



SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

For the Second Half Year 2013

*Life, Work, and
Teachings of Jesus*

Part 3

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Receiving Jesus' Message

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INTRODUCTION

Have you ever heard someone say, “Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away”? Luke 21:33. Everyone knows that a human being cannot make such a statement. Even if someone said it, it never happened. People speak many words that are as chaff that time scatters and that have no reality.

But not so with the words of Jesus. Has He given a principle? It has consistency and will pass every test. Has He given a promise? Even after decades and generations, He will not forget it; He will keep it and carry it out at the best time. Has He given a prophecy? Centuries may pass, but His words do not lose their power and will absolutely be fulfilled. “Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away.” Matthew 24:35.

The Lord’s messages are not like the speeches of men. His word is powerful and effective, whether immediately or in time. When people asked to be healed, freedom and help were not delayed for months, weeks, or hours; they were imparted instantly. “What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?”

“Lord, that I might receive my sight.”

“Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight,…” Mark 10:51, 52.

“Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all.” Mark 2:11, 12. These things happened because His words were from the Spirit of God and were life in themselves, as He said: “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” John 6:63. They generate not only physical health and physical life but also spiritual healing and joy.

In this half year, we will continue to study the life, work, and teachings of Jesus, focusing on “receiving Jesus’ message.” In the gospel, we come directly in contact with the Saviour’s powerful word. What should we do when we hear His life-giving message to everyone? “Whosoever cometh to Me, and heareth My sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock.” Luke 6:47, 48.

Confirming the wonderful power of the gospel message, the inspired messenger writes: “... Inestimable treasures are in the Bible, and it is like a mine full of precious ore.... Mercy and truth and love are valuable beyond our power to calculate; we cannot have too great a supply of these treasures, and it is in the word of God we find out how we may become possessors of these heavenly riches, and yet why is it that the word of God is uninteresting to many

professed Christians? Is it because the word of God is not spirit and is not life? Has Jesus put upon us an uninteresting task, when He commands us to ‘search the Scriptures’? Jesus says, ‘The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.’... When the heart is brought into harmony with the word, a new life will spring up within you, a new light will shine upon every line of the word, and it will become the voice of God to your soul. In this way you will take celestial observations, and know whither you are going, and be able to make the most of your privileges today.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 182, 183.

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If the weekly lessons are scanned at the last moment just to answer a question, they will not provide much benefit for one’s spiritual life. As we need food every day to sustain life and active energy, so it is with our spiritual life. Lessons from the Holy Scriptures should be studied and meditated on every day, applying in our personal lives that which has been learned. Then they will bring about change in our spiritual lives and impart great blessing.

“Parents should search the Scriptures with their children. They should become familiar with the lessons themselves; then they can assist their children in learning them. Every day some portion of time should be appropriated to the study of the lessons, not merely in learning to mechanically repeat the words, while the mind does not comprehend the meaning; but to go to the very foundation, and become familiar with what is brought out in the lesson. The indifference of the children, in very many cases, is chargeable to the parents. They are indifferent, and the children catch the same spirit. If parents show that they attach importance to the Sabbath school, by giving it respect and prominence, the children will generally copy their example.”—*Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, pp. 53, 54.

“Jesus is the source of power, the fountain of life. He brings us to His word, and from the tree of life presents to us leaves for the healing of sin-sick souls. He leads us to the throne of God, and puts into our mouth a prayer through which we are brought into close contact with Himself. In our behalf He sets in operation the all-powerful agencies of heaven. At every step we touch His living power.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 478.

Let us use this opportunity to profit spiritually from the blessed Source of life and wisdom.

—*The brothers and sisters of the General Conference*

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1

Sabbath, July 6, 2013

The Blessing of Hospitality

“The Bible lays much stress upon the practice of hospitality. Not only does it enjoin hospitality as a duty, but it presents many beautiful pictures of the exercise of this grace and the blessings which it brings. Foremost among these is the experience of Abraham....

“These acts of courtesy God thought of sufficient importance to record in His word; and more than a thousand years later they were referred to by an inspired apostle: ‘Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.’” –*The Adventist Home*, p. 445.

MOVING STEADILY TOWARD THE GOAL

1. Knowing that the final days of His mission were nearing, on what did Jesus focus?

LUKE 9:51 *And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.*

“To the heart of Christ it was a bitter task to press His way against the fears, disappointment, and unbelief of His beloved disciples. It was hard to lead them forward to the anguish and despair that awaited them at Jerusalem. And Satan was at hand to press his temptations upon the Son of man. Why should He now go to Jerusalem, to certain death? All around Him were souls hungering for the bread of life. On every hand were suffering ones waiting for His word of healing. The work to be wrought by the gospel of His grace was but just begun. And He was full of the vigor of manhood’s prime. Why not go forward to the vast fields of the world with the words of His grace, the touch of His healing power?...

“But in God’s great plan the hour had been appointed for the offering of Himself for the sins of men, and that hour was soon to strike. He would not fail nor falter. His steps are turned toward Jerusalem, where His foes have long plotted to take His life; now He will lay it down. He set His face steadfastly to go to persecution, denial, rejection, condemnation, and death.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 486.

2. Through what region did He and His disciples have to pass to reach Jerusalem? Whom did Jesus send ahead to reserve rooms for them in a Samaritan village?

LUKE 9:52 *And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.*

“Upon one occasion Christ sent messengers before Him unto a village of the Samaritans, requesting the people to prepare refreshments for Himself and His disciples.” —*The Sanctified Life*, pp. 57, 58.

KIND RECEPTION AND BLESSING

3. What did the disciples encounter when they went to the town and asked for hospitality? What was the reason for this rejection?

LUKE 9:53 *And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.*

“But the people refused to receive Him, because He was on His way to Jerusalem.... This they interpreted as meaning that Christ showed a preference for the Jews, whom they hated with intense bitterness. Had He come to restore the temple and worship upon Mount Gerizim, they would gladly have received Him; but He was going to Jerusalem, and they would show Him no hospitality. Little did they realize that they were turning from their doors the best gift of Heaven. Jesus invited men to receive Him. He asked favors at their hands, that He might come near to them, to bestow the richest blessings. For every favor manifested toward Him, He requited a more precious grace. But all was lost to the Samaritans because of their prejudice and bigotry.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 486, 487.

4. Unlike those Samaritans, what great sensitivity and hospitality characterized the patriarchs when they saw travelers passing their way? What special grace did the patriarchs receive without realizing who their visitors were?

GENESIS 18:1-5 *And the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground, And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said.*

GENESIS 19:1-3 *And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground; And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night. And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat.*

HEBREW 13:2 *Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.*

“The privilege granted Abraham and Lot is not denied to us. By showing hospitality to God’s children we, too, may receive His angels into our dwellings. Even in our day angels in human form enter the homes of men and are entertained by them. And Christians who live in the light of God’s countenance are always accompanied by unseen angels, and these holy beings leave behind them a blessing in our homes.”
—*The Adventist Home*, p. 445.

HUMAN REACTION TO DISCOURTESY

5. What negative response came from two of Jesus’ disciples? How would we feel if, because of some prejudice, we also would be refused entrance into a village or town?

LUKE 9:54 *And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?*

“The disciples knew that it was the purpose of Christ to bless the Samaritans by His presence; and the coldness, jealousy, and disrespect shown to their Master filled them with surprise and indignation. James and John especially were aroused. That He whom they so highly revered should be thus treated, seemed to them a wrong too great to be passed over without immediate punishment.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 540, 541.

“James and John, Christ’s messengers, were greatly annoyed at the insult shown to their Lord. They were filled with indignation because He had been so rudely treated by the Samaritans whom He was honoring by His presence. They had recently been with Him on the mount of transfiguration, and had seen Him glorified by God, and honored by Moses and Elijah. This manifest dishonor on the part of the Samaritans, should not, they thought, be passed over without marked punishment.

“Coming to Christ, they reported to Him the words of the people, telling Him that they had even refused to give Him a night’s lodging. They thought that a grievous wrong had been done Him, and seeing Mount Carmel in the distance, where Elijah had slain the false prophets, they said, ‘Wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 487.

MAKING A PLACE FOR THE BEST GUEST

6. What reception did Jesus find in another Samaritan village? How was He received by His own people? At what door is He still knocking today?

LUKE 9:56, LAST PART *And they went to another village.*

JOHN 1:11 *He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*

REVELATION 3:20 *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.*

“As a nation, the people of Israel, while desiring the advent of the Messiah, were so far separated from God in heart and life that they could have no true conception of the character or mission of the promised Redeemer.... Their own pride of heart, and their false conceptions of His character and mission, would prevent them from honestly weighing the evidences of His Messiahship.

“For more than a thousand years the Jewish people had awaited the coming of the promised Saviour. Their brightest hopes had rested upon this event. For a thousand years, in song and prophecy, in temple rite and household prayer, His name had been enshrined; and yet when He came, they did not recognize Him as the Messiah for whom they had so long waited. ‘He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.’ John 1:11. To their world-loving hearts the Beloved of heaven was ‘as a root out of a dry ground.’ In their eyes He had ‘no form nor comeliness;’ they discerned in Him no beauty that they should desire Him. Isaiah 53:2.” —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 709, 710.

7. Is it difficult for us to see and recognize our own errors? What may we learn from the Redeemer’s answer?

LUKE 9:55, 56 *But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.*

“They were surprised to see that Jesus was pained by their words, and still more surprised as His rebuke fell upon their ears....

“It is no part of Christ’s mission to compel men to receive Him. It is Satan, and men actuated by his spirit, that seek to compel the conscience. Under a pretense of zeal for righteousness, men who are confederate with evil angels bring suffering upon their fellow men, in order to convert them to their ideas of religion; but Christ is ever showing mercy, ever seeking to win by the revealing of His love. He can admit no rival in the soul, nor accept of partial service; but He desires only voluntary service, the willing surrender of the heart under the constraint of love. There can be no more conclusive evidence that we possess the spirit of Satan than the disposition to hurt and destroy those who do not appreciate our work, or who act contrary to our ideas....

“Every human being, in body, soul, and spirit, is the property of God. Christ died to redeem all. Nothing can be more offensive to God than for men, through religious bigotry, to bring suffering upon those who are the purchase of the Saviour’s blood.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 487, 488.

FOR MEDITATION

“But when the Saviour approached the town, He appeared to be passing on toward Jerusalem. This aroused the enmity of the Samaritans, and instead of sending messengers to invite and even urge Him to tarry with them, they withheld the courtesies which they would have given to a common wayfarer. Jesus never urges His presence upon any, and the Samaritans lost the blessing which would have been granted them had they solicited Him to be their guest.

“We may wonder at this uncourteous treatment of the Majesty of heaven, but how frequently are we who profess to be the followers of Christ

guilty of similar neglect. Do we urge Jesus to take up His abode in our hearts and in our homes? He is full of love, of grace, of blessing, and stands ready to bestow these gifts upon us; but, like the Samaritans, we are often content without them.” –*The Sanctified Life*, p. 58.

* * *

2

Sabbath, July 13, 2013

The Good Samaritan

“In the story of the good Samaritan, Christ illustrates the nature of true religion. He shows that it consists not in systems, creeds, or rites, but in the performance of loving deeds, in bringing the greatest good to others, in genuine goodness.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 497.

A QUESTION OF ETERNAL LIFE

- 1. What question was addressed to the Saviour by an expert in Moses’ law? With what question did Jesus respond to the man, thus avoiding the trap set for Him?**

LUKE 10:25, 26 *And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?*

“With breathless attention the large congregation awaited the answer. The priests and rabbis had thought to entangle Christ by having the lawyer ask this question. But the Saviour entered into no controversy. He required the answer from the questioner himself. ‘What is written in the law?’ He said; ‘how readest thou?’ The Jews still accused Jesus of lightly regarding the law given from Sinai; but He turned the question of salvation upon the keeping of God’s commandments.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 497.

KNOWING AND DOING

- 2. Was this expert lacking in knowledge or obedience to the law? What counsel did Jesus give him after hearing his answer?**

LUKE 10:27, 28 *And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.*

“The lawyer was not satisfied with the position and works of the Pharisees. He had been studying the Scriptures with a desire to learn

their real meaning. He had a vital interest in the matter, and had asked in sincerity, "What shall I do?" In his answer as to the requirements of the law, he passed by all the mass of ceremonial and ritualistic precepts. For these he claimed no value, but presented the two great principles on which hang all the law and the prophets. This answer, being commended by Christ, placed the Saviour on vantage ground with the rabbis. They could not condemn Him for sanctioning that which had been advanced by an expositor of the law....

"Supreme love to God and impartial love to man are the principles to be wrought out in the life. The lawyer found himself a lawbreaker. He was convicted under Christ's searching words. The righteousness of the law, which he claimed to understand, he had not practiced. He had not manifested love toward his fellow man." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 497, 498.

A HOTLY DEBATED QUESTION

3. What other question did the man then ask, trying to justify his lack of love for certain people? What illustration did Jesus use to correct his opinion of and behavior toward his neighbor?

LUKE 10:29, 30 *But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.*

"Among the Jews this question caused endless dispute. They had no doubt as to the heathen and the Samaritans; these were strangers and enemies. But where should the distinction be made among the people of their own nation, and among the different classes of society? Whom should the priest, the rabbi, the elder, regard as neighbor? They spent their lives in a round of ceremonies to make themselves pure. Contact with the ignorant and careless multitude, they taught, would cause defilement that would require wearisome effort to remove. Were they to regard the 'unclean' as neighbors?

"Again Jesus refused to be drawn into controversy. He did not denounce the bigotry of those who were watching to condemn Him. But by a simple story He held up before His hearers such a picture of the outflowing of heaven-born love as touched all hearts, and drew from the lawyer a confession of the truth.

"The way to dispel darkness is to admit light. The best way to deal with error is to present truth. It is the revelation of God's love that makes manifest the deformity and sin of the heart centered in self." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 498.

MORE THAN JUST SEEING, BEING READY TO HELP

4. What teaching was given in the law about such cases? Did the behavior of the priest and the temple assistant show that they understood the nature and purpose of their service?

EXODUS 23:4, 5 *If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.*

LUKE 10:31, 32 *And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.*

“This was no imaginary scene, but an actual occurrence, which was known to be exactly as represented. The priest and the Levite who had passed by on the other side were in the company that listened to Christ's words....

“These men were in sacred office, and professed to expound the Scriptures. They were of the class specially chosen to be representatives of God to the people....

“God in His providence had brought the priest and the Levite along the road where the wounded sufferer lay, that they might see his need of mercy and help. All heaven watched to see if the hearts of these men would be touched with pity for human woe. The Saviour was the One who had instructed the Hebrews in the wilderness; from the pillar of cloud and of fire He had taught a very different lesson from that which the people were now receiving from their priests and teachers. The merciful provisions of the law extended even to the lower animals, which cannot express in words their want and suffering.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 499, 500.

5. What special attention did the despised Samaritan give the bandits' unfortunate victim? Did the benefactor just provide comforting words, or did he willingly serve, giving his time, effort, and means?

LUKE 10:33-35 *But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.*

“He did not question whether the stranger was a Jew or a Gentile. If a Jew, the Samaritan well knew that, were their condition reversed, the man would spit in his face, and pass him by with contempt. But he did not hesitate on account of this. He did not consider that he himself might be in danger of violence by tarrying in the place. It was enough that there was before him a human being in need and suffering. He took off his own garment with which to cover him. The oil and wine provided for his own journey he used to heal and refresh the wounded man. He lifted him on his own beast, and moved slowly along with even pace, so that the stranger might not be jarred, and made to suffer increased pain. He brought him to an inn, and cared for him through the night, watching him tenderly. In the morning, as the sick man had improved, the

Samaritan ventured to go on his way. But before doing this, he placed him in the care of the innkeeper, paid the charges, and left a deposit for his benefit; and not satisfied even with this, he made provision for any further need....” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 503.

FOLLOWING A GOOD EXAMPLE

6. How difficult is it to identify one’s neighbor after hearing the story of the good Samaritan? What may we learn from the man’s generous attitude in overlooking social prejudice?

LUKE 10:36 *Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?*

“Thus the question, ‘Who is my neighbor?’ is forever answered. Christ has shown that our neighbor does not mean merely one of the church or faith to which we belong. It has no reference to race, color, or class distinction. Our neighbor is every person who needs our help. Our neighbor is every soul who is wounded and bruised by the adversary. Our neighbor is everyone who is the property of God.

“In the story of the good Samaritan, Jesus gave a picture of Himself and His mission. Man had been deceived, bruised, robbed, and ruined by Satan, and left to perish; but the Saviour had compassion on our helpless condition. He left His glory, to come to our rescue. He found us ready to die, and He undertook our case. He healed our wounds. He covered us with His robe of righteousness. He opened to us a refuge of safety, and made complete provision for us at His own charges. He died to redeem us. Pointing to His own example, He says to His followers, ‘These things I command you, that ye love one another.’ ‘As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.’ John 15:17; 13:34.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 503, 504.

7. What did Jesus therefore repeat to the expert in the law? What special lesson are we urged to learn from the good Samaritan in this illustration?

LUKE 10:28, LAST PART *Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.*

LUKE 10:37 *And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.*

“The Samaritan had obeyed the dictates of a kind and loving heart, and in this had proved himself a doer of the law. Christ bade the lawyer, ‘Go, and do thou likewise.’ Doing, and not saying merely, is expected of the children of God. ‘He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked.’ 1 John 2:6.

“The lesson is no less needed in the world today than when it fell from the lips of Jesus. Selfishness and cold formality have well-nigh extinguished the fire of love, and dispelled the graces that should make fragrant the character. Many who profess His name have lost sight of the fact that Christians are to represent Christ. Unless there is practical

self-sacrifice for the good of others, in the family circle, in the neighborhood, in the church, and wherever we may be, then whatever our profession, we are not Christians.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 504.

FOR MEDITATION

“If we are Christians, we shall not pass by on the other side, keeping as far as possible from the very ones who most need our help. When we see human beings in distress, whether through affliction or through sin, we shall never say, This does not concern me....

“By faith and prayer press back the power of the enemy. Speak words of faith and courage that will be as a healing balsam to the bruised and wounded one. Many, many, have fainted and become discouraged in the great struggle of life, when one word of kindly cheer would have strengthened them to overcome. Never should we pass by one suffering soul without seeking to impart to him of the comfort wherewith we are comforted of God.

“All this is but a fulfillment of the principle of the law—the principle that is illustrated in the story of the good Samaritan, and made manifest in the life of Jesus. His character reveals the true significance of the law, and shows what is meant by loving our neighbor as ourselves. And when the children of God manifest mercy, kindness, and love toward all men, they also are witnessing to the character of the statutes of heaven.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 504, 505.

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3

Sabbath, July 20, 2013

People Whom Jesus Blessed

“Jesus was ever a lover of children. He accepted their childish sympathy and their open, unaffected love. The grateful praise from their pure lips was music in His ears, and refreshed His spirit when oppressed by contact with crafty and hypocritical men. Wherever the Saviour went, the benignity of His countenance, and His gentle, kindly manner won the love and confidence of children.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 511.

CONSIDERATION OF CHILDREN

- 1. How were the children’s shouting and singing hosannas in the temple regarded by the priests and scribes? Do the Scriptures agree with this evaluation of praise to the Saviour?**

MATTHEW 21:15, 16 *And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased, And said*

unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?

PSALM 8:2 *Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.*

“When Jesus drew near to Jerusalem attended by the rejoicing multitudes that, with shouts of triumph and the waving of palm branches, heralded Him as the Son of David, the jealous Pharisees called upon Him to silence them; but Jesus answered that all this was in fulfillment of prophecy, and if these should hold their peace, the very stones would cry out. The people, intimidated by the threats of the priests and rulers, ceased their joyful proclamation as they entered the gates of Jerusalem; but the children in the temple courts afterward took up the refrain, and, waving their branches of palm, they cried: ‘Hosanna to the Son of David!’ Matthew 21:8-16. When the Pharisees, sorely displeased, said unto Him, ‘Hearest Thou what these say?’ Jesus answered, ‘Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?’ As God wrought through children at the time of Christ’s first advent, so He wrought through them in giving the message of His second advent. God’s word must be fulfilled, that the proclamation of the Saviour’s coming should be given to all peoples, tongues, and nations.”
—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 367, 368.

JESUS’ APPRECIATION OF CHILDREN

2. What comparison did Jesus give when the disciples were arguing over which of them should be the greatest? Differing widely from the scribes and disciples, how did He value the little children?

MARK 9:33-37 *And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest. And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.*

“Those who possess the spirit of Christ will have no ambition to occupy a position above their brethren. It is those who are small in their own eyes who will be accounted great in the sight of God. ‘And He took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when He had taken him in His arms, He said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in My name, receiveth Me: and whosoever shall receive Me, receiveth not Me, but Him that sent Me’ (verses 36, 37).” —*The Sanctified Life*, pp. 55, 56.

“It is still true that children are the most susceptible to the teachings of the gospel; their hearts are open to divine influences, and strong to retain the lessons received. The little children may be Christians, having

an experience in accordance with their years. They need to be educated in spiritual things, and parents should give them every advantage, that they may form characters after the similitude of the character of Christ.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 515.

3. What did Jesus pray to His Father concerning the sincerity and willingness of children? According to the Spirit of prophecy, what did He see in the children who were brought to Him to receive His blessing?

MATTHEW 11:25 *At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.*

“The beauty and preciousness of truth, which are undiscerned by the worldly-wise, are constantly unfolding to those who have a trusting, childlike desire to know and to do the will of God. We discern the truth by becoming, ourselves, partakers of the divine nature.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 26, 27.

“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 grown-up people, many of whom were the worldly-wise and hardhearted. In His teaching He came down to their level. He, the Majesty of heaven, did not disdain to answer their questions, and simplify His important lessons to meet their childish understanding. He planted in their minds the seeds of truth, which in after years would spring up, and bear fruit unto eternal life.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 512, 515.

THE MOTHERS’ WISH FOR THEIR CHILDREN

4. Having appreciated their contact with the Lord, what noble desire did some mothers have for their children? Are we today constantly presenting our children at the altar of the Lord in prayer for Him to guide and bless them?

LUKE 18:15, FIRST PART *And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them.*

MATTHEW 19:13, FIRST PART *Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray.*

“Among the Jews it was customary for children to be brought to some rabbi, that he might lay his hands upon them in blessing....” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 511.

“In the days of Christ mothers brought their children to Him, that He might lay His hands upon them in blessing. By this act they showed their faith in Jesus and the intense anxiety of their hearts for the present and future welfare of the little ones committed to their care.” —*The Adventist Home*, p. 273.

“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. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his birth. If we will live in communion with God, we too may expect the divine Spirit to mold our little ones, even from their earliest moments.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 511, 512.

NEED OF CHRISTIAN SENSITIVITY

5. Was Jesus pleased with the way the disciples treated the children? How is it with us today? Are we through our words and actions bringing the children and youth to Jesus, or are we pushing them away?

MATTHEW 19:13, LAST PART ... *And the disciples rebuked them.*

LUKE 18:15 *And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them.*

MARK 10:14, FIRST PART ... *But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased.*

“... But the Saviour’s disciples thought His work too important to be interrupted in this way. 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.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 511.

SPECIAL ATTENTION FOR THE CHILDREN AND YOUTH

6. How willing was Jesus to give His attention to the children, considering them as potential candidates for heaven? In what manner should we receive the kingdom of God?

MATTHEW 19:14 *But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.*

MARK 10:15 *Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.*

“One mother with her child had left her home to find Jesus. On the way she told a neighbor her errand, and the neighbor wanted to have Jesus bless her children. 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. But He waited to see how the disciples would treat them. When He saw them send the mothers away, thinking to do Him a favor, He showed them their error, saying, ‘Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God....’

“When Jesus told the disciples not to forbid the children to come to Him, He was speaking to His followers in all ages—to officers of the church, to ministers, helpers, and all Christians. Jesus is drawing the children, and He bids us, Suffer them to come; as if He would say, They will come if you do not hinder them.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 511, 512, 517.

7. What was Jesus very pleased to do, and with what tenderness? Following the Saviour’s example, how much time, attention, and love should we devote to the children and youth in the family and in the church, especially in our difficult time?

MATTHEW 19:15 *And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence.*

MARK 10:16 *And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.*

ISAIAH 8:18 *Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.*

“He took the children in His arms, He laid His hands upon them, and gave them the blessing for which they came.

“The mothers were comforted. They returned to their homes strengthened and blessed by the words of Christ. They were encouraged to take up their burden with new cheerfulness, and to work hopefully for their children. 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.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 512.

FOR MEDITATION

“Fathers and mothers should look upon their children as younger members of the Lord’s family, committed to them to educate for heaven. The lessons that we ourselves learn from Christ we should give to our children, as the young minds can receive them, little by little opening to them the beauty of the principles of heaven. Thus the Christian home becomes a school, where the parents serve as underteachers, while Christ Himself is the chief instructor.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 515.

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Rich and Still Poor

“Christ’s dealing with the young man is presented as an object lesson. God has given us the rule of conduct which every one of His servants must follow. It is obedience to His law, not merely a legal obedience, but an obedience which enters into the life, and is exemplified in the character. God has set His own standard of character for all who would become subjects of His kingdom. Only those who will become co-workers with Christ, only those who will say, Lord, all I have and all I am is Thine, will be acknowledged as sons and daughters of God. All should consider what it means to desire heaven, and yet to turn away because of the conditions laid down. Think of what it means to say ‘No’ to Christ.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 523.

SHOWING INTEREST AND HUMILITY

1. What question did a young ruler ask the Saviour of the world? How respectful were his speech and behavior?

MATTHEW 19:16 *And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?*

LUKE 18:18 *And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*

MARK 10:17 *And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?*

“He was a member of the honored council of the Jews....

“The young man who asked this question was a ruler. He had great possessions, and occupied a position of responsibility. He saw the love that Christ manifested toward the children brought to Him; he saw how tenderly He received them, and took them up in His arms, and his heart kindled with love for the Saviour. He felt a desire to be His disciple. He was so deeply moved that as Christ was going on His way, he ran after Him, and kneeling at His feet, asked with sincerity and earnestness the question so important to his soul and to the soul of every human being, ‘Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?’” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 520, 518.

2. To whom did Jesus lead the ruler’s mind? How did He answer the man’s question?

MARK 10:18 *And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.*

MATTHEW 19:17 *And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.*

“Jesus was free from all sin and error; there was not a trace of imperfection in His life or character. He maintained spotless purity under circumstances the most trying. True, He declared, ‘There is none good but one, that is, God’; but again He said, ‘I and My Father are one.’ Jesus speaks of Himself as well as the Father as God, and claims for Himself perfect righteousness.” –(MS 141, 1901) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 929.

“‘Why callest thou Me good?’ said Christ, ‘there is none good but One, that is, God.’ Jesus desired to test the ruler’s sincerity, and to draw from him the way in which he regarded Him as good. Did he realize that the One to whom he was speaking was the Son of God? What was the true sentiment of his heart?” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 518.

FOUNDATION AND GOAL OF THE COMMANDMENTS

3. What do the five commandments that Jesus mentioned have in common? Why did He put the commandment to love one’s neighbor as oneself at the end of His answer?

MATTHEW 19:18, 19 *He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

ROMANS 13:8, 9 *Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

“‘If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.’ Very many who profess to be Christ’s disciples will apparently pass along smoothly in this world, and will be regarded as upright, godly men, when they have a plague spot at the core, which taints their whole character and corrupts their religious experience. ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.’ This forbids us to take advantage of our fellow men in order to advantage ourselves. We are forbidden to wrong our neighbor in anything. We should not view the matter from the worldling’s standpoint. To deal with our fellow men in every instance just as we should wish them to deal with us is a rule which we should apply to ourselves practically. God’s laws are to be obeyed to the letter. In all our intercourse and deal with our fellow men, whether believers or unbelievers, this rule is to be applied: ‘Love thy neighbor as thyself.’” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 43.

YOU LACK ONE THING

4. From his answer, may we say that the young man was satisfied with his life? Did he really understand the deep message of Jesus?

MARK 10:20 *And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.*

MATTHEW 19:20 *The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?*

“This ruler had a high estimate of his own righteousness. He did not really suppose that he was defective in anything, yet he was not altogether satisfied. He felt the want of something that he did not possess. Could not Jesus bless him as He blessed the little children, and satisfy his soul want?...

“His claim that he had kept the law of God was a deception. He showed that riches were his idol. He could not keep the commandments of God while the world was first in his affections. He loved the gifts of God more than he loved the Giver.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 518, 520.

5. Was obedience to the Ten Commandments not sufficient through the grace and help of the Lord to give one eternal life? Why did Jesus add the additional requirement?

MATTHEW 19:21 *Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.*

MARK 10:21 *Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.*

“Christ was drawn to this young man. He knew him to be sincere in his assertion, ‘All these things have I kept from my youth.’ The Redeemer longed to create in him that discernment which would enable him to see the necessity of heart devotion and Christian goodness. He longed to see in him a humble and contrite heart, conscious of the supreme love to be given to God, and hiding its lack in the perfection of Christ....

“‘One thing thou lackest,’ Jesus said. ‘If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow Me.’ Christ read the ruler’s heart. Only one thing he lacked, but that was a vital principle. He needed the love of God in the soul. This lack, unless supplied, would prove fatal to him; his whole nature would become corrupted. By indulgence, selfishness would strengthen. That he might receive the love of God, his supreme love of self must be surrendered.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 519.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RULER’S DECISION

6. What reveals the decision made by the young man when he heard the Saviour’s answer? Are we not doing the same when we cling to our own ideas and attitudes?

MATTHEW 19:22 *But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.*

LUKE 18:23 *And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.*

“Christ gave this man a test. He called upon him to choose between the heavenly treasure and worldly greatness. The heavenly treasure was assured him if he would follow Christ. But self must yield; his will must be given into Christ’s control. The very holiness of God was offered to the young ruler. He had the privilege of becoming a son of God, and a coheir with Christ to the heavenly treasure. But he must take up the cross, and follow the Saviour in the path of self-denial....

“Christ’s words were verily to the ruler the invitation, ‘Choose you this day whom ye will serve.’ Joshua 24:15. The choice was left with him. Jesus was yearning for his conversion. He had shown him the plague spot in his character, and with what deep interest He watched the issue as the young man weighed the question! If he decided to follow Christ, he must obey His words in everything. He must turn from his ambitious projects. With what earnest, anxious longing, what soul hunger, did the Saviour look at the young man, hoping that he would yield to the invitation of the Spirit of God!” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 519, 520.

7. What is a serious problem for rich people? What counsel did Jesus give so one may overcome this and other obstacles in the way to heaven?

MATTHEW 19:23 *Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

LUKE 18:24, 25 *And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.*

MATTHEW 6:20, FIRST PART, 21 *But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.... For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

MATTHEW 6:33, FIRST PART *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.*

“Christ made the only terms which could place the ruler where he would perfect a Christian character. His words were words of wisdom, though they appeared severe and exacting. In accepting and obeying them was the ruler’s only hope of salvation. His exalted position and his possessions were exerting a subtle influence for evil upon his character. If cherished, they would supplant God in his affections. To keep back little or much from God was to retain that which would lessen his moral strength and efficiency; for if the things of this world are cherished, however uncertain and unworthy they may be, they will become all-absorbing....

“When Christ’s followers give back to the Lord His own, they are accumulating treasure which will be given to them when they shall hear the words, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant;... enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.’ ‘Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.’ Matthew 25:23; Hebrews 12:2.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 520, 523.

“Christ had offered the young man fellowship with Himself. ‘Follow Me,’ He said. But the Saviour was not so much to him as his own name among men or his possessions. To give up his earthly treasure, that was seen, for the heavenly treasure, that was unseen, was too great a risk. He refused the offer of eternal life, and went away, and ever after the world was to receive his worship. Thousands are passing through this ordeal, weighing Christ against the world; and many choose the world. Like the young ruler, they turn from the Saviour, saying in their hearts, I will not have this Man as my leader.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 520, 523.

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5

Sabbath, August 3, 2013

Why Is There Sickness?

“It is by suffering that our virtues are tested, and our faith tried. It is in the day of trouble that we feel the preciousness of Jesus. You will be given opportunity to say, ‘Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him’ (Job 13:15). Oh, it is so precious to think that opportunities are afforded us to confess our faith in the face of danger, and amid sorrow, sickness, pain, and death....” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 117, 118.

A TEST IN A BELOVED FAMILY

1. What message did Mary and Martha of Bethany send to Jesus one day? What was their reason for doing this?

JOHN 11:1-3 *Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.*

“Sorrow entered the peaceful home where Jesus had rested. Lazarus was stricken with sudden illness, and his sisters sent to the Saviour, saying, ‘Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick.’ They saw the violence of the disease that had seized their brother, but they knew that Christ had shown Himself able to heal all manner of diseases. They believed that He would sympathize with them in their distress; therefore they made no urgent demand for His immediate presence, but sent only the confiding message, ‘He whom Thou lovest is sick.’ They thought that He would immediately respond to their message, and be with them as soon as He could reach Bethany.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 525, 526.

DELAYING THE VISIT

2. Can sicknesses always be considered the consequence of a person's improper actions? Humanly speaking, what would one think of the Master's delay in responding after He received this message?

JOHN 9:2 *And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?*

JOHN 11:4-6 *When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.*

“Disease never comes without a cause. The way is prepared, and disease invited, by disregard of the laws of health. Many suffer in consequence of the transgression of their parents. While they are not responsible for what their parents have done, it is nevertheless their duty to ascertain what are and what are not violations of the laws of health. They should avoid the wrong habits of their parents and, by correct living, place themselves in better conditions.

“The greater number, however, suffer because of their own wrong course of action.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 234.

“Anxiously they waited for a word from Jesus. As long as the spark of life was yet alive in their brother, they prayed and watched for Jesus to come. But the messenger returned without Him. Yet he brought the message, ‘This sickness is not unto death,’ and they clung to the hope that Lazarus would live. Tenderly they tried to speak words of hope and encouragement to the almost unconscious sufferer. When Lazarus died, they were bitterly disappointed; but they felt the sustaining grace of Christ, and this kept them from reflecting any blame on the Saviour.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 526.

DEATH TAKES ITS VICTIM

3. What did Jesus decide to do after some days, even though the region of Judea was not a welcoming place for Him? What did the disciples recall?

JOHN 11:7-10 *Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judaea again. His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.*

“This delay was a mystery to the disciples. What a comfort His presence would be to the afflicted household! they thought. His strong affection for the family at Bethany was well known to the disciples, and they were surprised that He did not respond to the sad message, ‘He whom Thou lovest is sick.’

“During the two days Christ seemed to have dismissed the message from His mind; for He did not speak of Lazarus. The disciples thought of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus. They had wondered why Jesus, with the power to perform wonderful miracles, had permitted John to languish in prison, and to die a violent death.... The Saviour had warned His disciples of trials, losses, and persecution. Would He forsake them in trial? Some questioned if they had mistaken His mission. All were deeply troubled....

“He who walks in a path of his own choosing, where God has not called him, will stumble. For him day is turned into night, and wherever he may be, he is not secure.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 526, 527.

4. In the meantime, what had happened to Lazarus, the beloved friend of Jesus? Did the disciples understand what had happened?

JOHN 11:11-14 *These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.*

“The disciples felt rebuked. They had been disappointed because Christ did not respond more promptly to the message. They had been tempted to think that He had not the tender love for Lazarus and his sisters that they had thought He had, or He would have hastened back with the messenger. But the words, ‘Our friend Lazarus sleepeth,’ awakened right feelings in their minds. They were convinced that Christ had not forgotten His suffering friends.

“Christ represents death as a sleep to His believing children. Their life is hid with Christ in God, and until the last trump shall sound those who die will sleep in Him.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 527.

TRUST IN JESUS, EVEN UNDER SORROWFUL CIRCUMSTANCES

5. Having the power to heal with only a few words, why did Jesus not go immediately to help his friend and comfort his sisters? What opportunity was Lazarus’ death for the disciples?

JOHN 11:15, 16 *And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him. Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.*

“For their [the disciples’] sake He permitted Lazarus to die. Had He restored him from illness to health, the miracle that is the most positive evidence of His divine character, would not have been performed....

“Therefore Christ remained away.... He permitted Lazarus to pass under the dominion of death; and the suffering sisters saw their brother laid in the grave. Christ knew that as they looked on the dead face of their brother their faith in their Redeemer would be severely tried. But

He knew that because of the struggle through which they were now passing their faith would shine forth with far greater power....

“To all who are reaching out to feel the guiding hand of God, the moment of greatest discouragement is the time when divine help is nearest....

“In delaying to come to Lazarus, Christ had a purpose of mercy toward those who had not received Him. He tarried, that by raising Lazarus from the dead He might give to His stubborn, unbelieving people another evidence that He was indeed ‘the resurrection, and the life.’... This crowning miracle, the raising of Lazarus, was to set the seal of God on His work and on His claim to divinity.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 528, 529.

6. When Jesus and His disciples reached Bethany, what were a number of Jews trying to do? What conviction did Martha express to the Saviour?

JOHN 11:17-21 *Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already. Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off: And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house. Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.*

“The great outward display observed by the Jews at the death of friends or relatives was not in harmony with the spirit of Christ. He heard the sound of wailing from the hired mourners, and He did not wish to meet the sisters in the scene of confusion. Among the mourning friends were relatives of the family, some of whom held high positions of responsibility in Jerusalem. Among these were some of Christ’s bitterest enemies. Christ knew their purposes, and therefore He did not at once make Himself known.

“Martha hastened to meet Jesus, her heart agitated by conflicting emotions.... With grief surging in her heart because Christ had not come before, yet with hope that even now He would do something to comfort them, she said, ‘Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.’ Over and over again, amid the tumult made by the mourners, the sisters had repeated these words.... But looking into that face of love, she added, ‘I know, that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee.’” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 529.

7. Was His visit really too late to experience a great revelation of God’s power? What powerful statement did Jesus make?

JOHN 11:22, 23 *But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.*

“Jesus encouraged her faith, saying, ‘Thy brother shall rise again.’ His answer was not intended to inspire hope of an immediate change. He carried Martha’s thoughts beyond the present restoration of her broth-

er, and fixed them upon the resurrection of the just. This He did that she might see in the resurrection of Lazarus a pledge of the resurrection of all the righteous dead, and an assurance that it would be accomplished by the Saviour's power." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 530.

FOR MEDITATION

"We are to rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. The answer to our prayers may not come as quickly as we desire, and it may not be just what we have asked; but He who knows what is for the highest good of His children will bestow a much greater good than we have asked, if we do not become faithless and discouraged...."

"To all who are reaching out to feel the guiding hand of God, the moment of greatest discouragement is the time when divine help is nearest.... From every temptation and every trial He will bring them forth with firmer faith and a richer experience." —*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 92.

"Many have expected that God would keep them from sickness merely because they have asked Him to do so. But God did not regard their prayers, because their faith was not made perfect by works. God will not work a miracle to keep those from sickness who have no care for themselves...." —*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 26.

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6

Sabbath, August 10, 2013

From Death to Life

"God does not say, Ask once, and you shall receive. He bids us ask. Unwearily persist in prayer. The persistent asking brings the petitioner into a more earnest attitude, and gives him an increased desire to receive the things for which he asks. Christ said to Martha at the grave of Lazarus, 'If thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God.' John 11:40." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 145.

HOPE FOR THE WEEPING SISTERS

1. What hope did Jesus give the mind and heart of the grief-stricken sister? As shown by her answer, what faith did Martha have?

JOHN 11:24-27 *Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.*

“In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived. ‘He that hath the Son hath life.’ 1 John 5:12. The divinity of Christ is the believer’s assurance of eternal life. ‘He that believeth in Me,’ said Jesus, ‘though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?’ Christ here looks forward to the time of His second coming. Then the righteous dead shall be raised incorruptible, and the living righteous shall be translated to heaven without seeing death. The miracle which Christ was about to perform, in raising Lazarus from the dead, would represent the resurrection of all the righteous dead.... He who Himself was soon to die upon the cross stood with the keys of death, a conqueror of the grave, and asserted His right and power to give eternal life....

“She did not comprehend in all their significance the words spoken by Christ, but she confessed her faith in His divinity, and her confidence that He was able to perform whatever it pleased Him to do.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 530.

2. What trust did Mary express despite her sorrow? Why was Jesus moved and deeply troubled?

JOHN 11:28-33 *And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee. As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him. Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him. The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there. Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled,*

“The cries of the mourners were painful to her; for she longed for a few quiet words alone with Jesus. But she knew of the envy and jealousy cherished in the hearts of some present against Christ, and she was restrained from fully expressing her grief.

“... He read the hearts of all assembled. He saw that with many, what passed as a demonstration of grief was only pretense. He knew that some in the company, now manifesting hypocritical sorrow, would ere long be planning the death, not only of the mighty miracle worker, but of the one to be raised from the dead. Christ could have stripped from them their robe of pretended sorrow. But He restrained His righteous indignation. The words He could in all truth have spoken, He did not speak, because of the loved one kneeling at His feet in sorrow, who truly believed in Him.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 533.

AT THE GRAVESITE

3. When the Saviour saw where Lazarus was buried, what feelings did He have? At the same time, what was expressed by some of those who were present?

JOHN 11:34-37 *And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?*

“... It was not only because of His human sympathy with Mary and Martha that Jesus wept. In His tears there was a sorrow as high above human sorrow as the heavens are higher than the earth. Christ did not weep for Lazarus; for He was about to call him from the grave. He wept because many of those now mourning for Lazarus would soon plan the death of Him who was the resurrection and the life.... Others, seeking to drop the seed of unbelief into the hearts of those present, said derisively, ‘Could not this Man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?’ If it were in Christ’s power to save Lazarus, why then did He suffer him to die?...”

“... The weight of the grief of ages was upon Him. He saw the terrible effects of the transgression of God’s law. He saw that in the history of the world, beginning with the death of Abel, the conflict between good and evil had been unceasing. Looking down the years to come, He saw the suffering and sorrow, tears and death, that were to be the lot of men.... The woes of the sinful race were heavy upon His soul, and the fountain of His tears was broken up as He longed to relieve all their distress.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 533, 534.

4. Did Martha have any idea of Jesus’ purpose? Can the glory of God be manifested only when a person is alive?

JOHN 11:38-40 *Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?*

“Christ reproved Martha, but His words were spoken with the utmost gentleness. ‘Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?’ Why should you doubt in regard to My power? Why reason in opposition to My requirements? You have My word. If you will believe, you shall see the glory of God. Natural impossibilities cannot prevent the work of the Omnipotent One. Skepticism and unbelief are not humility. Implicit belief in Christ’s word is true humility, true self-surrender.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 535.

REVELATION OF GOD’S GLORY

5. What did Jesus do when the entrance to the grave was opened? Even at this moment, for whom did He pray?

JOHN 11:41, 42 *Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.*

“Calmly Christ stands before the tomb... Not long before this, Christ’s enemies had accused Him of blasphemy, and had taken up stones to cast at Him because He claimed to be the Son of God. They accused Him of performing miracles by the power of Satan. But here Christ claims God as His Father, and with perfect confidence declares that He is the Son of God.

“In all that He did, Christ was cooperating with His Father. Ever He had been careful to make it evident that He did not work independently; it was by faith and prayer that He wrought His miracles. Christ desired all to know His relationship with His Father... Here the disciples and the people were to be given the most convincing evidence in regard to the relationship existing between Christ and God. They were to be shown that Christ’s claim was not a deception.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 535, 536.

6. Instead of continuing to mourn and weep, what did the life-giving Saviour cry? To everyone’s astonishment, what happened when He gave this command?

JOHN 11:43, 44 *And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.*

“His voice, clear and penetrating, pierces the ear of the dead. As He speaks, divinity flashes through humanity. In His face, which is lighted up by the glory of God, the people see the assurance of His power. Every eye is fastened on the entrance to the cave. Every ear is bent to catch the slightest sound. With intense and painful interest all wait for the test of Christ’s divinity, the evidence that is to substantiate His claim to be the Son of God, or to extinguish the hope forever.

“There is a stir in the silent tomb, and he who was dead stands at the door of the sepulcher. His movements are impeded by the graveclothes in which he was laid away, and Christ says to the astonished spectators, ‘Loose him, and let him go.’ ...Lazarus is set free, and stands before the company, not as one emaciated from disease, and with feeble, tottering limbs, but as a man in the prime of life, and in the vigor of a noble manhood. His eyes beam with intelligence and with love for his Saviour. He casts himself in adoration at the feet of Jesus.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 536.

7. Amazed and astonished, while the sisters received their brother back, whom did many of those present accept? Did this great manifestation of God’s power and glory convince everyone who was there?

JOHN 11:45, 46 *Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.*

“The beholders are at first speechless with amazement. Then there follows an inexpressible scene of rejoicing and thanksgiving. The sisters

receive their brother back to life as the gift of God, and with joyful tears they brokenly express their thanks to the Saviour. But while brother, sisters, and friends are rejoicing in this reunion, Jesus withdraws from the scene. When they look for the Lifegiver, He is not to be found.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 536.

FOR MEDITATION

“During His ministry, Jesus raised the dead to life. He raised the son of the widow of Nain, the daughter of Jairus, and Lazarus; but these were not clothed with immortality. After they were raised, they continued to be subject to death. But those who came forth from the grave at Christ’s resurrection were raised to everlasting life. They were the multitude of captives that ascended with Him as trophies of His victory over death and the grave.”—*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 304, 305.

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7

Sabbath, August 17, 2013

Where Hardness of Heart Leads

“If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.’ These words were proved true in the history of the Jewish nation. Christ’s last and crowning miracle was the raising of Lazarus of Bethany, after he had been dead four days. The Jews were given this wonderful evidence of the Saviour’s divinity, but they rejected it. Lazarus rose from the dead and bore his testimony before them, but they hardened their hearts against all evidence, and even sought to take his life. John 12:9-11.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 265.

DIVINE EVIDENCE NOT APPRECIATED

- 1. Was the great miracle of Lazarus’ resurrection sufficient to convince everyone of the Saviour’s divinity? Instead of giving gratitude to God for the marvelous sign, what was the primary interest of some Jewish leaders?**

JOHN 11:46, 47 *But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done. Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles.*

“Bethany was so near Jerusalem that the news of the raising of Lazarus was soon carried to the city. Through spies who had witnessed the miracle the Jewish rulers were speedily in possession of the facts. A meeting of the Sanhedrin was at once called to decide as to what should be done. Christ had now fully made manifest His control of death and

the grave. That mighty miracle was the crowning evidence offered by God to men that He had sent His Son into the world for their salvation.... Many who witnessed the resurrection of Lazarus were led to believe on Jesus. But the hatred of the priests against Him was intensified. They had rejected all lesser evidence of His divinity, and they were only enraged at this new miracle.... No artifice could explain away such evidence. For this very reason the enmity of the priests grew deadlier. They were more than ever determined to put a stop to Christ's work." *—The Desire of Ages*, p. 537.

2. Why were the rulers so afraid of Jesus' growing influence among the people? Was there any danger in His actions that might provoke a bloody intervention by the Romans?

JOHN 11:48 *If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.*

"They [the Pharisees] had tried to arouse the Herodians against Him. They represented that He was seeking to set up a rival kingdom, and consulted with them how to destroy Him. To excite the Romans against Him, they had represented Him as trying to subvert their authority. They had tried every pretext to cut Him off from influencing the people. But so far their attempts had been foiled. The multitudes who witnessed His works of mercy and heard His pure and holy teachings knew that these were not the deeds and words of a Sabbathbreaker or blasphemer. Even the officers sent by the Pharisees had been so influenced by His words that they could not lay hands on Him. In desperation the Jews had finally passed an edict that any man who professed faith in Jesus should be cast out of the synagogue." *—The Desire of Ages*, p. 538.

THE MOST TERRIBLE RESOLUTION IN HISTORY

3. What was finally the proposal of the most influential speaker of the Sanhedrin? What reasoning did he present to pressure the council to reach the consensus he desired concerning Jesus?

JOHN 11:49, 50 *And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.*

"While the council was at the height of its perplexity, Caiaphas the high priest arose. Caiaphas was a proud and cruel man, overbearing and intolerant.... Caiaphas had studied the prophecies, and although ignorant of their true meaning, he spoke with great authority and assurance.... Even if Jesus were innocent, urged the high priest, He must be put out of the way. He was troublesome, drawing the people to Himself, and lessening the authority of the rulers. He was only one; it was better that He should die than that the authority of the rulers should be weakened. If the people were to lose confidence in their rulers, the national power would be destroyed. Caiaphas urged that after this miracle

the followers of Jesus would likely rise in revolt. The Romans will then come, he said, and will close our temple, and abolish our laws, destroying us as a nation. What is the life of this Galilean worth in comparison with the life of the nation?... Better that one man perish than that the whole nation be destroyed.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 539, 540.

4. How was the second part of Caiaphas’ argument to be understood? What deep significance did the evangelist see in this proposal to condemn Jesus to death?

JOHN 11:51, 52 *And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.*

“In declaring that one man should die for the nation, Caiaphas indicated that he had some knowledge of the prophecies, although it was very limited. But John, in his account of this scene, takes up the prophecy, and shows its broad and deep significance....

“On the lips of Caiaphas this most precious truth was turned into a lie. The policy he advocated was based on a principle borrowed from heathenism. Among the heathen, the dim consciousness that one was to die for the human race had led to the offering of human sacrifices. So Caiaphas proposed by the sacrifice of Jesus to save the guilty nation, not from transgression, but in transgression, that they might continue in sin. And by his reasoning he thought to silence the remonstrances of those who might dare to say that as yet nothing worthy of death had been found in Jesus.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 540.

5. On the basis of such ideas, what conclusion did the council reach at the end of their meeting?

JOHN 11:53 *Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.*

“The Sanhedrin was not at this time a legal assembly. It existed only by tolerance. Some of its number questioned the wisdom of putting Christ to death. They feared that this would excite an insurrection among the people, causing the Romans to withhold further favors from the priesthood, and to take from them the power they still held....

“Satan told them that in order to maintain their authority, they must put Jesus to death. This counsel they followed. The fact that they might lose the power they then exercised, was, they thought, sufficient reason for coming to some decision. With the exception of a few who dared not speak their minds, the Sanhedrin received the words of Caiaphas as the words of God. Relief came to the council; the discord ceased. They resolved to put Christ to death at the first favorable opportunity. In rejecting the proof of the divinity of Jesus, these priests and rulers had locked themselves in impenetrable darkness. They had come wholly under the sway of Satan, to be hurried by him over the brink of eternal ruin. Yet such was their deception that they were well pleased with themselves. They regarded themselves as patriots, who were seeking the nation’s salvation.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 539, 541.

6. Was it Jesus' intention to hasten the crisis? In accordance with the instruction He had given His disciples, what did He do under these circumstances?

MATTHEW 10:23 *When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another.*

JOHN 11:54 *Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples.*

“The Sanhedrin feared, however, to take rash measures against Jesus, lest the people should become incensed, and the violence meditated toward Him should fall upon themselves. On this account the council delayed to execute the sentence they had pronounced. The Saviour understood the plotting of the priests. He knew that they longed to remove Him, and that their purpose would soon be accomplished. But it was not His place to hasten the crisis, and He withdrew from that region, taking the disciples with Him. Thus by His own example Jesus again enforced the instruction He had given to the disciples, ‘When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another.’ Matthew 10:23. There was a wide field in which to work for the salvation of souls; and unless loyalty to Him required it, the Lord’s servants were not to imperil their lives.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 541.

7. What order was issued so the Saviour would fall into their hands? While they were tempting Him and plotting against Him, what great testimony had He given during His years of ministry?

JOHN 11:55-57 *And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves. Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast? Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should show it, that they might take him.*

ACTS 10:38, 39 *How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree.*

“Jesus had now given three years of public labor to the world. His example of self-denial and disinterested benevolence was before them. His life of purity, of suffering and devotion, was known to all. Yet this short period of three years was as long as the world could endure the presence of its Redeemer.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 541.

“His life had been one of persecution and insult. Driven from Bethlehem by a jealous king, rejected by His own people at Nazareth, condemned to death without a cause at Jerusalem, Jesus, with His few faithful followers, found a temporary asylum in a strange city. He who was ever touched by human woe, who healed the sick, restored sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and speech to the dumb, who fed the hungry and comforted the sorrowful, was driven from the people He had labored to save. He who walked upon the heaving billows, and by a word silenced their angry roaring, who cast out devils that in departing acknowledged Him to be the Son of God, who broke the slumbers of the dead, who held thousands entranced by His words of wisdom, was unable to reach the hearts of those who were blinded by prejudice and hatred, and who stubbornly rejected the light.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 541, 542.

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8

Sabbath, August 24, 2013

Not by Recommendation

“The one who stands nearest to Christ will be he who on earth has drunk most deeply of the spirit of His self-sacrificing love—love that ‘vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,... seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil’ (1 Corinthians 13:4, 5)—love that moves the disciple, as it moved our Lord, to give all, to live and labor and sacrifice, even unto death, for the saving of humanity.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 549.

HUMAN AMBITION AMONG THE DISCIPLES

1. **What discussion developed among the disciples more than once? Was the issue thus settled, or did they extend their speculation beyond this earth to the kingdom of heaven?**

LUKE 9:46 *Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest.*

MATTHEW 18:1 *At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?*

“There was in these words a solemnity and impressiveness which the disciples were far from comprehending. That which Christ discerned they could not see. They did not understand the nature of Christ’s kingdom, and this ignorance was the apparent cause of their contention. But the real cause lay deeper. By explaining the nature of the kingdom, Christ might for the time have quelled their strife; but this would not have touched the underlying cause. Even after they had received the fullest knowledge, any question of precedence might have renewed

the trouble. Thus disaster would have been brought to the church after Christ's departure. The strife for the highest place was the outworking of that same spirit which was the beginning of the great controversy in the worlds above, and which had brought Christ from heaven to die." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 435.

2. How was Jesus preparing His disciples for the difficult days that lay ahead? Did they understand the tests they would go through?

MARK 10:32-34 *And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him, Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again.*

LUKE 18:34 *And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.*

"Had they not just before proclaimed everywhere, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand'? Had not Christ Himself promised that many should sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God? Had He not promised to all who had left aught for His sake a hundred-fold in this life, and a part in His kingdom? And had He not given to the twelve the special promise of positions of high honor in His kingdom—to sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel? Even now He had said that all things written in the prophets concerning Him should be fulfilled. And had not the prophets foretold the glory of the Messiah's reign? In the light of these thoughts, His words in regard to betrayal, persecution, and death seemed vague and shadowy. Whatever difficulties might intervene, they believed that the kingdom was soon to be established." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 547, 548.

REQUEST FOR A POSITION

3. What did some disciples have in mind while the Lord was guiding them so they could face what was coming? What special request did the mother of two disciples present?

MATTHEW 20:20, 21 *Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.*

MARK 10:35-37 *And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.*

“John, the son of Zebedee, had been one of the first two disciples who had followed Jesus. He and his brother James had been among the first group who had left all for His service. Gladly they had forsaken home and friends that they might be with Him; they had walked and talked with Him; they had been with Him in the privacy of the home, and in the public assemblies. He had quieted their fears, delivered them from danger, relieved their sufferings, comforted their grief, and with patience and tenderness had taught them, till their hearts seemed linked with His, and in the ardor of their love they longed to be nearest to Him in His kingdom. At every possible opportunity, John took his place next the Saviour, and James longed to be honored with as close connection with Him. Their mother was a follower of Christ, and had ministered to Him freely of her substance. With a mother’s love and ambition for her sons, she coveted for them the most honored place in the new kingdom. For this she encouraged them to make request.

“Together the mother and her sons came to Jesus, asking that He would grant a petition on which their hearts were set.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 548.

4. What did Jesus clarify and teach when answering this question? What did the disciples have to face before receiving the privilege to sit on the throne of glory?

MATTHEW 20:22 *But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able.*

“Jesus bears tenderly with them, not rebuking their selfishness in seeking preference above their brethren. He reads their hearts. He knows the depth of their attachment to Him. Their love is not a mere human affection; though defiled by the earthliness of its human channel, it is an outflowing from the fountain of His own redeeming love. He will not rebuke, but deepen and purify. He said, ‘Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?’ They recall His mysterious words, pointing to trial and suffering, yet answer confidently, ‘We are able.’ They would count it highest honor to prove their loyalty by sharing all that is to befall their Lord.

“‘Ye shall drink indeed of My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with,’ He said; before Him a cross instead of a throne, two malefactors His companions at His right hand and His left. John and James were to share with their Master in suffering; the one, first of the brethren to perish with the sword; the other, longest of all to endure toil, and reproach, and persecution.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 548, 549.

5. What may we learn from the second part of His answer? Will a place and a throne in heaven be granted as the result of someone’s recommendation or favoritism?

MATTHEW 20:23 *And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.*

“‘But to sit on My right hand, and on My left,’ He continued, ‘is not Mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of My Father.’ In the kingdom of God, position is not gained through favoritism. It is not earned, nor is it received through an arbitrary bestowal. It is the result of character. The crown and the throne are the tokens of a condition attained; they are the tokens of self-conquest through our Lord Jesus Christ.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 549.

PRINCIPLES OF THE HEAVENLY KINGDOM

6. On what divine principles is the kingdom of Christ founded? Therefore, what example are we to follow?

MATTHEW 20:25-28 *But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

“In the kingdoms of the world, position meant self-aggrandizement. The people were supposed to exist for the benefit of the ruling classes. Influence, wealth, education, were so many means of gaining control of the masses for the use of the leaders. The higher classes were to think, decide, enjoy, and rule; the lower were to obey and serve. Religion, like all things else, was a matter of authority. The people were expected to believe and practice as their superiors directed. The right of man as man, to think and act for himself, was wholly unrecognized.

“Christ was establishing a kingdom on different principles. He called men, not to authority, but to service, the strong to bear the infirmities of the weak. Power, position, talent, education, placed their possessor under the greater obligation to serve his fellows....

“... The principle on which Christ acted is to actuate the members of the church which is His body. The plan and ground of salvation is love. In the kingdom of Christ those are greatest who follow the example He has given, and act as shepherds of His flock.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 550.

7. What was revealed later to John regarding those who will have the privilege to sit on Christ’s throne?

REVELATION 3:21 *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.*

“Long afterward, when the disciple had been brought into sympathy with Christ through the fellowship of His sufferings, the Lord revealed to John what is the condition of nearness in His kingdom. ‘To him that overcometh,’ Christ said, ‘will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne.’ ‘Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of My God,... and I will write upon him My new name.’ Revelation 3:21, 12. So

Paul the apostle wrote, 'I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.' 2 Timothy 4:6-8." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 549.

FOR MEDITATION

"The principles and the very words of the Saviour's teaching, in their divine beauty, dwelt in the memory of the beloved disciple. To his latest days the burden of John's testimony to the churches was, 'This is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.' 'Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.' 1 John 3:11, 16." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 551.

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*Please read the Missionary Report from
General Conference Family Department
on page 44*

9

Sabbath, August 31, 2013

He Wished to See Jesus

"It is when Christ is received as a personal Saviour that salvation comes to the soul. Zacchaeus had received Jesus, not merely as a passing guest in his home, but as One to abide in the soul temple. The scribes and Pharisees accused him as a sinner, they murmured against Christ for becoming his guest, but the Lord recognized him as a son of Abraham. For 'they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.' Galatians 3:7." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 556.

SINNER BUT NOT INSENSITIVE

1. Who lived in Jericho? How was he considered by his countrymen?

LUKE 19:1, 2 *And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho, And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.*

"Jericho was one of the cities anciently set apart for the priests, and at this time large numbers of priests had their residence there. But the city had also a population of a widely different character. It was a great center of traffic, and Roman officials and soldiers, with strangers from different quarters, were found there, while the collection of customs made it the home of many publicans.

“The chief among the publicans, Zacchaeus, was a Jew, and detested by his countrymen. His rank and wealth were the reward of a calling they abhorred, and which was regarded as another name for injustice and extortion. Yet the wealthy customs officer was not altogether the hardened man of the world that he seemed.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 552, 553.

2. What did he do when he heard that the Lord was going to visit Jericho? Was it mere curiosity that motivated him to climb a sycamore tree so he could see Jesus?

LUKE 19:3, 4 *And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.*

“Beneath the appearance of worldliness and pride was a heart susceptible to divine influences. Zacchaeus had heard of Jesus. The report of One who had borne Himself with kindness and courtesy toward the proscribed classes had spread far and wide. In this chief of the publicans was awakened a longing for a better life. Only a few miles from Jericho, John the Baptist had preached at the Jordan, and Zacchaeus had heard of the call to repentance. The instruction to the publicans, ‘Exact no more than that which is appointed you’ (Luke 3:13), though outwardly disregarded, had impressed his mind. He knew the Scriptures, and was convicted that his practice was wrong. Now, hearing the words reported to have come from the Great Teacher, he felt that he was a sinner in the sight of God. Yet what he had heard of Jesus kindled hope in his heart. Repentance, reformation of life, was possible, even to him; was not one of the new Teacher’s most trusted disciples a publican?” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 552.

3. While he feared that he would be unable to see Jesus, what wonderful surprise did he experience? Could he have ever imagined that Jesus would be interested in him?

LUKE 19:5 *And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.*

“The streets were crowded, and Zacchaeus, who was small of stature, could see nothing over the heads of the people. None would give way for him; so, running a little in advance of the multitude, to where a wide-branching fig tree hung over the way, the rich tax collector climbed to a seat among the boughs, whence he could survey the procession as it passed below. The crowd comes near, it is going by, and Zacchaeus scans with eager eyes to discern the one figure he longs to see....

“Above the clamor of priests and rabbis and the shouts of welcome from the multitude, that unuttered desire of the chief publican spoke to the heart of Jesus. Suddenly, just beneath the fig tree, a group halts, the company before and behind come to a standstill, and One looks upward whose glance seems to read the soul. Almost doubting his senses, the man in the tree hears the words, ‘Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 553, 554.

4. **How promptly did Zacchaeus respond to Jesus' offer to visit him at his home? What kind of reception did he give the Master in his home?**

LUKE 19:6 *And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.*

“The multitude give way, and Zacchaeus, walking as in a dream, leads the way toward his own home.... Zacchaeus had been overwhelmed, amazed, and silenced at the love and condescension of Christ in stooping to him, so unworthy.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 554.

5. **How were publicans considered by the public? Therefore, what opportunity did the Pharisees take when they saw Jesus enter Zacchaeus' home and eat with him, a sinner?**

MATTHEW 9:11 *And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?*

LUKE 19:7 *And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.*

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

“Among the publicans there was a confederacy, so that they could oppress the people, and sustain one another in their fraudulent practices. In their extortion they were but carrying out what had become an almost universal custom.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 272, 555.

A COMPLETELY CHANGED LIFE

6. **What reveals this man's repentance under the influence of the Holy Spirit? What Biblical principle was he applying by restoring any stolen goods?**

LUKE 19:8 *And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.*

EXODUS 22:1 *If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep.*

“Now love and loyalty to his new-found Master unseal his lips. He will make public his confession and his repentance....

“In the presence of the multitude, ‘Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.’... ”

“Before being accused by man, he had confessed his sin. He had yielded to the conviction of the Holy Spirit, and had begun to carry out the teaching of the words written for ancient Israel as well as for ourselves. The Lord had said long before, ‘If thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee. Take thou no usury of him, or increase: but fear thy God; that thy brother may live with thee. Thou shalt not give him thy money upon usury, nor lend him thy victuals for increase.’ ‘Ye shall not therefore oppress one another; but thou shalt fear thy God.’ Leviticus 25:35-37, 17. These words had been spoken by Christ Himself when He was enshrouded in the pillar of cloud, and the very first response of Zacchaeus to the love of Christ was in manifesting compassion toward the poor and suffering.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 554, 555.

7. As in the wonderful experience of Zacchaeus, what will come into the home of every sincere and repentant sinner when Jesus enters it? What great result does the presence of Jesus produce in the life of one who repents?

LUKE 19:9 *And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.*

LUKE 19:10 *For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

“... No sooner did Zacchaeus yield to the influence of the Holy Spirit than he cast aside every practice contrary to integrity.

“No repentance is genuine that does not work reformation. The righteousness of Christ is ... a principle of life that transforms the character and controls the conduct. Holiness is ... the entire surrender of heart and life to the indwelling of the principles of heaven....

“The Christian in his business life is to represent to the world the manner in which our Lord would conduct business enterprises. In every transaction he is to make it manifest that God is his teacher. ‘Holiness unto the Lord’ is to be written upon daybooks and ledgers, on deeds, receipts, and bills of exchange. Those who profess to be followers of Christ, and who deal in an unrighteous manner, are bearing false witness against the character of a holy, just, and merciful God. Every converted soul will, like Zacchaeus, signalize the entrance of Christ into his heart by an abandonment of the unrighteous practices that have marked his life. Like the chief publican, he will give proof of his sincerity by making restitution.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 555, 556.

FOR MEDITATION

“If we have injured others through any unjust business transaction, if we have overreached in trade, or defrauded any man, even though it be within the pale of the law, we should confess our wrong, and make restitution as far as lies in our power. It is right for us to restore not only that which we have taken, but all that it would have accumulated if put to a right and wise use during the time it has been in our possession.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 556.

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MISSIONARY REPORT
FROM THE GENERAL CONFERENCE FAMILY DEPARTMENT

To be read on Sabbath, August 31, 2013

*The Special Sabbath School Offering will be gathered
on Sabbath, September 7, 2013*

By the grace of God, the World Assembly of delegates meeting in South Africa in 2012 established the Family Department of the General Conference. We praise the Lord for the opportunity to be able to present the thought of Joshua 24:15—“... As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”—as the objective to pursue in this new department.

This new General Conference institution must give the nucleus of society—the family—assistance, counsel, support, and training so Christ-centered homes can be established, for “Christ ... came to restore, elevate, purify, and ennoble every current of pure affection, that the family on earth might become a symbol of the family in heaven.” —(Manuscript 22, 1898) *Christ Triumphant*, p. 230.

The Family Department considers its primary responsibilities:

1. To restore the institution of the family in each one of its diverse areas—spiritual, interpersonal, filial, social, material, and cultural;
2. To raise the quality of the family’s relationship with God among its members, the church, and society;
3. To purify the affections and establish divine love as the vital principle of the family;
4. To ennoble every family relationship in accordance with the Biblical perspective and the Spirit of prophecy.

To proceed with the implementation of these responsibilities, seminars will be conducted, projects will be formulated, manuals and various publications will be prepared, activities will be coordinated with the other departments of the unions and fields, a family department will be established at each level of the church organization, and activities will be carried out to raise funds to perpetuate the department and support each family as a model of Christian life in a society in which this divine institution is becoming extinct.

We want to solicit the generous offerings of every heart to be able to put into practice the improvement, enrichment, restoration, and support of the family in the church and ultimately in society. The generous offerings received for this purpose will have an ennobling, beneficial influence on every one of us, for this area of the cause

involves each of us, impels us to action, and makes us happy along with our loved ones. “For for this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.” Ephesians 3:14, 15.

“By faith Noah, after he was warned about what was not yet seen and motivated by godly fear, built an ark to deliver his family.” Hebrews 11:7, *Holman Christian Standard Bible*. The salvation of our families and of all who desire to meet the Lord should be the concern of each one of us as parents. Therefore, let this offering be to save the family and support the good of society through the word and the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ our Saviour.

—*Raquel Orce*
General Conference Family Department Leader

**Special Sabbath School Offering for the
GENERAL CONFERENCE FAMILY DEPARTMENT**

Your gifts will support the development of Christian families

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Sabbath, September 7, 2013

A Good Work Done for Jesus

“Christ values acts of heartfelt courtesy. When anyone did Him a favor, with heavenly politeness He blessed the actor. He did not refuse the simplest flower plucked by the hand of a child, and offered to Him in love. He accepted the offerings of children, and blessed the givers, inscribing their names in the book of life. In the Scriptures, Mary’s anointing of Jesus is mentioned as distinguishing her from the other Marys. Acts of love and reverence for Jesus are an evidence of faith in Him as the Son of God. And the Holy Spirit mentions, as evidences of woman’s loyalty to Christ: ‘If she have washed the saints’ feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.’ 1 Timothy 5:10.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 564.

THE MASTER INVITED BY ONE WHO WAS HEALED

1. Who was Simon of Bethany? What did he prepare at his home in gratitude for Jesus’ healing of his leprosy?

MATTHEW 26:6 *Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper,*

MARK 14:3, FIRST PART *And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat,...*

LUKE 7:36 *And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee’s house, and sat down to meat.*

“Simon of Bethany was accounted a disciple of Jesus. He was one of the few Pharisees who had openly joined Christ’s followers. He acknowledged Jesus as a teacher, and hoped that He might be the Messiah, but he had not accepted Him as a Saviour. His character was not transformed; his principles were unchanged....

“Simon had been healed of the leprosy, and it was this that had drawn him to Jesus. He desired to show his gratitude, and at Christ’s last visit to Bethany he made a feast for the Saviour and His disciples. This feast brought together many of the Jews. There was at this time much excitement at Jerusalem. Christ and His mission were attracting greater attention than ever before. Those who had come to the feast closely watched His movements, and some of them with unfriendly eyes.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 557.

2. Who came into the room where Jesus was sitting? What special service did this woman perform for Jesus?

MATTHEW 26:7 *There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat.*

MARK 14:3 *And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head.*

“At the table the Saviour sat with Simon, whom He had cured of a loathsome disease, on one side, and Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead, on the other. Martha served at the table, but Mary was earnestly listening to every word from the lips of Jesus. In His mercy, Jesus had pardoned her sins, He had called forth her beloved brother from the grave, and Mary’s heart was filled with gratitude. She had heard Jesus speak of His approaching death, and in her deep love and sorrow she had longed to show Him honor. At great personal sacrifice she had purchased an alabaster box of ‘ointment of spikenard, very costly,’ with which to anoint His body. But now many were declaring that He was about to be crowned king. Her grief was turned to joy, and she was eager to be first in honoring her Lord. Breaking her box of ointment, she poured its contents upon the head and feet of Jesus; then, as she knelt weeping, moistening them with her tears, she wiped His feet with her long, flowing hair.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 558, 559.

JUDGING OTHERS’ MOTIVES AND ACTIONS

3. Was this anointing of the Lord welcomed by all? What negative comments were made by some?

MARK 14:4, 5 *And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.*

MATTHEW 26:8, 9 *But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.*

“She had sought to avoid observation, and her movements might have passed unnoticed, but the ointment filled the room with its fragrance, and published her act to all present. Judas looked upon this act with great displeasure. Instead of waiting to hear what Christ would say of the matter, he began to whisper his complaints to those near him, throwing reproach upon Christ for suffering such waste. Craftily he made suggestions that would be likely to cause disaffection....

“Now the act of Mary was in such marked contrast to his selfishness that he was put to shame; and according to his custom, he sought to assign a worthy motive for his objection to her gift.... Judas had no heart for the poor. Had Mary’s ointment been sold, and the proceeds fallen into his possession, the poor would have received no benefit.

“Judas had a high opinion of his own executive ability.... He had gained their confidence, and had a strong influence over them. His professed sympathy for the poor deceived them, and his artful insinuation caused them to look distrustfully upon Mary’s devotion. The murmur passed round the table, ‘To what purpose is this waste?...’” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 559, 560.

4. Can we say that negativity and criticism were problems only at that time and in that case? What does God’s holy word teach concerning thinking and speaking evil? 1 Corinthians 13:4, 5.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:4, 5 *Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil.*

PHILIPPIANS 4:8 *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*

“Floating rumors are often the destroyers of unity among brethren. There are some who watch with open mind and ears to catch flying scandal. They gather up little incidents which may be trifling in themselves, but which are repeated and exaggerated until a man is made an offender for a word.... These talebearers are doing Satan’s work with surprising fidelity, little knowing how offensive their course is to God.... The door of the mind should be closed against ‘They say,’ or ‘I have heard.’ Why should we not, instead of allowing jealousy or evil surmising to come into our hearts, go to our brethren, and after frankly but kindly setting before them the things we have heard detrimental to their character and influence, pray with and for them?....

“Let us diligently cultivate the pure principles of the gospel of Christ—the religion, not of self-esteem, but of love, meekness, and lowliness of heart. Then we shall love our brethren, and esteem them better than ourselves. Our minds will not dwell on scandal and flying reports.” —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 504, 505.

5. What effect did this criticism have on Mary? What did Jesus say, giving a completely different character to her actions?

MATTHEW 26:10 *When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me.*

MARK 14:6 *And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me.*

“Mary heard the words of criticism. Her heart trembled within her. She feared that her sister would reproach her for extravagance. The Master, too, might think her improvident. Without apology or excuse she was about to shrink away, when the voice of her Lord was heard, ‘Let her alone; why trouble ye her?’ He saw that she was embarrassed

and distressed. He knew that in this act of service she had expressed her gratitude for the forgiveness of her sins, and He brought relief to her mind. Lifting His voice above the murmur of criticism, He said, 'She hath wrought a good work on Me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but Me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint My body to the burying.'" –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 560.

UNDERSTANDING GOOD WORKS AND PROCLAIMING GOOD NEWS

6. What did Jesus say to help everyone understand and appreciate the motive of Mary's actions? Were very many people doing such good things for Him?

MATTHEW 26:11, 12 *For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial.*

MARK 14:7, 8 *For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.*

“What a sharp lesson Christ might have given him who had dropped the seed of criticism and evil thinking into the minds of the disciples!... The hollow pretense on which the traitor based his words might have been laid bare; for, instead of sympathizing with the poor, he was robbing them of the money intended for their relief....

“The fragrant gift which Mary had thought to lavish upon the dead body of the Saviour she poured upon His living form. At the burial its sweetness could only have pervaded the tomb; now it gladdened His heart with the assurance of her faith and love. Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus offered not their gift of love to Jesus in His life. With bitter tears they brought their costly spices for His cold, unconscious form. The women who bore spices to the tomb found their errand in vain, for He had risen. But Mary, pouring out her love upon the Saviour while He was conscious of her devotion, was anointing Him for the burial. And as He went down into the darkness of His great trial, He carried with Him the memory of that deed, an earnest of the love that would be His from His redeemed ones forever.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 563, 560.

7. According to Jesus' words, what would be the fruit of this woman's sincere act of appreciation? Keeping this story in mind, how careful will we be not to judge others' actions or spread gossip?

MATTHEW 26:13 *Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.*

MARK 14:9 *Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.*

“Verily I say unto you,’ Christ declared, ‘Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.’ Looking into the future, the Saviour spoke with certainty concerning His gospel. It was to be preached throughout the world. And as far as the gospel extended, Mary’s gift would shed its fragrance, and hearts would be blessed through her unstudied act. Kingdoms would rise and fall; the names of monarchs and conquerors would be forgotten; but this woman’s deed would be immortalized upon the pages of sacred history. Until time should be no more, that broken alabaster box would tell the story of the abundant love of God for a fallen race.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 563.

FOR MEDITATION

“Christ delighted in the earnest desire of Mary to do the will of her Lord. He accepted the wealth of pure affection which His disciples did not, would not, understand. The desire that Mary had to do this service for her Lord was of more value to Christ than all the precious ointment in the world, because it expressed her appreciation of the world’s Redeemer. It was the love of Christ that constrained her. The matchless excellence of the character of Christ filled her soul. That ointment was a symbol of the heart of the giver. It was the outward demonstration of a love fed by heavenly streams until it overflowed.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 564.

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Sabbath, September 14, 2013

If He Knew

“Nothing is apparently more helpless, yet really more invincible, than the soul that feels its nothingness and relies wholly on the merits of the Saviour. By prayer, by the study of His word, by faith in His abiding presence, the weakest of human beings may live in contact with the living Christ, and He will hold them by a hand that will never let go.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 182.

THE TEMPTATION TO JUDGE OTHERS

- 1. Giving a picture of Mary’s repentance and gratitude, how did Luke tell about her offering of the alabaster box of ointment at the house of Simon?**

LUKE 7:36-38 *And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee’s house, and sat down to meat. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to*

wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

“Mary loved her Lord. He had forgiven her sins, which were many, and had raised from the dead her much-loved brother, and she felt that nothing was too dear to bestow upon Jesus. The more precious the ointment, the better could she express her gratitude to her Saviour by devoting it to Him.” –*Early Writings*, p. 165.

2. Seeing Mary’s offering to Jesus, was Simon thinking about her deep repentance? How far did he go in his condemnation?

LUKE 7:39 *Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.*

“Simon the host had been influenced by the criticism of Judas upon Mary’s gift, and he was surprised at the conduct of Jesus. His Pharisaic pride was offended. He knew that many of his guests were looking upon Christ with distrust and displeasure....

“By curing Simon of leprosy, Christ had saved him from a living death. But now Simon questioned whether the Saviour were a prophet. Because Christ allowed this woman to approach Him, because He did not indignantly spurn her as one whose sins were too great to be forgiven, because He did not show that He realized she had fallen, Simon was tempted to think that He was not a prophet. Jesus knows nothing of this woman who is so free in her demonstrations, he thought, or He would not allow her to touch Him....

“But it was Simon’s ignorance of God and of Christ that led him to think as he did. He did not realize that God’s Son must act in God’s way, with compassion, tenderness, and mercy.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 566.

DEALING WITH SECRET THOUGHTS

3. Although Simon did not act like Judas in voicing his opinion, who had knowledge of it? Did Jesus approach him as one who was offended?

LUKE 7:40 *And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.*

MATTHEW 18:15 *Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.*

“‘Longsuffering’ is patience with offence; long endurance. If you are longsuffering, you will not impart to others your supposed knowledge of your brother’s mistakes and errors. You will seek to help and save him, because he has been purchased with the blood of Christ.... To be longsuffering is not to be gloomy and sad, sour and hardhearted; it is to be exactly the opposite....

“Try to live peaceably with all men, and let the atmosphere surrounding your soul be sweet and fragrant. The Lord hears every unwise word that is spoken. If you will battle against selfish human nature, you will go forward steadily in the work of overcoming hereditary and cultivated tendencies to wrong. By patience, longsuffering, and forbearance you will accomplish much. Remember that you cannot be humiliated by the unwise speeches of someone else, but that when you answer unwisely, you lose a victory that you might have gained. Be very careful of your words.” —*My Life Today*, p. 52.

4. Reading Simon’s thoughts as an open book, what example did Jesus present to convince Simon of his double mistake? What human tendency had his thoughts revealed?

LUKE 7:41-43 *There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.*

“As did Nathan with David, Christ concealed His home thrust under the veil of a parable. He threw upon His host the burden of pronouncing sentence upon himself. Simon had led into sin the woman he now despised. She had been deeply wronged by him. By the two debtors of the parable, Simon and the woman were represented. Jesus did not design to teach that different degrees of obligation should be felt by the two persons, for each owed a debt of gratitude that never could be repaid. But Simon felt himself more righteous than Mary, and Jesus desired him to see how great his guilt really was. He would show him that his sin was greater than hers, as much greater as a debt of five hundred pence exceeds a debt of fifty pence.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 566, 567.

HELPING BOTH

5. How did the Lord open Simon’s eyes to his own fault? What did Simon’s behavior reveal, in comparison to that of Mary?

LUKE 7:44, 45 *And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.*

“Simon’s coldness and neglect toward the Saviour showed how little he appreciated the mercy he had received. He had thought he honored Jesus by inviting Him to his house. But he now saw himself as he really was. While he thought himself reading his Guest, his Guest had been reading him. He saw how true Christ’s judgment of him was. His religion had been a robe of Pharisaism. He had despised the compassion of Jesus. He had not recognized Him as the representative of God. While Mary was a sinner pardoned, he was a sinner unpardoned. The rigid rule of justice he had desired to enforce against her condemned him.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 567.

6. How did Jesus further portray Mary's repentance and gratitude in order to reach Simon's heart? Why was it necessary to tell him that Mary had been forgiven?

LUKE 7:46, 47 *My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.*

“Simon now began to see himself in a new light. He saw how Mary was regarded by One who was more than a prophet. He saw that with keen prophetic eye Christ read her heart of love and devotion. Shame seized upon him, and he realized that he was in the presence of One superior to himself....

“Christ recounted the opportunities Simon had had to show his love for his Lord, and his appreciation of what had been done for him. Plainly, yet with delicate politeness, the Saviour assured His disciples that His heart is grieved when His children neglect to show their gratitude to Him by words and deeds of love.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 567.

7. While men were criticizing both what she did and who she was, what healing message did Jesus give to the repentant sinner? Even if one's sins are many, what is possible by sincere faith?

LUKE 7:48-50 *And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.*

“Bear in mind ... that every soul who is inclined to err and is easily tempted, is the special object for whom Christ is solicitor. They that are whole need not a physician, but those that are sick. The compassionate Intercessor is pleading, and will sinful, finite men and women repulse a single soul?

“Shall any man or woman be indifferent to the very souls for whom Christ is pleading in the courts of heaven? Shall you in your course of action, imitate the Pharisees, who would be merciless, and Satan, who would accuse and destroy? O will you individually humble your own souls before God, and let that stern nerve and iron will be subdued and broken?” —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 275.

FOR MEDITATION

“Simon was touched by the kindness of Jesus in not openly rebuking him before the guests. He had not been treated as he desired Mary to be treated. He saw that Jesus did not wish to expose his guilt to others, but sought by a true statement of the case to convince his mind, and by pitying kindness to subdue his heart. Stern denunciation would have hardened Simon against repentance, but patient admonition convinced him of his error. He saw the magnitude of the debt which he owed his Lord. His pride was humbled, he repented, and the proud Pharisee became a lowly, self-sacrificing disciple.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 567, 568.

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The King Is Coming

“When Christ made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the applause of the multitude was at its height. Hosannas were on the lips of the people; but the Saviour felt no joy.... How deep must His emotion have been as He thought of the nation that had forged its own fetters, sealed its own doom, gathered about it the cloud of Jehovah’s wrath. ‘You have defiantly resisted all My pleadings,’ He said. ‘Again and again I have averted the bolts of justice. In love I have waited for your penitence and repentance. I have borne with you as a man beareth with his own son that serveth him. But ye would not come unto Me that ye might have life.’” —*Review and Herald*, December 3, 1901.

ENTERING THE CITY IN A HUMBLE MANNER

- 1. What request did the Lord make of His disciples as He was nearing Jerusalem? What did these instructions reveal?**

MATTHEW 21:1-3 *And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.*

“Purposing to ride into Jerusalem, Jesus had sent two of His disciples to bring to Him an ass and its colt.... Although the cattle on a thousand hills are His, He is dependent on a stranger’s kindness for an animal on which to enter Jerusalem as its King. But again His divinity is revealed, even in the minute directions given His disciples for this errand. As He foretold, the plea, ‘The Lord hath need of them,’ was readily granted. Jesus chose for His use the colt on which never man had sat. The disciples, with glad enthusiasm, spread their garments on the beast, and seated their Master upon it. Heretofore Jesus had always traveled on foot, and the disciples had at first wondered that He should now choose to ride.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 569, 570.

- 2. What image did Jesus give to His disciples, the people, and the leaders by His triumphal entrance into the city? According to prophecy, what would He give the people?**

ZECARIAH 9:9 *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.*

Translating this verse from the Hebrew, other versions emphasize Jesus' humility. One such translation reads like this: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is He, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."—*English Standard Version* © 2001.

MATTHEW 21:4, 5 *All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.*

JOHN 12:16 *These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.*

"Christ was following the Jewish custom for a royal entry. The animal on which He rode was that ridden by the kings of Israel, and prophecy had foretold that thus the Messiah should come to His kingdom. No sooner was He seated upon the colt than a loud shout of triumph rent the air. The multitude hailed Him as Messiah, their King. Jesus now accepted the homage which He had never before permitted, and the disciples received this as proof that their glad hopes were to be realized by seeing Him established on the throne...."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 570.

REJOICING AT HIS ENTRANCE

3. What rejoicing was heard at this moment of His ministry by the disciples and the multitude?

MATTHEW 21:6-8 *And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way.*

LUKE 19:37 *And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen.*

"Their questionings are silenced by a shout of triumph. Again and again it is repeated by the eager throng; it is taken up by the people afar off, and echoed from the surrounding hills and valleys. And now the procession is joined by crowds from Jerusalem. From the multitudes gathered to attend the Passover, thousands go forth to welcome Jesus. They greet Him with the waving of palm branches and a burst of sacred song....

"Never before in His earthly life had Jesus permitted such a demonstration.... But it was His purpose thus publicly to present Himself as the Redeemer. He desired to call attention to the sacrifice that was to crown His mission to a fallen world. 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 was necessary, then, that the eyes of all people should now be directed to Him; the events

which preceded His great sacrifice must be such as to call attention to the sacrifice itself.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 571.

4. How was He received and praised by the multitude? Who else was praised for the mighty works which they had witnessed?

MATTHEW 21:9-11 *And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.*

LUKE 19:37 *And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen;*

“This day, which seemed to the disciples the crowning day of their lives, would have been shadowed with gloomy clouds had they known that this scene of rejoicing was but a prelude to the suffering and death of their Master. Although He had repeatedly told them of His certain sacrifice, yet in the glad triumph of the present they forgot His sorrowful words, and looked forward to His prosperous reign on David’s throne....

“Never before had the world seen such a triumphal procession. It was not like that of the earth’s famous conquerors.... But about the Saviour were the glorious trophies of His labors of love for sinful man. There were the captives whom He had rescued from Satan’s power, praising God for their deliverance. 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.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 571, 572.

NOT ALL WERE SATISFIED

5. What was the attitude of some of the Pharisees when they saw Jesus exalted as King? What did they tell Him to do?

LUKE 19:38, 39 *Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest. And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples.*

“Many Pharisees witnessed the scene, and, burning with envy and malice, sought to turn the current of popular feeling. With all their authority they tried to silence the people; but their appeals and threats only increased the enthusiasm. They feared that this multitude, in the strength of their numbers, would make Jesus king. As a last resort they pressed through the crowd to where the Saviour was, and accosted Him with reproving and threatening words: ‘Master, rebuke Thy disciples.’ They declared that such noisy demonstrations were unlawful, and would not be permitted by the authorities.” — *The Desire of Ages*, p. 572.

6. If the disciples and children did not praise the Lord, what would do so? What significance is there for us in Jesus' answer?

LUKE 19:40 *And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.*

“But they were silenced by the reply of Jesus, ‘I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.’ That scene of triumph was of God’s own appointing. It had been foretold by the prophet, and man was powerless to turn aside God’s purpose. Had men failed to carry out His plan, He would have given a voice to the inanimate stones, and they would have hailed His Son with acclamations of praise. As the silenced Pharisees drew back, the words of Zechariah were taken up by hundreds of voices: ‘Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 572, 575.

7. Despite this warm welcome, why was Jesus grieved at the spiritual condition of Israel? What is our spiritual attitude when Jesus comes to us?

LUKE 19:41-44 *And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.*

JOHN 7:38 *He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*

JOHN 6:47 *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.*

“From the crest of the hill where Jesus and His followers stood, it had the appearance of a massive structure of snow, set with golden pinnacles of the temple....

“All eyes turn upon the Saviour, expecting to see in His countenance the admiration they themselves feel. But instead of this they behold a cloud of sorrow.... This sudden sorrow was like a note of wailing in a grand triumphal chorus.... Israel’s King was in tears; not silent tears of gladness, but tears and groans of insuppressible agony....

“The tears of Jesus were not in anticipation of His own suffering.... It was the sight of Jerusalem that pierced the heart of Jesus—Jerusalem that had rejected the Son of God and scorned His love, that refused to be convinced by His mighty miracles, and was about to take His life. He saw what she was in her guilt of rejecting her Redeemer, and what she

might have been had she accepted Him who alone could heal her wound. He had come to save her; how could He give her up?" —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 575, 576.

FOR MEDITATION

"Israel had been a favored people; God had made their temple His habitation; it was 'beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth.' Psalm 48:2. The record of more than a thousand years of Christ's guardian care and tender love, such as a father bears his only child, was there. In that temple the prophets had uttered their solemn warnings. There had the burning censers waved, while incense, mingled with the prayers of the worshipers, had ascended to God. There the blood of beasts had flowed, typical of the blood of Christ. There Jehovah had manifested His glory above the mercy seat. There the priests had officiated, and the pomp of symbol and ceremony had gone on for ages. But all this must have an end.

"If Jerusalem had known what it was her privilege to know, and had heeded the light which Heaven had sent her, she might have stood forth in the pride of prosperity, the queen of kingdoms, free in the strength of her God-given power. There would have been no armed soldiers standing at her gates, no Roman banners waving from her walls. The glorious destiny that might have blessed Jerusalem had she accepted her Redeemer rose before the Son of God. He saw that she might through Him have been healed of her grievous malady, liberated from bondage, and established as the mighty metropolis of the earth. From her walls the dove of peace would have gone forth to all nations. She would have been the world's diadem of glory." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 576.

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13

Sabbath, September 28, 2013

The Tree without Fruit

"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples." John 15:8.

LOOKING FOR FRUIT

1. What did the Master feel as He was going from Bethany to Jerusalem?

MATTHEW 21:17, 18 *And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there. Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered.*

"For a short time Jesus remained at the temple, looking upon it with sorrowful eyes. Then He withdrew with His disciples, and returned to Bethany. When the people sought for Him to place Him on the throne, He was not to be found.

“The entire night Jesus spent in prayer, and in the morning He came again to the temple. On the way He passed a fig orchard. He was hungry,…” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 581.

2. What did He notice beside the road? Seeing it, what was His natural desire?

MATTHEW 21:19, FIRST PART *And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it.*

NOTHING BUT LEAVES

3. How great was His disappointment as He looked at the leaves? Was this justified if it was not the proper season?

MATTHEW 21:19, SECOND PART ... *And found nothing thereon, but leaves only.*

MARK 11:13 *And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet.*

“It was not the season for ripe figs, except in certain localities; and on the highlands about Jerusalem it might truly be said, ‘The time of figs was not yet.’ But in the orchard to which Jesus came, one tree appeared to be in advance of all the others. It was already covered with leaves. It is the nature of the fig tree that before the leaves open, the growing fruit appears. Therefore this tree in full leaf gave promise of well-developed fruit. But its appearance was deceptive. Upon searching its branches, from the lowest bough to the topmost twig, Jesus found ‘nothing but leaves.’ It was a mass of pretentious foliage, nothing more.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 581.

4. What severe sentence did He pronounce on the tree when He found only foliage, a beautiful appearance but devoid of substance? Was this normal for the lovely person of Jesus?

MATTHEW 21:19, 20, THIRD PART *And said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away!*

MARK 11:14, 20, 21 *And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it. And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away.*

“Christ’s act in cursing the fig tree had astonished the disciples. It seemed to them unlike His ways and works. Often they had heard Him declare that He came not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. They remembered His words, ‘The Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.’ Luke 9:56. His

wonderful works had been done to restore, never to destroy. The disciples had known Him only as the Restorer, the Healer. This act stood alone. What was its purpose? they questioned.

“God ‘delighteth in mercy.’ ‘As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.’ Micah 7:18; Ezekiel 33:11. To Him the work of destruction and the denunciation of judgment is a ‘strange work.’ Isaiah 28:21. But it is in mercy and love that He lifts the veil from the future, and reveals to men the results of a course of sin.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 582.

THE FIG TREE IS AN OBJECT LESSON

5. Like the vineyard of prophecy, whom did the fig tree that had only leaves represent?

ISAIAH 5:1, 2, 5-7 *Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.*

And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.

“The cursing of the fig tree was an acted parable. That barren tree, flaunting its pretentious foliage in the very face of Christ, was a symbol of the Jewish nation. The Saviour desired to make plain to His disciples the cause and the certainty of Israel’s doom. For this purpose He invested the tree with moral qualities, and made it the expositor of divine truth. The Jews stood forth distinct from all other nations, professing allegiance to God. They had been specially favored by Him, and they laid claim to righteousness above every other people. But they were corrupted by the love of the world and the greed of gain. They boasted of their knowledge, but they were ignorant of the requirements of God, and were full of hypocrisy. Like the barren tree, they spread their pretentious branches aloft, luxuriant in appearance, and beautiful to the eye, but they yielded ‘nothing but leaves.’ The Jewish religion, with its magnificent temple, its sacred altars, its mitred priests and impressive ceremonies, was indeed fair in outward appearance, but humility, love, and benevolence were lacking.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 582, 583.

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF US

6. What is the Lord expecting of every tree? What will happen to a tree that produces no fruit?

LUKE 13:6-9 *He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumberest thou the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.*

“The parable of the fig tree, spoken before Christ’s visit to Jerusalem, had a direct connection with the lesson He taught in cursing the fruitless tree. For the barren tree of the parable the gardener pleaded, Let it alone this year, until I shall dig about it and dress it; and if it bear fruit, well; but if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down. Increased care was to be given the unfruitful tree. It was to have every advantage. But if it remained fruitless, nothing could save it from destruction. In the parable the result of the gardener’s work was not foretold. It depended upon that people to whom Christ’s words were spoken. They were represented by the fruitless tree, and it rested with them to decide their own destiny. Every advantage that Heaven could bestow was given them, but they did not profit by their increased blessings. By Christ’s act in cursing the barren fig tree, the result was shown. They had determined their own destruction.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 584.

7. What inspired counsel is given to help us bear fruit?

JOHN 15:5 *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*

MATTHEW 7:21 *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*

“A godly example will tell more for the truth than the greatest eloquence unaccompanied by a well-ordered life. Trim the lamp of the soul, and replenish it with the oil of the Spirit. Seek from Christ that grace, that clearness of comprehension, which will enable you to do successful work. Learn from Him what it means to labor for those for whom He gave His life. The most talented worker can do little unless Christ is formed within, the hope and strength of the life. The tree itself must be good in order to produce good fruit.” —*Australasian Union Conference Record*, July 15, 1902.

FOR MEDITATION

“The warning is for all time. Christ’s act in cursing the tree which His own power had created stands as a warning to all churches and to all Christians. No one can live the law of God without ministering to others. But there are many who do not live out Christ’s merciful, unselfish life. Some who think themselves excellent Christians do not understand what constitutes service for God.... In all the affairs of life this is their object. Not for others but for themselves do they minister. God created them to live in a world where unselfish service must be performed. He designed them to help their fellow men in every possible way. But self is so large that they cannot

see anything else. They are not in touch with humanity. Those who thus live for self are like the fig tree, which made every pretension but was fruitless. They observe the forms of worship, but without repentance or faith. In profession they honor the law of God, but obedience is lacking. They say, but do not. In the sentence pronounced on the fig tree Christ demonstrates how hateful in His eyes is this vain pretense.” – *The Desire of Ages*, p. 584.

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14

Sabbath, October 5, 2013

The Second Cleansing

“God calls upon His people to come into line. There is a great work to be done in a short time, and there is no time for hesitation. Plead with God, saying, ‘I make an entire surrender. I give myself away to Thee.’ Then be joyful. The Word is in you, purifying and cleaning your character. God does not want His children to go about with anxiety and sorrow expressed in their faces. He wants the lovely expression of His countenance to be revealed in every one of us who are partakers of the divine nature, for we have power to escape the corruptions of the world.” – *Sermons and Talks*, vol. 2, pp. 297, 298.

A CLEAN TEMPLE

1. **What unpleasant scenes met Jesus as He entered the temple’s outer court at the end of His mission? In the face of such unholy traffic, what did He undertake without hesitation?**

LUKE 19:45 *And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought.*

MARK 11:15 *And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves.*

“At the beginning of His ministry, Christ had driven from the temple those who defiled it by their unholy traffic; and His stern and godlike demeanor had struck terror to the hearts of the scheming traders. At the close of His mission He came again to the temple, and found it still desecrated as before. The condition of things was even worse than before. The outer court of the temple was like a vast cattle yard. With the cries of the animals and the sharp chinking of coin was mingled the sound of angry altercation between traffickers, and among them were heard the voices of men in sacred office. The dignitaries of the temple were themselves engaged in buying and selling and the exchange of money. So

completely were they controlled by their greed of gain that in the sight of God they were no better than thieves.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 589.

2. What was God’s wonderful purpose for the temple? What happened in the house of prayer where God’s presence was supposed to abide and bless the people?

MATTHEW 21:13 *And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.*

LUKE 19:46 *Saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves.*

MARK 11:17 *And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.*

“Again the piercing look of Jesus swept over the desecrated court of the temple. All eyes were turned toward Him. Priest and ruler, Pharisee and Gentile, looked with astonishment and awe upon Him who stood before them with the majesty of heaven’s King. Divinity flashed through humanity, investing Christ with a dignity and glory He had never manifested before. Those standing nearest Him drew as far away as the crowd would permit. Except for a few of His disciples, the Saviour stood alone. Every sound was hushed. The deep silence seemed unbearable. Christ spoke with a power that swayed the people like a mighty tempest: ‘It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.’ His voice sounded like a trumpet through the temple. The displeasure of His countenance seemed like consuming fire. With authority He commanded, ‘Take these things hence.’ John 2:16....

“Jesus had taken His position as guardian of the temple. Never before had He assumed such kingly authority. Never before had His words and works possessed so great power. He had done marvelous works throughout Jerusalem, but never before in a manner so solemn and impressive.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 590, 591, 593.

CLEANSING THE TEMPLE

3. What did the Master stop with His decided action? Do we know what is permitted in God’s house and what is forbidden?

MARK 11:16 *And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple.*

MALACHI 3:1-3 *The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap: and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver.*

“That temple, erected for the abode of the divine Presence, was designed to be an object lesson for Israel and for the world. From eternal

ages it was God's purpose that every created being ... should be a temple for the indwelling of the Creator. Because of sin, humanity ceased to be a temple for God.... God designed that the temple at Jerusalem should be a continual witness to the high destiny open to every soul. But the Jews had not understood the significance of the building they regarded with so much pride. They did not yield themselves as holy temples for the Divine Spirit. The courts of the temple at Jerusalem, filled with the tumult of unholy traffic, represented all too truly the temple of the heart, defiled by the presence of sensual passion and unholy thoughts. In cleansing the temple from the world's buyers and sellers, Jesus announced His mission to cleanse the heart from the defilement of sin—from the earthly desires, the selfish lusts, the evil habits, that corrupt the soul....

"... Only Christ can cleanse the soul temple. But He will not force an entrance. He comes not into the heart as to the temple of old; but He says, 'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him.' Revelation 3:20." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 161.

Thought question: *What should we do to remove every strange and defiling thing from our hearts, our minds, and God's house of prayer?*

A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT IMAGE

4. While some people and their merchandise were not welcome there, who entered the temple court and received great blessing?

MATTHEW 21:14 *And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them.*

"On the way from the temple they were met by a throng who came with their sick inquiring for the Great Healer. The report given by the fleeing people caused some of these to turn back. They feared to meet One so powerful, whose very look had driven the priests and rulers from His presence. But a large number pressed through the hurrying crowd, eager to reach Him who was their only hope. When the multitude fled from the temple, many had remained behind. These were now joined by the newcomers. Again the temple court was filled by the sick and the dying, and once more Jesus ministered to them." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 592.

5. What innocent voices were heard in the holy court after the Master had cleansed it?

MATTHEW 21:15 *And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased,*

"After a season the priests and rulers ventured back to the temple. When the panic had abated, they were seized with anxiety to know what would be the next movement of Jesus. They expected Him to take the throne of David. Quietly returning to the temple, they heard the voices of men, women, and children praising God. Upon entering, they stood transfixed before the wonderful scene. They saw the sick healed, the

blind restored to sight, and deaf receive their hearing, and the crippled leap for joy. 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. What blessed work did Jesus constantly do in that place that the Jews had contaminated with their commerce? What religion leads to God?

LUKE 19:47 *And he taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy him.*

LUKE 20:1 *And it came to pass, that on one of those days, as he taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes came upon him with the elders.*

LUKE 21:37 *And in the day time he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives.*

MARK 14:49 *I was daily with you in the temple teaching, ...*

“Let Jesus into the soul temple to preside there, and all things will then be after the order of God.” —*Daughters of God*, p. 168.

“The religion that comes from God is the only religion that will lead to God. In order to serve Him aright, we must be born of the divine Spirit. This will purify the heart and renew the mind, giving us a new capacity for knowing and loving God. It will give us a willing obedience to all His requirements. This is true worship. It is the fruit of the working of the Holy Spirit. By the Spirit every sincere prayer is indited, and such prayer is acceptable to God. Wherever a soul reaches out after God, there the Spirit’s working is manifest, and God will reveal Himself to that soul. For such worshipers He is seeking. He waits to receive them, and to make them His sons and daughters.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 189.

WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT GOD’S WORK IN US

7. While the priests and rulers were not offended by the crying and selling of speculators, what was disturbing to them? Were they willing to hear the purifying teaching of Jesus?

MATTHEW 21:16 *And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?*

MATTHEW 23:37 *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*

“The priests tried to stop them. They declared that these children were defiling the temple, and they turned to Jesus to demand the reason of the manifestation he had called forth. They asked him, ‘Hearest thou what these say?’ And Jesus turned to them with the question, ‘Have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?’” —*Review and Herald*, April 9, 1889.

“The Jews knew that the act of Jesus in purging the temple of its sacrilegious speculators, was not the exhibition of human power. The divine authority that inspired Jesus, and lifted Him above humanity, was felt and realized by them, and should have been sufficient to bring them as worshipers at His feet. But they were determined to disbelieve Him.” —*Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, p. 120.

Thought question: For what purpose was this account recorded?

FOR MEDITATION

“There is a work to be done that has not yet been done. The temple courts are not yet cleansed as they must be before the work which Christ did after the cleansing of the temple can be done. Then all the sick were brought to Him, and He laid His hands upon them, and healed them all.” —*Spalding and Magan Collection*, p. 139; see also *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, February 24, 1899.

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15

Sabbath, October 12, 2013

Questions and Answers

“Many have tried neutrality in a crisis, but they have failed in their purpose. No one can maintain a neutral ground. Those who endeavor to do this will fulfill Christ’s words, ‘No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon’ (chap. 6:24). Those who begin their Christian life by being half and half, whatever may be their intentions, will at last be found enlisted on the enemy’s side.” —*This Day with God*, p. 240.

THE CHIEF PRIESTS QUESTION JESUS

- 1. Revealing their opposition to His actions in driving the merchants from the temple court, what intimidating question did the chief priests and elders ask Jesus? Were they willing to accept His answer?**

MATTHEW 21:23 *And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?*

“Repairing to the temple where He was teaching, they proceeded to question Him: ‘By what authority doest Thou these things? and who gave Thee this authority?’ They expected Him to claim that His authority was from God. Such an assertion they intended to deny.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 593.

A QUESTION DIRECTED TO THE CONSCIENCE

2. Did the Lord answer their question directly, as He had done many times before? Knowing their intentions, what serious, thoughtful question did He ask them?

MARK 11:29, 30 *And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me.*

“But Jesus met them with a question apparently pertaining to another subject, and He made His reply to them conditional on their answering this question. ‘The baptism of John,’ He said, ‘whence was it? from heaven, or of men?’” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 593.

INCONSISTENT REASONING

3. Was Jesus’ question easy for the leaders to answer? What were the consequences if they answered positively?

MARK 11:31 *And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him?*

“The priests saw that they were in a dilemma from which no sophistry could extricate them. If they said that John’s baptism was from heaven, their inconsistency would be made apparent. Christ would say, Why have ye not then believed on him? John had testified of Christ, ‘Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’ John 1:29. If the priests believed John’s testimony, how could they deny the Messiahship of Christ?” – *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 593, 594.

“‘He that loveth his life shall lose it’ (John 12:25). When a man loses the shield of a good conscience, he knows that he has lost the cooperation of heavenly angels. God is not working in him. Another spirit inspires him. And to be an apostate, a traitor to the cause of God, is much more serious than death; it means the loss of eternal life.” –(Manuscript 87, August 19, 1897, “All That Will Live Godly in Christ Jesus Shall Suffer Persecution”) *This Day with God*, p. 240.

4. Was the opposite answer a possible one for them? What would have been the consequences if they had denied the heavenly origin of John’s ministry and baptism?

MARK 11:32 *But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed.*

“If they declared their real belief, that John’s ministry was of men, they would bring upon themselves a storm of indignation; for the people believed John to be a prophet.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 593.

5. Caught in a dilemma, what calculated answer did they give? Were they sincere in their answer?

LUKE 20:7 *And they answered, that they could not tell whence it was.*

JOHN 9:29 *We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is.*

JAMES 1:8. *A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*

“With intense interest the multitude awaited the decision. They knew that the priests had professed to accept the ministry of John, and they expected them to acknowledge without a question that he was sent from God. But after conferring secretly together, the priests decided not to commit themselves. Hypocritically professing ignorance, they said, ‘We cannot tell.’ ‘Neither tell I you,’ said Christ, ‘by what authority I do these things.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 594.

Thought question: *Could the Lord bless them in such lack of honesty?*

“There are many who would serve Christ provided they could serve themselves also. But this cannot be. The Lord will not accept cowards in His army. There can be no dissembling. Christ’s followers must stand ready to serve Him at all times and in every way that may be required. God will accept only true-hearted, level-headed, all-round men. ‘He that is not with Me is against Me,’ Christ declared; ‘and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad.’ Matthew 12:30.” —*This Day with God*, p. 240.

THE RESULT OF COMPROMISE

6. In what other serious circumstances did the people of Israel take no clear position? What demonstrates lukewarmness and neutrality when the Lord has clearly revealed the truth?

1 KING 18:21 *And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.*

REVELATION 3:15, 16 *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.*

“What astonishing deception and fearful blindness had, like a dark cloud, covered Israel! This blindness and apostasy had not closed about them suddenly; it had come upon them gradually as they had not heeded the word of reproof and warning which the Lord had sent to them because of their pride and their sins. And now, in this fearful crisis, in the presence of the idolatrous priests and the apostate king, they remained neutral. If God abhors one sin above another, of which His people are

guilty, it is doing nothing in case of an emergency. Indifference and neutrality in a religious crisis is regarded of God as a grievous crime and equal to the very worst type of hostility against God.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 280, 281.

7. Having revealed their lack of sincerity and unwillingness to accept the truth, what did Jesus answer the priests?

LUKE 20:8 *And Jesus said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.*

“Scribes, priests, and rulers were all silenced. Baffled and disappointed, they stood with lowering brows, not daring to press further questions upon Christ. By their cowardice and indecision they had in a great measure forfeited the respect of the people, who now stood by, amused to see these proud, self-righteous men defeated.

“All these sayings and doings of Christ were important, and their influence was to be felt in an ever-increasing degree after His crucifixion and ascension. Many of those who had anxiously awaited the result of the questioning of Jesus were finally to become His disciples, first drawn toward Him by His words on that eventful day. The scene in the temple court was never to fade from their minds. The contrast between Jesus and the high priest as they talked together was marked... Many of those who witnessed the words and deeds of Jesus in the temple from that time enshrined Him in their hearts as a prophet of God. But as the popular feeling turned in His favor, the hatred of the priests toward Jesus increased. The wisdom by which He escaped the snares set for His feet, being a new evidence of His divinity, added fuel to their wrath.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 594.

FOR MEDITATION

“Double minded men and women are Satan’s best allies. Whatever favorable opinion they may have of themselves, they are dissemblers. All who are loyal to God and the truth must stand firmly for the right because it is right. To yoke up with those that are unconsecrated and yet be loyal to the truth, is simply an impossibility. We cannot unite with those who are serving themselves, who are working on worldly plans, and not lose our connection with the heavenly Counsellor. We may recover ourselves from the snare of the enemy, but we are bruised and wounded, and our experience is dwarfed. ‘Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God’ (James 4:4).” —*This Day with God*, p. 240.

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From Caretakers to Usurpers

“Christ hungers to receive from His vineyard the fruit of holiness and unselfishness. He looks for the principles of love and goodness. Not all the beauty of art can bear comparison with the beauty of temper and character to be revealed in those who are Christ’s representatives. It is the atmosphere of grace which surrounds the soul of the believer, the Holy Spirit working upon mind and heart, that makes him a savor of life unto life, and enables God to bless his work.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 298.

ENTRUSTED WITH THE VINEYARD

1. What parable did Jesus present to illustrate the husbandmen’s privileges and responsibilities?

MATTHEW 21:33 *Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.*

“In the parable the householder represented God, the vineyard the Jewish nation, and the hedge the divine law which was their protection. The tower was a symbol of the temple. The Lord of the vineyard had done everything needful for its prosperity. ‘What could have been done more to my vineyard,’ he says, ‘that I have not done in it?’ Isaiah 5:4. Thus was represented God’s unwearied care for Israel.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 596.

EXPECTED TO BEAR FRUIT

2. What was normally expected from a vineyard after a period of time and care? What did the husbandmen do at the time of the grape harvest?

MATTHEW 21:34, 35 *And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.*

Thought question: *Whom were the Lord’s agents supposed to honor and represent?*

“And as the husbandmen were to return to the Lord a due proportion of the fruits of the vineyard, so God’s people were to honor Him by a life corresponding to their sacred privileges.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 596.

“Upon this people God had bestowed great privileges, blessing them richly from His abundant goodness. He looked for them to honor Him

by yielding fruit. They were to reveal the principles of His kingdom. In the midst of a fallen, wicked world they were to represent the character of God.

“As the Lord’s vineyard they were to produce fruit altogether different from that of the heathen nations.... It was the privilege of the Jewish nation to represent the character of God as it had been revealed to Moses. This was the fruit that God desired from His people. In the purity of their characters, in the holiness of their lives, in their mercy and loving-kindness and compassion, they were to show that ‘the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.’ Psalm. 19:7.” –*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 285.

3. Did the caretakers deliver the owner’s share later when more servants were sent to receive it?

MATTHEW 21:36 *Again, he sent other servants more than the first; and they did unto them likewise.*

“But as the husbandmen had killed the servants whom the master sent to them for fruit, so the Jews had put to death the prophets whom God sent to call them to repentance. Messenger after messenger had been slain. Thus far the application of the parable could not be questioned, and in what followed it was not less evident.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 596.

“The husbandmen who had been placed in charge of the Lord’s vineyard were untrue to their trust. The priests and teachers were not faithful instructors of the people. They did not keep before them the goodness and mercy of God and His claim to their love and service. These husbandmen sought their own glory. They desired to appropriate the fruits of the vineyard. It was their study to attract attention and homage to themselves.” –*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 292.

THE USURPERS’ TREATMENT OF THE SON

4. What happened when the divine Owner of the vineyard sent His most noble representative, His Son?

MATTHEW 21:37-39 *But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.*

“As a last resource, God sent His Son, saying, ‘They will reverence My Son.’ But their resistance had made them vindictive....

“The Jewish rulers did not love God; therefore they cut themselves away from Him, and rejected all His overtures for a just settlement. Christ, the Beloved of God, came to assert the claims of the Owner of the vineyard; but the husbandmen treated Him with marked contempt, saying, We will not have this man to rule over us.... They hated the high standard of righteousness which Christ continually presented.... When the final test came, the test which meant obedience unto eternal life or disobedience unto eternal death, they rejected the Holy One of Israel.” –*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 293, 294.

“In the beloved son whom the Lord of the vineyard finally sent to his disobedient servants, and whom they seized and slew, the priests and rulers saw a distinct picture of Jesus and His impending fate. Already they were planning to slay Him whom the Father had sent to them as a last appeal. In the retribution inflicted upon the ungrateful husbandmen was portrayed the doom of those who should put Christ to death.”
—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 596, 597.

5. Having reached this very critical point, what did the husbandmen deserve?

MATTHEW 21:40, 41 *When the Lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.*

“In asking the question, ‘When the Lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?’ Christ designed that the Pharisees should answer as they did. He designed that they should condemn themselves. His warnings, failing to arouse them to repentance, would seal their doom, and He wished them to see that they had brought ruin on themselves. He designed to show them the justice of God in the withdrawal of their national privileges, which had already begun, and which would end, not only in the destruction of their temple and their city, but in the dispersion of the nation.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 597.

FAITHFUL HUSBANDMEN

6. What else did the Lord say, referring directly to His impenitent hearers and the people as a nation? What is written about the unfaithful servant?

MATTHEW 21:43 *Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.*

MATTHEW 24:48-51 *But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming; And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; The Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

“Christ would have averted the doom of the Jewish nation if the people had received Him. But envy and jealousy made them implacable. They determined that they would not receive Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. They rejected the Light of the world, and thenceforth their lives were surrounded with darkness as the darkness of midnight....

“As a people the Jews had failed of fulfilling God’s purpose, and the vineyard was taken from them. The privileges they had abused, the work they had slighted, was entrusted to others.

“The parable of the vineyard applies not alone to the Jewish nation. It has a lesson for us. The church in this generation has been endowed

by God with great privileges and blessings, and He expects corresponding returns.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 295, 296.

7. Upon what holy foundation do all good and faithful servants build? With what wonderful words will they be welcomed into the kingdom of their Lord?

MATTHEW 21:42 *Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?*

1 PETER 2:6 *Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.*

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

“In quoting the prophecy of the rejected stone, Christ referred to an actual occurrence in the history of Israel. The incident was connected with the building of the first temple. While it had a special application at the time of Christ’s first advent, and should have appealed with special force to the Jews, it has also a lesson for us....

“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. 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.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 597-599.

FOR MEDITATION

“The church is very precious in God’s sight. He values it, not for its external advantages, but for the sincere piety which distinguishes it from the world. He estimates it according to the growth of the members in the knowledge of Christ, according to their progress in spiritual experience.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 298.

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*Please read the Missionary Report from
Myanmar on page 78*

17

Sabbath, October 26, 2013

Give to Caesar That Which Belongs to Him

“Christ’s reply was no evasion, but a candid answer to the question. Holding in His hand the Roman coin, upon which were stamped the name and image of Caesar, He declared that since they were living under the protection of the Roman power, they should render to that power the support it claimed, so long as this did not conflict with a higher duty. But while peaceably subject to the laws of the land, they should at all times give their first allegiance to God.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 602.

A TRAP

1. What plan did the Pharisees devise to trap the Lord and condemn His teachings? What did their agents do?

MATTHEW 22:15 *Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk.*

LUKE 20:20 *And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor.*

“The priests and rulers had listened in silence to Christ’s pointed rebukes. They could not refute His charges. But they were only the more determined to entrap Him, and with this object they sent to Him spies, ‘which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of His words, that so they might deliver Him unto the power and authority of the governor.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 601.

2. Whom did they send as spies? With what flattery did they approach the Master?

MARK 12:13 *And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words.*

MATTHEW 22:16 *And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men.*

LUKE 20:21 *And they asked him, saying, Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly.*

“They did ... send ... young men, who were ardent and zealous, and whom, they thought, Christ did not know. These were accompanied by certain of the Herodians, who were to hear Christ’s words, that they might testify against Him at His trial. The Pharisees and Herodians had been bitter enemies, but they were now one in enmity to Christ....

“The words, ‘We know that Thou sayest and teachest rightly,’ had they been sincere, would have been a wonderful admission. But they were spoken to deceive; nevertheless their testimony was true. The Pharisees did know that Christ said and taught rightly, and by their own testimony will they be judged.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 601, 602.

TRIBUTE PAID TO HEATHEN AUTHORITIES

3. What crafty question did they ask Him? Had the Pharisees been in agreement on this issue?

MATTHEW 22:17 *Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?*

LUKE 20:22 *Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no?*

“Those who put the question to Jesus thought that they had sufficiently disguised their purpose; but Jesus read their hearts as an open book, and sounded their hypocrisy....

“The Pharisees had ever chafed under the exaction of tribute by the Romans. The payment of tribute they held to be contrary to the law of God. Now they saw opportunity to lay a snare for Jesus. The spies came to Him, and with apparent sincerity, as though desiring to know their duty, said, ‘Master, we know that Thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest Thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly: is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no?’” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 602, 601.

4. Knowing that they were deliberately setting a trap for Him, what did He ask them?

LUKE 20:23 *But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me?*

MARK 12:15 *Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see it.*

MATTHEW 22:18, 19 *But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Show me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny.*

“The spies had expected Jesus to answer their question directly, in one way or the other. If He should say, It is unlawful to give tribute to Caesar, He would be reported to the Roman authorities and arrested for inciting rebellion. But in case He should pronounce it lawful to pay the tribute, they designed to accuse Him to the people as opposing the law of God. Now they felt themselves baffled and defeated. Their plans were disarranged. The summary manner in which their question had been settled left them nothing further to say.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 602.

5. What did He ask them after He received the coin? What did they have to admit?

MATTHEW 22:20 *And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and super-
scription?*

MARK 12:16 *And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose is this
image and superscription? And they said unto him, Caesar's.*

LUKE 20:24 *Show me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it?
They answered and said, Caesar's.*

Thought question: *What will be our attitude if we wish to receive
answers from the Lord?*

“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.” —*God's Amazing Grace*, p. 289.

6. What wonderfully balanced, inspired explanation did the Lord give? Is tax evasion acceptable for God's children?

LUKE 20:25 *And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the
things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's.*

Thought question: *What principle is still valid today?*

“Pointing to the inscription on the coin, Jesus said, ‘Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's’....

“The Saviour's words, ‘Render ... unto God the things that are God's,’ were a severe rebuke to the intriguing Jews. Had they faithfully fulfilled their obligations to God, they would not have become a broken nation, subject to a foreign power. No Roman ensign would have waved over Jerusalem, no Roman sentinel would have stood at her gates, no Roman governor would have ruled within her walls. The Jewish nation was then paying the penalty of its apostasy from God.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 602.

7. What did they do after hearing such a definitive answer? How clearly do we see what belongs to the Lord and must never be given to Caesar?

MATTHEW 22:22 *When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and
left him, and went their way.*

Thought question: *What other examples show the difference between
sacred and common things?*

“When the Pharisees heard Christ’s answer, ‘they marveled, and left Him, and went their way.’ He had rebuked their hypocrisy and presumption, and in doing this He had stated a great principle, a principle that clearly defines the limits of man’s duty to the civil government and his duty to God. In many minds a vexed question had been settled. Ever after they held to the right principle. And although many went away dissatisfied, they saw that the principle underlying the question had been clearly set forth, and they marveled at Christ’s far-seeing discernment.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 602, 603.

FOR MEDITATION

“It should not surprise us when evil conjectures are greedily seized upon as undoubted facts by those who have an appetite for falsehood. The opposers of Christ were again and again confounded and put to silence by the wisdom of His words; yet they still eagerly listened to every rumor, and found some pretext to ply Him again with opposing questions. They were determined not to abandon their purpose. They well knew that if Jesus should continue His work, many would believe on Him, and the scribes and Pharisees would lose their power with the people. Hence they were ready to stoop to any base or contemptible measure to accomplish their malicious intentions against Him. They hated the Herodians, yet they joined these inveterate enemies in order to invent some plan to rid the earth of Christ.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 71.

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MISSIONARY REPORT
FROM MYANMAR

To be read on Sabbath, October 26, 2013

*The Special Sabbath School Offering will be gathered
on Sabbath, November 2, 2013*

Dear brethren around the world, I greet you all in the name of our soon-coming King and Lord Jesus Christ with the following scripture: “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” Philippians 1:3-6.

It is a great privilege to have this opportunity to tell you about the ongoing work of the International Missionary Society in Myanmar. First of all, I would like to mention a little about the history of this country. Myanmar is one of the Asian countries; it borders Thailand on the east, Laos and China on the north, India on the west, Bangladesh on the southwest, and the Bay of Bengal on the south. It was an independent colony under Great Britain until 1948. After independence, the country was under military control for many years. But since 2010, democracy is developing and has grown much more than ever before. A recent estimate of the population is about 70 million.

There are four major religions in Myanmar—Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism. The majority of the population is Buddhist, and Christianity is the second largest group with about 8% of the population. Among Christians, the Seventh-day Adventist Church was one of the earlier churches to be established in Myanmar. According to one Seventh-day Adventist pastor, there are currently more than 30 thousand Adventists in the country.

The Reform Movement did not exist here until the end of 2011, when Pastor Leonardo Jastiva from Philippines baptized seven members, including a pastor from the Presbyterian Church, on December 12. From that time onward, the Lord has been increasing the humble ministry in Myanmar. On March 4, 2012, eight people were baptized by Pastor Cortes in Yangon. On May 1, 2012, nine members were added through baptism in Matupi by Elder Suan Kam Thang. On August 15, another nine baptized members were added to the church by Elder Suan Kam Thang. On September 28 and 29, eleven

baptized members were added in Ngente Village, again by Elder Suan Kam Thang. On October 13, 2012, another baptized member was added to the church in Yangon. So, now there are 45 baptized members and three local churches. And every Sabbath, interested souls come to the Sabbath school and divine service. The church has been working very hard and struggling with two full-time workers and two-part time missionaries.

At present, the church in Myanmar has been standing very firmly and is moving forward in the midst of obstacles posed not only by Adventists but also by Protestant churches which regard us as returning to Judaism and being under the law. To help solve this problem, the history of the IMS is being translated into the Burmese and Tedim dialects. But the church in Myanmar has a strong determination to defend and preach the present truth throughout Myanmar as well as other countries.

At the same time, we have another difficulty in that we have to move the headquarters and meeting location from one place to another. Often we gathered some interested souls in one area but after a while had to leave them because we rented a different house for the headquarters. Therefore, it is very important for us to secure a permanent headquarters not only for the office but also for ministering to the interested souls.

The members of the Myanmar Mission Field humbly petition all of the IMS members around the world to pray for us at least for half a minute every day. We also cordially invite all the believers around the world—the pastors, workers, and members—to visit us and share your talents with your Myanmar brothers and sisters in Jesus' name.

The offering that you are going to give to the Lord for Myanmar next Sabbath will do great things which you cannot imagine. Your generous offerings will change the conditions of God's work in Myanmar. "But this I say, he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in this heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." 2 Corinthians 9:6-8.

*—For the Myanmar Mission Field
Suan Kam Thang*

Special Sabbath School Offering for MYANMAR

Give your gifts with love and gratitude to the great Creator!

18

Sabbath, November 2, 2013

What Will Happen in the Resurrection?

“Thousands become infidels because their finite minds cannot comprehend the mysteries of God. They cannot explain the wonderful exhibition of divine power in His providences, therefore they reject the evidences of such power, attributing them to natural agencies which they can comprehend still less. The only key to the mysteries that surround us is to acknowledge in them all the presence and power of God. Men need to recognize God as the Creator of the universe, One who commands and executes all things. They need a broader view of His character, and of the mystery of His agencies.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 606.

THE PATRIARCHS’ HOPE

1. **Is the resurrection mentioned in the books of the Bible written before Jesus’ birth? Explain the verses in the Old Testament that mention the resurrection.**

JOB 19:25-27 *For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.*

DANIEL 12:2 *And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.*

“From the day when the first pair turned their sorrowing steps from Eden, the children of faith have waited the coming of the Promised One to break the destroyer’s power and bring them again to the lost Paradise. Holy men of old looked forward to the advent of the Messiah in glory, as the consummation of their hope. Enoch, only the seventh in descent from them that dwelt in Eden, he who for three centuries on earth walked with his God, was permitted to behold from afar the coming of the Deliverer. ‘Behold,’ he declared, ‘the Lord cometh with

ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all.' Jude 14, 15. The patriarch Job in the night of his affliction exclaimed with unshaken trust: 'I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:... In my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.' Job 19:25-27."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 299.

THE SPECULATIONS OF THE SADDUCEES

2. Nevertheless, what did the Sadducees believe about the resurrection in Jesus' day?

LUKE 20:27 *Then came to him certain of the Sadducees, which deny that there is any resurrection; and they asked him.*

"The Sadducees rejected the traditions of the Pharisees. They professed to believe the greater portion of the Scriptures, and to regard them as the rule of action; but practically they were skeptics and materialists.

"The Sadducees denied the existence of angels, the resurrection of the dead, and the doctrine of a future life, with its rewards and punishments. On all these points they differed with the Pharisees. Between the two parties the resurrection was especially a subject of controversy. The Pharisees had been firm believers in the resurrection, but in these discussions their views in regard to the future state became confused. Death became to them an inexplicable mystery. Their inability to meet the arguments of the Sadducees gave rise to continual irritation. The discussions between the two parties usually resulted in angry disputes, leaving them farther apart than before."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 603, 604.

3. What argument did they present for their objection to the resurrection? Was there any Biblical support for their belief?

LUKE 20:28-33 *Saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. There were therefore seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and died without children. And the second took her to wife, and he died childless. And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also: and they left no children, and died. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife.*

DEUTERONOMY 25:5 *If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her.*

"This teaching [the resurrection] the Sadducees were determined to discredit. In seeking a controversy with Jesus, they felt confident of bringing Him into disrepute, even if they could not secure His condemnation. The resurrection was the subject on which they chose to question

Him. Should He agree with them, He would give still further offense to the Pharisees. Should He differ with them, they designed to hold His teaching up to ridicule.

“The Sadducees reasoned that if the body is to be composed of the same particles of matter in its immortal as in its mortal state, then when raised from the dead it must have flesh and blood, and must resume in the eternal world the life interrupted on earth. In that case they concluded that earthly relationships would be resumed, husband and wife would be reunited, marriages consummated, and all things go on the same as before death, the frailties and passions of this life being perpetuated in the life beyond.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 605.

JESUS ANSWERS THE OBJECTION

4. How did Jesus answer their objection after listening to their argument?

MATTHEW 22:29, 30 *Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.*

LUKE 20:34, 35 *And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage.*

“He showed that the Sadducees were wrong in their belief. Their premises were false. ‘Ye do err,’ He added, ‘not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.’ He did not charge them, as He had charged the Pharisees, with hypocrisy, but with error of belief....

“The Sadducees had flattered themselves that they of all men adhered most strictly to the Scriptures. But Jesus showed that they had not known their true meaning. That knowledge must be brought home to the heart by the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. Their ignorance of the Scriptures and the power of God He declared to be the cause of their confusion of faith and darkness of mind. They were seeking to bring the mysteries of God within the compass of their finite reasoning. Christ called upon them to open their minds to those sacred truths that would broaden and strengthen the understanding.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 605, 606.

5. Will married life continue after the resurrection? What nature will the redeemed possess?

LUKE 20:36 *Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.*

“Those who in the judgment are ‘accounted worthy’ will have a part in the resurrection of the just. Jesus said: ‘They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead,... are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.’ Luke 20:35, 36. And again He declares that ‘they

that have done good' shall come forth 'unto the resurrection of life.' John 5:29. The righteous dead will not be raised until after the judgment at which they are accounted worthy of 'the resurrection of life.' Hence they will not be present in person at the tribunal when their records are examined and their cases decided." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 482.

BIBLICAL CONSIDERATION

6. What did the Master state to corroborate the teaching of the resurrection? Would it be significant for the Lord to call Himself the “God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” if after their death there would be no resurrection?

MATTHEW 22:31 *But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.*

LUKE 20:37, 38 *Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.*

“Christ declared to His hearers that if there were no resurrection of the dead, the Scriptures which they professed to believe would be of no avail.... God counts the things that are not as though they were. He sees the end from the beginning, and beholds the result of His work as though it were now accomplished. The precious dead, from Adam down to the last saint who dies, will hear the voice of the Son of God, and will come forth from the grave to immortal life. God will be their God, and they shall be His people. There will be a close and tender relationship between God and the risen saints. This condition, which is anticipated in His purpose, He beholds as if it were already existing. The dead live unto Him.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 606.

7. After hearing this answer, what did some scribes and the multitude of the people recognize?

MATTHEW 22:33 *And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine.*

LUKE 20:39, 40 *Then certain of the scribes answering said, Master, thou hast well said. And after that they durst not ask him any question at all.*

“By the words of Christ the Sadducees were put to silence. They could not answer Him. Not a word had been spoken of which the least advantage could be taken for His condemnation. His adversaries had gained nothing but the contempt of the people.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 606.

FOR MEDITATION

Thought question: *Is it beneficial to speculate concerning the physical nature of the redeemed after they are resurrected?*

“Erroneous theories, with no authority from the Word of God, will come in on the right hand and the left, and to weaklings these theories will appear as truth which makes wise. But they are as nothingness. And yet many church members have become so well satisfied with cheap food that they have dyspeptic religion. Why will men and women belittle their experience by gathering up idle tales and presenting them as matters worthy of attention? The people of God have no time to dwell on the indefinite, frivolous questions which have no bearing on God’s requirements.

“God desires men and women to think soberly and candidly. They are to ascend to a higher and still higher grade, commanding a wider and still wider horizon. Looking unto Jesus, they are to be changed into His image. They are to spend their time in searching for the deep, everlasting truths of heaven. Then there will be nothing frivolous in their religious experience. As they study the grand truths of God’s Word, they endure the seeing of Him who is invisible. They see that the most uplifting, ennobling truths are those most closely connected with the Source of all truth. And as they learn of Him, their motives and sympathies become firm and unchanging; for the impressions made by the All-wise are substantial and enduring.”—*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 171, 172.

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19

Sabbath, November 9, 2013

The Great Commandment

“The Pharisees had exalted the first four commandments, which point out the duty of man to his Maker, as of far greater consequence than the other six, which define man’s duty to his fellow man. As the result, they greatly failed of practical godliness. Jesus had shown the people their great deficiency, and had taught the necessity of good works, declaring that the tree is known by its fruits. For this reason He had been charged with exalting the last six commandments above the first four.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 606, 607.

ANOTHER TEST

- 1. Were the Pharisees convinced that Jesus’ message came from heaven? What question did an expert in the law ask to test Him again?**

MARK 12:28 *And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?*

MATTHEW 22:34, 35 *But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him.*

2. How did the Lord reply to this question? Explain the text on which He based His answer.

MARK 12:29 *And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord.*

DEUTERONOMY 6:4 *Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord.*

EXODUS 20:2, 3 *I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*

“The commandments of God are comprehensive and far reaching; in a few words they unfold the whole duty of man.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 320.

Thought question: *What is evident when one compares this verse with the first of the Ten Commandments?*

“He who proclaimed the law from Sinai, and delivered to Moses the precepts of the ritual law, is the same that spoke the Sermon on the Mount. The great principles of love to God, which He set forth as the foundation of the law and the prophets, are only a reiteration of what He had spoken through Moses to the Hebrew people: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.’ Deuteronomy 6:4, 5. ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.’ Leviticus 19:18. The teacher is the same in both dispensations. God’s claims are the same. The principles of His government are the same. For all proceed from Him ‘with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.’ James 1:17.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 373.

3. According to the Bible, what is the result of accepting the Lord as the one true God? Since this is the first commandment, what place should the Lord have in our life?

DEUTERONOMY 6:4, 5 *Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.*

“But those who are waiting to behold a magical change in their characters without determined effort on their part to overcome sin, will be disappointed. We have no reason to fear while looking to Jesus, no reason to doubt but that He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto Him; but we may constantly fear lest our old nature will again obtain the supremacy, that the enemy shall devise some snare whereby we shall again become his captives. We are to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of His good pleasure. With our limited powers we are to be as holy in our sphere as God is holy in His sphere. To the extent of our ability, we are to make manifest the truth and love and excellence of the divine character. As wax takes the impression of the seal, so the soul is to take the impression of the Spirit of God and retain the image of Christ. We are to grow daily in spiritual loveliness.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 336, 337.

4. In harmony with these verses, how should we love God? Do we truly hold Him as the greatest and the first in our daily lives?

MARK 12:30 *And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.*

MATTHEW 22:37 *Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*

“The first four of the Ten Commandments outline our duty to our Maker. He who is false to his God cannot be true to his neighbor. He who loves God supremely will love his neighbor as himself. Pride lifts itself up unto vanity, leading the human agent to make a god of himself. The gospel of Christ sanctifies the soul, expelling self-love.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 211, 212.

“So Christians are bidden to present their bodies, ‘a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.’ In order to do this, all their powers must be preserved in the best possible condition. Every practice that weakens physical or mental strength unfits man for the service of his Creator.... Those who do love God with all the heart will desire to give Him the best service of their life, and they will be constantly seeking to bring every power of their being into harmony with the laws that will promote their ability to do His will. They will not, by the indulgence of appetite or passion, enfeeble or defile the offering which they present to their heavenly Father.” —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 473, 474.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF PUTTING GOD FIRST

5. Whom will one also love sincerely if he loves the Lord with all his heart?

MATTHEW 22:39 *And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

MARK 12:31 *And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.*

Thought question: *In what sense is no other commandment greater than this?*

“The first four of the Ten Commandments are summed up in the one great precept, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.’ The last six are included in the other, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.’ Both these commandments are an expression of the principle of love. The first cannot be kept and the second broken, nor can the second be kept while the first is broken. When God has His rightful place on the throne of the heart, the right place will be given to our neighbor. We shall love him as ourselves. And only as we love God supremely is it possible to love our neighbor impartially.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 607.

6. How much depends on these two commandments? What does this mean?

MATTHEW 22:40 *On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*

Thought question: *In giving these two great commandments, did the Lord teach that all other commandments are abolished, as some people think?*

“And since all the commandments are summed up in love to God and man, it follows that not one precept can be broken without violating this principle. Thus Christ taught His hearers that the law of God is not so many separate precepts, some of which are of great importance, while others are of small importance and may with impunity be ignored. Our Lord presents the first four and the last six commandments as a divine whole, and teaches that love to God will be shown by obedience to all His commandments.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 607.

7. At this point, what did the expert in the law recognize in comparing the two great commandments with the sacrificial system? Therefore, what should be the motive for every action in life?

MARK 12:32-34 *And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.*

“The scribe who had questioned Jesus was well read in the law, and he was astonished at His words. He did not expect Him to manifest so deep and thorough a knowledge of the Scriptures. He had gained a broader view of the principles underlying the sacred precepts. Before the assembled priests and rulers he honestly acknowledged that Christ had given the right interpretation to the law....” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 607.

FOR MEDITATION

“The scribe was near to the kingdom of God, in that he recognized deeds of righteousness as more acceptable to God than burnt offerings and sacrifices. But he needed to recognize the divine character of Christ, and through faith in Him receive power to do the works of righteousness. The ritual service was of no value, unless connected with Christ by living faith. Even the moral law fails of its purpose, unless it is understood in its relation to the Saviour. Christ had repeatedly shown that His Father’s law contained something deeper than mere authoritative commands. In the law is embodied the same principle that is revealed in the gospel. The law points out man’s duty and shows him his guilt. To Christ he must look for pardon and for power to do what the law enjoins.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 608.

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Son and Lord of David

“The voice of God had been heard at the baptism of Jesus at the beginning of His ministry, and again at His transfiguration on the mount. Now at the close of His ministry it was heard for the third time, by a larger number of persons, and under peculiar circumstances. Jesus had just spoken the most solemn truth regarding the condition of the Jews. He had made His last appeal, and pronounced their doom. Now God again set His seal to the mission of His Son. He recognized the One whom Israel had rejected. ‘This voice came not because of Me,’ said Jesus, ‘but for your sakes.’ It was the crowning evidence of His Messiahship, the signal from the Father that Jesus had spoken the truth, and was the Son of God.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 625.

A CHALLENGING QUESTION

1. In contrast to other cases, who asked a question this time? What occasion did He choose for this?

MATTHEW 22:41 *While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them.*

“Instead of poring over the learned lore handed down by the rabbis from century to century, Jesus, under the Divine Teacher, studied the words of God, pure and uncorrupted, and studied also the great lesson book of nature. The words, ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ were ever upon His lips, and ‘It is written,’ was His reason for every act that varied from the family customs. He brought a purer atmosphere into the home life. Though He did not place Himself under the instruction of the rabbis by becoming a student in their schools, yet He was often brought in contact with them, and the questions He asked, as if He were a learner, puzzled the wise men; for their practices did not harmonize with the Scriptures, and they had not the wisdom that comes from God.” —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 439, 440.

2. What appropriate question did the Lord ask them? What prophecy implied that the Messiah would be a descendant of King David?

MATTHEW 22:42 *Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David.*

2 SAMUEL 7:12, 13, 15, 16 *And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.*

But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.

“A chorus of voices answered, ‘The Son of David.’ This was the title which prophecy had given to the Messiah. When Jesus revealed His divinity by His mighty miracles, when He healed the sick and raised the dead, the people had inquired among themselves, ‘Is not this the Son of David?’ The Syrophenician woman, blind Bartimaeus, and many others had cried to Him for help, ‘Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David.’ Matthew 15:22. While riding into Jerusalem He had been hailed with the joyful shout, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.’ Matthew 21:9. And the little children in the temple had that day echoed the glad ascription. But many who called Jesus the Son of David did not recognize His divinity. They did not understand that the Son of David was also the Son of God.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 608, 609.

A DEEPER QUESTION

3. What was His second question? What was His reason for presenting these two fundamental questions to the Pharisees?

MATTHEW 22:43 *He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord...?*

“The Pharisees had gathered close about Jesus as He answered the question of the scribe. Now turning He put a question to them: ‘What think ye of Christ? whose son is He?’ This question was designed to test their belief concerning the Messiah—to show whether they regarded Him simply as a man or as the Son of God.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 608.

4. In the psalm, did David in spirit simply call the Son of man “Lord,” or did he add additional points?

PSALM 110:1 *The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.*

MARK 12:36 *For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.*

“And all through the generations of the past, Christ has spoken; Christ has led His people, and has been the light of the world. When God chose Abraham as a representative of His truth, He took him out of his country, and away from his kindred, and set him apart. He desired to mold him after His own model. He desired to teach him according to His own plan. The mold of the world’s teachers was not to be upon him. He was to be taught how to command his children and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment. This is the work that God would have us do. He would have us understand how to govern our families, how to control our children, how to command our households to keep the way of the Lord.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 409, 410.

THE THIRD QUESTION

5. What argument did Jesus use to help the people understand that the Son of man was is God's Son?

MATTHEW 22:45 *If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?*

“In reply to the statement that Christ was the Son of David, Jesus said, ‘How then doth David in Spirit [the Spirit of Inspiration from God] call Him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool? If David then call Him Lord, how is He his son? And no man was able to answer Him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 609.

SON OF DAVID AND SON OF GOD

6. Were they able to answer the third question? What revealed their incapability, even though the answer was plainly in the psalms?

MATTHEW 22:46 *And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.*

Thought question: *Following Jesus' example, what counsel appears in the Testimonies regarding these questions?*

“Whenever practicable, every important discourse should be followed by a Bible study. Here the points that have been presented can be applied, questions can be asked, and right ideas inculcated. More time should be devoted to patiently educating the people, giving them opportunity to express themselves. It is instruction that men need, line upon line, and precept upon precept.” —*Evangelism*, p. 153.

7. What other prophecies attest to the divine nature of God's Son? What voice was heard from heaven giving similar affirmation during Jesus' life?

ISAIAH 7:14 *Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*

ISAIAH 9:6 *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, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.*

MICAH 5:2 *But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.*

MATTHEW 3:17 *And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

“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. Genesis 14:18.

“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.’ Isaiah 7:14; 9:6.

“Jeremiah will tell you, The Branch of David, ‘the Lord our Righteousness.’ Jeremiah 23:6.

“Daniel will tell you, He is the Messiah.

“Hosea will tell you, He is ‘the Lord God of hosts; the Lord is His memorial.’ Hosea 12:5.

“John the Baptist will tell you, He is ‘the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’ John 1:29.

“The great Jehovah has proclaimed from His throne, ‘This is My beloved Son.’ Matthew 3:17. 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.’ Mark 1:24.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 578, 579.

FOR MEDITATION

“‘Emmanuel, God with us,’ this means everything to us. What a broad foundation does it lay for our faith. What a hope big with immortality does it place before the believing soul. God with us in Christ Jesus to accompany us every step of the journey to heaven. The Holy Spirit is with us as a comforter, a guide in our perplexities, to soothe our sorrows, and shield us in temptation. ‘O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!’” –*My Life Today*, p. 290.

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Guilt of the Pharisees, *Part 1*

“Those in positions of responsibility who follow their own way are held responsible for the mistakes of those who are led astray by their example.” —(*Review and Herald*, September 14, 1905) *Christian Leadership*, p. 10.

“No one is compelled to copy the errors of professed Christians. If he sees the mistakes and faults of others, he will be responsible before God and before his fellow men if he does not set a better example. But some make the faults of others an excuse for their own defects of character, and even copy the very objectionable traits which they condemn. Such persons strengthen those of whom they complain as pursuing an unchristian course. With their eyes open they walk into the enemy’s snare.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 650.

SAYING AND DOING

1. How did the Lord begin His warning message regarding Israel’s religious leaders? Of all their teachings, what was correct to observe?

MATTHEW 23:2, 3 *Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.*

“The scribes and the Pharisees,’ He said, ‘sit in Moses’ seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.’ The scribes and Pharisees claimed to be invested with divine authority similar to that of Moses. They assumed to take his place as expounders of the law and judges of the people. As such they claimed from the people the utmost deference and obedience. Jesus bade His hearers do that which the rabbis taught according to the law, but not to follow their example. They themselves did not practice their own teaching.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 612.

DOUBLE STANDARD

2. What serious discrepancy could be seen in their actions? Are we not tempted sometimes to have a double standard, especially when our reputations or personal interests are at stake?

MATTHEW 23:4 *For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.*

“And they taught much that was contrary to the Scriptures. Jesus said, ‘They bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them

on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.' The Pharisees enjoined a multitude of regulations, having their foundation in tradition, and unreasonably restricting personal liberty. And certain portions of the law they so explained as to impose upon the people observances which they themselves secretly ignored, and from which, when it served their purpose, they actually claimed exemption."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 612.

GOING ASTRAY

3. How had an old teaching, which had been given to help people remember God's will, been altered? How can this same danger threaten us today?

DEUTERONOMY 6:6, 8 *And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart... Thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.*

MATTHEW 23:5 *But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,*

"To make a show of their piety was their constant aim. Nothing was held too sacred to serve this end.... These words [of Deuteronomy 6:8] have a deep meaning. As the word of God is meditated upon and practiced, the whole man will be ennobled. In righteous and merciful dealing, the hands will reveal, as a signet, the principles of God's law. They will be kept clean from bribes, and from all that is corrupt and deceptive. They will be active in works of love and compassion. The eyes, directed toward a noble purpose, will be clear and true. The expressive countenance, the speaking eye, will testify to the blameless character of him who loves and honors the word of God. But by the Jews of Christ's day all this was undiscerned. The command given to Moses was construed into a direction that the precepts of Scripture should be worn upon the person. They were accordingly written upon strips of parchment, and bound in a conspicuous manner about the head and wrists. But this did not cause the law of God to take a firmer hold of the mind and heart. These parchments were worn merely as badges, to attract attention. They were thought to give the wearers an air of devotion which would command the reverence of the people."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 612, 613.

AMBITION FOR POSITION

4. Instead of cultivating modesty and humility, what distinguished these leaders? How can self-righteousness become a similar problem for us?

MATTHEW 23:6 *And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues,*

"In such plain words the Saviour revealed the selfish ambition that was ever reaching for place and power, displaying a mock humility, while the heart was filled with avarice and envy. When persons were invited to a feast, the guests were seated according to their rank, and

those who were given the most honorable place received the first attention and special favors. The Pharisees were ever scheming to secure these honors. This practice Jesus rebuked.

“He also reproved 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.

5. Was the ambition for titles and positions confined to the leaders of Jesus’ time? Although we do not use those exact terms, what may we be guilty of promoting?

MATTHEW 23:7-10 *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; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.*

“If Christ were on earth today, surrounded by those who bear the title of ‘Reverend’ or ‘Right Reverend,’ would He not repeat His saying, ‘Neither be ye called masters: for One is your Master, even Christ?’ The Scripture declares of God, ‘Holy and reverend is His name.’ Psalm 111:9. To what human being is such a title befitting? How little does man reveal of the wisdom and righteousness it indicates! How many of those who assume this title are misrepresenting the name and character of God! Alas, how often have worldly ambition, despotism, and the basest sins been hidden under the bordered garments of a high and holy office!” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 613.

APPLYING THE PROPER ANTIDOTE

6. What will be the end of pride? What is the result of humility?

PROVERBS 18:12, FIRST PART *Before destruction the heart of man is haughty.*

PROVERBS 15:33 *The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility.*

MATTHEW 23:11, 12 *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.*

MATTHEW 20:26, 27 *But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.*

“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.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 613, 614.

Thought question: *How is it possible to be meek in thought, feeling, and action, thus receiving God's blessing?*

“The more one sees of the character of God, the more humble he becomes, and the lower his estimation is of himself. This indeed is the evidence that he beholds God, that he is in union with Jesus Christ. Unless we are meek and lowly, we cannot in truth claim that we have any conception of the character of God. Men may think that they possess superior qualifications. Their splendid talents, great learning, eloquence, activity, and zeal, may dazzle the eye, delight the fancy, and awaken the admiration of those who cannot read beneath the surface; but unless humility and modesty is linked with these other gifts, self-glorification and self-exaltation will be seen. Unless each qualification is consecrated to the Lord, unless those to whom the Lord has entrusted gifts seek that grace which alone can make their qualifications acceptable to God, they are looked upon by the Lord ... as unprofitable servants.” —*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 68.

7. What makes us a stumbling block to the spiritual life of others, instead of being a help? How can such a danger be avoided?

MATTHEW 23:13 *But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.*

LUKE 11:52 *Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.*

“By perverting the Scriptures, the priests and lawyers blinded the minds of those who would otherwise have received a knowledge of Christ's kingdom, and that inward, divine life which is essential to true holiness.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 614; see also *The Story of Redemption*, p. 361.

FOR MEDITATION

“The rebuke of Christ to the Pharisees is applicable to those who have lost from the heart their first love. A cold, legal religion can never lead souls to Christ; for it is a loveless, Christless religion. When fastings and prayers are practiced in a self-justifying spirit, they are abominable to God. The solemn assembly for worship, the round of religious ceremonies, the external humiliation, the imposed sacrifice, all proclaim to the world the testimony that the doer of these things considers himself as righteous. These things call attention to the observer of rigorous duties, saying, This man is entitled to heaven. But it is all a deception. Works will not buy for us an entrance into heaven. The one great offering that has been made is ample for all who will believe.” —(MS 154, 1897) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1098.

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Guilt of the Pharisees, *Part 2*

“The Lord expects His servants to excel others in life and character. He has placed every facility at the command of those who serve Him. The Christian is looked upon by the whole universe as one who strives for the mastery, running the race set before him, that he may obtain the prize, even an immortal crown; but if he who professes to follow Christ does not make it manifest that his motives are above those of the world in this great contest where there is everything to win and everything to lose, he will never be a victor. He is to make use of every entrusted power, that he may overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil through the power of the Holy Spirit, by grace abundantly provided....” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 271.

ACTING FOR PERSONAL ADVANTAGE

1. How far did the Pharisees go in dealing with widows? What does prophecy say about the display of forms and external religiosity in the last days?

MATTHEW 23:14 *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.*

2 TIMOTHY 3:1 *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.*

2 TIMOTHY 3:5 *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.*

“The Pharisees had great influence with the people, and of this they took advantage to serve their own interests. They gained the confidence of pious widows, and then represented it as a duty for them to devote their property to religious purposes. Having secured control of their money, the wily schemers used it for their own benefit. To cover their dishonesty, they offered long prayers in public, and made a great show of piety. This hypocrisy Christ declared would bring them the greater damnation. The same rebuke falls upon many in our day who make a high profession of piety. Their lives are stained by selfishness and avarice, yet they throw over it all a garment of seeming purity, and thus for a time deceive their fellow men. But they cannot deceive God. He reads every purpose of the heart, and will judge every man according to his deeds.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 614.

2. Not being truly converted, could the Pharisees' missionary activity have a good result, bringing people to the Lord? And today, is it of value for one to preach a powerful message to convince others if he is not himself converted?

MATTHEW 23:15 *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.*

"In the words we speak to the people, and in the prayers we offer, God desires us to give unmistakable evidence that we have spiritual life. We do not enjoy the fullness of blessing which the Lord has prepared for us, because we do not ask in faith. If we would exercise faith in the word of the living God, we would have the richest blessing. We dishonor God by our lack of faith, therefore we cannot impart life to others by bearing a living, uplifting testimony. We cannot give what we do not possess." –PH130—"Camp Meetings, Their Object, and How to Conduct Them," p. 34.

"The Lord had instructed His people that He was the owner of the vineyard, and that all their possessions were given them in trust to be used for Him. But the priests and teachers did not perform the work of their sacred office as if they were handling the property of God. They were systematically robbing Him of the means and facilities entrusted to them for the advancement of His work. Their covetousness and greed caused them to be despised even by the heathen. Thus the Gentile world was given occasion to misinterpret the character of God and the laws of His kingdom." –*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 292, 293.

ADAPTING TO CONVENIENCE

3. How seriously did they take certain kinds of oaths? What will be the result today if we consider as relative that which should be recognized as binding?

MATTHEW 23:16-19 *Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?*

"The priests interpreted God's requirements according to their own false and narrow standard. They presumed to make nice distinctions as to the comparative guilt of various sins, passing over some lightly, and treating others of perhaps less consequence as unpardonable. For a money consideration they excused persons from their vows. And for large sums of money they sometimes passed over aggravated crimes. At the same time these priests and rulers would in other cases pronounce severe judgment for trivial offenses." –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 616.

4. What did the Saviour say about their painstaking calculation and payment of tithe on small, insignificant things, while they were neglectful of important matters?

MATTHEW 23:23 *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.*

“In these words Christ again condemns the abuse of sacred obligation. The obligation itself He does not set aside. The tithing system was ordained by God, and it had been observed from the earliest times. Abraham, the father of the faithful, paid tithes of all that he possessed. The Jewish rulers recognized the obligation of tithing, and this was right; but they did not leave the people to carry out their own convictions of duty. Arbitrary rules were laid down for every case. The requirements had become so complicated that it was impossible for them to be fulfilled. None knew when their obligations were met. As God gave it, the system was just and reasonable; but the priests and rabbis had made it a wearisome burden.

“All that God commands is of consequence. Christ recognized the payment of tithes as a duty; but He showed that this could not excuse the neglect of other duties. The Pharisees were very exact in tithing garden herbs, such as mint, anise, and rue; this cost them little, and it gave them a reputation for exactness and sanctity. At the same time their useless restrictions oppressed the people and destroyed respect for the sacred system of God’s own appointing. They occupied men’s minds with trifling distinctions, and turned their attention from essential truths.”
—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 616, 617.

5. What happens when one loses the sense of the divine standard and begins to introduce his own concepts and values? How far did the Pharisees go in such cases?

MATTHEW 23:24 *Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.*

JOHN 7:21-24 *Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel. Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man. If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day? Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.*

JOHN 18:28 *Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover.*

“Other laws had been perverted by the rabbis in like manner. In the directions given through Moses, it was forbidden to eat any unclean

thing. The use of swine's flesh, and the flesh of certain other animals, was prohibited, as likely to fill the blood with impurities, and to shorten life. But the Pharisees did not leave these restrictions as God had given them. They went to unwarranted extremes. Among other things the people were required to strain all the water used, lest it should contain the smallest insect, which might be classed with the unclean animals. Jesus, contrasting these trivial exactions with the magnitude of their actual sins, said to the Pharisees, "Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 617.

PROFESSION VERSUS GENUINE GOODNESS

6. Is a mere profession of religion valued by the Lord? What is our condition if we present a good appearance while our hearts are dominated by unholy passions?

MATTHEW 23:25, 26 *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.*

"A mere profession of godliness is worthless. It is he that abideth in Christ that is a Christian.... Unless the mind of God becomes the mind of men, every effort to purify himself will be useless; for it is impossible to elevate man except through a knowledge of God." —(Letter 13, 1893) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 951.

"Those who would be victors should contemplate and count the cost of salvation. Strong human passions must be subdued; the independent will must be brought into captivity to Christ. The Christian is to realize that he is not his own. He will have temptations to resist, and battles to fight against his own inclinations; for the Lord will accept no half-way service. Hypocrisy is an abomination to Him. The follower of Christ must walk by faith, as seeing Him who is invisible. Christ will be his dearest treasure, his all and in all." —*God's Amazing Grace*, p. 271.

7. What will happen to those who appear religious while they are not good people? Instead of correcting the outward appearance, for what righteousness should we strive daily?

MATTHEW 23:27, 28 *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.*

MATTHEW 7:21, 22 *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?*

MATTHEW 5:6 *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*

“As the whited and beautifully decorated tomb concealed the putrefying remains within, so the outward holiness of the priests and rulers concealed iniquity.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 617.

“The outward gloss may be put on, and men may be as were the Pharisees whom Jesus describes as ‘whited sepulchres’ full of corruption and dead men’s bones. But all the deformity of the soul is open to Him who judgeth righteously, and unless the truth is planted in the heart, it cannot control the life. Cleansing the outside of the cup will never make the vessel pure within. A nominal acceptance of truth is good as far as it goes, and the ability to give a reason for our faith is a good accomplishment, but if the truth does not go deeper than this, the soul will never be saved. The heart must be purified from all moral defilement.” —(Letter 13, 1893) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 951.

FOR MEDITATION

“This experience is essential to those who profess the name of Christ, for its influence pervades the conduct, and sanctifies the influence of the Christian’s life in its effect upon others. The business connections and intercourse of Christians with men of the world will be sanctified by the grace of Christ; and wherever they are, a moral atmosphere will be created, that will have power for good; for it will breathe the spirit of the Master.

“He who has the mind of Christ knows that his only safe course is to keep close to Jesus, following the light of life. He will not accept work, or engage himself in business, that will hinder him from reaching the perfection of Christian character.... ‘No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.’ 2 Timothy 2:4.” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 271.

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23

Sabbath, December 7, 2013

Disobedience and Its Consequences

“The condition of the unbelieving Jews illustrates the condition of the careless and unbelieving among professed Christians, who are willingly ignorant of the work of our merciful High Priest. In the typical service, when the high priest entered the most holy place, all Israel were required to gather about the sanctuary and in the most solemn manner humble their souls before God, that they might receive the pardon of their sins and not be cut off from the congregation. How much more essential in this antitypical Day of Atonement that we understand the work of our High Priest and know what duties are required of us.” —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 430, 431.

- 1. Is the construction of monuments or burial sites for the prophets evidence that their teaching is accepted and followed? What is the best evidence that the prophets' messages have been accepted?**

MATTHEW 23:29 *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous.*

“To show their esteem for the dead prophets, the Jews were very zealous in beautifying their tombs; but they did not profit by their teachings, nor give heed to their reproofs....

“In the days of Christ a superstitious regard was cherished for the resting places of the dead, and vast sums of money were lavished upon their decoration. In the sight of God this was idolatry. In their undue regard for the dead, men showed that they did not love God supremely, nor their neighbor as themselves. The same idolatry is carried to great lengths today. Many are guilty of neglecting the widow and the fatherless, the sick and the poor, in order to build expensive monuments for the dead. Time, money, and labor are freely spent for this purpose, while duties to the living—duties which Christ has plainly enjoined—are left undone.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 617, 618.

A MISTAKEN COMPARISON

- 2. While the Pharisees considered themselves better than their fathers, what were they doing with the greatest of all prophets and with His message? Is it spiritually beneficial to compare oneself with others, who are also sinful?**

MATTHEW 23:30 *And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.*

“The Pharisees built the tombs of the prophets, and adorned their sepulchers, and said one to another, If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have united with them in shedding the blood of God’s servants. At the same time they were planning to take the life of His Son. This should be a lesson to us. It should open our eyes to the power of Satan to deceive the mind that turns from the light of truth. Many follow in the track of the Pharisees. They revere those who have died for their faith. They wonder at the blindness of the Jews in rejecting Christ. Had we lived in His day, they declare, we would gladly have received His teaching; we would never have been partakers in the guilt of those who rejected the Saviour. But when obedience to God requires self-denial and humiliation, these very persons stifle their convictions, and refuse obedience. Thus they manifest the same spirit as did the Pharisees whom Christ condemned.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 618.

FOLLOWING IN THE SAME FOOTSTEPS

- 3. Were the leaders conscious of their great responsibility? What was going to happen soon to the Christians who worshiped in the Jewish synagogues?**

MATTHEW 23:31-34 *Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city.*

Thought question: *How can we avoid repeating the errors of the people who lived in the past?*

“Little did the Jews realize the terrible responsibility involved in rejecting Christ. From the time when the first innocent blood was shed, when righteous Abel fell by the hand of Cain, the same history had been repeated, with increasing guilt. In every age prophets had lifted up their voices against the sins of kings, rulers, and people, speaking the words which God gave them, and obeying His will at the peril of their lives. From generation to generation there had been heaping up a terrible punishment for the rejecters of light and truth. This the enemies of Christ were now drawing down upon their own heads. The sin of the priests and rulers was greater than that of any preceding generation. By their rejection of the Saviour, they were making themselves responsible for the blood of all the righteous men slain from Abel to Christ. They were about to fill to overflowing their cup of iniquity. And soon it was to be poured upon their heads in retributive justice.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 618, 619.

ATTITUDE TOWARD THE PROPHETS

4. **Considering the behavior of their ancestors, did the Jewish leaders change their own attitude? Where did such horrible misconduct originate?**

MATTHEW 23:35 *That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.*

2 CHRONICLES 24:18-21 *And they left the house of the Lord God of their fathers, and served groves and idols: and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass. Yet he sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto the Lord; and they testified against them: but they would not give ear. And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the Lord, he hath also forsaken you. And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the Lord.*

“The scribes and Pharisees who listened to Jesus knew that His words were true. They knew how the prophet Zacharias had been slain. While the words of warning from God were upon his lips, a satanic fury seized the apostate king, and at his command the prophet was put to

death. His blood had imprinted itself upon the very stones of the temple court, and could not be erased; it remained to bear testimony against apostate Israel. As long as the temple should stand, there would be the stain of that righteous blood, crying to God to be avenged. As Jesus referred to these fearful sins, a thrill of horror ran through the multitude.

“Looking forward, Jesus declared that the impenitence of the Jews and their intolerance of God’s servants would be the same in the future as it had been in the past.

“... Prophets and wise men, full of faith and the Holy Ghost—Stephen, James, and many others—would be condemned and slain. With hand uplifted to heaven, and a divine light enshrouding His person, Christ spoke as a judge to those before Him. His voice, that had so often been heard in gentleness and entreaty, was now heard in rebuke and condemnation. The listeners shuddered. Never was the impression made by His words and His look to be effaced.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 619.

IN THE JUDGMENT TIME

5. Having made so many appeals for the leaders to repent, without any positive response, what did Jesus see coming upon that generation? What was the tone of His voice as He presented these warnings?

MATTHEW 23:36 *Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.*

Thought question: *With what spirit will the Christian face difficult situations?*

“Christ’s indignation was directed against the hypocrisy, the gross sins, by which men were destroying their own souls, deceiving the people and dishonoring God. In the specious deceptive reasoning of the priests and rulers He discerned the working of satanic agencies. Keen and searching had been His denunciation of sin; but He spoke no words of retaliation. He had a holy wrath against the prince of darkness; but He manifested no irritated temper. So the Christian who lives in harmony with God, possessing the sweet attributes of love and mercy, will feel a righteous indignation against sin; but he will not be roused by passion to revile those who revile him. Even in meeting those who are moved by a power from beneath to maintain falsehood, in Christ he will still preserve calmness and self-possession.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 619, 620.

THE FAREWELL OF LONGSUFFERING LOVE

6. In view of the Jews’ intractable disobedience, what great sorrow did the Lord express at this moment? How can a rebellious course be reversed?

MATTHEW 23:37 *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*

“Divine pity marked the countenance of the Son of God as He cast one lingering look upon the temple and then upon His hearers. In a voice choked by deep anguish of heart and bitter tears He exclaimed, ‘O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!’ Matthew 23:37. This is the separation struggle. In the lamentation of Christ the very heart of God is pouring itself forth. It is the mysterious farewell of the longsuffering love of the Deity.

“Pharisees and Sadducees were alike silenced. Jesus summoned His disciples, and prepared to leave the temple, not as one defeated and forced from the presence of His adversaries, but as one whose work was accomplished. He retired a victor from the contest.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 620.

UNTIL A COMPLETE CHANGE OCCURS

7. Since the leaders and people were unwilling to accept the Son, what would happen to the temple? How long would they remain in their desolate condition?

MATTHEW 23:38, 39 *Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

2 THESSALONIANS 2:10, LAST PART, 11 ... *They received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

Thought Question: *What do we need to learn from the Lord’s serious warning?*

“... Israel as a nation had divorced herself from God. The natural branches of the olive tree were broken off. Looking for the last time upon the interior of the temple, Jesus said with mournful pathos, ‘Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.’ Hitherto He had called the temple His Father’s house; but now, as the Son of God should pass out from those walls, God’s presence would be withdrawn forever from the temple built to His glory. Henceforth its ceremonies would be meaningless, its services a mockery.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 620.

FOR MEDITATION

“Men cannot with impunity reject the warning which God in mercy sends them. A message was sent from heaven to the world in Noah’s day, and their salvation depended upon the manner in which they treated that message. Because they rejected the warning, the Spirit of God was withdrawn from the sinful race, and they perished in the waters of the Flood. In the time of Abraham, mercy ceased to plead with the guilty inhabitants of Sodom, and all but Lot with his wife and two daughters were consumed by the fire sent down from heaven. So in the days of Christ. The Son of

God declared to the unbelieving Jews of that generation: 'Your house is left unto you desolate.' Matthew 23:38. Looking down to the last days, the same Infinite Power declares, concerning those who 'received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved': 'For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.' 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12. As they reject the teachings of His word, God withdraws His Spirit and leaves them to the deceptions which they love." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 431.

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24

Sabbath, December 14, 2013

Conversation with the Greeks

"How was Christ to bring these poor souls where Satan would not gain over them a decided victory? How could He show that a mere profession of discipleship did not make them disciples, or insure them a place in His kingdom? How could He show that it is loving service, true humility, which constitutes real greatness? How was He to kindle love in their hearts, and enable them to comprehend what He longed to tell them?" —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 644.

CONNECTING WITH SEARCHING SOULS

1. **What was the wish of some Greeks who came to worship at the feast? Are there many today who want to meet Jesus and hear His message?**

JOHN 12:20-22 *And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.*

"... Christ was approaching the consummation of His work. The great event which concerned not only the Jewish nation, but the whole world, was about to take place. When Christ heard the eager request, 'We would see Jesus,' echoing the hungry cry of the world, His countenance lighted up, and He said, 'The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.' In the request of the Greeks He saw an earnest of the results of His great sacrifice.

"... So these Greeks, representing the nations, tribes, and peoples of the world, came to see Jesus. So the people of all lands and all ages would be drawn by the Saviour's cross. So shall many 'come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.' Matthew 8:11." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 621.

2. What did Jesus say when He introduced the most important subject to the people? What did He see in the interest of those who came to search for Him?

JOHN 12:23 *And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.*

“The hour of Christ’s glorification had come. He was standing in the shadow of the cross, and the inquiry of the Greeks showed Him that the sacrifice He was about to make would bring many sons and daughters to God. He knew that the Greeks would soon see Him in a position they did not then dream of.... By making this propitiation for the sins of men, Christ knew that His kingdom would be perfected, and would extend throughout the world. He would work as the Restorer, and His Spirit would prevail.... In these strangers He saw the pledge of a great harvest, when the partition wall between Jew and Gentile should be broken down, and all nations, tongues, and peoples should hear the message of salvation. The anticipation of this, the consummation of His hopes, is expressed in the words, ‘The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.’ But the way in which this glorification must take place was never absent from Christ’s mind. The gathering in of the Gentiles was to follow His approaching death. Only by His death could the world be saved. Like a grain of wheat, the Son of man must be cast into the ground and die, and be buried out of sight; but He was to live again.”
—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 622, 623.

THE NECESSITY OF DEATH

3. What follows death? What illustration from nature did Jesus use to depict the abundant fruit that His death would produce?

JOHN 12:24 *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*

“Christ presented His future, illustrating it by the things of nature, that the disciples might understand. The true result of His mission was to be reached by His death. ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you,’ He said, ‘Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.’ When the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it springs up, and bears fruit. So the death of Christ would result in fruit for the kingdom of God. In accordance with the law of the vegetable kingdom, life was to be the result of His death....

“The grain of wheat that preserves its own life can produce no fruit. It abides alone. Christ could, if He chose, save Himself from death. But should He do this, He must abide alone. He could bring no sons and daughters to God. Only by yielding up His life could He impart life to humanity. Only by falling into the ground to die could He become the seed of that vast harvest—the great multitude that out of every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, are redeemed to God.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 623.

4. According to this explanation, what is the principle of preservation? What is the result when one lives for self?

JOHN 12:25 *He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.*

Thought question: *Was it only Jesus who had to die, or does the same thing happen to our sinful tendencies?*

“With this truth Christ connects the lesson of self-sacrifice that all should learn: ‘He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.’ All who would bring forth fruit as workers together with Christ must first fall into the ground and die. The life must be cast into the furrow of the world’s need. Self-love, self-interest, must perish. And the law of self-sacrifice is the law of self-preservation. The husbandman preserves his grain by casting it away. So in human life. To give is to live. The life that will be preserved is the life that is freely given in service to God and man. Those who for Christ’s sake sacrifice their life in this world will keep it unto life eternal.

“The life spent on self is like the grain that is eaten. It disappears, but there is no increase. A man may gather all he can for self; he may live and think and plan for self; but his life passes away, and he has nothing. The law of self-serving is the law of self-destruction.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 623, 624.

SERVICE AND DISCIPLESHIP

5. What is implied in true discipleship? Is partial fellowship sufficient? What will naturally follow consecrated discipleship?

JOHN 12:26 *If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.*

“‘If any man serve Me,’ said Jesus, ‘let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if any man serve Me, him will My Father honor.’ All who have borne with Jesus the cross of sacrifice will be sharers with Him of His glory. It was the joy of Christ in His humiliation and pain that His disciples should be glorified with Him. They are the fruit of His self-sacrifice. The outworking in them of His own character and spirit is His reward, and will be His joy throughout eternity. This joy they share with Him as the fruit of their labor and sacrifice is seen in other hearts and lives. They are workers together with Christ, and the Father will honor them as He honors His Son.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 624.

IN VIEW OF THE SACRIFICE

6. What overwhelming burden did the Saviour start to feel at this point? Where alone could He find help for the very difficult test that was approaching?

JOHN 12:27, FIRST PART *Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour.*

“The message of the Greeks, foreshadowing as it did the gathering in of the Gentiles, brought to the mind of Jesus His entire mission. The work of redemption passed before Him, from the time when in heaven the plan was laid, to the death that was now so near at hand. A mysterious cloud seemed to enshroud the Son of God. Its gloom was felt by those near Him. He sat rapt in thought. At last the silence was broken by His mournful voice, ‘Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour:...’ In anticipation Christ was already drinking the cup of bitterness. His humanity shrank from the hour of abandonment, when to all appearance He would be deserted even by God, when all would see Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. He shrank from public exposure, from being treated as the worst of criminals, from a shameful and dishonored death. A foreboding of His conflict with the powers of darkness, a sense of the awful burden of human transgression, and the Father’s wrath because of sin caused the spirit of Jesus to faint, and the pallor of death to overspread His countenance.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 624.

7. Of what was Jesus fully conscious in the fulfillment of His mission? He needed the help of His Father, so how much more should we ask for such help to face our tests and fulfill His commission?

JOHN 12:27, LAST PART ... *But for this cause came I unto this hour.*

“Then came divine submission to His Father’s will. ‘For this cause,’ He said, ‘came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name.’ Only through the death of Christ could Satan’s kingdom be overthrown. Only thus could man be redeemed, and God be glorified. Jesus consented to the agony, He accepted the sacrifice. The Majesty of heaven consented to suffer as the Sin Bearer.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 624.

FOR MEDITATION

“There are those who profess holiness, who declare that they are wholly the Lord’s, who claim a right to the promises of God, while they do not render obedience to His commandments. These transgressors of the law claim everything that is promised to the children of God, but this is simply presumption; for John tells us that ‘he that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected; hereby know we that we are in Him. He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked.’ Jesus says, ‘I have kept My Father’s commandments, and abide in His love.’ John 15:10. Obedience is the true sign of discipleship. ‘Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven.’ Matthew 7:21.” —*Gospel Workers* (1892), pp. 226, 227.

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Deeper Teachings

“I was shown that God’s people dwell too much under a cloud. It is not His will that they should live in unbelief. Jesus is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. His children are the children of light. They are renewed in His image, and called out of darkness into His marvelous light. He is the light of the world, and so also are they that follow Him. They shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. The more closely the people of God strive to imitate Christ, the more perseveringly will they be pursued by the enemy; but their nearness to Christ strengthens them to resist the efforts of our wily foe to draw them from Christ.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, pp. 405, 406.

THE VOICE FROM HEAVEN

1. What did Jesus request of His Father right before His trial? How could the Father’s name be honored and glorified?

JOHN 12: 28, 29 *Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him.*

Thought question: *How do my life and experience praise and honor the heavenly Father?*

“‘Father, glorify Thy name,’ He said. As Christ spoke these words, a response came from the cloud which hovered above His head: ‘I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.’ Christ’s whole life, from the manger to the time when these words were spoken, had glorified God; and in the coming trial His divine-human sufferings would indeed glorify His Father’s name.

“As the voice was heard, a light darted from the cloud, and encircled Christ, as if the arms of Infinite Power were thrown about Him like a wall of fire. The people beheld this scene with terror and amazement. No one dared to speak. With silent lips and bated breath all stood with eyes fixed upon Jesus. The testimony of the Father having been given, the cloud lifted, and scattered in the heavens. For the time the visible communion between the Father and the Son was ended.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 624, 625.

2. What did Jesus say when the voice was heard confirming His request? What did it mean that the message was for the searchers’ sakes?

JOHN 12:30 *Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes.*

“The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to Him.’ But the inquiring Greeks saw the cloud, heard the voice, comprehended its meaning, and discerned Christ indeed; to them He was revealed as the Sent of God.

“The voice of God had been heard at the baptism of Jesus at the beginning of His ministry, and again at His transfiguration on the mount. Now at the close of His ministry it was heard for the third time, by a larger number of persons, and under peculiar circumstances. Jesus had just spoken the most solemn truth regarding the condition of the Jews. He had made His last appeal, and pronounced their doom. Now God again set His seal to the mission of His Son. He recognized the One whom Israel had rejected. ‘This voice came not because of Me,’ said Jesus, ‘but for your sakes.’ It was the crowning evidence of His Messiahship, the signal from the Father that Jesus had spoken the truth, and was the Son of God.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 625.

THE EVENTS SURROUNDING HIS SACRIFICE

3. How did the Saviour consider the time of His suffering that was just ahead? What would be decided by His trial, death, and resurrection?

LUKE 22:53, LAST PART ... *But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.*

JOHN 12:31 *Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.*

“Now is the judgment of this world,’ Christ continued; ‘now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me. This He said, signifying what death He should die.’ This is the crisis of the world. If I become the propitiation for the sins of men, the world will be lighted up. Satan’s hold upon the souls of men will be broken. The defaced image of God will be restored in humanity, and a family of believing saints will finally inherit the heavenly home. This is the result of Christ’s death. The Saviour is lost in contemplation of the scene of triumph called up before Him. He sees the cross, the cruel, ignominious cross, with all its attending horrors, blazing with glory.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 625.

4. What does the Lord do for everyone who comes to Him? While the cross was the great test, what was its result for every believer?

JOHN 6:44 *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.*

JOHN 12:32, 33 *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.*

“But the work of human redemption is not all that is accomplished by the cross. The love of God is manifested to the universe. The prince of this world is cast out. The accusations which Satan has brought against God are refuted. The reproach which he has cast upon heaven is forever removed. Angels as well as men are drawn to the Redeemer. ‘I, if I be lifted up from the earth,’ He said, ‘will draw all unto Me.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 626.

THE NEED OF DIVINE LIGHT

5. Did the hearers understand that the Messiah would be offered in sacrifice as the Lamb of God, rise from death, and ascend to heaven? Therefore, what invitation did He extend to them?

JOHN 12:34-36 *The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man? Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.*

“The people must be instructed that Christ is unto them salvation and righteousness. It is Satan’s studied purpose to keep souls from believing in Christ as their only hope; for the blood of Christ that cleanseth from all sin is efficacious in behalf of those only who believe in its merit, and who present it before the Father as did Abel in his offering.” —*Gospel Workers*, p. 162.

“‘Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you.’ John 12:35. Those who turn away from the light which God has given, or who neglect to seek it when it is within their reach, are left in darkness. But the Saviour declares: ‘He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.’ John 8:12. Whoever is with singleness of purpose seeking to do God’s will, earnestly heeding the light already given, will receive greater light; to that soul some star of heavenly radiance will be sent to guide him into all truth.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 312.

6. While many of the chief rulers believed in Jesus, what did the leaders and people do, notwithstanding Jesus’ holy teachings, miracles, and manifestations of divinity?

JOHN 12:37-43 *But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him. Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.*

“Innumerable signs had been given; but they had closed their eyes and hardened their hearts. Now that the Father Himself had spoken, and they could ask for no further sign, they still refused to believe.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 626.

“The scribes, Pharisees, and rulers were determined that they would not see the evidences of truth, and they evaded the most manifest conclusions. To justify their course of stubborn unbelief, they lost no possible opportunity of seizing upon anything in the teaching of Jesus that they could misconstrue, misapply, or falsify. When there was no possibility of misapplying the truth of Christ’s words, these men who rejected the counsel of God against themselves, started questions that had no reference to the matter in hand, so as to attract the attention of the people away from the lesson that Jesus sought to teach, and adroitly evade the truth. The Pharisees were not blindly opposing the doctrines of Christ; for the truth made deep impressions upon their minds; but they resisted truth, and went contrary to their convictions, closing their eyes lest they should see, hardening the heart, lest they should perceive, and be converted, and Christ should heal them.” —(*Review and Herald*, October 18, 1892) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1120.

7. Whom do we trust when we believe in Jesus’ message? What will happen to those who trust Him?

JOHN 12:44-46 *Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.*

“Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on Him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.’ They loved the praise of men rather than the approval of God. To save themselves from reproach and shame, they denied Christ, and rejected the offer of eternal life. And how many through all the centuries since have been doing the same thing! To them all the Saviour’s warning words apply: ‘He that loveth his life shall lose it’ ‘He that rejecteth Me,’ said Jesus, ‘and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.’ John 12:48.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 626.

FOR MEDITATION

“By many, the words which the Lord sent will be rejected, and the words that man may speak will be received as light and truth. Human wisdom will lead away from self-denial, from consecration, and will devise many things that tend to make of no effect God’s messages. We cannot with any safety rely upon men who are not in close connection with God. They accept the opinions of men, but cannot discern the voice of the true Shepherd, and their influence will lead many astray, though evidence is piled upon evidence before their eyes, testifying to the truth that God’s people should have for this time.” —(*Letter 1f*, 1890) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1147.

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*Please read the Missionary Report from
Great Britain on page 118*

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Sabbath, December 28, 2013

Signs of the Times

“I appeal to the members of our churches not to disregard the fulfilling of the signs of the times, which say so plainly that the end is near....

“The things that concern our eternal welfare are now to absorb our attention. We cannot afford to give heavenly things the second place.... The judgments of God are in the land. They speak in solemn warning, saying, ‘Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.’” —*Maranatha*, pp. 39, 106.

THE LORD SPEAKS THROUGH SIGNS OF THE TIMES

1. What is often mentioned in the ancient writings of the prophets? What did Stephen tell about what God did in the time of the exodus from Egypt?

EXODUS 10:2 *And that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done among them; that ye may know how that I am the Lord.*

PSALM 135:9 *Who sent tokens and wonders into the midst of thee, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants.*

DANIEL 6:27 *He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.*

ACTS 7:36 *He brought them out, after that he had showed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years.*

Thought question: *What is the Lord's purpose in bringing about special events?*

“I appeal to the members of our churches not to disregard the fulfilling of the signs of the times, which say so plainly that the end is near. O, how many who have not cared for the salvation of their souls will soon make the bitter lamentation, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!”...

“There are many, many in our churches who know little of the real meaning of the truth for this time. I appeal to them not to disregard the fulfilling of the signs of the times, which say so plainly that the end is near. O how many who have not sought their soul's salvation will soon make the bitter lamentation, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and my soul is not saved.”” —*Maranatha*, pp. 39, 106.

2. According to Jesus' statement, what is important when such special events take place? Did the Jews appreciate and understand these signs?

MATTHEW 16:3 *And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day; for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?*

“We need keen, sanctified perception. This perception is not to be used in criticizing and condemning one another, but in discerning the signs of the times. We are to keep our hearts with all diligence that we may not make shipwreck of faith. Those who neglect to watch and pray in these days of peril; those who neglect to unite with their brethren in seeking the Lord, but who stand aloof from God's appointed agencies in the church, are in grave danger of strengthening themselves in their own way, following the impulses of their own minds, and of refusing to heed the admonitions of the Lord....” —*In Heavenly Places*, p. 97.

THE DISCIPLES' INTEREST

3. What did the disciples ask Jesus shortly before the end of His mission? What did Jesus say would happen to the beloved temple?

MATTHEW 24:1, 2 *And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple; and his disciples came to him for to show him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.*

“As Christ's attention was attracted to the magnificence of the temple, what must have been the unuttered thoughts of that Rejected One! The view before Him was indeed beautiful, but He said with sadness, I see it all. The buildings are indeed wonderful. You point to these walls as apparently indestructible; but listen to My words: The day will come when 'there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.'” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 627.

4. What statement of Jesus concerning the temple was of particular interest to His disciples? What did they ask Him when they were outside the town in the mount of Olives?

MATTHEW 24:3 *And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?*

Thought question: *For whom was prophecy given?*

“Christ's words had been spoken in the hearing of a large number of people; but when He was alone, Peter, John, James, and Andrew came

to Him as He sat upon the Mount of Olives. ‘Tell us,’ they said, ‘when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?’ Jesus did not answer His disciples by taking up separately the destruction of Jerusalem and the great day of His coming. He mingled the description of these two events. Had He opened to His disciples future events as He beheld them, they would have been unable to endure the sight. In mercy to them He blended the description of the two great crises, leaving the disciples to study out the meaning for themselves. When He referred to the destruction of Jerusalem, His prophetic words reached beyond that event to the final conflagration in that day when the Lord shall rise out of His place to punish the world for their iniquity, when the earth shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain. This entire discourse was given, not for the disciples only, but for those who should live in the last scenes of this earth’s history.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 628.

RELIGIOUS SIGNS

5. In response to their questions, what was the first warning He gave them? Who will pretend to be God’s messengers?

MATTHEW 24:4, 5 *And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.*

“Turning to the disciples, Christ said, ‘Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.’ Many false messiahs will appear, claiming to work miracles, and declaring that the time of the deliverance of the Jewish nation has come. These will mislead many. Christ’s words were fulfilled. Between His death and the siege of Jerusalem many false messiahs appeared. But this warning was given also to those who live in this age of the world. The same deceptions practiced prior to the destruction of Jerusalem have been practiced through the ages, and will be practiced again.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 628.

SIGNS IN SOCIETY

6. What other very troubling events would take place, according to the prophecy given by Jesus?

MATTHEW 24:6-8 *And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.*

“Prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, men wrestled for the supremacy. Emperors were murdered. Those supposed to be standing next the throne were slain. There were wars and rumors of wars. ‘All these things must come to pass,’ said Christ, ‘but the end of the Jewish nation as a nation is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and

earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.' Christ said, As the rabbis see these signs, they will declare them to be God's judgments upon the nations for holding in bondage His chosen people. They will declare that these signs are the token of the advent of the Messiah. Be not deceived; they are the beginning of His judgments. The people have looked to themselves. They have not repented and been converted that I should heal them. The signs that they represent as tokens of their release from bondage are signs of their destruction."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 628, 629.

GOD'S PEOPLE TESTED

7. What else did the Saviour tell His beloved disciples would happen before the destruction of Jerusalem? What do we know about how the church was hated and persecuted?

MATTHEW 24:9 *Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.*

ACTS 8:1 *And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.*

"All this the Christians suffered. Fathers and mothers betrayed their children. Children betrayed their parents. Friends delivered their friends up to the Sanhedrin. The persecutors wrought out their purpose by killing Stephen, James, and other Christians."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 629.

"From Olivet the Saviour beheld the storms about to fall upon the apostolic church; and penetrating deeper into the future, His eye discerned the fierce, wasting tempests that were to beat upon His followers in the coming ages of darkness and persecution. In a few brief utterances of awful significance He foretold the portion which the rulers of this world would mete out to the church of God. Matthew 24:9, 21, 22. The followers of Christ must tread the same path of humiliation, reproach, and suffering which their Master trod. The enmity that burst forth against the world's Redeemer would be manifested against all who should believe on His name."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 39.

8. Nevertheless, what comforting reassurance did the Lord give concerning such serious tests?

MATTHEW 5:10-12 *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*

MATTHEW 24:13 *But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.*

"Through trials and persecution, the glory—character—of God is revealed in His chosen ones. The church of God, hated and persecuted by

the world, are educated and disciplined in the school of Christ. They walk in narrow paths on earth; they are purified in the furnace of affliction. They follow Christ through sore conflicts; they endure self-denial and experience bitter disappointments; but their painful experience teaches them the guilt and woe of sin, and they look upon it with abhorrence. Being partakers of Christ's sufferings, they are destined to be partakers of His glory. In holy vision the prophet saw the triumph of the people of God." —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 31.

FOR MEDITATION

"The signs of the times fulfilling all around us show us that the end of all things is at hand. Intense earnestness should take possession of us. Our slumbering energies should be aroused by persevering effort....

"How strange it is that those who have had the light of truth for so many years have not carried the torch of truth into the dark places of the earth. The whole world is astir. The Lord calls upon His people to awake out of sleep. My brethren and sisters, stop criticizing others, but criticize severely your own words and motives. We have no time to spend in using the enemy's methods.... Envy, malice, hatred, unbelief, which have been growing into sturdy plants in the garden of the soul, are to be uprooted and cast out, and their place supplied by love, patience, forbearance, kindness, benevolence, tenderheartedness, meekness...." —*The Upward Look*, p. 79.

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MISSIONARY REPORT
FROM GREAT BRITAIN

To be read on Sabbath, December 28, 2013

*The Special Sabbath School Offering will be gathered
on Sabbath, January 4, 2014*

The United Kingdom, also known as Great Britain and England, is a large island on the west side of the European continent. Economically it is one of the strongest countries in Europe. The island has an area of 243,610 square kilometers (94,058 square miles). Its coastline is 12,429 kilometers (7,723 miles). The population is approximately 62.7 million people.

Politically, the United Kingdom is a union of England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. The official language is English, although other native languages are recognized, including Scottish, Irish, and Welsh. Britain is a multiracial nation comprised of 88.7% Caucasians, 5.6% Indians, 2.7% Blacks, 1.6% Chinese and other, and 1.4% mixed races.

The country is basically a Christian nation with a good degree of religious liberty. Protestants account for 60% of the population, Catholics 14%, Muslims 3%, and Buddhists and Hindus 2%, while other religions, such as Jews, Jehovah Witnesses, Seventh-day Adventists, and others share 21%. Like many other Western countries, due to material wealth and other factors, interest in religious matters is dying very rapidly in this country.

England has a very rich and interesting historical heritage, including the Protestant Reformation. During the Middle Ages of Roman Catholic supremacy, one of the very first Reformers in all Christendom arose in the fourteenth century in this country. John Wycliffe, the “morning star of the Reformation,” opened the eyes of many to the Holy Scriptures, which in his time were accessible only to a few learned scholars. In a very special way, he exposed the false teachings of Romanism by writing and publishing tracts. After him, a long list of other eminent Reformers emerged in England and in other countries of Europe.

Following the Adventist awakening in the 1840s, the present truth of the three angels’ messages reached England in the mid-1860s, while the message of the Reform Movement reached England as early as 1925 and the church was organized. At the beginning, this message was well received in Britain, and there was a good number

of believers, most of whom lived in Wales. The Charles family was the first to accept the message. Others joined, and the number of believers in Wales grew to about 25. In Scarborough, there were 10 members, while in Stock on Trent there was a family of 4 members. As political and economic pressures increased, it became difficult to present the message in its full power; and as the members grew older and died, the new generation could not live the message. Today we have just a few members in England. The present membership stands at about twenty, composed mostly of immigrants attending the church in Chelmsford, from which we operate the activities of the British Field.

At present, the church leadership in England is working hard to focus the church's energies on expanding the missionary outreach especially in the City of London, where three souls were recently baptized. Sister White had a special message with regard to missionary work in this city: "There is a great work to be done in England. The light radiating from London should beam forth in clear, distinct rays to regions beyond. God has wrought in England, but this English-speaking world has been terribly neglected. England has needed many more laborers and much more means. London has been scarcely touched. My heart is deeply moved as the situation in that great city is presented before me. It pains me to think that greater facilities are not provided for the work throughout Europe. I have sore heartache as I think of the work in Switzerland, Germany, Norway, and Sweden. Where there are one or two men struggling to carry forward the different branches of the cause, there should be hundreds at work. In the city of London alone no fewer than one hundred men should be engaged. The Lord marks the neglect of His work, and there will be a heavy account to settle by and by." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 25, 26. We hope to do our best to follow this testimony.

One of the problems is that the British Field was only recently officially registered. Also, like a new field, we need a chapel and a central office with furniture, fixtures, and office equipment to carry out the present activities. In the past, the British church did a great deal to support the General Conference financially in extending missionary activities to other countries. But now, due to the great need, we solicit the support of our sister fields and the Unions around the world to join hands with us in our endeavor to advance our evangelistic campaign as well as re-establish the church in this country at a new level. Currently the British Field, in collaboration with the General Conference, is in the process of obtaining a permanent

gospel minister for England who will take care of the work. Such plans and obligations, which this field has never experienced in the past, will put this field under greater financial constraints. For this reason, we ask for your financial support next Sabbath. Your generous gifts will be highly appreciated. May the grace of God and the multitude of His blessings rest upon you as you respond to this kind appeal.

*—Your co-worker in Christ,
Parmenas N. Shirima*

Special Sabbath School Offerings



**West African
Missionary School
July 6, 2013**

**General Conference
Family Department
September 7, 2013**



**General Conference
Family Department**



**Myanmar Mission Field
November 2, 2013**