive.’ John 7:37-39. The refreshing water, welling up in a parched and barren land, causing the desert place to blossom, and flowing out to give life to the perishing, is an emblem of the divine grace which Christ alone can bestow, and which is as the living water, purifying, refreshing, and invigorating the soul. He in whom Christ is abiding has within him a never-failing fountain of grace and strength. Jesus cheers the life and brightens the path of all who truly seek Him. His love, received into the heart, will spring up in good works unto eternal life. And not only does it bless the soul in which it springs, but the living stream will flow out in words and deeds of righteousness, to refresh the thirsting around him.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 412.

THE WORLD’S POLLUTED WATER

5. What may sometimes attract God’s people? Are we advised to drink from the worldly fountains? Jeremiah 2:13.

“He who seeks to quench his thirst at the fountains of this world will drink only to thirst again. Everywhere men are unsatisfied. They long for something to supply the need of the soul. Only One can meet that want. The need of the world, ‘The Desire of all nations,’ is Christ.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 187.

“Those who drink from these polluted channels do not thirst for the waters of life; for they are satisfied with the broken cisterns of the world. They think they have the treasures of knowledge, when they are hoarding that which is but wood and hay and stubble, not worth gaining, not worth keeping.” —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 168.

6. What invitation does Jesus address today to those who are thirsty? What risk is there for those who do not want to answer the call? Revelation 22:17; John 6:35, last part; Amos 8:11, 12.

“The cry of Christ to the thirsty soul is still going forth, and it appeals to us with even greater power than to those who heard it in the temple on that last day of the feast. The fountain is open for all. The weary and exhausted ones are offered the refreshing draught of eternal life. Jesus is still crying, ‘If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink.’ ‘Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.’ ‘Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.’ Revelation 22:17; John 4:14.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 454.

LET US SHARE THE WATER WE RECEIVE

7. For this water to flow abundantly in us, what do we need to do? Isaiah 58:10, 11; John 7:38; Proverbs 11:25.

“‘Give, and it shall be given unto you’ (Luke 6:38); for the word of God is ‘a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams of Lebanon’ (Song of Solomon 4:15). The heart that has once tasted the love of Christ, cries out continually for a deeper draft, and as you impart you will receive in richer and more abundant measure. Every revelation of God to the soul increases the capacity to know and to love. The continual cry of the heart is, ‘More of Thee....’” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 20.

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

FOR MEDITATION

“The heart that receives the word of God is not as a pool that evaporates, not like a broken cistern that loses its treasure. It is like the mountain stream, fed by unfailing springs, whose cool, sparkling waters leap from rock to rock, refreshing the weary, the thirsty, the heavy-laden. It is like a river constantly flowing and, as it advances, becoming deeper and wider, until its life-giving waters are spread over all the earth. The stream, that goes singing on its way leaves behind its gift of verdure and fruitfulness. The grass on its banks is a fresher green, the trees have a richer verdure, the flowers are more abundant. When the earth lies bare and brown under the summer’s scorching heat, a line of verdure marks the river’s course.

“So it is with the true child of God. The religion of Christ reveals itself as a vitalizing, pervading principle, a living, working, spiritual energy. When the heart is opened to the heavenly influence of truth and love, these principles will flow forth again like streams in the desert, causing fruitfulness to appear where now are barrenness and dearth.” —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 233, 234.

“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.

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18

Sabbath, May 4, 2013

The Light of the World

“We can trace the line of the world’s great teachers as far back as human records extend; but the Light was before them. As the moon and the stars of the solar system shine by the reflected light of the sun, so, as far as their teaching is true, do the world’s great thinkers reflect the rays of the Sun of Righteousness? Every gem of thought, every flash of the intellect, is from the Light of the World.” —*Gospel Workers*, p. 50.

THE TRUE LIGHT

1. In what manner does Jesus present Himself? John 8:12.

“God is light; and in the words, ‘I am the light of the world,’ Christ declared His oneness with God, and His relation to the whole human family. It was He who at the beginning had caused ‘the light to shine out of darkness.’ 2 Corinthians 4:6. He is the light of sun and moon and star. He was the spiritual light that in symbol and type and prophecy had shone upon Israel. But not to the Jewish nation alone was the light given. As the sunbeams penetrate to the remotest corners of the earth, so does the light of the Sun of Righteousness shine upon every soul.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 464.

“‘Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.’ If you strive in all humility to understand what is the mind of Christ, you will not be left in darkness. Jesus says, ‘He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.’” —(*The Youth’s Instructor*, October 13, 1892) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 903.

2. Do all who are enlightened receive the light? What is the consequence? John 1:9-13; 3:19-21.

“We must walk in the light which shines upon us, otherwise that light will become darkness. God requires of us to exhibit to the world, in our character and works, that measure of the spirit of union and oneness which is in accordance with the sacred truths we profess and with the spirit of those prophecies that are fulfilling in these last days. The truth which has reached our understanding, and the light which has shone on the soul, will judge and condemn us, if we turn away and refuse to be led by them.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, pp. 262, 263.

“It is not God that blinds the eyes of men or hardens their hearts. He sends them light to correct their errors, and to lead them in safe paths; it is by the rejection of this light that the eyes are blinded and the heart hardened. Often the process is gradual, and almost imperceptible. Light comes to the soul through God’s word, through His servants, or by the direct agency of His Spirit; but when one ray of light is disregarded, there is a partial benumbing of the spiritual perceptions, and the second revealing of light is less clearly discerned. So the darkness increases, until it is night in the soul.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 322.

THE ONLY LIGHT THAT LIGHTENS THE PATH

3. Where does this precious light come from? What is specific about the true light? Psalm 119:105; Proverbs 4:18.

“There is only one true religion, only one way to heaven; only one light to illuminate the way as the pilgrims press on. As we follow on to know the Lord, we shall acknowledge at every step that Christ is the Light of the world, that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; and we shall find that the path that He bids us follow is ‘as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.’ Proverbs 4:18.”—*The Upward Look*, p. 233.

“In order to arrive at truth, we must have a sincere desire to know the truth and a willingness of heart to obey it....

“Instead of questioning and caviling concerning that which you do not understand, give heed to the light that already shines upon you, and you will receive greater light. By the grace of Christ, perform every duty that has been made plain to your understanding, and you will be enabled to understand and perform those of which you are now in doubt.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 111.

4. Is it important how we walk in the Light? 1 John 1:7; Colossians 2:6.

“There is need of constant watchfulness, and of earnest, loving devotion; but these will come naturally when the soul is kept by the power of God through faith. We can do nothing, absolutely nothing, to commend ourselves to divine favor. We must not trust at all to ourselves nor to our good works; but when as erring, sinful beings we come to Christ, we may find rest in His love. God will accept every one that comes to Him trusting wholly in the merits of a crucified Saviour. Love springs up in the heart. There may be no ecstasy of feeling, but there is an abiding, peaceful trust. Every burden is light; for the

yoke which Christ imposes is easy. Duty becomes a delight, and sacrifice a pleasure. The path that before seemed shrouded in darkness becomes bright with beams from the Sun of Righteousness. This is walking in the light as Christ is in the light.”—*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 353, 354.

A WORLDWIDE MISSION

5. What does Jesus ask of His disciples? Matthew 5:16.

“Christ’s followers are to be more than a light in the midst of men. They are the light of the world.... As Christ is the channel for the revelation of the Father, so we are to be the channel for the revelation of Christ. While our Saviour is the great source of illumination, forget not, O Christian, that He is revealed through humanity. God’s blessings are bestowed through human instrumentality. Christ Himself came to the world as the Son of man. Humanity, united to the divine nature, must touch humanity. The church of Christ, every individual disciple of the Master, is heaven’s appointed channel for the revelation of God to men...

“In like manner the disciples of Christ are set as light bearers on the way to heaven; through them the Father’s mercy and goodness are made manifest to a world enshrouded in the darkness of misapprehension of God. By seeing their good works, others are led to glorify the Father who is above; for it is made manifest that there is a God on the throne of the universe whose character is worthy of praise and imitation.”—*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 40, 41.

LIGHT BEARERS IN THE WORLD

6. With what does the Lord compare His disciples, who faithfully proclaim the three angels’ messages? Philippians 2:14, 15; Ephesians 5:8; 1 Timothy 4:15.

“God requires His people to shine as lights in the world. It is not merely the ministers who are required to do this, but every disciple of Christ. Their conversation should be heavenly. And while they enjoy communion with God, they will wish to have intercourse with their fellow men, in order to express by their words and acts the love of God which animates their hearts. In this way they will be lights in the world, and the light transmitted through them will not go out or be taken away.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 122, 123; *Christian Service*, p. 20.

“In a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light bearers. To them has been entrusted the last warning for a perishing world. On them is shining wonderful light from the word of God. They have been given a work of the most solemn import—the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels’ messages. There is no other work of so great importance. They are to allow nothing else to absorb their attention.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 19.

7. As darkness spreads, how will the true Christians shine in this world in view of Christ’s second coming? Isaiah 60:1; Daniel 12:3.

“... And in the hour of deepest apostasy, when Satan’s supreme effort is made to cause ‘all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond,’ to receive, under penalty of death, the sign of allegiance to a false rest day, these faithful ones, ‘blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke,’ will ‘shine as lights in the world.’ Revelation 13:16; Philippians 2:15. The darker the night, the more brilliantly will they shine.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 188.

“‘Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.’ Isaiah 60:1. Christ is coming with power and great glory. He is coming with His own glory and with the glory of the Father. And the holy angels will attend Him on His way. While all the world is plunged in darkness, there will be light in every dwelling of the saints. They will catch the first light of His second appearing. The unsullied light will shine from His splendor, and Christ the Redeemer will be admired by all who have served Him. While the wicked flee, Christ’s followers will rejoice in His presence.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 720.

FOR MEDITATION

“What is light? It is piety, goodness, truth, mercy, love; it is the revealing of the truth in the character and life. The gospel is dependent on the personal piety of its believers for its aggressive power, and God has made provision through the death of His beloved Son, that every soul may be thoroughly furnished unto every good work. Every soul is to be a bright and shining light, showing forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. ‘We are laborers together with God.’ Yes, laborers; that means doing earnest service in the vineyard of the Lord. There are souls to be saved—souls in our churches, in our Sabbath schools, and in our neighborhoods.”—(*Review and Herald*, March 24, 1891) *Christian Service*, pp. 21, 22.

FOR PERSONAL STUDY

- Hebrews 3:7-10.

“Trials patiently borne, blessings gratefully received, temptations manfully resisted, meekness, kindness, mercy, and love habitually revealed, are the lights that shine forth in the character in contrast with the darkness of the selfish heart, into which the light of life has never shone.”—*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 44.

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The Great Physician

“God alone is the One who can heal. Those whose minds and bodies are diseased are to behold in Christ the restorer. ‘Because I live, He says, ‘ye shall live also.’ John 14:19. This is the life we are to present to the sick, telling them that if they have faith in Christ as the restorer, if they co-operate with Him, obeying the laws of health, and striving to perfect holiness in His fear, He will impart to them His life. When we present Christ to them in this way, we are imparting a power, a strength, that is of value; for it comes from above. This is the true science of healing for body and soul.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 243, 244.

HOPE FOR THE SICK

1. **In what condition are most people today? Is there any hope for healing? Isaiah 1:5, last part, 6.**

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

2. **Why did the Saviour come to the earth? Matthew 9:12; 4:23.**

“Christ came to this world and lived the law of God, that man might have perfect mastery over the natural inclinations which corrupt the soul. The Physician of soul and body, He gives victory over warring lusts. He has provided every facility, that man may possess completeness of character....

“And Christ is the same compassionate physician now that He was during His earthly ministry. In Him there is healing balm for every disease, restoring power for every infirmity.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 130, 131, 226.

JESUS' HEALING POWER

3. **By what special power does Jesus heal? Psalm 107:19, 20; 2 Kings 20:4, 5; Matthew 8:8.**

“The same power that Christ exercised when He walked visibly among men is in His word. It was by His word that Jesus healed disease and cast out demons; by His word He stilled the sea and raised the dead, and the people bore witness that His word was with power. He spoke the word of God, as He had spoken to all the prophets and teachers of the Old Testament. The whole Bible is a manifestation of Christ. . . .

“The Saviour in His miracles revealed the power that is continually at work in man’s behalf, to sustain and to heal him. Through the agencies of nature, God is working, day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment, to keep us alive, to build up and restore us. When any part of the body sustains injury, a healing process is at once begun; nature’s agencies are set at work to restore soundness. But the power working through these agencies is the power of God. All life-giving power is from Him. When one recovers from disease, it is God who restores him.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 122, 112, 113.

4. What is still His invitation today? Matthew 11:28-30.

“The love which Christ diffuses through the whole being is a vitalizing power. Every vital part—the brain, the heart, the nerves—it touches with healing. By it the highest energies of the being are roused to activity. It frees the soul from the guilt and sorrow, the anxiety and care, that crush the life forces. With it come serenity and composure. It implants in the soul, joy that nothing earthly can destroy—joy in the Holy Spirit—health-giving, life-giving joy.

“Our Saviour’s words, ‘Come unto Me, . . . and I will give you rest’ (Matthew 11:28), are a prescription for the healing of physical, mental, and spiritual ills. Though men have brought suffering upon themselves by their own wrongdoing, He regards them with pity. In Him they may find help. He will do great things for those who trust in Him.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 115.

PHYSICIAN OF THE SOUL

5. Is Jesus only the Physician of the body? What are His words to the sick? Psalm 103:3, 4; Matthew 9:2.

“Many of those who came to Christ for help had brought disease upon themselves, yet He did not refuse to heal them. And when virtue from Him entered into these souls, they were convicted of sin, and many were healed of their spiritual disease as well as of their physical maladies.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 73.

“There is a remedy for the sin-sick soul. That remedy is in Jesus. Precious Saviour! His grace is sufficient for the weakest; and the strongest must also have His grace or perish.” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 87.

6. What is the divine Physician’s prescription for health of body, mind, and soul? What will motivate others to search for this Physician? John 6:51; Jeremiah 15:16; Romans 10:14.

“For the health and vitality of the soul, the divine Physician has prescribed communion with Himself. We are to sit at His feet and learn of Him how to be meek and lowly in heart. Spiritual health is dependent on the food given to the mind and on the air which is breathed.

“The soul needs food, and in order to get this food, the Word of God must be studied. . . . The breathing of pure air is essential for the cure of disease. And it is no less essential that the atmosphere we breathe in the spiritual life shall be pure. This is essential for a healthy growth in grace. Breathe the pure atmosphere which produces pure thoughts and noble words. Choose Christian society. The Christian will not have spiritual health unless he is guarded in regard to his associations.” —*The Upward Look*, p. 174.

7. What did Jesus instruct those who had been healed or pardoned by Him? John 5:14; 8:11.

“When Christ healed disease, He warned many of the afflicted ones, ‘Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.’ John 5:14. Thus He taught that they had brought disease upon themselves by transgressing the laws of God, and that health could be preserved only by obedience.

“The physician should teach his patients that they are to cooperate with God in the work of restoration. The physician has a continually increasing realization of the fact that disease is the result of sin. He knows that the laws of nature, as truly as the precepts of the Decalogue, are divine, and that only in obedience to them can health be recovered or preserved. He sees many suffering as the result of hurtful practices who might be restored to health if they would do what they might for their own restoration. They need to be taught that every practice which destroys the physical, mental, or spiritual energies is sin, and that health is to be secured through obedience to the laws that God has established for the good of all mankind.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 113.

FOR MEDITATION

“The only remedy for the sins and sorrows of humanity is Christ. The gospel of His grace alone can cure the evils that curse society. . . . He alone, for the selfish heart of sin, gives the new heart of love.” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 25.

“Physical healing is bound up with the gospel commission. In the work of the gospel, teaching and healing are never to be separated. . . .

“The giving of the gospel to the world is the work that God has committed to those who bear His name. For earth’s sin and misery the gospel is the only antidote. To make known to all mankind the message of the grace of God is the first work of those who know its healing power.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 141.

FOR PERSONAL STUDY

“The Saviour ministered to both the soul and the body. The gospel which He taught was a message of spiritual life and of physical restoration. Deliverance from sin and the healing of disease were linked together.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 111.

• Matthew 20:32

• Luke 18:41

“Thus it is with the leprosy of sin—deep-rooted, deadly, impossible to be cleansed by human power. ‘The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores.’ Isaiah 1:5, 6. But Jesus, coming to dwell in humanity, receives no pollution. His presence was healing virtue for the sinner. Whoever will fall at His feet, saying in faith, ‘Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean,’ shall hear the answer, ‘I will; be thou clean.’ . . .

“The surrender of hurtful indulgences requires sacrifice. But in the end it will be found that nature, untrammelled, does her work wisely and well. Those who persevere in obedience to her laws will reap the reward in health of body and health of mind.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 70, 127.

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20

Sabbath, May 18, 2013

The Divine Teacher

“Christ was the greatest teacher the world has ever known. He came to this earth to shed abroad the bright beams of truth, that men might gain a fitness for heaven. ‘For this cause came I into the world,’ He declared, ‘that I should bear witness unto the truth.’ John 18:37. He came to reveal the character of the Father, that men might be led to worship Him in spirit and in truth.” —*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 259.

THE DIVINE TEACHER’S CHILDHOOD

1. From whom did Jesus, the divine Teacher, receive His education? Luke 2:51, 52.

“The child Jesus did not receive instruction in the synagogue schools. His mother was His first human teacher. From her lips and from the scrolls of the prophets, He learned of heavenly things. The very words which He Himself had spoken to Moses for Israel He was now taught at His mother’s knee. As He advanced from childhood to youth, He did not seek the schools of the rabbis. He needed not the education to be obtained from such sources; for God was His instructor. . . .

“Since He gained knowledge as we may do, His intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures shows how diligently His early years were given to the study of God’s word. And spread out before Him was the great library of God’s created works. He who had made all things studied the lessons which His own hand had written in earth and sea and sky. Apart from the unholy ways of the world, He gathered stores of scientific knowledge from nature.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 70.

2. To what book did Jesus refer as being true and authoritative? What did He often use in His teaching? Luke 24:27; 10:26; Matthew 13:34, 35.

“Beginning at Moses, the very Alpha of Bible history, Christ expounded in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. . . .

“Thus the gospel message, as given by the Saviour Himself, was based on the prophecies.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 796, 233.

“The Great Teacher brought His hearers in contact with nature, that they might listen to the voice which speaks in all created things; and as their hearts became tender and their minds receptive, He helped them to interpret the spiritual teaching of the scenes upon which their eyes rested. The parables, by means of which He loved to teach lessons of truth, show how open His spirit was to the influences of nature and how He delighted to gather the spiritual teaching from the surroundings of daily life.” —*Education*, p. 102.

3. Did Jesus teach only during meetings, or did He take advantage of many different opportunities? What was the objective of the divine Teacher? Mark 2:15; John 4:7; Luke 10:38, 39; Matthew 18:11.

“Jesus saw in every soul one to whom must be given the call to His kingdom. He reached the hearts of the people by going among them as one who desired their good. He sought them in the public streets, in private houses, on the boats, in the synagogue, by the shores of the lake, and at the marriage feast. He met them at their daily vocations, and manifested an interest in their secular affairs. He carried His instruction into the household, bringing families in their own homes under the influence of His divine presence. His strong personal sympathy helped to win hearts.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 151.

“In Him was found the perfect ideal.

“To reveal this ideal as the only true standard for attainment; to show what every human being might become; what, through the indwelling of humanity by divinity, all who received Him would become—for this, Christ came to the world. He came to show how men are to be trained as befits the sons of God; how on earth they are to practice the principles and to live the life of heaven.” —*Education*, pp. 73, 74.

4. What can be said about His teaching? What was His double key to success as a Teacher? John 5:39; 15:10, last part, 13:15.

“In His teaching were embraced the things of time and the things of eternity—things seen, in their relation to things unseen, the passing incidents of common life and the solemn issues of the life to come.

“The things of this life He placed in their true relation, as subordinate to those of eternal interest; but He did not ignore their importance. He taught that Heaven and earth are linked together, and that a knowledge of divine truth prepares man better to perform the duties of daily life. . . .

“He who seeks to transform humanity must himself understand humanity. Only through sympathy, faith, and love can men be reached and uplifted. Here Christ stands revealed as the master teacher; of all that ever dwelt on the earth, He alone has perfect understanding of the human soul.

“What He taught, He lived. . . . Thus in His life, Christ’s words had perfect illustration and support. And more than this; what He taught, He was. His words were the expression, not only of His own life experience, but of His own character. Not only did He teach the truth, but He was the truth. It was this that gave His teaching, power.” —*Education*, pp. 82, 78.

THE TRUE RABBI

5. What did Jesus instruct His followers to do to avoid attracting attention to themselves? Matthew 23:7, 8.

“But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ. . . .

“He also reproveth the vanity shown in coveting the title of rabbi, or master. Such a title, He declared, belonged not to men, but to Christ. Priests, scribes, and rulers, expounders and administrators of the law, were all brethren, children of one Father. Jesus impressed upon the people that they were to give no man a title of honor indicating his control of their conscience or their faith.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 613.

JESUS’ LISTENERS

6. Who were frequently in Jesus’ audience? How did His listeners often react? Mark 12:37, last part; John 7:46; Matthew 7:28, 29.

“He spoke not only for, but to, all mankind. To the little child, in the gladness of life’s morning; to the eager, restless heart of youth; to men in the strength of their years, bearing the burden of responsibility and care; to the aged in their weakness and weariness—to all, His message was spoken—to every child of humanity, in every land and in every age.” —*Education*, p. 82.

“Of Christ’s teaching it is said, ‘The common people heard Him gladly.’ Mark 12:37. ‘Never man spake like this Man’ (John 7:46), declared the officers who were sent to take Him. His words comforted, strengthened, and blessed those who were longing for the peace that He alone could give. There was in His words that which lifted His hearers to a high plane of thought and action.” —*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 260.

7. Although the multitude were amazed by Jesus’ teaching, how did some react, and why? John 7:14-17.

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

“My teaching is not Mine,’ said Jesus, ‘but His that sent Me. If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from Myself.’ John 7:16, 17, R.V. The question of these cavilers Jesus met, not by answering the cavil, but by opening up truth vital to the salvation of the soul. The perception and appreciation of truth, He said, depends less upon the mind than upon the heart.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 455.

FOR MEDITATION

“The teaching of Christ was the expression of an inwrought conviction and experience, and those who learn of Him become teachers after the divine order. The word of God, spoken by one who is himself sanctified through it, has a life-giving power that makes it attractive to the hearers, and convicts them that it is a living reality. When one has received the truth in the love of it, he will make this manifest in the persuasion of his manner and the tones of his voice. He makes known that which he himself has heard, seen, and handled of the word of life, that others may have fellowship with him through the knowledge of Christ. His testimony, from lips touched with a live coal from off the altar, is truth to the receptive heart, and works sanctification upon the character.

“And he who seeks to give light to others will himself be blessed.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 142.

FOR PERSONAL STUDY

• 2 Timothy 3:16, 17

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

“Christ always used simple language, yet His words tested the knowledge of deep, unprejudiced thinkers.... Thus Christ addressed the crowds that pressed and thronged about Him; and all, learned and unlearned, were able to comprehend His lessons....

“He had come to seek and to save the lost, and He would not permit Himself to be turned from His object. He revealed truths that had been buried under the rubbish of error, and He freed them from the exactions and traditions of men, and bade them stand fast forever. He rescued truth from its obscurity, and set it in its proper framework, that it might shine with its original luster. What wonder that crowds followed in the footsteps of the Lord and gave Him homage as they listened to His words!” —*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, pp. 261, 29.

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Friend of Children and Mothers

“The Saviour regards with infinite tenderness the souls whom He has purchased with His blood. They are the claim of His love. He looks upon them with unutterable longing. His heart is drawn out, not only to the best-trained and most attractive children, but to those who by inheritance and through neglect have objectionable traits of character.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 44.

JESUS' CHILDHOOD

1. What is known about Jesus' childhood and youth? Why can He be the Friend of children and youth? Luke 2:40.

“There were some who sought His society, feeling at peace in His presence; but many avoided Him, because they were rebuked by His stainless life. Young companions urged Him to do as they did. He was bright and cheerful; they enjoyed His presence, and welcomed His ready suggestions; but they were impatient at His scruples, and pronounced Him narrow and strait-laced. Jesus answered, It is written, ‘Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy word.’ ‘Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee.’ Psalm 119:9, 11.

“... When questioned why He did not join in the frolics of the youth of Nazareth, He said, It is written, ‘I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. I will meditate in Thy precepts, and have respect unto Thy ways. I will delight myself in Thy statutes; I will not forget Thy word.’ Psalm 119:14-16.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 89.

2. What reveals His close contact with nature? Having been a child Himself, how did Jesus rejoice with little children? Luke 12:27.

“As the children gathered the wildflowers growing so abundantly around them, and crowded up to present to Him their little offerings, He received them gladly, smiled upon them, and expressed His joy at seeing so many varieties of flowers.

“These children were His heritage. He knew that He had come to ransom them from the enemy by dying on the cross of Calvary. He spoke words to them that ever after they carried in their hearts. They were delighted to think that He appreciated their gifts and spoke so lovingly to them.

“Christ watched children at their play, and often expressed His approval when they gained an innocent victory over something they were determined to do. He sang to children in sweet and blessed words. They knew that He loved them. He never frowned on them. He shared their childish joys and sorrows. Often He would gather flowers, and after pointing out their beauties to the children, would leave them with them as a gift. He had made the flowers and He delighted to point out their beauties.

“It has been said that Jesus never smiled. This is not correct. A child in its innocence and purity called forth from His lips joyous song.”—*The Upward Look*, p. 57.

JESUS HEALED AND BLESSED THE LITTLE CHILDREN

3. What episode is described for us, as little children were brought to Him to be blessed? Matthew 19:13-15.

“When the mothers came to Him with their little ones, the disciples looked on them with disfavor. They thought these children too young to be benefited by a visit to Jesus, and concluded that He would be displeased at their presence. But it was the disciples with whom He was displeased. The Saviour understood the care and burden of the mothers who were seeking to train their children according to the word of God. He had heard their prayers. He Himself had drawn them into His presence....

“Thus several mothers came together, with their little ones. Some of the children had passed beyond the years of infancy to childhood and youth. When the mothers made known their desire, Jesus heard with sympathy the timid, tearful request....

“He took the children in His arms, He laid His hands upon them, and gave them the blessing for which they came.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 511, 512.

4. In what other ways did Jesus demonstrate special care for children? Matthew 17:18; 15:28; John 4:51, 52.

“Let the eye of faith take in the scene. Watch these mothers pressing their way to Him, pale, weary, almost despairing, yet determined and persevering, bearing their burden of suffering in their arms.

“As these anxious ones are being crowded back, Christ makes His way to them step by step, until He is close by their side. Tears of gladness and hope fall freely as they catch His attention and look into the eyes expressing such tender pity and love for the weary mother as well as for her suffering child. He invites her confidence, saying, ‘What shall I do for you?’ She sobs out her great want—‘Master, that Thou shouldest heal my child.’ She has shown her faith in urging her way to Him, though she did not know that He was making His way to her, and Christ takes the child from her arms. He speaks the word, and disease flees at His touch. The pallor of death is gone. The life-giving current flows through the veins. The muscles receive strength.”—*The Upward Look*, p. 26.

5. When and in what special way did these cured children later praise Jesus? Matthew 21:9, 15, 16.

“The children were foremost in the rejoicing. Jesus had healed their maladies; He had clasped them in His arms, received their kisses of grateful affection, and some of them had fallen asleep upon His breast as He was teaching the people. Now with glad voices the children sounded His praise. They repeated the hosannas of the day before, and waved palm branches triumphantly before the Saviour. The temple echoed and re-echoed with their acclamations.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 592.

6. Can mothers still bring their children to Jesus in the same way today? Tell your personal experience. Psalm 115:13, 14.

“The mothers of today are to receive His words with the same faith. Christ is as verily a personal Saviour today as when He lived a man among men. He is as verily the helper of mothers today as when He gathered the little ones to His arms in Judea. The children of our hearths are as much the purchase of His blood as were the children of long ago.

“Jesus knows the burden of every mother’s heart. He who had a mother that struggled with poverty and privation sympathizes with every mother in her labors.... He is touched today by the mother’s sorrow. In every grief and every need He will give comfort and help.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 512.

7. What can children and youth do today, knowing that their best Friend is ready to listen to them and answer their prayers? 1 John 5:14, 15; Ephesians 3:20.

“Children and youth may come to Jesus with their burdens and perplexities, and know that He will respect their appeals to Him, and give them the very things they need. Be earnest; be resolute. Present the promise of God, and then believe without a doubt. Do not wait to feel special emotions before you think the Lord answers. Do not mark out some particular way that the Lord must work for you before you believe you receive the things you ask of Him; but trust His word, and leave the whole matter in the hands of the Lord, with full faith that your prayer will be honored, and the answer will come at the very time and in the very way your heavenly Father sees is for your good; and then live out your prayers. Walk humbly and keep moving forward.”—*Messages to Young People*, p. 123.

FOR MEDITATION

“In the children, who were brought in contact with Him, Jesus saw the men and women who should be heirs of His grace and subjects of His kingdom, and some of whom would become martyrs for His sake. He knew that these children would listen to Him and accept Him as their Redeemer far more readily than would grownup people, many of whom were the worldly-wise and hardhearted. In teaching, He came down to their level. He, the majesty of heaven, answered their questions and simplified His important lessons to meet their childish understanding. He planted in their minds the seeds of truth, which in afteryears would spring up and bear fruit unto eternal life.”—*Evangelism*, pp. 579, 580.

FOR PERSONAL STUDY

- Matthew 9:24, 25.

“Words of comfort and peace are spoken to the mother, and then another case just as urgent is presented. The mother asks help for herself and her children, for they are all sufferers. With willingness and joy Christ exercises His life-giving power, and they give praise and honor and glory to His name who doeth wonderful things.”—*The Upward Look*, p. 26.

“Let mothers come to Jesus with their perplexities. They will find grace sufficient to aid them in the management of their children. The gates are open for every mother who would lay her burdens at the Saviour’s feet. He who said, ‘Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not,’ still invites the mothers to lead up their little ones to be blessed by Him. Even the babe in its mother’s arms may dwell as under the shadow of the Almighty through the faith of the praying mother.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 512.

• Matthew 7:7, 8.

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22

Sabbath, June 1, 2013

The Connecting Ladder

“Jesus is the ladder to heaven, . . . and God calls upon us to mount this ladder. But we cannot do this while we load ourselves down with earthly treasures.” –*Signs of the Times*, February 1, 1899.

VISION OF THE LADDER

1. In what vision do we find the ladder connecting earth to heaven? Genesis 28:10-13.

“Here is man, who had lost all connection with God, and the God of heaven looks upon him and consents that Christ shall bridge the gulf which sin has made. We might have looked and said, I long for heaven but how can I reach it? I see no way. That is what Jacob thought, and so God shows him the vision of the ladder, and that ladder connects earth with heaven, with Jesus Christ. A man can climb it, for the base rests upon the earth and the top-most round reaches into heaven....” –(*MS* 5, 1891) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1095.

“Christ is the ladder that Jacob saw, the base resting on the earth, and the topmost round reaching to the gate of heaven, to the very threshold of glory. If that ladder had failed by a single step of reaching the earth, we should have been lost. But Christ reaches us where we are. He took our nature and overcame, that we through taking His nature might overcome.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 311, 312.

2. In the New Testament, on what occasion did Jesus refer to this mystic ladder? John 1:51.

“The mystic ladder revealed to him Jacob in his dream was the same to which Christ referred in His conversation with Nathanael. Said He, ‘Ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.’ John 1:51. Up to the time of man’s rebellion against the government of God, there had been free communion

between God and man. But the sin of Adam and Eve separated earth from heaven, so that man could not have communion with his Maker. Yet the world was not left in solitary hopelessness. The ladder represents Jesus, the appointed medium of communication. Had He not with His own merits bridged the gulf that sin had made, the ministering angels could have held no communion with fallen man. Christ connects man in his weakness and helplessness with the source of infinite power.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 184.

THE ANGELS ASCEND AND DESCEND

3. What is the mission of the angels ascending and descending on the ladder? Hebrews 1:14; Psalm 91:11.

“Angels of God, that ascend and descend the ladder that Jacob saw in vision, will help every soul who will to climb even to the highest heaven. They are guarding the people of God, and watching how every step is taken. Those who climb the shining way will be rewarded; they will enter into the joy of their Lord.”—(*Review and Herald*, August 19, 1884) *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 86.

“The angels of God are ascending, bearing the prayers of the needy and distressed to the Father above, and descending, bringing blessing and hope, courage, help, and life, to the children of men.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 142.

PETER’S LADDER

4. What illustration does the apostle Peter give of the Christian’s progress as he climbs the ladder rung after rung? 2 Peter 1:5-11.

“These words are full of instruction, and strike the keynote of victory. The apostle presents before the believers the ladder of Christian progress, every step of which represents advancement in the knowledge of God, and in the climbing of which there is to be no standstill. Faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity are the rounds of the ladder. We are saved by climbing round after round, mounting step after step, to the height of Christ’s ideal for us. Thus He is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 530.

“The progressive Christian has grace and love which passes knowledge, for divine insight into the character of Christ takes a deep hold upon his affections. The glory of the Lord revealed above the ladder can only be appreciated by the progressive climber, who is ever attracted higher, to nobler aims which Christ reveals.”—*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 241.

HOW TO CLIMB THE LADDER

5. How can one safely and progressively climb this heavenly ladder? 1 Corinthians 9:24, 25; 1 Timothy 6:12.

“All these successive steps are not to be kept before the mind’s eye, and counted as you start; but fixing the eye upon Jesus, with an eye single to the glory of God, you will make advancement. You cannot reach the full measure of the stature of Christ in a day, and you would sink in despair could you behold all the difficulties that must be met and overcome. You have Satan to contend with, and he will seek by every possible device to attract your mind from Christ....

“By taking one step after another, the highest ascent may be climbed, and the summit of the mount may be reached at last. Do not become overwhelmed with the great amount of work you must do in your lifetime, for you are not required to do it all at once. Let every power of your being go to each day’s work, improve each precious opportunity, appreciate the helps that God gives you, and make advancement up the ladder of progress step by step. Remember that you are to live but one day at a time, that God has given you one day, and heavenly records will show how you have valued its privileges and opportunities. May you so improve every day given you of God, that at last you may hear the Master say, ‘Well done, thou good and faithful servant.’” —*Messages to Young People*, pp. 45, 46.

6. Is there a risk that we will be impeded in our ascent of this ladder? What counsel is given to prevent one from retreating or falling from it? Philippians 3:13, 14; Matthew 26:41; 1 Peter 5:8.

“Our Saviour is the ladder which Jacob saw, whose base rested on the earth and whose topmost rounds reached the highest heavens. This shows the appointed method of salvation. If any of us are finally saved, it will be by clinging to Jesus as to the rounds of a ladder. To the believer, Christ is made wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption. Let no one imagine that it is an easy thing to overcome the enemy and that he can be borne aloft to an incorruptible inheritance without effort on his part. To look back is to grow dizzy; to let go the hold is to perish. Few appreciate the importance of striving constantly to overcome. They relax their diligence and, as a result, become selfish and self-indulgent. Spiritual vigilance is not thought to be essential. Earnestness in human effort is not brought into the Christian life.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 539, 540.

7. Why is it so important to reach the top of the ladder and be victorious? Matthew 24:13; Hebrews 12:1, 2.

“You can never secure a good character by merely wishing for it. It can be gained only by labor. Your desires in this direction must be expressed in earnest, honest endeavor and patient toil. By taking advance steps each day up the ladder of progress, you will find at last at the top—a conqueror, yes, more than a conqueror, through Him who has loved you....

“Remember that you will never reach a higher standard than you yourself set. Then set your mark high, and step by step, even though it be by painful effort, by self-denial and sacrifice, ascend the whole length of the ladder of progress. Let nothing hinder you. Fate has not woven its meshes about any human being so firmly that he need remain helpless and in uncertainty. Opposing circumstances should create a firm determination to overcome them. The breaking down of one barrier will give greater ability and courage to go forward. Press with determination in the right direction, and circumstances will be your helpers, not your hindrances.” —*Messages to Young People*, pp. 348, 99, 100.

“Christ is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto Him. He who comes to Jesus is setting his feet upon a ladder that reaches from earth to heaven. Teach it by pen, by voice, that God is above the ladder; the bright rays of His glory are shining upon every round of the ladder. He is looking graciously upon all who are climbing painfully upward, that He may send them help, divine help, when the hand seems to be relaxing and the foot trembling. Yes, tell it, tell it in words that will melt the heart, that not one who shall perseveringly climb the ladder will fail of an entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; those who believe in Christ shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of His hand.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 181, 182.

“We must put to the stretch every spiritual nerve and muscle.... God ... does not desire you to remain novices. He wants you to reach the very highest round of the ladder and then step from it into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” —*Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 806.

FOR PERSONAL STUDY

“... God calls upon us to mount this ladder. But we cannot do this while we load ourselves down with earthly treasures. We wrong ourselves when we place our convenience and personal advantages before the things of God. There is no salvation in earthly possessions or surroundings. A man is not exalted in God’s sight, or accredited by Him as possessing goodness, because He has earthly riches. If we gain a genuine experience in climbing, we shall learn that as we ascend we must leave every hindrance behind. Those who mount must place their feet firmly on every round of the ladder.” —*Signs of the Times*, February 1, 1899.

“Every round that you climb, you are coming step after step into fellowship with the sufferings of Christ, and are becoming fashioned after His divine similitude. The angels of God are constantly ascending and descending this glorious ladder. They will not let you fall, if you keep your eye fixed upon the glory of God which is at the top of the ladder.” —*The Upward Look*, p. 256.

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23

Sabbath, June 8, 2013

The Fruitful Vine

“Christ pointed to the vine and its branches: I give you this lesson that you may understand My relationship to you and your relationship to Me. There was not the least excuse for His hearers to misunderstand His words. The figure He used was as a mirror held up before them, that they might understand His connection with them.” —*The Upward Look*, p. 182.

1. Why is it essential to be connected to Christ? 1 John 5:11, 12.

“This lesson will be repeated to the ends of the earth. All who receive Christ by faith become one with Him. The branches are not tied to the vine by any mechanical process or artificial fastening. They are united to the vine and have become part of it. They are nourished by the roots of the vine. So those who receive Christ by faith become one with Him in principle and action. They are united to Him, and the life they live is the life of the Son of God. They derive their life from Him who is life....

“The heart must be united with Christ’s heart, the will must be submerged in His will, the mind must become one with His mind, the thoughts must be brought into captivity to Him. A man may be baptized, and his name placed on the church rolls, yet the heart may be unchanged. Hereditary and cultivated tendencies may still work evil in the character.”
—*The Upward Look*, p. 182.

CONNECTION OF THE VINE WITH THE BRANCHES

2. How did Jesus intercede with His Father so that this connection between the Vine and the branches may exist? John 17:20-23.

“Christian unity consists in the branches being in the same parent stock, the vitalizing power of the center supporting the grafts that have united to the Vine. In thoughts and desires, in words and actions, there must be an identity with Christ, a constant partaking of his spiritual life. Faith must increase by exercise. All who live near to God will have a realization of what Jesus is to them and they to Jesus. As communion with God is making its impress upon the soul, and shining out in the countenance as an illuminating light, the steadfast principles of Christ’s holy character will be reflected in humanity.”—(*Review and Herald*, November 9, 1897) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1143.

3. What will happen to the Lord’s vineyard (the church) when Christ’s true disciples carry out the instructions contained in His intercessory prayer? Ephesians 4:1-6.

“Harmony and union existing among men of varied dispositions is the strongest witness that can be borne that God has sent His Son into the world to save sinners. It is our privilege to bear this witness. But, in order to do this, we must place ourselves under Christ’s command. Our characters must be molded in harmony with His character, our wills must be surrendered to His will. Then we shall work together without a thought of collision.

“They are to be one in Him, even though they are scattered the world over....

“When Christ’s prayer is fully believed, when its instruction is brought into the daily life of God’s people, unity of action will be seen in our ranks.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, pp. 242, 243

4. Why is it impossible to have an on-again, off-again relationship with Christ? What danger is there for one who lets his attention be diverted from a continual walk in Him? John 15:2, first part, 6.

“‘Abide in Me, and I in you.’ Abiding in Christ means a constant receiving of His Spirit, a life of unreserved surrender to His service. The channel of communication must be open continually between man and his God. As the vine branch constantly draws the sap from the living vine, so are we to cling to Jesus, and receive from Him by faith the strength and perfection of His own character.

“The root sends its nourishment through the branch to the outermost twig. So Christ communicates the current of spiritual strength to every believer. So long as the soul is united to Christ, there is no danger that it will wither or decay.” *—The Desire of Ages*, p. 676.

THE BRANCH THAT BEARS FRUIT

5. How will the world see that we are bound to the divine Vine? John 15:4, 5; Matthew 7:16, 17.

“The regenerated man has a vital union with Christ. As the branch derives its sustenance from the parent stock, and because of this bears much fruit, so the true believer is united with Christ, and reveals in his life the fruits of the Spirit. The branch becomes one with the vine. Storm cannot carry it away. Frosts cannot destroy its vital properties. Nothing is able to separate it from the vine. It is a living branch, and it bears the fruit of the vine. So with the believer. By good words and good actions, he reveals the character of Christ. As the branch derives its nourishment from the vine, so all who are truly converted draw spiritual vitality from Christ.” *—The Upward Look*, p. 182.

“Now that we are branches of the Living Vine we will be nourished by the sap that flows from the Vine. It flows all the time to every branch, and every branch will bear fruit to the glory of God. ‘It is your Father’s good pleasure’ ‘that ye bear much fruit.’” *—Faith and Works*, p. 65.

6. What fruit will be produced by those who are united to the living Vine? Galatians 5:22, 23.

“He who is united to Christ, partaking of the sap and nourishment of the Vine, will work the works of Christ. The love of Christ must be in him or he cannot be in the Vine. Supreme love to God, and love to your neighbor equal to that which you bear to yourself, is the basis of true religion. . . .

“As the branch must abide in the vine to obtain the vital sap which causes it to flourish, so those who love God and keep all His sayings must abide in His love. Without Christ we cannot subdue a single sin or overcome the smallest temptation. . . . All who are really in Christ will experience the benefit of this union. The Father accepts them in the Beloved, and they become objects of His solicitude and tender, loving care. This connection with Christ will result in the purification of the heart and in a circumspect life and faultless character. The fruit borne upon the Christian tree is ‘love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.’” *—Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 353, 355.

7. What will the divine Gardener do so every branch will bear more fruit? John 15:2, last part.

”Jesus with solemn tenderness explained the purpose of the husbandman. The pruning will cause pain, but it is the Father who applies the knife. He works with no wanton hand or indifferent heart. There are branches trailing upon the ground; these must be cut loose from the earthly supports to which their tendrils are fastening. They are to reach heavenward, and find their support in God. The excessive foliage that draws away the life current from the fruit must be pruned off. The overgrowth must be cut out, to give room for the healing beams of the Sun of Righteousness. The husbandman prunes away the harmful growth, that the fruit may be richer and more abundant.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 676.

FOR MEDITATION

“The Holy Spirit, which proceeds from the only-begotten Son of God, binds the human agent, body, soul, and spirit, to the perfect, divine-human nature of Christ. This union is represented by the union of the vine and the branches. Finite man is united to the manhood of Christ. Through faith human nature is assimilated with Christ’s nature. We are made one with God in Christ.”—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 251.

FOR PERSONAL STUDY

“The branches of the vine cannot blend into each other; they are individually separate; yet every branch must be in fellowship with every other if they are united in the same parent stock. They all draw nourishment from the same source; they drink in the same life-giving properties. So each branch of the True Vine is separate and distinct, yet all are bound together in the parent stock. There can be no division. They are all linked together by his will to bear fruit wherever they can find place and opportunity. But in order to do this, the worker must hide self. He must not give expression to his own mind and will. He is to express the mind and will of Christ.”—(*Review and Herald*, November 9, 1897) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1143.

• Colossians 3:12-15

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

“Brother will be bound to brother by the golden bonds of the love of Christ. The Spirit of God alone can bring about this oneness. He who sanctified Himself can sanctify His disciples. United with Him, they will be united with one another in the most holy faith. When we strive for this unity as God desires us to strive for it, it will come to us.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 243.

“There are conditions to meet if we would be blessed and honored by God. We are to separate from the world, and refuse to touch those things that will separate our affections from God. God has the first and highest claims upon his people. Set your affections upon him and upon heavenly things. Your tendrils must be severed from everything earthly.”—(*Review and Herald*, January 2, 1900) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1102.

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Refuge and Stronghold

“Live in contact with the living Christ, and He will hold you firmly by a hand that will never let go. Know and believe the love that God has to us, and you are secure; that love is a fortress impregnable to all the delusions and assaults of Satan. ‘The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.’ Proverbs 18:10.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 119.

CITIES OF REFUGE

1. What was symbolized by the cities of refuge established during the partitioning of Canaan? Psalm 46:1; 9:9.

“The cities of refuge appointed for God’s ancient people were a symbol of the refuge provided in Christ. The same merciful Saviour who appointed those temporal cities of refuge has by the shedding of His own blood provided for the transgressors of God’s law a sure retreat, into which they may flee for safety from the second death. No power can take out of His hands the souls that go to Him for pardon. ‘There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.’ ‘Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us,’ that ‘we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.’ Romans 8:1, 34; Hebrews 6:18.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 516, 517.

2. Why is it very dangerous to delay in making Jesus our refuge? Hebrews 3:14, 15; 3:6.

“He who fled to the city of refuge could make no delay.... There was no time to say farewell to loved ones. His life was at stake, and every other interest must be sacrificed to the one purpose—to reach the place of safety....

“The sinner is exposed to eternal death, until he finds a hiding place in Christ; and as loitering and carelessness might rob the fugitive of his only chance for life, so delays and indifference may prove the ruin of the soul. Satan, the great adversary, is on the track of every transgressor of God’s holy law, and he who is not sensible of his danger, and does not earnestly seek shelter in the eternal refuge, will fall a prey to the destroyer.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 517.

3. When we have once found refuge in Jesus, what danger awaits us if we do not abide in Him? 1 Peter 5:8; 1 Corinthians 10:12.

“The prisoner who at any time went outside the city of refuge was abandoned to the avenger of blood. Thus the people were taught to adhere to the methods which infinite wisdom appointed for their security. Even so, it is not enough that the sinner believe in Christ for the pardon of sin; he must, by faith and obedience, abide in Him. ‘For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.’ Hebrews 10:26, 27.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 517.

“Through the plan of salvation, Jesus is breaking Satan’s hold upon the human family and rescuing souls from his power. All the hatred and malignity of the archrebel is stirred as he beholds the evidence of Christ’s supremacy, and with fiendish power and cunning he works to wrest from Him the remnant of the children of men who have accepted His salvation.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 470.

PROTECTED BY GOD

4. How does Satan react when one takes Jesus as his refuge? James 4:7, 8; Proverbs 18:10.

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

5. What invitation does Jesus extend to everyone? How can one abide in Him? John 15:9, 10.

“Do you ask, ‘How am I to abide in Christ?’ In the same way as you received Him at first. ‘As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him.’ ‘The just shall live by faith.’ Colossians 2:6; Hebrews 10:38. You gave yourself to God, to be His wholly, to serve and obey Him, and you took Christ as your Saviour. You could not yourself atone for your sins or change your heart; but having given yourself to God, you believe that He for Christ’s sake did all this for you. By faith you became Christ’s, and by faith you are to grow up in Him—by giving and taking. You are to give—all—your heart, your will, your service—give yourself to Him to obey all His requirements; and you must take all—Christ, the fullness of all blessing, to abide in your heart, to be your strength, your righteousness, your everlasting helper—to give you power to obey.” —*Steps to Christ*, pp. 69, 70.

6. What encouraging words of Jesus can the tempted and tested soul hear? John 6:37-39.

“The omnipotent power of the Holy Spirit is the defense of every contrite soul. Not one that in penitence and faith has claimed His protection will Christ permit to pass under the enemy’s power. The Saviour is by the side of His tempted and tried ones. With Him there can be no such thing as failure, loss, impossibility, or defeat; we can do all things through Him who strengthens us. When temptations and trials come, do not wait to adjust all the difficulties, but look to Jesus, your helper.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 490–493.

7. On the day of the Lord, what will those who did not make Jesus their refuge cry? But what will the redeemed exclaim? Revelation 6:15-17; Isaiah 25:9.

“... ‘The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and my soul is not saved! Why did I not flee to the Stronghold for refuge? Why have I trifled with my soul’s salvation, and done despite to the Spirit of grace?’” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 48.

“If we stand in the great day of the Lord, with Christ as our refuge, our high tower, we must put away all envy, all strife for the supremacy. We must utterly destroy the roots of these unholy things, that they may not again spring up into life. We must place ourselves wholly on the side of the Lord.” –*Last Day Events*, p. 190.

FOR MEDITATION

“Christians should be preparing for what is soon to break upon the world as an overwhelming surprise, and this preparation they should make by diligently studying the word of God and striving to conform their lives to its precepts. The tremendous issues of eternity demand of us something besides an imaginary religion, a religion of words and forms, where truth is kept in the outer court. God calls for a revival and a reformation.” –*Prophets and Kings*, p. 626.

FOR PERSONAL STUDY

- Psalm 7:1; 34:8, 22.

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The Rock of Ages

“In our character building we must build on Christ. He is the sure foundation—a foundation which can never be moved. The tempest of temptation and trial cannot move the building which is riveted to the Eternal Rock.” —*Child Guidance*, p. 166.

THE ROCK IN PROPHECY

1. **In what settings does the Old Testament refer to Jesus as the Rock for protection and refuge? According to the Spirit of prophecy, who is represented by the expressions “Rock of Israel” and “Rock of my refuge”? 2 Samuel 23:3; Psalm 94:22; Deuteronomy 32:4.**

“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.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 413.

“The same beautiful and expressive figures are carried throughout the Bible. Centuries before the advent of Christ, Moses pointed to Him as the rock of Israel’s salvation (Deuteronomy 32:15); the psalmist sang of Him as ‘my Redeemer,’ ‘the rock of my strength,’ ‘the rock that is higher than I,’ ‘a rock of habitation,’ ‘rock of my heart,’ ‘rock of my refuge.’... Isaiah describes Him as the ‘rock of ages,’ and ‘the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.’ Isaiah 26:4; 32:2.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 413.

A SURE FOUNDATION

2. **For what other reason is the spiritual Rock considered important in prophecy? Isaiah 28:16; 1 Peter 2:6.**

“In infinite wisdom, God chose the foundation stone, and laid it Himself. He called it ‘a sure foundation.’ The entire world may lay upon it their burdens and griefs; it can endure them all. With perfect safety they may build upon it.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 598.

3. **Why is the foundation we choose for our faith so important? Who is the only one elected by the Lord? 1 Corinthians 3:11; Acts 4:12.**

“Christ is a ‘tried stone.’ Those who trust in Him, He never disappoints. He has borne every test. He has endured the pressure of Adam’s guilt, and the guilt of his posterity, and has come off more than conqueror of the powers of evil. He has borne the burdens cast upon Him by every repenting sinner. In Christ the guilty heart has found relief. He is the sure foundation. All who make Him their dependence rest in perfect security.

“In Isaiah’s prophecy, Christ is declared to be both a sure foundation and a stone of stumbling. The apostle Peter, writing by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, clearly shows to whom Christ is a foundation stone, and to whom a rock of offense.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 598, 599.

“The great principles of the law, of the very nature of God, are embodied in the words of Christ on the mount. Whoever builds upon them is building upon Christ, the Rock of Ages. In receiving the word, we receive Christ. And only those who thus receive His words are building upon Him. ‘Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.’ 1 Corinthians 3:11. ‘There is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.’ Acts 4:12. Christ, the Word, the revelation of God—the manifestation of His character, His law, His love, His life—is the only foundation upon which we can build a character that will endure.” –*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 148, 150.

4. Besides what was presented in the Old Testament, what was revealed to the apostle Peter regarding the Stone? 1 Peter 2:3-5.

“Christ, the true foundation, is a living stone; His life is imparted to all that are built upon Him. ‘Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house.’ ‘Each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord.’ 1 Peter 2:5, R.V.” –*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 150.

“Peter himself, writing by inspiration, applies this prophecy to Jesus. He says, ‘If ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious: unto whom coming, a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house.’ 1 Peter 2:3-5, R.V.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 413.

THE SPIRITUAL, LIVING ROCK

5. According to the divine proclamation, from whom did the water come to quench the people’s thirst? Was this usual? Numbers 20:7, 8, 11.

“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.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 411.

6. Who was the spiritual Rock to whom the apostle Paul refers? 1 Corinthians 10:4.

“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 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.’” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 411.

BEING BROKEN ON THE ROCK

7. Just as waves break upon the rocks, what must “self” do? On the verge of Christ’s second coming, why is it so important to break oneself on the Rock? Matthew 21:42, 44; Galatians 2:20.

“‘Behold,’ Simeon had said, ‘this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against.’ They must fall who would rise again. We must fall upon the Rock and be broken before we can be uplifted in Christ. Self must be dethroned, pride must be humbled, if we would know the glory of the spiritual kingdom.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 56, 57.

“To those who believe, Christ is the sure foundation. These are they who fall upon the Rock and are broken. Submission to Christ and faith in Him are here represented. To fall upon the Rock and be broken is to give up our self-righteousness and to go to Christ with the humility of a child, repenting of our transgressions, and believing in His forgiving love. And so also it is by faith and obedience that we build on Christ as our foundation.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 599.

FOR MEDITATION

“The question that should come home to each of us is, Upon what foundation am I building? We have the privilege of striving for immortal life; and it is of the greatest importance that we dig deep, removing all the rubbish, and build on the solid rock, Christ Jesus. He is the sure foundation. ‘Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.’ 1 Corinthians 3:11. In Him alone is our salvation. ‘There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.’ Acts 4:12.” —*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 61.

FOR PERSONAL STUDY

- Isaiah 26:4
- Psalm 31:3

“Every day we are building character. Let us build on the Rock, Christ Jesus. This sure foundation will stand for every one of us.” —*The Upward Look*, p. 247.

“‘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....

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

“The class represented by the foolish virgins are not hypocrites. They have a regard for the truth, they have advocated the truth, they are attracted to those who believe the truth; but they have not yielded themselves to the Holy Spirit’s working. They have not fallen upon the Rock, Christ Jesus.... The Spirit works upon man’s heart, according to his desire and consent implanting in him a new nature; but the class represented by the foolish virgins have been content with a superficial work. They do not know God. They have not studied His character; they have not held communion with Him; therefore they do not know how to trust, how to look and live.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 411.

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Please read the Missionary Report from West Africa on page 99.

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Sabbath, June 29, 2013

First and Last, Beginning and End

“Jesus was the light of His people—the light of the world—before He came to earth in the form of humanity. The first gleam of light that pierced the gloom in which sin had wrapped the world, came from Christ. And from Him has come every ray of heaven’s brightness that has fallen upon the inhabitants of the earth. In the plan of redemption Christ is the Alpha and the Omega—the First and the Last.” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 43.

CHRIST FOR THE SALVATION OF EVERY SOUL

- 1. What does the Word mean when it says that Jesus is “the beginning and the end” of our salvation? Romans 10:9-11; 1 Peter 1:9; Revelation 22:13.**

“Let no man present the idea that man has little or nothing to do in the great work of overcoming; for God does nothing for man without his cooperation. Neither say that after you have done all you can on your part, Jesus will help you. Christ has said, ‘Without me ye can do nothing.’ John 15:5. From first to last man is to be a laborer together with God.

Unless the Holy Spirit works upon the human heart, at every step we shall stumble and fall. Man's efforts alone are nothing but worthlessness; but cooperation with Christ means a victory. Of ourselves we have no power to repent of sin. Unless we accept divine aid we cannot take the first step toward the Saviour. He says, 'I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end' (Revelation 21:6) in the salvation of every soul." —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 381.

CHRIST IN OUR CONGREGATIONS

2. Do we glorify our Saviour in our congregations and give Him the first place in our worship services? Psalm 111:1; Malachi 3:16, 17.

"Then don't let us ever say that we can repent of ourselves, and then Christ will pardon. No, indeed. It is the favor of God that pardons. It is the favor of God that leads us by His power to repentance. Therefore, it is all of Jesus Christ, everything of Him, and you want to just give back glory to God. Why don't you respond more when you meet together in your meetings? Why don't you have the quickening influence of the Spirit of God when the love of Jesus and His salvation are presented to you? It is because you do not see that Christ is first and last and best, and the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the very Author and Finisher of our faith. You don't realize this, and therefore you remain in your sins. Why is this? It is because Satan is here wrestling and battling for the souls of men. He casts his hellish shadow right athwart our pathway, and all that you can see is the enemy and his power." —*Faith and Works*, p. 73.

CHRIST IN OUR LIVES

3. What experience of the apostle Paul will be made by all who inherit the eternal kingdom? Galatians 2:20.

"When His words of instruction have been received, and have taken possession of us, Jesus is to us an abiding presence, controlling our thoughts and ideas and actions. We are imbued with the instruction of the greatest teacher the world ever knew. A sense of human accountability and of human influence, gives character to our views of life and of daily duties.

"Jesus Christ is everything to us—the first, the last, the best in everything. Jesus Christ, His Spirit, His character, colors everything; it is the warp and woof, the very texture of our entire being. The words of Christ are spirit and life. We cannot, then, center our thoughts upon self; it is no more we that live, but Christ that liveth in us, and He is the hope of glory. Self is dead, but Christ is a living Saviour. Continuing to look unto Jesus, we reflect His image to all around us. We cannot stop to consider our disappointments, or even to talk of them; for a more pleasant picture attracts our sight,—the precious love of Jesus. He dwells in us by the word of truth." —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 389, 390.

4. Why is it so important to have the Lord's approval in everything we do? Colossians 3:23, 24; Ephesians 6:6-8.

“Jesus does not release us from the necessity of effort, but He teaches that we are to make Him first and last and best in everything. We are to engage in no business, follow no pursuit, seek no pleasure, that would hinder the outworking of His righteousness in our character and life. Whatever we do is to be done heartily, as unto the Lord.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 99.

CHRIST AT HOME

5. What place do we need to give to Jesus if we want His blessing in our home? Ephesians 5:2, 22, 25; 6:1; 1 Timothy 5:8.

“Affection may be as clear as crystal and beautiful in its purity, yet it may be shallow because it has not been tested and tried. Make Christ first and last and best in everything. Constantly behold Him, and your love for Him will daily become deeper and stronger as it is submitted to the test of trial. And as your love for Him increases, your love for each other will grow deeper and stronger.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 46.

CHRIST IN EDUCATION

6. Who alone should be our Teacher as the source of all wisdom? Revelation 1:11, first part, 17; 1 Corinthians 1:24.

“In the Teacher sent from God all true educational work finds its center. Of this work today, as verily as of the work He established eighteen hundred years ago, the Saviour speaks in the words, ‘I am the first and the last, and the Living One.’ ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.’ Revelation 1:17, 18; 21:6, R.V.

“In the presence of such a Teacher, with such opportunity for divine education, what worse than folly is it to seek an education apart from Him—to seek to be wise apart from Wisdom; to be true while rejecting Truth; to seek illumination apart from Light, and existence without the Life; to turn from the Fountain of living waters, and hew out broken cisterns, that can hold no water!” —*Education*, p. 83; *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 17.

CHRIST IN MISSIONARY WORK

7. What must be the theme of all teaching and of all evangelism for the salvation of souls? Romans 10:13-15; 1 Corinthians 2:2; 1:23.

“Christ crucified, Christ risen, Christ ascended into the heavens, Christ coming again, should so soften, gladden, and fill the mind of the minister that he will present these truths to the people in love and deep earnestness. The minister will then be lost sight of, and Jesus will be made manifest.” —*Evangelism*, p. 185.

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

And as they go forward, step by step, in the study of the Bible, they will be better prepared to appreciate the beauty and harmony of its precious truths.”—(*Review and Herald*, June 13, 1912) *Evangelism*, p. 485.

FOR MEDITATION

“When the students of prophecy shall set hearts to know the truths of Revelation, they will realize what an importance is attached to this search. Christ Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the Genesis of the Old Testament, and the Revelation of the New. Both meet together in Christ. Adam and God are reconciled by the obedience of the second Adam, who accomplished the work of overcoming the temptations of Satan and redeeming Adam’s disgraceful failure and fall.”—(*MS 33*, 1897) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, pp. 1092, 1093.

FOR PERSONAL STUDY

“It should be the burden of every messenger to set forth the fullness of Christ. When the free gift of Christ’s righteousness is not presented, the discourses are dry and spiritless; the sheep and the lambs are not fed. Said Paul, ‘My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.’ There is marrow and fatness in the gospel. Jesus is the living center of everything. Put Christ into every sermon. Let the preciousness, mercy, and glory of Jesus Christ be dwelt upon until Christ is formed within, the hope of glory.”—*Evangelism*, p. 186.

“He who would grow into a beautiful building for the Lord must cultivate every power of the being. It is only by the right use of the talents that the character can develop harmoniously. Thus we bring to the foundation that which is represented in the Word as gold, silver, precious stones—material that will stand the test of God’s purifying fires. In our character building Christ is our example.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 166.

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Missionary Report from West Africa

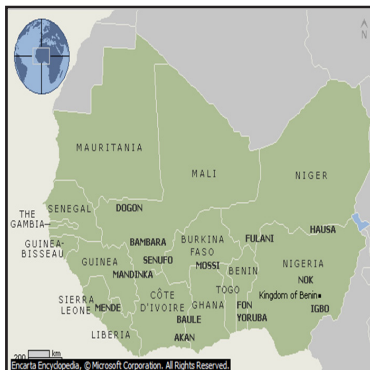
To be read on Sabbath, June 29, 2013

The Special Sabbath School Offering will be gathered on Sabbath, July 6, 2013

As we look at West Africa, my dear brothers and sisters around the world, I want to draw your attention to the greatest commission ever given to the children of men: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matthew 28:19, 20). Also, according to the word of our Lord Jesus Christ, the day of His coming will come only when this gospel of the kingdom has reached every nation and kindred. (Matthew 24:14). This great commission has extended up to the West Africa Region.

West Africa comprises several countries, namely: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Gambia, and Togo.

For some years the message of reformation has been in this region, but it has been very slow in reaching the surrounding areas. As of now it seems that God has opened the way for His church to advance this present truth, and the fact is becoming known that the International Missionary Society has sound doctrine and truth. As a result, of late many denominations are calling for help. This region (West Africa) is dominated by various denominations, but most of them are Pentecostal in their style of worship and beliefs. Most of them keep the Sabbath as the day of worship, but they do not know about the Adventist message and have no knowledge of the Spirit of prophecy. When the message of reformation becomes known, it stirs the curiosity of these sabbatarians, and they express their desire to join with the International Missionary Society. Presently we have witnessed the message of reformation entering a number of West African countries, such as Gambia, Burkina Faso, Guinea, and Senegal; and there are urgent calls from Ivory Coast. While I was in Nigeria, the International Missionary Society approached two such churches and was accepted. In Sierra Leone, two sabbatarian groups joined the International Missionary Society, and a number of pastors and members have been baptized.



But there are some challenges to extending the work. For one, most of the West African countries speak French as their official language although English is spoken by many. Another challenge is the lack of experienced workers and pastors to help the new areas where the message has recently reached. There is a great need of workers in this region, therefore the Evangelism Department proposes that experienced workers who have been in the truth for a number of years be sent from other fields and Unions. Also there is a great need to train more workers from this region to work in the area, for there are many local languages, which makes it necessary for the locals to reach the local people. Primary schools, medical centers (natural health clinics), and health schools would be of great help if they can be established in each country where the message has reached.

A missionary school for training workers would also be of help since we are able to teach English and French. In 2011, the General Conference tried to help this region by conducting evangelism and leadership seminars in countries like Ghana and Liberia. These seminars were attended by individuals from all of the West African countries which are acquainted with the message. As a result, we saw the work extending to other new fields, including Guinea, Gambia, Burkina Faso, and Senegal; but now we need well-established efforts, and in this plan we as a body can assist this region to grow faster than we have witnessed so far. The words ‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature’ (Mark 16:15) are spoken to each one of Christ’s followers. All who are ordained unto the life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellow men. The same longing of soul that He felt for the saving of the lost is to be manifest in them. Not all can fill the same place, but for all there is a place and a work. All upon whom God’s blessings have been bestowed are to respond by actual service; every gift is to be employed for the advancement of His kingdom.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 16.

As the Assistant Leader of the Evangelism Department, I appeal to all members, Fields, Unions, and institutions of the International Missionary Society as a whole to make gifts, contributions, and donations so that by the Lord’s grace the heavenly message may extend from West Africa to North Africa, which is in great need of this gospel of the kingdom. It is now that we can put our riches in the storehouse of God above, where thieves, robbers, and even death itself has no power to deprive us of our possessions, for they are kept by the everlasting Hand.

Your brother and co-worker.

—Alfred Ngwenya

Assistant Leader of the General Conference Evangelism Department