

SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

for the Second Half 2008

Third Quarter
The Gospel of Peace

Fourth Quarter
Children of Light

Issued by the
General Conference
International Missionary Society
Seventh-day Adventist Church
Reform Movement
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Review and editing of Contents
by the General Conference Ministerial Department

Translation, editing, and design
by the General Conference Publishing Department

Editing and design of the English edition
by the American Union Publishing Department

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INTRODUCTION

Every day we hear about attacks on human life and of people being killed somewhere in the world; the earth is continuously receiving innocent human blood and tears of pain. God's gifts of life and peace have been lost sight of, while long ago His Word noted: "The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace." Isaiah 59:8. This is the case not just with unbelievers; even people who claim to know God and call themselves by His name sometimes have the same problems. For this reason, referring to Jerusalem, Jesus said: "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." Luke 19:41, 42.

What is the way of God that so many people don't know? How may we find it and rejoice in the wonderful gift of peace? The Holy Scriptures speak about "the gospel of peace." Ephesians 6:15. Do we know what God means by this? Do we long to live accordingly, or do we think there are times when it is permissible for Christians to resort to violence or to take up weapons and fight against their neighbor? What way has the Lord chosen for human beings? What great blessings come to those who choose to live in His way?

Ever since ancient times, it has been revealed that God's way of salvation is through the sacrifice of Christ. This is the "gospel of peace," the message which brings peace between man and God and between man and his neighbor. The Holy Scriptures call it also simply "the gospel," or "the gospel of Christ," "the gospel of the kingdom," "the gospel of grace" and "the gospel of God," or even "the everlasting gospel." Although there are different expressions for it, it is always the same gospel, about which the apostle Paul wrote: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Romans 1:16.

This is the key to the plan of salvation, the way of God for you, for me, and for everyone. It is the gospel that we need to know and live. If we walk in it, we will be following our Redeemer and receiving His blessings. "He who is shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace will walk as Christ walked. He will be able to speak right words, and to speak them in love. He will not try to drive home God's message of truth. He will deal tenderly with every heart, realizing that the Spirit will impress the truth on those who are susceptible to divine impressions. Never will he be vehement in his manner. Every word spoken will have a softening, subduing influence." —*Evangelism*, p. 174.

May the lessons for this quarter help us to understand that the gospel of peace is the way God uses to save human beings, and may we follow in His footsteps in order to live constantly in harmony with that gospel and reap the rich rewards of its great blessings.

—The brothers and sisters of the General Conference

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Sabbath, July 5, 2008

“And God Saw That It Was Good”

INTRODUCTION

“He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.” Ecclesiastes 3:11, New International Version.

MAN’S ORIGINAL DIGNITY

- 1. What was God’s plan in the creation of man? In whose supreme likeness was he made? Genesis 1:26, 27.**

“Man came from the hand of his Creator perfect in organization and beautiful in form. The fact that he has for six thousand years withstood the ever-increasing weight of disease and crime is conclusive proof of the power of endurance with which he was first endowed. And although the antediluvians generally gave themselves up to sin without restraint, it was more than two thousand years before the violation of natural law was sensibly felt. Had Adam originally possessed no greater physical power than men now have, the race would ere this have become extinct.” —*Counsels on Health*, p. 19.

- 2. What noble dignity characterized man’s being? Ecclesiastes 7:29.**

“Created to be ‘the image and glory of God’ (1 Corinthians 11:7), Adam and Eve had received endowments not unworthy of their high destiny. Graceful and symmetrical in form, regular and beautiful in feature, their countenances glowing with the tint of health and the light of joy and hope, they bore in outward resemblance the likeness of their Maker. Nor was this likeness manifest in the physical nature only. Every faculty of mind and soul reflected the Creator’s glory. Endowed with high mental and spiritual gifts, Adam and Eve were made but ‘little lower than the angels’

(Hebrews 2:7), that they might not only discern the wonders of the visible universe, but comprehend moral responsibilities and obligations.”—*Education*, p. 20.

“God made man upright; He gave him noble traits of character, with no bias toward evil. He endowed him with high intellectual powers, and presented before him the strongest possible inducements to be true to his allegiance. Obedience, perfect and perpetual, was the condition of eternal happiness. On this condition he was to have access to the tree of life.”—*Conflict and Courage*, p. 13.

INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

3. What intimate relationship existed at the beginning between God and man? Genesis 3:8-11, 21.

“To Adam in his innocence was granted communion, direct, free, and happy, with his Maker. After his transgression God would communicate to man through Christ and angels.”—*The Story of Redemption*, p. 51.

“Adam and Eve received knowledge through direct communion with God; and they learned of Him through His works. All created things, in their original perfection, were an expression of the thought of God. To Adam and Eve nature was teeming with divine wisdom. But by transgression man was cut off from learning of God through direct communion and, to a great degree, through His works.”—*Education*, pp. 17, 18.

PEACE IN THE ANIMAL KINGDOM AS WELL

4. What relationship existed at the beginning between man and animals? When He gave man the dominion over all life forms on earth, was it God’s plan that man should kill the animals and use them for himself? Genesis 2:19, 20; 1:29.

“While they remained true to God, Adam and his companion were to bear rule over the earth. Unlimited control was given them over every living thing. The lion and the lamb sported peacefully around them or lay down together at their feet. The happy birds flitted about them without fear; and as their glad songs ascended to the praise of their Creator, Adam and Eve united with them in thanksgiving to the Father and the Son.

“... They held converse with leaf and flower and tree, gathering from each the secrets of its life. With every living creature, from the mighty leviathan that playeth among the waters to the insect mote that floats in the sunbeam, Adam was familiar. He had given to each its name, and he was acquainted with the nature and habits of all.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 50, 51.

5. Did the law of the jungle—that the more powerful animals kill and eat the weaker ones—exist at that time? What wonderful conclusion did God express concerning the creation? Genesis 1:24, 25, 30, 31.

In translating Genesis 1:24, 25, some versions of the Bible use the terms “wild animals” or “wild beasts,” which may give the impression that God created particular animals to be ferocious or evil. It is important to emphasize that this cannot be, because the last sentence of verse 25 is written in the affirmative: “And God saw that it was good.” These verses designate three kinds of animals: cattle, reptiles, and animals of the field. The first are the domestic livestock; the second, reptiles in general; and the third, the animals which roam freely in the fields or in the forests. Thus, there were no ferocious or evil animals in Eden, but only domestic animals, reptiles, and those creatures which roamed freely. For this reason, other versions do not use the terms “wild animals” or “wild beasts” but simply “beasts of the earth.” The same expression—“beasts of the earth”—is used in Genesis 2:19, 20; 3:1, where we may also understand that these were not evil beasts (see *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, comments on Genesis 1:24, 25).

“There was to be no death in Eden.” —*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 81.

“The diet of the animals is vegetables and grains.... God provided fruit in its natural state for our first parents. He gave to Adam charge of the garden, to dress it, and to care for it, saying, ‘To you it shall be for meat.’ One animal was not to destroy another animal for food.” —*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 396.

GOD’S INVITATION

6. What holy invitation is therefore extended to everyone today? 1 Thessalonians 5:13.

“A Christian will not pursue a course of bickering and contention with even the most wicked and unbelieving. How wrong to indulge this spirit with those who believe the truth and who are seeking for peace, love, and harmony! Says Paul: ‘Be at peace among yourselves.’” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 163.

“God is leading a people out from the world upon the exalted platform of eternal truth, the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. He will discipline and fit up His people. They will not be at variance, one believing one thing, and another having faith and views entirely opposite; each moving independently of the body. Through the diversity of the gifts and governments that He has placed in the church, they will all come to the unity of the faith. If one man takes his views of Bible truth without regard to the opinion of his brethren, and justifies his course, alleging that he has a right to his own peculiar views, and then presses them upon others, how can he be fulfilling

the prayer of Christ? And if another and still another arises, each asserting his right to believe and talk what he pleases, without reference to the faith of the body, where will be that harmony which existed between Christ and His Father, and which Christ prayed might exist among His brethren?"—*Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White*, pp. 201-203.

7. Is peace an involuntary product of sinful human nature? What are we counseled in order to achieve it? 1 Thessalonians 4:11; Hebrews 12:14.

"Objectionable traits of character, whether hereditary or cultivated, should be taken up separately, and compared with the great rule of righteousness; and in the light reflected from the word of God, they should be firmly resisted and overcome, through the strength of Christ. 'Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.'"—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 136.

"We should never give to the world the false impression that Christians are a gloomy, unhappy people. If our eyes are fixed on Jesus, we shall see a compassionate Redeemer, and shall catch light from His countenance. Wherever His Spirit reigns, there peace abides. And there will be joy also, for there is a calm, holy trust in God."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 152, 153.

AN OBJECT LESSON: ONE DAY IN HEAVEN

The joy of one day in heaven will be a reward for all our sufferings and problems in this world. We find a very inspiring illustration in what was written by Mr. Earl D. Sims when he returned to the home of his childhood after serving as a missionary in an eastern country for sixteen years.

"After many years of hard labor in a foreign country, suffering many privations and dangers, living isolated from all other missionaries during a time of war, and without being able to satisfy even the most basic necessities of life, I returned home to see my old mother and the other members of my family.

"After traveling for a number of weeks by boat and some days by train, I arrived in my home town. As I stepped down from the train and met my sister, whom I had not seen for many years, and who was no long a child, but a young woman twenty years of age, I felt an overwhelming joy.

"As we neared our home, I saw my mother standing at the door waiting eagerly for us. I ran and embraced her. Oh, what happiness to be home again with my beloved mother who gave me life! This made up for all the sufferings and sadness of my heart during the sixteen years that we had been separated."

As I read these words, I recalled what heaven means to those who have worked and suffered in this world. "One day in heaven will be reward enough for all the vicissitudes of life in the service of God." Truly, the presence of God, the love of Jesus Christ, the company of the angels and the redeemed of all ages, and the peace of paradise will dry every tear and comfort every heart forever.

Facing the Consequences of Sin

INTRODUCTION

“Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?” Matthew 7:16.

“For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” Galatians 6:8.

THE RESULT OF SIN FOR THE FIRST MAN

- 1. How were the consequences of his transgression explained to Adam? Was only his life affected, or were all the relationships of society and nature altered? Genesis 3:17-19.**

“God cursed the ground because of their sin in eating of the tree of knowledge, and declared, ‘In sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.’ He had apportioned them the good, but withheld the evil. Now He declares that they shall eat of it, that is, they should be acquainted with evil all the days of their life.

“The race from that time forward was to be afflicted by Satan’s temptations. A life of perpetual toil and anxiety was appointed unto Adam, instead of the happy, cheerful labor that he had hitherto enjoyed. They should be subject to disappointment, grief, and pain, and finally come to dissolution. They were made of the dust of the earth, and unto dust should they return.” —*The Story of Redemption*, p. 40.

“In the creation God had made her [Eve] the equal of Adam. Had they remained obedient to God—in harmony with His great law of love—they would ever have been in harmony with each other; but sin had brought discord....” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 58.

- 2. What is reported about the very first human being born into this world? Genesis 4:8-11.**

“And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. And the Lord said unto Cain, Where [is] Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother’s keeper? And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother’s blood from thy hand.” Genesis 4:8-11.

“Satan is the parent of unbelief, murmuring, and rebellion. He filled Cain with doubt and with madness against his innocent brother, and against God because his sacrifice was refused and Abel’s was accepted. And he slew his brother in his insane madness.”—*Confrontation*, p. 23.

“When Cain, moved by the spirit of the wicked one, saw that he could not control Abel, he was so enraged that he destroyed his life. And wherever there are any who will stand in vindication of the righteousness of the law of God, the same spirit will be manifested against them....

“But Cain lived only to harden his heart, to encourage rebellion against the divine authority, and to become the head of a line of bold, abandoned sinners. This one apostate, led on by Satan, became a tempter to others; and his example and influence exerted their demoralizing power, until the earth became so corrupt and filled with violence as to call for its destruction.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 77, 78.

PICTURE OF THE FOLLOWING CENTURIES

3. Can you imagine and describe the moral and spiritual conditions in existence some generations later? Genesis 6:11, 12, 5, 3, 13.

“... The inhabitants of the world at this time are represented by the dwellers upon the earth at the time of the Flood. The wickedness of the inhabitants of the old world is plainly stated: ‘And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.’ Genesis 6:5. God became weary of these people whose only thoughts were of pleasure and indulgence. They sought not the counsel of the God who had created them, nor cared to do His will. The rebuke of God was upon them because they followed the imagination of their own hearts continually; and there was violence in the land.”—*Selected Messages*, Book 2, p. 151.

“This prevailing sin, the indulgence of perverted appetite, inflamed the passions of men in the days of Noah, and led to widespread corruption. Violence and sin reached to heaven. This moral pollution was finally swept from the earth by means of the Flood.”—*Counsels on Health*, p. 23.

4. Generations later, what terrible slaughters of innocent beings were sometimes ordered? Exodus 1:15, 16, 22. (For further study, read 1 Samuel 22:16, 19 and Matthew 2:16.)

“The king commanded that the male children should be killed as soon as they were born. Satan was the mover in these matters. He knew that a deliverer was to be raised up among the Hebrews to rescue them from

oppression. He thought that if he could move the king to destroy the male children, the purpose of God would be defeated.... As the king of Egypt was informed that his command had not been obeyed he was very angry. He then made his command more urgent and extensive. He charged all his people to keep a strict watch, saying, 'Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.'—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, pp. 179, 180.

"... Saul had such a spirit of envy and hatred and murder, that he desired the report to be true. The partial and exaggerated statement of the chief of the herdsmen, was suited for the use of the adversary of God and man. It was presented to the mind of Saul in such a light that the king lost all control of himself, and acted like a madman. If he had but calmly waited until he could have heard the whole story, and had exercised his reasoning faculties, how different would have been the terrible record of that day's doings!"—(*The Signs of the Times*, Sept. 21, 1888) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 1020.

THE ROOTS OF STRIFE AND VIOLENCE

5. According to the word of God, what are the origins of quarrels, violence, terrorism, and war with all its horrors? 1 Peter 2:11; James 4:1. (For further study, read Romans 7:23 and Proverbs 15:18.)

"The will of God is the law of heaven. As long as that law was the rule of life, all the family of God were holy and happy. But when the divine law was disobeyed, then envy, jealousy, and strife were introduced, and a part of the inhabitants of heaven fell."—*Child Guidance*, p. 79.

"Satan delights in war, for it excites the worst passions of the soul, and then sweeps into eternity its victims steeped in vice and blood. It is his object to incite the nations to war against one another; for he can thus divert the minds of the people from the work of preparation to stand in the day of God."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 589.

"Satan's influence is constantly exerted upon men to distract the senses, control the mind for evil, and incite to violence and crime. He weakens the body, darkens the intellect, and debases the soul. Whenever men reject the Saviour's invitation, they are yielding themselves to Satan. Multitudes in every department in life, in the home, in business, and even in the church, are doing this today. It is because of this that violence and crime have overspread the earth, and moral darkness, like the pall of death, enshrouds the habitations of men. Through his specious temptations Satan leads men to worse and worse evils, till utter depravity and ruin are the result. The only safeguard against his power is found in the presence of Jesus.... His Spirit will develop in man all that will ennoble the character and dignify the nature."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 341.

GOD'S DEALINGS WITH SINFUL MEN

- 6. Although men are corrupt and unworthy, how does the Lord deal with them? Does He recompense us according to our merits? Psalms 130:3; 103:9, 10. (For further study, read Ezekiel 20:44.)**

“The Lord is gracious, of tender pity, and plenteous in mercy. He knows our needs and weaknesses, and He will help our infirmities if we only trust in Him and believe that He will bless us and do great things for us.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 67.

“While He [God] extends to all the world His invitation to come to Him and be saved, He commissions His angels to render divine help to every soul that cometh to Him in repentance and contrition, and He comes personally by His Holy Spirit into the midst of His church.” —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 15.

- 7. How does He deal with us sinners and unworthy beings? Nehemiah 9:31; Psalm 78:38. (For further study, read Psalm 103:2-4.)**

“But He does forgive sins and that fully. There are no sins He will not forgive in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the sinner's only hope, and if he rests here in sincere faith, he is sure of pardon and that full and free. There is only one channel and that is accessible to all, and through that channel a rich and abundant forgiveness awaits the penitent, contrite soul and the darkest sins are forgiven.” —*The Faith I Live By*, p. 102.

“When Moses asked the Lord to show him His glory, the Lord said, ‘I will make all My goodness pass before thee.’ ‘And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty.... And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped.’ When we are able to comprehend the character of God as did Moses, we too shall make haste to bow in adoration and praise.” —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 178.

THE BEHAVIOR OF CHILDREN OF PEACE

- 8. What should therefore be our response in cases of provocation and offense? Matthew 5:9; Proverbs 15:1; Genesis 13:8.**

“Evilspeaking is a twofold curse, falling more heavily upon the speaker than upon the hearer. He who scatters the seeds of dissension and strife

reaps in his own soul the deadly fruits. How miserable is the talebearer, the surmiser of evil! He is a stranger to true happiness.

“‘Blessed are the peacemakers.’ Grace and peace rest upon those who refuse to join in the strife of tongues. When vendors of scandal are passing from family to family, those who fear God will be chaste keepers at home. The time that is so often worse than wasted in idle, frivolous, and malicious gossip should be given to higher and nobler objects. If our brethren and sisters would become missionaries for God, visiting the sick and afflicted, and laboring patiently and kindly for the erring—in short, if they would copy the Pattern—the church would have prosperity in all her borders.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 176.

“‘Blessed are the peacemakers.’ Matthew 5:9. He who has the meek and lowly spirit of Christ will be a peacemaker. Such a spirit provokes no quarrel, gives back no angry answer. It makes the home happy, and brings a sweet peace that blesses all around.”—*The Story of Jesus*, p. 62.

“Hold firmly to the One who has all power in heaven and in earth. Though you so often fail to reveal patience and calmness, do not give up the struggle. Resolve again, this time more firmly, to be patient under every provocation. And never take your eyes off your divine Example.”—*The Review and Herald*, October 31, 1907.

AN OBJECT LESSON: HOW CAN WE OBTAIN VICTORY?

A man once became lost in the desert and for many days and nights remained completely disoriented. He wondered anxiously, How long before I starve to death? The merciless sun beat down upon him, and he felt feverish. When from sheer exhaustion he managed to sleep for an hour, he would dream of water, oranges, and dates. Then he would wake up to even greater suffering and stagger on.

Suddenly, he saw an oasis in the distance. It is certainly a mirage, he thought, an optical illusion trying to deceive me and plunge me into despair, since there is nothing there. But as he came closer to the oasis, instead of disappearing, it became more and more real. He could see the date palms, the green grass, and the water springing up from the rocks. This too may, of course, be a hallucination brought on by my half-mad mind, thought he. Such fantasies happen in my condition. There, now I can even hear the water gushing! How cruel nature can be! While thus reflecting, he had a complete breakdown and died, silently cursing the senselessness of life.

An hour later, two Bedouins found him. “Can you understand something like this?” one of them asked the other. “The dates are growing almost by his mouth—he needs only to stretch out his hand—but here he lies, near the spring, in the middle of this beautiful oasis, starved to death. How is this possible?!”

So many people trust their own strength and attain to nothing. They do not seek God’s help. Many think that they can find peace and rest on their own. But only the Lord, who is so close to us, can give us peace, and that more abundantly and speedily than we can imagine!

War and Promises of Peace

INTRODUCTION

"The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?" Psalm 118:6.

"In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me." Psalm 56:4.

ENEMIES' ATTACKS AND GOD'S PROTECTION

1. **What was God's great promise to His people in case of attack by their enemies? Isaiah 41:12; 54:17.**
2. **Do we have examples in the history of Israel of something as portentous as this truly happening? Was it necessary in such cases for individuals to defend themselves personally with their human power? Exodus 14:13, 14, 25, 30, 31. (For further study, read 2 Kings 6:18-22; 7:6; 19:35.)**

"God in His providence brought the Hebrews into the mountain fastnesses before the sea, that He might manifest His power in their deliverance and signally humble the pride of their oppressors. He might have saved them in any other way, but He chose this method in order to test their faith and strengthen their trust in Him. The people were weary and terrified, yet if they had held back when Moses bade them advance, God would never have opened the path for them. It was 'by faith' that 'they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land.' Hebrews 11:29. In marching down to the very water, they showed that they believed the word of God as spoken by Moses. They did all that was in their power to do, and then the Mighty One of Israel divided the sea to make a path for their feet." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 290.

CONSIDERING GOD'S PROMISES

3. **Were God's promises absolute or conditional? Deuteronomy 28:1, 2, 7. (For further study, read Isaiah 1:19, 20; Psalm 81:13, 14; 1 Samuel 12:24, 25.)**

“It should be remembered that the promises and the threatenings of God are alike conditional.” –*Evangelism*, p. 695.

“God’s promises are conditional. In order to make it possible for Him to bless us, we must do our part. We cannot expect that all His blessings will come to us naturally, if we fold our hands in inactivity. We are to be laborers together with God.” –*Peter’s Counsel to Parents*, p. 25.

“The Lord had never commanded them to ‘go up and fight.’ It was not His purpose that they should gain the land by warfare, but by strict obedience to His commands....

“God had promised His people that if they would obey His voice He would go before them and fight for them; and He would also send hornets to drive out the inhabitants of the land.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 392, 436, 437.

“In the land of Canaan, God’s people were to have one general place of assembly, where, three times each year they could all meet to worship God. As they would obey the divine laws, they would receive the divine blessing. God would not blot out the idolatrous nations. He would give them opportunity to become acquainted with Him through His church. The experience of His people during the forty years of their wilderness wandering was to be the study of these nations. God’s laws and kingdom were to extend over all the territory of the earth, and His people must be known as the people of the living God.” –*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, pp. 998, 999.

4. What other promises of peace, righteousness, and blessings have the same characteristics? Isaiah 48:18; Deuteronomy 5:29.

“He who walks in the way of God’s commandments is walking in company with Christ, and in His love the heart is at rest....

“Those who take Christ at His word, and surrender their souls to His keeping, their lives to His ordering, will find peace and quietude. Nothing of the world can make them sad when Jesus makes them glad by His presence. In perfect acquiescence there is perfect rest. The Lord says, ‘Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee.’ Isaiah 26:3. Our lives may seem a tangle; but as we commit ourselves to the wise Master Worker, He will bring out the pattern of life and character that will be to His own glory. And that character which expresses the glory–character–of Christ will be received into the Paradise of God. A renovated race shall walk with Him in white, for they are worthy.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 331.

CONSEQUENCES OF HUMAN FAILURE

5. Have people in all times lived in harmony with God’s ideal and requirements, rejoicing in His presence? In such cas-

es, was He with them, defending them from their enemies without their involvement? Deuteronomy 1:30-32; Joshua 7:12; Psalm 60:10. (For further study, read Psalm 44:9, 10; Deuteronomy 1:42.)

“A concealed golden wedge and a Babylonish garment troubled the entire camp of Israel. The frown of God was brought upon the people because of the sin of one man. Thousands were slain upon the field of battle because God would not bless and prosper a people among whom there was even one sinner, one who had transgressed His word. This sinner was not in holy office, yet a jealous God could not go forth to battle with the armies of Israel while these concealed sins were in the camp....

“Does God forsake His people without a cause? No; He tells Joshua that there is a work for him to do before his prayer can be answered. ‘Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also.’ He declares: ‘Neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you.’” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 239, 520.

6. Due to their disobedience, rebellion, and apostasy, what often befell God’s people? 1 Samuel 12:9-11; Luke 21:20-22. (For further study, see 1 Kings 8:44-46; Isaiah 42:24, 25.)

“The Jews had forged their own fetters; they had filled for themselves the cup of vengeance. In the utter destruction that befell them as a nation, and in all the woes that followed them in their dispersion, they were but reaping the harvest which their own hands had sown. Says the prophet: ‘O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself;’ ‘for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.’ Hosea 13:9; 14:1. Their sufferings are often represented as a punishment visited upon them by the direct decree of God. It is thus that the great deceiver seeks to conceal his own work. By stubborn rejection of divine love and mercy, the Jews had caused the protection of God to be withdrawn from them, and Satan was permitted to rule them according to his will. The horrible cruelties enacted in the destruction of Jerusalem are a demonstration of Satan’s vindictive power over those who yield to his control.

“We cannot know how much we owe to Christ for the peace and protection which we enjoy. It is the restraining power of God that prevents mankind from passing fully under the control of Satan. The disobedient and unthankful have great reason for gratitude for God’s mercy and long-suffering in holding in check the cruel, malignant power of the evil one. But when men pass the limits of divine forbearance, that restraint is removed. God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression; but He leaves the rejecters of His mercy to themselves, to reap that which they have sown. Every ray of light re-

jected, every warning despised or unheeded, every passion indulged, every transgression of the law of God, is a seed sown which yields its unfailing harvest.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 36.

TRUST IN THE LORD AND HIS ANSWER

7. What happens, on the other hand, when our ways are pleasing to the Lord? Proverbs 16:7; Genesis 31:24. (For further study, read 2 Chronicles 17:10; Romans 8:13.)

“I am instructed to say to you: Move guardedly, doing always that which the Lord commands. Move forward courageously, assured that the Lord will be with those who love and serve Him. He will work in behalf of His covenant-keeping people. He will not suffer them to become a reproach....

“I assure you that if you work in right lines, God will make your enemies to be at peace with you. He will uphold and strengthen you. Make a covenant with God that you will guard well your words.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, pp. 242, 243.

“In obedience to God’s law there is great gain. In conformity to the divine requirements there is a transforming power that brings peace and good will among men. If the teachings of God’s word were made the controlling influence in the life of every man and woman, if mind and heart were brought under its restraining power, the evils that now exist in national and in social life would find no place. From every home would go forth an influence that would make men and women strong in spiritual insight and in moral power, and thus nations and individuals would be placed on vantage ground.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 192.

8. Instead of becoming confused and making mistakes, how should we face problems, opposition, and difficulties? What is possible through faith in the Lord? Hebrews 11:33; 11:30. (For further study, read Judges 7:20-22.)

“While the world is progressing in wickedness, none of us need flatter ourselves that we shall have no difficulties. But it is these very difficulties that bring us into the audience chamber of the Most High. We may seek counsel of One who is infinite in wisdom.

“The Lord says, ‘Call upon Me in the day of trouble.’ Psalm 50:15. He invites us to present to Him our perplexities and necessities, and our need of divine help. He bids us be instant in prayer. As soon as difficulties arise, we are to offer to Him our sincere, earnest petitions. By our importunate prayers we give evidence of our strong confidence in God. The sense of our need leads us to pray earnestly, and our heavenly Father is moved by our supplications.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 172.

**AN OBJECT LESSON: IS PEACE POSSIBLE
AMID RUMORS OF WAR AND DANGER?**

A painting competition was once sponsored on the significant subject of “Peace,” and different pictures were submitted. One portrayed a calm morning; another, a peaceful sunset; and others, similar scenes. But the first place award went to the painting of a huge waterfall, which, as the water thundered over a cliff, produced a dense cloud of foam and mist. All the while a robin sat peacefully warbling a song beside its nest on the branch of a tree that was stretched over the roiling cascade!

Certainty can be obtained and enjoyed not only in favorable circumstances, but amid the storms of life. The robin was sitting on a branch of a tree which had its roots in the rock above the thundering water and mist of the waterfall. In that lofty tree, the bird rested peacefully in its wonderful security. Should it be any different for those who are surrounded by problems and dangers, but who trust fully in the Lord of heaven?

4

Sabbath, July 26, 2008

The Covenant of Peace

INTRODUCTION

“I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles.” Isaiah 42:6.

AN EVERLASTING COVENANT

1. What has been God’s holy desire for His people since the days of the patriarchs? Genesis 17:7, 19.

“This same covenant was renewed to Abraham in the promise, ‘In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.’ Genesis 22:18. This promise pointed to Christ. So Abraham understood it (see Galatians 3:8, 16), and he trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sins. It was this faith that was accounted unto him for righteousness. The covenant with Abraham also maintained the authority of God’s law. The Lord appeared unto Abraham, and said, ‘I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect.’ Genesis 17:1. The testimony of God concerning His faithful servant was, ‘Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.’ Genesis 26:5. And the Lord declared to him, ‘I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after

thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee.' Genesis 17:7." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 370.

2. What testimony full of hope did David give many centuries later? 1 Chronicles 16:15-17.

"Let those who are oppressed under a sense of sin remember that there is hope for them. The salvation of the human race has ever been the object of the councils of heaven. The covenant of mercy was made before the foundation of the world. It has existed from all eternity, and is called the everlasting covenant. So surely as there never was a time when God was not, so surely there never was a moment when it was not the delight of the eternal mind to manifest His grace to humanity." —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 934.

GOD'S COVENANT OF PEACE

3. What was revealed about God's character when He established the everlasting covenant with the patriarchs and with Israel of old? Isaiah 54:10, 13.

"Through all our trials we have a never-failing Helper. He does not leave us alone to struggle with temptation, to battle with evil, and be finally crushed with burdens and sorrow. Though now He is hidden from mortal sight, the ear of faith can hear His voice saying, Fear not; I am with you. 'I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore.' Revelation 1:18. I have endured your sorrows, experienced your struggles, encountered your temptations. I know your tears; I also have wept. The griefs that lie too deep to be breathed into any human ear, I know. Think not that you are desolate and forsaken. Though your pain touch no responsive chord in any heart on earth, look unto Me, and live. 'The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.' Isaiah 54:10." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 483.

"... Amid the tempest of divine judgment the children of God will have no cause for fear. 'The Lord will be the hope of His people, and the strength of the children of Israel.' Joel 3:16. The day that brings terror and destruction to the transgressors of God's law will bring to the obedient 'joy unspeakable and full of glory.' 'Gather My saints together unto Me,' saith the Lord, 'those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice. And the heavens shall declare His righteousness: for God is Judge Himself.'

"... 'I, even I, am He that comforteth you.' Isaiah 51:12. 'For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith

the Lord that hath mercy on thee.' Isaiah 54:10."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 341, 342.

- 4. Was the covenant promised to the scattered and suffering flock of a different nature? What does this mean? Ezekiel 34:25; 37:26.**

"God had commanded that Jerusalem be rebuilt; the vision of the measuring of the city was an assurance that He would give comfort and strength to His afflicted ones, and fulfill to them the promises of His everlasting covenant. His protecting care, He declared, would be like 'a wall of fire round about;' and through them His glory would be revealed to all the sons of men. That which He was accomplishing for His people was to be known in all the earth. 'Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.' Isaiah 12:6."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 581.

THE PRIESTHOOD'S COVENANT OF PEACE

- 5. Was there another covenant of peace made by the Lord with certain of His servants? Numbers 25:12, 13.**

"The Lord separated the tribe of Levi, to bear the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord to minister unto Him, and to bless in His name.' My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared Me, and was afraid before My name.... He walked with Me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity.' Deuteronomy 10:8; Malachi 2:5, 6."—*Education*, p. 148.

- 6. What blessings were included in this covenant? When did it reach its fulfillment in the Levitical ministry? Malachi 2:5; Psalm 119:165.**

"The covenant of 'life and peace' God had made with the sons of Levi—the covenant which, if kept, would have brought untold blessing—the Lord now offered to renew with those who once had been spiritual leaders, but who through transgression had become 'contemptible and base before all the people.' Malachi 2:5, 9."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 706.

ENTERING INTO THE COVENANT OF PEACE

- 7. Through whom may we enter into the covenant with God and receive all of its blessings? Isaiah 42:6; 49:7, 8.**

“Of the mission of the Saviour the word of Jehovah was: ‘I the Lord have called Thee in righteousness, and will hold Thine hand, and will keep Thee, and give Thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house. I am the Lord: that is My name: and My glory will I not give to another, neither My praise to graven images. Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.’ Verses 6-9.

“Through the promised Seed, the God of Israel was to bring deliverance to Zion. ‘There shall come forth a Rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.’ ‘Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall He eat, that He may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.’ Isaiah 11:1; 7:14, 15....

“It was to Christ that the prophetic promise was given: ‘Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and His Holy One, to Him whom man despiseth, to Him whom the nation abhorreth,... thus saith the Lord,... I will preserve Thee, and give Thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages...’” —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 693-695, 689.

8. Thanks to Him, what is now possible also to those who are alienated and estranged from the covenant of promise? Colossians 1:21, 22; Ephesians 2:11-14.

“The glory of heaven is in lifting up the fallen, comforting the distressed. And wherever Christ abides in human hearts, He will be revealed in the same way. Wherever it acts, the religion of Christ will bless. Wherever it works, there is brightness.

“No distinction on account of nationality, race, or caste, is recognized by God. He is the Maker of all mankind. All men are of one family by creation, and all are one through redemption. Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment of the temple, that every soul may have free access to God. His love is so broad, so deep, so full, that it penetrates everywhere. It lifts out of Satan’s circle the poor souls who have been deluded by his deceptions. It places them within reach of the throne of God, the throne encircled by the rainbow of promise.

“In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free. All are brought nigh by His precious blood. (Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:13.)” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 386.

AN OBJECT LESSON: HIS WORD IS ENOUGH

When William, Prince of Orange, delivered a certain document to a young man in the hope of receiving help from him in his work, he promised to the youth a high employ in his kingdom. But the young man refused the document. Why? He explained his reason thus: “The word of your Majesty is enough. I

would not want to serve a king in whose word I could not trust!"

What happens with us and the Word of our Lord? The Word of our King is more than enough and worthy of our complete trust. He has not only given us promises; He has also made a covenant with us, ratifying it with an oath and a sacrifice of peace!

5

Sabbath, August 2, 2008

Entering into God's Rest

INTRODUCTION

"For we which have believed do enter into rest.... There remaineth therefore a rest [Greek, 'sabbatical rest'] to the people of God. For he that is entered into His rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest...." Hebrews 4:3, 9-11.

THE BLESSING OF GOD'S REST

- 1. What did the Lord sanctify in the beginning so man would be able to participate or enter into His blessed rest? Genesis 2:2, 3.**

"God has given us His commandments, not only to be believed in, but to be obeyed. The great Jehovah, when He had laid the foundations of the earth, had dressed the whole world in the garb of beauty, and had filled it with things useful to man—when He had created all the wonders of the land and the sea—instituted the Sabbath day and made it holy. God blessed and sanctified the seventh day, because He rested upon it from all His wondrous work of creation. The Sabbath was made for man, and God would have him put by his labor on that day, as He Himself rested after His six days' work of creation." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 247.

- 2. What promises did the Lord make to Israel concerning this heavenly gift? Exodus 33:14; Jeremiah 6:16.**

"When we realize that we are workers together with God, His promises will not be spoken with indifference. They will burn in our hearts, and kindle upon our lips. To Moses, when called to minister to an ignorant, undisciplined, and rebellious people, God gave the promise, 'My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.' And He said, 'Certainly I will be

with thee.' Exodus 33:14; 3:12. This promise is to all who labor in Christ's stead for His afflicted and suffering ones." –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 641.

"When the Lord laid upon Moses the work of leading the children of Israel from Egypt, He gave him the assurance: 'Certainly I will be with thee.' 'My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.' Exodus 3:12; 33:14. The same assurance is given to those who go forth to work for the Lord in the Southern field." –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 221.

"Jeremiah called their attention repeatedly to the counsels given in Deuteronomy. More than any other of the prophets, he emphasized the teachings of the Mosaic law and showed how these might bring the highest spiritual blessing to the nation and to every individual heart. 'Ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein,' he pleaded, 'and ye shall find rest for your souls.' Jeremiah 6:16." –*Prophets and Kings*, p. 411.

PEACE AND REST IN THE PROMISED LAND

- 3. What was also included in that promise of peace and rest? Leviticus 26:6; Deuteronomy 12:10.**
- 4. Did that promise have a perfect and universal fulfillment as was God's wish? Psalm 95:10, 11; Hebrews 3:18; 1 Kings 8:56.**

"Israel fell short of the high ideal which had been set before her. Another than Joshua must guide His people to the true rest of faith. No longer is Gerizim known as the mount of the Beatitudes, but that unnamed mountain beside the Lake of Gennesaret, where Jesus spoke the words of blessing to His disciples and the multitude." –*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 1.

"God will never, never allow any man to pass through the pearly gates of the City of God who does not bear the signet of the faithful, His government mark. Every soul who is saved will cherish pure principles, which proceed from the very essence of truth. He must fasten himself by golden links to the everlasting power and love of the God of truth. He must be loyal to the principles of God's word, loyal to the everlasting covenant which is a sign between man and his Maker." –*Medical Ministry*, p. 123.

PROMISE ALSO IN PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL TROUBLE

- 5. What serious problems may sometimes trouble us and make it difficult for us to attain peace and rest? Job 3:26; 30:27; Isaiah 14:3.**

6. What great hindrance to our peace ruins soul and body? Psalms 32:3; 51:8; Proverbs 28:13.

“Those who have not humbled their souls before God in acknowledging their guilt, have not yet fulfilled the first condition of acceptance. If we have not experienced that repentance which is not to be repented of, and have not with true humiliation of soul and brokenness of spirit confessed our sins, abhorring our iniquity, we have never truly sought for the forgiveness of sin; and if we have never sought, we have never found the peace of God. The only reason why we do not have remission of sins that are past is that we are not willing to humble our hearts and comply with the conditions of the word of truth. Explicit instruction is given concerning this matter. Confession of sin, whether public or private, should be heartfelt and freely expressed.” —*Steps to Christ*, pp. 37, 38.

“Many a sin is left unconfessed to confront the sinner in the day of final account; better far to confront your sins now, to confess them and put them away, while the atoning Sacrifice pleads in your behalf. Do not fail to learn the will of God on this subject. The health of your soul and the salvation of others depends upon the course you pursue in this matter. ‘Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon Him: for He careth for you’ (1 Peter 5:6, 7). The humble and broken heart can appreciate something of the love of God and the cross of Calvary. Ample will be the blessing experienced by him who meets the condition by which he may become a partaker of the favor of God.” —*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 327.

THE BLESSED SOURCE OF REST AND PEACE

7. Knowing our problems and weaknesses, what loving invitation does our Redeemer extend to us? Matthew 11:28-30.

“There are many professing Christians who are anxious and depressed, many who are so full of busy activity that they cannot find time to rest quietly in the promises of God, who act as if they could not afford to have peace and quietness. To all such Christ’s invitation is: ‘Come unto Me,... and I will give you rest.’ Matthew 11:28.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 69.

“As through Jesus we enter into rest, heaven begins here. We respond to His invitation, Come, learn of Me, and in thus coming we begin the life eternal. Heaven is a ceaseless approaching to God through Christ. The longer we are in the heaven of bliss, the more and still more of glory will be opened to us; and the more we know of God, the more intense will be our happiness.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 331.

8. How may we be found in the ideal relationship of peace with God? Romans 5:1; Ephesians 2:14. (For further study, read Hebrews 4:9; Isaiah 32:17.)

“‘There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.’ Hebrew 4:9. The rest here spoken of is the rest of grace, obtained by following the prescription, Labor diligently. Those who learn of Jesus His meekness and lowliness find rest in the experience of practicing His lessons. It is not in indolence, in selfish ease and pleasure-seeking, that rest is obtained. Those who are unwilling to give the Lord faithful, earnest, loving service will not find spiritual rest in this life or in the life to come. Only from earnest labor comes peace and joy in the Holy Spirit—happiness on earth and glory hereafter.”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 928.

“As the Sabbath was the sign that distinguished Israel when they came out of Egypt to enter the earthly Canaan, so it is the sign that now distinguishes God’s people as they come out from the world to enter the heavenly rest. The Sabbath is a sign of the relationship existing between God and His people, a sign that they honor His law. It distinguishes between His loyal subjects and transgressors.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 349, 350.

“Rest yourself wholly in the hands of Jesus. Contemplate His great love, and while you meditate upon His self-denial, His infinite sacrifice made in our behalf in order that we should believe in Him, your heart will be filled with holy joy, calm peace, and indescribable love.”—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 311.

AN OBJECT LESSON: WHEN CAN WE RADIATE PEACE AND JOY?

I was once in a jewelry store and found myself standing near two men who spoke enthusiastically about precious stones. I was more interested in what they were saying than in my own purchase. With my eyes I followed the finger of the older gentleman who pointed out to the other one the incredibly high price of a stone. “I don’t see anything special about it.”

His listener was of the same opinion. “It’s worthless,” I heard him say.

But then the first man took the stone and held it in his closed hand for an instant. When he opened his hand, the stone shone with the colors of the rainbow. Astonished, I moved a little closer. “How is that possible?” I asked.

“This is an opal,” he explained enthusiastically. “It is one of those so-called sympathetic stones. It needs the touch of a warm hand to show its brilliance.”

Strengthened by the power of God, even the weakest Christians develop the strength of faith which is praise to the Lord and of inestimable value to the church of Christ. May the Lord grant that each one of us may be such a stone!

The Prince of Peace

INTRODUCTION

“In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.” Psalm 72:7.

PROPHECY OF THE PRINCE OF PEACE

1. What special prophecy was given to strengthen the faith of God’s people throughout the centuries? Isaiah 7:14.

“‘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 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.

“‘His name shall be called Immanuel,... God with us.’... It was to manifest this glory that He came to our world. To this sin-darkened earth He came to reveal the light of God’s love—to be ‘God with us.’ Therefore it was prophesied of Him, ‘His name shall be called Immanuel.’

“... God’s wonderful purpose of grace, the mystery of redeeming love, is the theme into which ‘angels desire to look,’ and it will be their study throughout endless ages. Both the redeemed and the unfallen beings will find in the cross of Christ their science and their song. It will be seen that the glory shining in the face of Jesus is the glory of self-sacrificing love. In the light from Calvary it will be seen that the law of self-renouncing love is the law of life for earth and heaven; that the love which ‘seeketh not her own’ has its source in the heart of God; and that in the meek and lowly One is manifested the character of Him who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 19, 20.

2. What special name was given to Him in view of His nature and mission? Isaiah 9:6.

“Christ is ‘the Prince of Peace’ (Isaiah 9:6), and it is His mission to restore to earth and heaven the peace that sin has broken. ‘Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ Romans 5:1.

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

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

HIS WORK IN THE CHURCH

3. As the Prince of Peace, how did He present Himself in Jerusalem, the symbol of God’s people? Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:5.

“Five hundred years before the birth of Christ, the prophet Zechariah thus foretold the coming of the King to Israel. This prophecy is now to be fulfilled. He who has so long refused royal honors now comes to Jerusalem as the promised heir to David’s throne.

“... All nature seemed to rejoice. The trees were clothed with verdure, and their blossoms shed a delicate fragrance on the air. A new life and joy animated the people. The hope of the new kingdom was again springing up.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 569.

4. Was His message for the heathen, among whom we are counted, different from that for the Jews? Zechariah 9:10.

“Every man’s experience testifies to the truth of the words of Scripture, ‘The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest.... There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.’ Isaiah 57:20, 21. Sin has destroyed our peace. While self is unsubdued, we can find no rest. The masterful passions of the heart no human power can control. We are as helpless here as were the disciples to quiet the raging storm. But He who spoke peace to the billows of Galilee has spoken the word of peace for every soul. However fierce the tempest, those who turn to Jesus with the cry, ‘Lord, save us,’ will find deliverance. His grace, that reconciles the soul to God, quiets the strife of human passion, and in His love the heart is at rest. ‘He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so He bringeth them unto their desired haven.’ Psalm 107:29, 30. ‘Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ ‘The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever.’ Romans 5:1; Isaiah 32:17.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 336, 337.

NOT BEARING ARMS

- 5. According to the teachings of the Prince of Peace, what will happen with military weapons among those who accept His message of peace? Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3, 4.**

“God has provided abundant means for successful warfare against the evil that is in the world. The Bible is the armory where we may equip for the struggle. Our loins must be girt about with truth. Our breastplate must be righteousness. The shield of faith must be in our hand, the helmet of salvation on our brow; and with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, we are to cut our way through the obstructions and entanglements of sin.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 502.

- 6. Right at His birth, what joyous announcement was made by the heavenly host to the people who longed for His coming? Luke 2:13, 14.**

“When the plan of salvation was revealed to the angels, joy, inexpressible joy, filled heaven. The glory and blessedness of a world redeemed, out-measured even the anguish of the Prince of life. Through the celestial courts echoed the first strain of that song that angels sang above the hills of Bethlehem: ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.’” —*The Messenger*, June 7, 1893, par. 3.

“No one born into the world, not even the most gifted of God’s children, has ever been accorded such demonstration of joy as greeted the Babe born in Bethlehem. Angels of God sang His praises over the hills and plains of Bethlehem. ‘Glory to God in the highest,’ they sang, ‘and on earth peace, good will toward men’ (Luke 2:14). O that today the human family could recognize this song! The declaration then made, the note then struck, the tune then started, will swell and extend to the end of time, and resound to the ends of the earth. It is glory to God, it is peace on earth, good will to men. When the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings, the song then started in the hills of Bethlehem will be reechoed by the voice of a great multitude, as the voice of many waters, saying, ‘Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth’ (Revelation 19:6).” —*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 250.

THE MESSAGE OF THE PRINCE OF PEACE

- 7. According to prophecy and its fulfillment, what was the message of Jesus to human hearts? Isaiah 57:19; Acts 10:36; Ephesians 2:17.**

“They began to realize the nature and extent of their work, to see that they were to proclaim to the world the truths entrusted to them. The events of Christ’s life, His death and resurrection, the prophecies pointing to these events, the mysteries of the plan of salvation, the power of Jesus for the remission of sins—to all these things they had been witnesses, and they were to make them known to the world. They were to proclaim the gospel of peace and salvation through repentance and the power of the Saviour.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 27.

“Beside the throng on the shores of Gennesaret, Jesus in His sermon by the sea had other audiences before His mind. Looking down the ages, He saw His faithful ones in prison and judgment hall, in temptation and loneliness and affliction. Every scene of joy and conflict and perplexity was open before Him. In the words spoken to those gathered about Him, He was speaking also to these other souls the very words that would come to them as a message of hope in trial, of comfort in sorrow, and heavenly light in darkness. Through the Holy Spirit, that voice which was speaking from the fisherman’s boat on the Sea of Galilee, would be heard speaking peace to human hearts to the close of time.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 245.

8. What greeting did Jesus recommend that the disciples give when they visited homes in their missionary labors? What gift did He give them just before His crucifixion? What should be our message? Matthew 10:12, 13; John 14:27.

“When you go into a house. say, ‘Peace be with you.’ If the people in that house welcome you, let your greeting of peace remain; but if they do not welcome you, then take back your greeting.” Matthew 10:12, 13, *Today’s English Version, The New Testament in Greek and English*.

“At the birth of Jesus the angel announced, Peace on earth, and good will to men. And now at His first appearance to the disciples after His resurrection, the Saviour addressed them with the blessed words, ‘Peace be unto you.’ Jesus is ever ready to speak peace to souls that are burdened with doubts and fears. He waits for us to open the door of the heart to Him, and say, Abide with us. 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, and will sup with him, and he with Me.’ Revelation 3:20.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 803, 804.

“Shortly before His crucifixion Christ had bequeathed to His disciples a legacy of peace. ‘Peace I leave with you,’ He said, ‘My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.’ John 14:27. This peace is not the peace that comes through conformity to the world. Christ never purchased peace by compromise with evil. The peace that Christ left His disciples is internal rather than external and was ever to remain with His witnesses through strife and contention.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 84.

AN OBJECT LESSON: BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN MEN

One day two brothers who lived near each other on their respective farms had a quarrel. It was their first quarrel in 40 years of being good neighbors, of exchanging machinery, work, and goods. Suddenly all this came to an end as a result of a bitter exchange of words, followed by weeks of silence. One morning someone knocked on the door of the older brother. It was a carpenter who was looking for work: "Maybe you have some small jobs that I could help you with for a few days?"

"Yes," said the older brother, "I have work for you. That huge ditch in the farm has been made by my neighbor, my younger brother. Last week there was a field of flowers between our two farms; but he has taken the tractor and has ploughed the field, creating this deep chasm between us. But I will certainly not treat him better. I would like you to build a high fence so that it will not be possible for us to see each other, and he'll pay for this."

"I understand the situation," said the carpenter and immediately went to work. He took measurements, cut the lumber, and nailed it together. At sunset, when the farmer returned home, the carpenter had finished his work. But there was no fence! There was only a bridge connecting one farm with the other! It was a masterful work, and the younger brother was just crossing the bridge with open arms, saying: "You have had the courage to build this bridge after all that I have said and done to you!" The two brothers met and embraced in the middle of the bridge.

Then they turned around and saw the carpenter picking up his tools and getting ready to leave. "Wait, don't go! Stay a few more days; I have more work for you," said the older brother to the carpenter.

"I would like to stay," responded the carpenter, "but I have many more bridges to build."

The One who has built the bridge over the abyss is Jesus Christ. He longs for us to reconcile with God and with our brethren. What are we doing? Are we building fences or bridges?

Peace with God

INTRODUCTION

“And as many as walk according to this rule, Peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.” Galatians 6:16.

SEPARATION FROM CHRIST

- 1. What is the enormous consequence of sin in the relationship between God and man? Isaiah 59:2; Jeremiah 5:25.**

“The transgression of that law caused a fearful separation between God and man. To Adam in his innocency was granted communion, direct, free, and happy, with his Maker. After his transgression God would communicate to man through Christ and angels.” *—The Story of Redemption*, p. 51.

“I knew that the Lord had not forsaken His people, but that their sins and iniquities had separated them from God.” *—Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 586.

- 2. Although created and kept in life by God, how far did man depart from Him? Colossians 1:21; Ephesians 2:12.**

“Restraint and moral control in the human family are destroyed. Restraint upon vice grows more and more feeble. The world loves not, fears not God. And those who do not love or fear God soon lose all sense of obligation to one another. They are without God and without hope in the world.” *—Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*, p. 93.

“Many are without God and without hope in the world. They are guilty, corrupt, and degraded, enslaved by Satan’s devices. Yet these are the ones whom Christ came from heaven to redeem. They are subjects for tenderest pity, sympathy, and tireless effort; for they are on the verge of ruin. They suffer from ungratified desires, disordered passions, and the condemnation of their own consciences; they are miserable in every sense of the word, for they are losing their hold on this life and have no prospect for the life to come.” *—Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 568.

PEACE WITH GOD

- 3. Have our separation, enmity, and sins changed God’s attitude toward men? What is His constant invitation to us? Romans 5:8; Colossians 2:13; Isaiah 27:5; Romans 8:32.**

"It was a costly sacrifice that the Lord of heaven made. Divine benevolence was stirred to its unfathomable depths; it was impossible for God to give more. He 'so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' John 3:16. Why is our gratitude so limited? It is only as a ripple on the surface, compared with the great tide of love that flows to us from the Father."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 59, 60.

"I exalted before them the infinite sacrifice made by the Father in giving His beloved Son for fallen men, that they might through obedience be transformed and become the acknowledged sons of God. The church and the world are called upon to behold and admire a love which thus expressed is beyond human comprehension, and which amazed even the angels of heaven. This love is so deep, so broad, and so high that the inspired apostle, failing to find language in which to describe it, calls upon the church and the world to behold it—to make it a theme of contemplation and admiration."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 293.

4. Thanks to His peace and the gift of justification, what may men achieve in their relationship with God? Romans 5:1; Isaiah 32:17.

"The light of justification through faith, and that the righteousness of Christ must become our righteousness, else we cannot possibly keep the law of God, is the testimony of all who speak, and the fruit is peace, courage, joy, and harmony. There is danger of making even these subjects a theory, and not practicing the truth that is expressed. Those who bear this message must carry with them the pure character of Christ Jesus."—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 9, pp. 332, 333.

"The sinner cannot depend upon his own good works as a means of justification. He must come to the point where he will renounce all his sin, and embrace one degree of light after another as it shines upon his pathway. He simply grasps by faith the free and ample provision made in the blood of Christ. He believes the promises of God, which through Christ are made unto him sanctification and righteousness and redemption. And if he follows Jesus, he will walk humbly in the light, rejoicing in the light and diffusing that light to others. Being justified by faith, he carries cheerfulness with him in his obedience in all his life. Peace with God is the result of what Christ is to him. The souls who are in subordination to God, who honor Him, and are doers of His Word, will receive divine enlightenment. In the precious Word of God there is purity and loftiness as well as beauty that, unless assisted by God, the highest powers of man cannot attain to."—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1071.

"When the Spirit of God controls mind and heart, the converted soul breaks forth into a new song; for he realizes that in his experience the promise of God has been fulfilled, that his transgression has been forgiven, his sin covered. He has exercised repentance toward God for the violation

of the divine law, and faith toward Christ, who died for man's justification. 'Being justified by faith,' he has 'peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.' Romans 5:1." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 476.

THE HIGH PRICE OF OUR PEACE

5. Is it possible to appreciate fully the great price that God has paid to make peace with man? Isaiah 53:5; Romans 4:25; 1 Corinthians 15:3.

"What a theme for meditation is the sacrifice that Jesus made for lost sinners! 'He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.' How shall we estimate the blessings thus brought within our reach? Could Jesus have suffered more? Could He have purchased for us richer blessings? Should it not melt the hardest heart when we remember that for our sakes He left the happiness and glory of heaven and suffered poverty and shame, cruel affliction and a terrible death? Had He not by His death and resurrection opened for us the door of hope, we should have known nothing but the horrors of darkness and the miseries of despair. In our present state, favored and blessed as we are, we cannot realize from what depths we have been rescued. We cannot measure how much deeper our afflictions would have been, how much greater our woes, had not Jesus encircled us with His human arm of sympathy and love, and lifted us up." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 316.

BEARING PRECIOUS FRUIT

6. What kind of fruit is peace? Therefore, whom should we invite into our hearts and minds to receive it? Galatians 5:22; Romans 14:17; 8:6.

"The peace of Christ, the peace of Christ—money cannot buy it, brilliant talent cannot command it, intellect cannot secure it; it is the gift of God. The religion of Christ—how shall I make all understand their great loss if they fail to carry its holy principles into the daily life? The meekness and lowliness of Christ is the Christian's power. It is indeed more precious than all things which genius can create or wealth can buy. Of all things that are sought, cherished, and cultivated, there is nothing so valuable in the sight of God as a pure heart, a disposition imbued with thankfulness and peace." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 559.

"Mildness, gentleness, forbearance, longsuffering, being not easily provoked, bearing all things, hoping all things, enduring all things—these are the fruit growing upon the precious tree of love, which is of heavenly growth. This tree, if nourished, will prove to be an evergreen. Its branches will not decay, its leaves will not wither. It is immortal, eternal, watered

continually by the dews of heaven.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 134, 135.

7. What assurance is given that we may receive this gift even in a world full of problems and sorrows? Colossians 3:15; Romans 15:13; Psalm 85:8.

“... The religion of Jesus gives peace like a river. It does not quench the light of joy; it does not restrain cheerfulness nor cloud the sunny, smiling face.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 121.

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, and peace. Discord and strife are the work of Satan and the fruit of sin. If we would as a people enjoy peace and love, we must put away our sins; we must come into harmony with God, and we shall be in harmony with one another. Let each ask himself: Do I possess the grace of love? Have I learned to suffer long and to be kind? Talents, learning, and eloquence, without this heavenly attribute, will be as meaningless as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. Alas that this precious treasure is so lightly valued and so little sought by many who profess the faith!”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 169.

AN OBJECT LESSON: THE VALUE OF THE OLD VIOLIN

The auctioneer at the sale lifted up an old violin. It was scratched and splintered, and its strings were all loose. The auctioneer thought it had no value and did not want to waste much time with the old violin, but he lifted it with a smile: “How much will you offer, gentlemen?” he shouted. “We begin with ... fifty dollars!”

“Fifty-five,” answered a voice. Then, “Sixty,” said another. “Sixty-five!” still another. “Seventy dollars,” offered a fourth.

Then from the corner of the room a white-haired man approached the auctioneer and picked up the little bow. With his handkerchief he dusted the old violin, tightened the loose strings, and began to play a melody as pure and sweet as an angel song.

As the music ceased, the auctioneer, in a calm and soft voice, asked: “How much for the old violin?” as he lifted it up together with the little bow.

“Five hundred, and who offers two-thousand dollars? Last offer: Who offers three thousand dollars? Only three thousand! Sold for three thousand dollars,” said the auctioneer.

People applauded, but some asked, “What increased the value of the violin?”

There was a quick reply: “It was the touch of the master’s hand.”

We also are like old musical instruments—dusty and broken, troubled and burdened with many problems and sins. But we are still valuable to our Lord; and if we will permit His hands to touch us, we may have peace with Him, our lives gaining precious value as He plays a lovely melody through us to His honor and for the blessing of others.

Peace with Men

INTRODUCTION

“Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.” Philipians 4:9.

MEN OF PEACE

- 1. What divine instruction is given to every follower of the Lord regarding his relationship with others? Does this injunction apply only to church members? Mark 9:50; 1 Thesalonians 5:13; Romans 12:18.**

“A Christian will not pursue a course of bickering and contention with even the most wicked and unbelieving. How wrong to indulge this spirit with those who believe the truth and who are seeking for peace, love, and harmony! Says Paul: ‘Be at peace among yourselves.’ This spirit of contention is opposed to all the principles of heaven. In Christ’s Sermon on the Mount He says: ‘Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.’ ‘Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.’” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 163, 164.

“When we can, notwithstanding disagreeable circumstances, rest confidently in His love and shut ourselves in with Him, resting peacefully in His love, the sense of His presence will inspire a deep, tranquil joy. This experience gains for us a faith that enables us not to fret, not to worry, but to depend upon a Power that is infinite.” —*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 9, p. 289.

- 2. In the Holy Scriptures, how are those who help to bring peace among men regarded? Luke 10:6; Matthew 5:9.**

“‘Blessed are the peacemakers.’ Grace and peace rest upon those who refuse to join in the strife of tongues. When vendors of scandal are passing from family to family, those who fear God will be chaste keepers at home. The time that is so often worse than wasted in idle, frivolous, and malicious gossip should be given to higher and nobler objects. If our brethren and sisters would become missionaries for God, visiting the sick and afflicted, and laboring patiently and kindly for the erring—in short, if they would copy the Pattern—the church would have prosperity in all her borders.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 176.

3. To what will we pay special attention if we want to have peace in the church? 1 Corinthians 1:10; Romans 16:17.

“The strength of God’s people lies in their union with Him through His only-begotten Son, and their union with one another. There are no two leaves of a tree precisely alike; neither do all minds run in the same direction. But while this is so, there may be unity in diversity. Christ is our root, and all who are grafted into this root will bear the fruit which Christ bore. They will reveal the fragrance of His character in the talent of speech, in the cultivation of hospitality, of kindness, of Christian courtesy and heavenly politeness.

“Look at the flowers in a carpet, and notice the different colored threads. All are not pink, all are not green, all are not blue. A variety of colors are woven together to perfect the pattern. So it is in the design of God. He has a purpose in placing us where we must learn to live as individuals. We are not all fitted to do the same kind of work, but each man’s work is designed by God to help make up His plan.” —(*Review and Herald*, July 4, 1899) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1083.

4. May we do something for the peace and harmony of spiritual Jerusalem? Psalm 122:6-9; Ephesians 4:3; 2 Corinthians 13:11.

“Paul asks, ‘Is Christ divided?’ Have we not one spiritual Head? Christ has been the uniting stone, the chief cornerstone, in all ages. The patriarchs, the Levitical priesthood, and Christians of today, all have their center in Him. He is all and in all.” —(*Review and Herald*, January 3, 1899) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1083.

“I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”

“Union is strength; division is weakness. When those who believe present truth are united, they exert a telling influence. Satan well understands this. Never was he more determined than now to make of none effect the truth of God by causing bitterness and dissension among the Lord’s people.

“The world is against us, the popular churches are against us, the laws of the land will soon be against us. If there was ever a time when the people of God should press together, it is now.... We cannot afford now to give place to Satan by cherishing disunion, discord, and strife.

“That union and love might exist among His disciples was the burden of our Saviour’s last prayer for them prior to His crucifixion. With the agony

of the cross before Him, His solicitude was not for Himself, but for those whom He should leave to carry forward His work in the earth. The severest trials awaited them, but Jesus saw that their greatest danger would be from a spirit of bitterness and division.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 236.

NECESSITY FOR SPECIAL CONTROL

- 5. What needs to be absolutely under the control of the Holy Spirit if we wish to have peace with our fellow men? Psalm 34:12-14; 1 Peter 3:10, 11. (For further study, read James 3:5, 6.)**

“Evilspeaking is a twofold curse, falling more heavily upon the speaker than upon the hearer. He who scatters the seeds of dissension and strife reaps in his own soul the deadly fruits. How miserable is the talebearer, the surmiser of evil! He is a stranger to true happiness.

“The sin of evilspeaking begins with the cherishing of evil thoughts. Guile includes impurity in all its forms. An impure thought tolerated, an unholy desire cherished, and the soul is contaminated, its integrity compromised. ‘Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.’ If we would not commit sin, we must shun its very beginnings. Every emotion and desire must be held in subjection to reason and conscience. Every unholy thought must be instantly repelled. To your closet, followers of Christ. Pray in faith and with all the heart. Satan is watching to ensnare your feet. You must have help from above if you would escape his devices.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 176, 177.

- 6. How far should we go to achieve and foster peace with each other? 1 Corinthians 6:7; 1 Peter 3:9. (For further study, read James 3:18.)**

“Peter exhorts the believers: ‘Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.’

“When the right way is so plainly marked out, why do not the professed people of God walk in it? Why do they not study and pray and labor earnestly to be of one mind? Why do they not seek to cherish compassion

for one another, to love as brethren, instead of rendering evil for evil and railing for railing? Who does not love life and desire good days? yet how few comply with the conditions, to refrain the tongue from evil and the lips from speaking guile. Few are willing to follow the Saviour's example of meekness and humility. Many ask the Lord to humble them, but are unwilling to submit to the needful discipline. When the test comes, when trials or even annoyances occur, the heart rebels, and the tongue utters words that are like poisoned arrows or blasting hail."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 175, 176.

THE SECRET OF PEACE

7. When we are each truly united with Jesus Christ, what will be the case among the believers? Ephesians 2:13, 14; Colossians 1:20.

"The glory of heaven is in lifting up the fallen, comforting the distressed. And wherever Christ abides in human hearts, He will be revealed in the same way. Wherever it acts, the religion of Christ will bless. Wherever it works, there is brightness.

"No distinction on account of nationality, race, or caste, is recognized by God. He is the Maker of all mankind. All men are of one family by creation, and all are one through redemption. Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment of the temple, that every soul may have free access to God. His love is so broad, so deep, so full, that it penetrates everywhere. It lifts out of Satan's circle the poor souls who have been deluded by his deceptions. It places them within reach of the throne of God, the throne encircled by the rainbow of promise.

"In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free. All are brought nigh by His precious blood. (Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:13.)

"Whatever the difference in religious belief, a call from suffering humanity must be heard and answered. Where bitterness of feeling exists because of difference in religion, much good may be done by personal service. Loving ministry will break down prejudice, and win souls to God."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 386.

AN OBJECT LESSON: HOW CAN THE BARRIERS BE BROKEN DOWN?

A young man who was a foreigner had enrolled in a seminar and was taking part in a prayer meeting along with some twenty young people of different nationalities. The young man felt a certain aversion to the students from certain countries against which his own country had recently fought. At one point, the group leader suggested that everyone pray in his own language.

At first, the young man was not touched by the prayers of his companions since they were spoken in a language he did not understand. But then he noticed one word that he could understand in all the different languages. That word was "Jesus."

He realized that he had something in common with that group—everyone knew Jesus as his personal Saviour. He began to understand that there is no east nor west, neither friends nor enemies. There should be no barriers or prejudice separating us. In Christ we are all brethren!

Jesus has made this possible. How about us?

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Sabbath, August 30, 2008

The Sermon on the Mount

INTRODUCTION

*“And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.”
Luke 6:31.*

INSPIRED ASSESSMENT

1. In what special category of people did Jesus include the meek and the lowly? Matthew 5:5.

“The spirit of meekness is not a spirit of discontent, but it is directly the opposite.

“Those professed Christians who are constantly whining and complaining, and who seem to think happiness and a cheerful countenance a sin, have not the genuine article of religion. Those who look upon nature’s beautiful scenery as they would upon a dead picture, who choose to look upon dead leaves rather than to gather the beautiful living flowers, who take a mournful pleasure in all that is melancholy in the language spoken to them by the natural world, who see no beauty in valleys clothed with living green and grand mountain heights clothed with verdure, who close their senses to the joyful voice which speaks to them in nature and which is sweet and musical to the listening ear—these are not in Christ. They are not walking in the light, but are gathering to themselves darkness and gloom, when they could just as well have brightness and the blessing of the Sun of Righteousness arising in their hearts with healing in His beams.”
—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 334, 335.

2. How are those who plant the seeds of peace regarded by the Redeemer? Why? Matthew 5:9; James 3:18.

“There is a wonderful power in silence. When impatient words are spoken to you, do not retaliate. Words spoken in reply to one who is angry usually act as a whip, lashing the temper into greater fury. But anger met by silence quickly dies away. Let the Christian bridle his tongue, firmly resolving not to speak harsh, impatient words. With the tongue bridled, he may be victorious in every trial of patience through which he is called to pass.”—*Messages to Young People*, pp. 135, 136.

“Says James, ‘Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom’ (James 3:13). ‘The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace’ (James 3:17, 18). This will be the wisdom manifested by him who takes the cup of salvation and calls upon the name of the Lord. This salvation, which offers pardon to the transgressor, presents to him the righteousness that will bear the scrutiny of the Omniscient One, gives victory over the powerful enemy of God and man, provides eternal life and joy for its receiver, and may well be a theme of rejoicing to the humble, who hear thereof and are glad.”—*Selected Messages*, Book 1, pp. 338, 339.

CONSEQUENCES OF KILLING, ANGER, AND OFFENSE

3. What can be said about those who kill or endanger the lives of others? How perilous is their condition before the law and before the Lord? Matthew 5:21.

“Across the sea from the place where they were assembled was the country of Bashan, a lonely region, whose wild gorges and wooded hills had long been a favorite lurking ground for criminals of all descriptions. Reports of robbery and murder committed there were fresh in the minds of the people, and many were zealous in denouncing these evildoers. At the same time they were themselves passionate and contentious; they cherished the most bitter hatred of their Roman oppressors and felt themselves at liberty to hate and despise all other peoples, and even their own countrymen who did not in all things conform to their ideas. In all this they were violating the law which declares, ‘Thou shalt not kill.’” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 56.

4. Are we correct in thinking that getting angry and offending a brother is not so bad? Matthew 5:22.

“How Satan exults when he is enabled to set the soul into a white heat of anger! A glance, a gesture, an intonation, may be seized upon and used, as the arrow of Satan, to wound and poison the heart that is open to re-

ceive it. If the Spirit of Christ possesses us wholly, and we have been transformed by His grace, there will be no disposition to speak evil, or to bear reports freighted with falsehood. The falsifier, the accuser of the brethren, is a chosen agent of the great deceiver.” —(*Signs of the Times*, September 21, 1888) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 1020.

“In the sermon on the mount, Christ presented before His disciples the far-reaching principles of the law of God. He taught His hearers that the law was transgressed by the thoughts before the evil desire was carried out in actual commission. We are under obligation to control our thoughts, and to bring them into subjection to the law of God. The noble powers of the mind have been given to us by the Lord, that we may employ them in contemplating heavenly things. God has made abundant provision that the soul may make continual progression in the divine life. He has placed on every hand agencies to aid our development in knowledge and virtue; and yet, how little these agencies are appreciated or enjoyed! How often the mind is given to the contemplation of that which is earthly, sensual, and base! We give our time and thought to the trivial and commonplace things of the world, and neglect the great interests that pertain to eternal life. The noble powers of the mind are dwarfed and enfeebled by lack of exercise on themes that are worthy of their concentration. [Philippians 4:8 quoted.]” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1145.

FACING PHYSICAL INJURY OR ROBBERY

5. In case of physical injury, is it in harmony with Jesus’ teaching to retaliate against evil? What should we do if someone threatens us or takes something that belongs to us? Matthew 5:38, 39, 40-42; Luke 6:29.

“The Father’s presence encircled Christ, and nothing befell Him but that which infinite love permitted for the blessing of the world. Here was His source of comfort, and it is for us. He who is imbued with the Spirit of Christ abides in Christ. The blow that is aimed at him falls upon the Saviour, who surrounds him with His presence. Whatever comes to him comes from Christ. He has no need to resist evil, for Christ is his defense. Nothing can touch him except by our Lord’s permission, and ‘all things’ that are permitted ‘work together for good to them that love God.’ Romans 8:28.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 71.

“When trials arise that seem unexplainable, we should not allow our peace to be spoiled. However unjustly we may be treated, let not passion arise. By indulging a spirit of retaliation we injure ourselves. We destroy our own confidence in God, and grieve the Holy Spirit. There is by our side a witness, a heavenly messenger, who will lift up for us a standard against the enemy. He will shut us in with the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Beyond this Satan cannot penetrate. He cannot pass this shield of holy light.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 171, 172.

6. Is a Christian justified in hating his enemies? What godly attitude should we have toward those who make our lives difficult? Matthew 5:43, 44; Luke 6:27, 28, 35.

“Such was the spirit of the law which the rabbis had misinterpreted as a cold and rigid code of exactions. They regarded themselves as better than other men, and as entitled to the special favor of God by virtue of their birth as Israelites; but Jesus pointed to the spirit of forgiving love as that which would give evidence that they were actuated by any higher motives than even the publicans and sinners, whom they despised.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 73, 74.

“In his own strength man cannot rule his spirit. But through Christ he may gain self-control. In His strength he may bring his thoughts and words into subjection to the will of God. The religion of Christ brings the emotions under the control of reason and disciplines the tongue. Under its influence the hasty temper is subdued, and the heart is filled with patience and gentleness.” —*Messages to Young People*, p. 136.

7. If we consider ourselves children of God, should we in difficult situations follow our natural human impulse or the example of our heavenly Father? Matthew 5:45-48.

“Christ is the greatest Teacher that the world has ever known. And what is the standard that He holds before all who believe in Him? ‘Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.’ Matthew 5:48. As God is perfect in His sphere, so man may be perfect in his sphere.

“The ideal of Christian character is Christlikeness. There is opened before us a path of constant advancement. We have an object to gain, a standard to reach, that includes everything good and pure and noble and elevated. There should be continual striving and constant progress onward and upward toward perfection of character.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 64.

“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.... 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.” –*Selected Messages*, Book 1, pp. 336, 337.

AN OBJECT LESSON: A USELESS BURDEN

A teacher once proposed the following story to his disciples: “A man was walking along a road when he stumbled on a stone. He picked it up and carried it. A little later he stumbled on another stone, which he also picked up and began to carry. He continued picking up and carrying every stone that he stumbled on, until the load became too heavy for him and he was no longer able to walk.

“What do you think about that man?” asked the teacher.

“I think he’s ridiculous,” answered one of the disciples. “Why should he carry all the stones that he stumbled on?”

The teacher then observed: “This is just what we do when we burden ourselves with the offenses we receive and feel bitter and hurt. We should not oppress ourselves with the load of ‘stones’ of resentment and ill will. If we lay down that useless burden and do not pick it up again, our way will be easier and our step lighter.”

Let us lay down every useless burden, dear brothers and sisters, because that is exactly what the Word of God teaches us: “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” Hebrews 12:1.

10

Sabbath, September 6, 2008

The Lamb of God

INTRODUCTION

“The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth” Acts 8:32.

AS A LAMB FOR THE VICTORY OVER SIN

- 1. According to prophecy, what work was the seed of the woman to accomplish? What did the Lamb have to suffer to fulfill this prophecy? Genesis 3:15; 1 Peter 1:19, 20; Revelation 13:8.**

“To man the first intimation of redemption was communicated in the sentence pronounced upon Satan in the garden. The Lord declared, ‘I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel.’ Genesis 3:15. This sentence, uttered in the hearing of our first parents, was to them a promise. While it foretold war between man and Satan, it declared that the power of the great adversary would finally be broken. Adam and Eve stood as criminals before the righteous Judge, awaiting the sentence which transgression had incurred; but before they heard of the life of toil and sorrow which must be their portion, or of the decree that they must return to dust, they listened to words that could not fail to give them hope. Though they must suffer from the power of their mighty foe, they could look forward to final victory.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 65, 66.

“Through the long centuries of ‘trouble and darkness’ and ‘dimness of anguish’ (Isaiah 8:22) marking the history of mankind from the day our first parents lost their Eden home, to the time the Son of God appeared as the Saviour of sinners, the hope of the fallen race was centered in the coming of a Deliverer to free men and women from the bondage of sin and the grave.

“The first intimation of such a hope was given to Adam and Eve in the sentence pronounced upon the serpent in Eden when the Lord declared to Satan in their hearing, ‘I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel.’ Genesis 3:15.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 681.

2. What sacrificial offerings were necessary during the centuries before the coming of Jesus? Genesis 22:7, 8; Exodus 12:3, 6.

“Every morning and evening a lamb of a year old was burned upon the altar, with its appropriate meat offering, thus symbolizing the daily consecration of the nation to Jehovah, and their constant dependence upon the atoning blood of Christ. God expressly directed that every offering presented for the service of the sanctuary should be ‘without blemish.’ Exodus 12:5.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 352.

“In patriarchal times the sacrificial offerings connected with divine worship constituted a perpetual reminder of the coming of a Saviour, and thus it was with the entire ritual of the sanctuary services throughout Israel’s history. In the ministration of the tabernacle, and of the temple that afterward took its place, the people were taught each day, by means of types and shadows, the great truths relative to the advent of Christ as Redeemer, Priest, and King; and once each year their minds were carried forward to the closing events of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, the final purification of the universe from sin and sinners.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 684, 685.

HE OPENED NOT HIS MOUTH

3. What divine characteristic did the Lamb of God show even amid the worst opposition and threats? Isaiah 53:7.

“Every morning and evening a lamb of a year old was burned upon the altar, with its appropriate meat offering, thus symbolizing the daily consecration of the nation to Jehovah, and their constant dependence upon the atoning blood of Christ. God expressly directed that every offering presented for the service of the sanctuary should be ‘without blemish.’ Exodus 12:5.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 352.

“Not one word did Jesus answer to all this [mockery]. While the nails were being driven through His hands, and the sweat drops of agony were forced from His pores, from the pale, quivering lips of the innocent Sufferer a prayer of pardoning love was breathed for His murderers: ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.’ All heaven was gazing with profound interest upon the scene. The glorious Redeemer of a lost world was suffering the penalty of man’s transgression of the Father’s law. He was about to ransom His people with His own blood. He was paying the just claims of God’s holy law. This was the means through which an end was to be finally made of sin and Satan, and his host to be vanquished.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 208, 209.

4. How did Jesus bear the pain of false accusation and cruel torture? Isaiah 53:5, 9; 1 Peter 1:19; 2:21-23.

“Satan assailed Him [Christ] in every point, yet He sinned not in thought, word, or deed. He did no violence, neither was guile found in His mouth. Walking in the midst of sin, He was holy, harmless, undefiled. He was wrongfully accused, yet He opened not His mouth to justify Himself. How many now, when accused of that of which they are not guilty, feel that there is a time when forbearance ceases to be a virtue, and losing their temper, speak words which grieve the Holy Spirit?” —(Manuscript 42, 1901) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1148.

“Christ gave Himself, an atoning sacrifice, for the saving of a lost world. He was treated as we deserve, in order that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. ‘With His stripes we are healed.’ Isaiah 53:5.

“Christ was tempted in all points like as we are, by the one who once stood in loyalty by His side in the heavenly courts. Behold the Son of God in the wilderness of temptation, in the time of greatest weakness assailed by the fiercest temptation. See Him during the years of His ministry, at-

tacked on every side by the forces of evil. See Him in His agony on the cross. All this He suffered for us.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, pp. 208, 209.

THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

5. What testimony did John the Baptist give concerning Jesus as he saw Him coming toward him? John 1:29, 36.

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

“None among the hearers, and not even the speaker himself, discerned the import of these words, ‘the Lamb of God.’ Upon Mount Moriah, Abraham had heard the question of his son, ‘My father, ... where is the lamb for a burnt offering?’ The father answered, ‘My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering.’ Genesis 22:7, 8. And in the ram divinely provided in the place of Isaac, Abraham saw a symbol of Him who was to die for the sins of men.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 112.

6. What wonderful work did He accomplish for the human race? Isaiah 53:11; 1 Peter 2:24.

“Those who walk even as Christ walked, who are patient, gentle, kind, meek and lowly in heart, those who yoke up with Christ and lift His burdens, who yearn for souls as He yearned for them—these will enter into the joy of their Lord. They will see with Christ the travail of His soul, and be satisfied. Heaven will triumph, for the vacancies made in heaven by the fall of Satan and his angels will be filled by the redeemed of the Lord.” —(*Review and Herald*, May 29, 1900) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 949.

“Christ longs to extend His sway over every human mind. He longs to stamp His image and character upon every soul. When He was on this earth, He hungered for sympathy and cooperation, that His kingdom might extend and embrace the whole world.... And there are triumphs yet to be accomplished through the blood shed for the world, that will bring everlasting glory to God and to the Lamb. The heathen will be given for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. Christ will see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied.” —*Gospel Workers*, p. 28.

7. How did He present Himself at different times to give us hope and confidence? Revelation 1:10, 11, 17, 18; 2:8; 22:13.

“All the great truths of the Scriptures center in Christ; rightly understood, all lead to Him. Let Christ be presented as the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end, of the great plan of redemption. Present to the people such subjects as will strengthen their confidence in God and in His Word, and lead them to investigate its teachings for themselves. And as they go forward, step by step, in the study of the Bible, they will be better prepared to appreciate the beauty and harmony of its precious truths.”
—(*Review and Herald*, June 13, 1912) *Evangelism*, p. 485.

8. What name is given to Jesus many times in the Book of Revelation, and why? Revelation 5:6; 7:10; 1:5.

“The Lamb of God is represented before us as ‘in the midst of the throne’ of God. He is the great ordinance by which man and God are united and commune together. Thus men are represented as sitting in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. This is the appointed place of meeting between God and humanity.” —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 124.

“The Saviour is presented before John under the symbols of ‘the Lion of the tribe of Judah’ and of ‘a Lamb as it had been slain.’ Revelation 5:5, 6. These symbols represent the union of omnipotent power and self-sacrificing love. The Lion of Judah, so terrible to the rejecters of His grace, will be the Lamb of God to the obedient and faithful. The pillar of fire that speaks terror and wrath to the transgressor of God’s law is a token of light and mercy and deliverance to those who have kept His commandments. The arm strong to smite the rebellious will be strong to deliver the loyal. Everyone who is faithful will be saved.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 589.

AN OBJECT LESSON

One day a farm laborer appeared at his friend’s house and knocked firmly at the door. As the friend opened the heavy oak door, the worker, smiling, presented him with a beautiful cluster of grapes.

“Friend,” said the laborer, “do you know to whom I would like to give this cluster of grapes, the best from my vineyard?”

“Maybe to someone living in this house.”

“No!” was the answer. “I would like to give it to YOU!”

“To me?” asked the friend, surprised with joy. “You want to give it to me?”

“Yes, because you have always been so kind to me and have helped me whenever I asked you. I would like to give you these grapes as a token of my gratitude and to bring you a little joy.”

The friend gratefully took the cluster of grapes and admired it all morning.

It was really wonderful. But then he got an idea: "Why don't I take this cluster of grapes to another person living in this home and give him some joy as well?" So he took the grapes to his friend.

That person was truly happy to receive the grapes, but he remembered that there was an elderly sick person in the building and he thought, "I will take these grapes to him, to cheer him up a bit." So the grapes continued to circulate. But they didn't stay long in the room of the sick person. He thought he could give a little joy to a person who worked all day and afterward helped him. So the cluster of grapes was given to another person until it finally came back to the first friend who had received it. It had made a lovely circle of joy.

Don't wait for others to begin spreading hope and love. Begin, yourself, this circle of joy today. Jesus took the first step without waiting for a response from men and has filled the world with love that cannot be stopped. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 4:10. Will you help spread His love?

11

Sabbath, September 13, 2008

Atonement and Intercession

INTRODUCTION

"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." 2 Corinthians 5:21.

CLEANSING OF SIN IN THE LEVITICAL MINISTRY

- 1. Is sin a stain that can be easily removed? What is required for its atonement or remission? Leviticus 17:11; Hebrews 9:22.**

"To many it has been a mystery why so many sacrificial offerings were required in the old dispensation, why so many bleeding victims were led to the altar. But the great truth that was to be kept before men, and imprinted upon mind and heart, was this, 'Without shedding of blood is no remission.'" —*The Signs of the Times*, January 2, 1893.

- 2. What sacrifices in the Old Testament typified the coming Redeemer? Leviticus 16:30; 4:26.**

"In every bleeding sacrifice was typified 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.'" –*The Signs of the Times*, January 2, 1893.

"The Jews saw in the sacrificial offerings the symbol of Christ whose blood was shed for the salvation of the world. All these offerings were to typify Christ and to rivet the great truth in their hearts that the blood of Jesus Christ alone cleanseth from all sin, and without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. Some wonder why God desired so many sacrifices and appointed the offering of so many bleeding victims in the Jewish economy.

"Every dying victim was a type of Christ, which lesson was impressed on mind and heart in the most solemn, sacred ceremony, and explained definitely by the priests. Sacrifices were explicitly planned by God Himself to teach this great and momentous truth, that through the blood of Christ alone there is forgiveness of sins." –*Selected Messages*, Book 1, pp. 106, 107.

JESUS' SUFFERING ON THE CROSS FOR US

3. According to the counsel of God, what was Jesus to suffer? 1 Peter 1:20; Acts 2:23; Luke 24:46.

"Thus Satan strove to gain control over the human mind, that he might wreak his hatred and revenge on the only-begotten Son of God. But the last act of the tragedy was yet to be enacted. The Son of God was yet to be killed by the unfaithful stewards." –*The Signs of the Times*, February 17, 1898.

4. Why did He have to suffer to the point of death on the cross? 1 John 2:1, 2; Hebrews 2:17; Romans 3:25.

"In order for man to be saved, and for the honor of the law to be maintained, it was necessary for the Son of God to offer Himself as a sacrifice for sin. He who knew no sin became sin for us. He died for us on Calvary. His death shows the wonderful love of God for man, and the immutability of His law." –*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 240.

"And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.' 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' The conditions of obtaining mercy from God are simple and reasonable. The Lord does not require us to do some grievous thing in order to gain forgiveness. We need not make long and wearisome pilgrimages, or perform painful penances, to commend our souls to the God of heaven or to expiate our transgression. He that 'confesseth and forsaketh' his sin 'shall have mercy.' Proverbs 28:13." –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 552.

MAKING INTERCESSION FOR MEN

5. After His atoning sacrifice, what ministry of peace did He continue to perform? Hebrews 7:25.

“Christ is able to save to the uttermost all who come to Him in faith. He will cleanse them from all defilement if they will let Him. But if they cling to their sins, they cannot possibly be saved; for Christ’s righteousness covers no sin unrepented of. God has declared that those who receive Christ as their Redeemer, accepting Him as the One who takes away all sin, will receive pardon for their transgressions.”—(Manuscript 142, 1899) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 931.

“Let the glorious conceptions of God possess your mind. Let your life be knit by hidden links to the life of Jesus. He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness is willing to shine in your heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit will take the things of God and show them unto you, conveying them as a living power into the obedient heart. Christ will lead you to the threshold of the Infinite. You may behold the glory beyond the veil, and reveal to men the sufficiency of Him who ever liveth to make intercession for us.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 149.

6. What great assurance may we therefore have as those who are at peace with God? 1 John 4:10; Romans 8:34.

“Thank God that He who spilled His blood for us, lives to plead it, lives to make intercession for every soul who receives Him. ‘If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.’ The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. It speaketh better things than the blood of Abel, for Christ ever liveth to make intercession for us. We need to keep ever before us the efficacy of the blood of Jesus. That life-cleansing, life-sustaining blood, appropriated by living faith, is our hope. We need to grow in appreciation of its inestimable value, for it speaks for us only as we by faith claim its virtue, keeping the conscience clean and at peace with God.”—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 947, 948.

OUR ONE TRUE EXAMPLE

7. Who is the only atoning sacrifice for sin in whom one may have hope? Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5, 6.

“The heart belongs to Jesus. He has paid an infinite price for the soul; and He intercedes before the Father as our Mediator, pleading not as a petitioner, but as conqueror who would claim that which is His own. He is able to save to the uttermost, for He ever lives to make intercession for us. A young heart is a precious offering, the most valuable gift that can be presented to God. All that you are, all the ability you possess, comes from God a sacred trust, to be rendered back to Him again in a willing, holy offering. You cannot give to God anything that He has not first given you. Therefore when the heart is given to God, it is giving to Him a gift which He has purchased and is His own.” —*Messages to Young People*, p. 407.

8. On whom should our look of faith be fastened as our only hope and perfect Example in all things? Hebrews 12:2; Psalm 25:15.

“Many make a serious mistake in their religious life by keeping the attention fixed upon their feelings and thus judging of their advancement or decline. Feelings are not a safe criterion. We are not to look within for evidence of our acceptance with God. We shall find there nothing but that which will discourage us. Our only hope is in ‘looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith.’ There is everything in Him to inspire with hope, with faith, and with courage. He is our righteousness, our consolation and rejoicing.

“Those who look within for comfort will become weary and disappointed. A sense of our weakness and unworthiness should lead us with humility of heart to plead the atoning sacrifice of Christ. As we rely upon His merits we shall find rest and peace and joy. He saves to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 199, 200.

AN OBJECT LESSON: SEARCHING FOR A PERSON WORTHY OF HER LOVE

In one of his dramas, Pedro Calderón de la Barca, a playwright of the Spanish Golden Age, wrote about a young Roman girl in the early centuries of Christianity who had vowed not to enter into marriage with anyone but a man who would prove his love for her by risking his own life for her.

A member of the Roman nobility, the young girl one day heard an itinerant preacher tell the story of a man who, because of His great love for sinners, had given his life as an atonement, dying on the cross.

She knew she had found the person worthy of her love and was converted, becoming one of His faithful followers. The poet presented this heroine, Daria, as faithful until the end, dying a martyr’s death. This was her heart’s answer to the love of the One who had died for her.

Instruments of Peace

INTRODUCTION

“... In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God.” “By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left.” 2 Corinthians 6:4, 7.

A SPIRITUAL BATTLE

- 1. What is required for victory over the devil and his dark powers? Ephesians 6:10, 11; Romans 13:12. .**

“If we overcome our trials and get victory over the temptations of Satan, then we endure the trial of our faith, which is more precious than gold, and are stronger and better prepared to meet the next. But if we sink down and give way to the temptations of Satan, we shall grow weaker and get no reward for the trial and shall not be so well prepared for the next. In this way we shall grow weaker and weaker, until we are led captive by Satan at his will. We must have on the whole armor of God and be ready at any moment for a conflict with the powers of darkness. When temptations and trials rush in upon us, let us go to God and agonize with Him in prayer. He will not turn us away empty, but will give us grace and strength to overcome, and to break the power of the enemy. Oh, that all could see these things in their true light and endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus! Then would Israel move forward, strong in God, and in the power of His might.” —*Early Writings*, p. 46.

- 2. Do God’s children wage war against human beings? What kind of warfare are they engaged in? Ephesians 6:12; 2 Corinthians 10:3, 4.**

“The Christian life is a warfare. But ‘we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.’ In this conflict of righteousness against unrighteousness we can be successful only by divine aid. Our finite will must be brought into submission to the will of the Infinite; the human will must be blended with the divine. This will bring the Holy Spirit to our aid; and every conquest will tend to the

recovery of God's purchased possession, to the restoration of His image in the soul."—*Messages to Young People*, p. 55.

"Yet in this case, as in so many others, was proved the truth of Paul's assertion that the weapons of his warfare were 'mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds,' 2 Corinthians 10:4. Even in Nero's household, trophies of the cross were won. From the vile attendants of a viler king were gained converts who became sons of God. These were not Christians secretly, but openly. They were not ashamed of their faith....

"He [Paul] knew that at every step in the Christian pathway they would be opposed by the synagogue of Satan and that they would have to engage in conflicts daily. They would have to guard against the stealthy approach of the enemy, forcing back old habits and natural inclinations, and ever watching unto prayer. Paul knew that the higher Christian attainments can be reached only through much prayer and constant watchfulness, and this he tried to instill into their minds. But he knew also that in Christ crucified they were offered power sufficient to convert the soul and divinely adapted to enable them to resist all temptations to evil. With faith in God as their armor, and with His word as their weapon of warfare, they would be supplied with an inner power that would enable them to turn aside the attacks of the enemy."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 463, 307.

USING THE WEAPONS GIVEN BY GOD

- 3. Since our warfare is spiritual, what special armor must we put on to be able to resist the attacks of the devil? Ephesians 6:13; James 4:7.**

"In every soul two powers are struggling earnestly for the victory. Unbelief marshals its forces, led by Satan, to cut us off from the Source of our strength. Faith marshals its forces, led by Christ, the author and finisher of our faith. Hour by hour, in the sight of the heavenly universe, the conflict goes forward. This is a hand-to-hand fight, and the great question is, Which shall obtain the mastery? This question each must decide for himself. In this warfare all must take a part, fighting on one side or the other. From the conflict there is no release. . . . We are urged to prepare for this conflict. 'Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.' The warning is repeated, 'Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.'"—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 328.

GOD'S BELT AND BREASTPLATE

- 4. What is our spiritual belt? Can we succeed if we turn to falsehoods, as did King Saul? Ephesians 6:14, first part; Isaiah 11:5.**

“Let truth telling be held with no loose hand or uncertain grasp. Let it become a part of the life. Playing fast and loose with truth, and dissembling to suit one’s own selfish plans, means shipwreck of faith. ‘Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.’ Ephesians 6:14. He who utters untruths sells his soul in a cheap market. His falsehoods may seem to serve in emergencies; he may thus seem to make business advancement that he could not gain by fair dealing; but he finally reaches the place where he can trust no one. Himself a falsifier, he has no confidence in the word of others.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 76.

“Theories will be continually agitated to divert the mind, to unsettle the faith. Those who have had the actual experience in the unfolding of the prophecies, have been made what they are today, Seventh-day Adventists, by these prophecies. They are to stand with their loins girt about with truth, and with the whole armor on. Those who have not had this experience are privileged to hold the message of truth with the same confidence. The light that God has been pleased to give His people will not weaken their confidence in the path in which He has led them in the past, but will strengthen them to hold fast the faith. We must hold the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end.” —*Selected Messages*, Book 2, pp. 115, 116.

5. What divine gift is absolutely essential to fight sin in all its forms? What is the function of Christ’s imputed righteousness? Ephesians 6:14, second part; 1 Thessalonians 5:8, first part; Isaiah 59:17, first part; 2 Corinthians 6:7.

“We fight in a warfare, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, and against spiritual wickedness in high places. See Ephesians 6:12. In life’s conflict we must meet evil agencies that have arrayed themselves against the right. Our hope is not in man, but in the living God. With full assurance of faith we may expect that He will unite His omnipotence with the efforts of human instrumentalities, for the glory of His name. Clad with the armor of His righteousness, we may gain the victory over every foe....

“Clad in the armor of Christ’s righteousness, the church is to enter upon her final conflict. ‘Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners’ (Song of Solomon 6:10), she is to go forth into all the world, conquering and to conquer.

“The darkest hour of the church’s struggle with the powers of evil is that which immediately precedes the day of her final deliverance. But none who trust in God need fear; for ‘when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall,’ God will be to His church ‘a refuge from the storm.’ Isaiah 25:4.” —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 111, p. 725.

6. What should be the basis of our preparation and readiness? Is its source human or divine? Ephesians 6:15; Isaiah 52:7; Acts 10:36.

“The testing truth for this time is not the fabrication of any human mind. It is from God. It is genuine philosophy to those who appropriate it. Christ became incarnate in order that we, through belief of the truth, might be sanctified and redeemed. Let those who hold the truth in righteousness arouse and go forth, shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, to proclaim the truth to those who know it not. Let them make straight paths for their feet, lest the lame be turned out of the way.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, pp. 211, 212.

“Brethren and sisters, will you put on the Christian armor? ‘Your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace,’ you will be prepared to walk from house to house, carrying the truth to the people. Sometimes you will find it trying to do this kind of work; but if you go forth in faith, the Lord will go before you, and will let His light shine upon your pathway. Entering the homes of your neighbors to sell or to give away our literature, and in humility to teach them the truth, you will be accompanied by the light of heaven, which will abide in these homes.” —(*Review and Herald*, May 24, 1906) *Evangelism*, pp. 114, 115.

7. What do we need to take in order to be victorious in every spiritual battle and became like the heroes of Hebrews 11? Ephesians 6:16; 1 Peter 5:8, 9; 1 John 5:4.

“I asked the angel why there was no more faith and power in Israel. He said, ‘Ye let go of the arm of the Lord too soon. Press your petitions to the throne, and hold on by strong faith. The promises are sure. Believe ye receive the things ye ask for, and ye shall have them.’ I was then pointed to Elijah. He was subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly. His faith endured the trial. Seven times he prayed before the Lord, and at last the cloud was seen. I saw that we had doubted the sure promises, and wounded the Saviour by our lack of faith. Said the angel, ‘Gird the armor about thee, and above all take the shield of faith; for that will guard the heart, the very life, from the fiery darts of the wicked.’” —*Early Writings*, p. 73.

“Satan is busy every moment, going to and fro, walking up and down in the earth, seeking whom he may devour. But the earnest prayer of faith will baffle his strongest efforts. Then take ‘the shield of faith,’ brethren, ‘wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.’” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 294.

HELMET, SWORD, AND SPIRITUAL VICTORY

8. Are there other defensive and offensive instruments that we need to use in our spiritual battle to gain the victory? Ephesians 6:17, 18; 1 Thessalonians 5:8; Hebrews 4:12.

“When the servants of Christ take the shield of faith for their defense, and the sword of the Spirit for war, there is danger in the enemy’s camp, and something must be done.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 407.

“It is true that our warfare is aggressive, but our weapons are to be those found in a plain ‘Thus saith the Lord.’ Our work is to prepare a people to stand in the great day of God. We should not be turned aside to lines that will encourage controversy or arouse antagonism in those not of our faith.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 394.

“I fear that there is not that faith that is essential. Shall we not brace ourselves against disappointments and temptations to be discouraged? God is merciful, and with the truth rejoicing, purifying, ennobling the life, we can do a sound and solid work for God. Prayer and faith will do wonderful things. The Word must be our weapon of warfare. Miracles can be wrought through the Word; for it is profitable for all things.” —(Letter 75, 1896) *Evangelism*, p. 489.

9. How confident can we be if we use these weapons in the fight of faith? 2 Timothy 4:7, 8.

“Well-nigh a score of centuries have passed since Paul the aged poured out his blood as a witness for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.... Like a trumpet peal his voice has rung out through all the ages since, nerving with his own courage thousands of witnesses for Christ and wakening in thousands of sorrow-stricken hearts the echo of his own triumphant joy: ‘... 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: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.’ 2 Timothy 4:6-8.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 513.

AN OBJECT LESSON: HELPING OTHERS

A preacher told his listeners one day that he had witnessed the rescue of a shipwreck survivor who had been swept away by the river. As his strength was ebbing away, he was able to grab and cling to a small branch that could barely support him. When the rescuers came and threw him a rope, the man wanted to grasp it; but he was afraid to let go of the branch that had been supporting him. Seeing this, the rescuers shouted, “Let go of the branch! The rope is strong enough to hold you!” Finally, frightened and trembling, the man let go of the branch and saw, to his surprise, that the rope was able to keep him

afloat and that it was being pulled by strong arms to the shore, where medical help awaited him.

Jesus is our powerful Rescuer and Saviour; but He is also the branch, the outstretched hands, the powerful arms, and the strong rope—all instruments for the salvation of the lonely shipwreck survivor. Jesus wants us also to be instruments of peace bringing the blessing of salvation to others.

*Please read the Missionary Report of the
General Conference Medical
Missionary Department on page 64*

13

Sabbath, September 27, 2008

The Ministry of Reconciliation

INTRODUCTION

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” Galatians 6:1.

RECONCILIATION OF MAN TO GOD

1. Although we were God’s enemies, what great work has He accomplished through Jesus Christ? Romans 5:10, 11.

“Jesus was the majesty of heaven, the beloved commander of the angels, who delighted to do His pleasure. He was one with God, ‘in the bosom of the Father’ (John 1:18), yet He thought it not a thing to be desired to be equal with God while man was lost in sin and misery. He stepped down from His throne, He left His crown and royal scepter, and clothed His divinity with humanity. He humbled Himself even to the death of the cross, that man might be exalted to a seat with Him upon His throne. In Him we have a complete offering, an infinite sacrifice, a mighty Saviour, who is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. In love He comes to reveal the Father, to reconcile man to God, to make him a new creature renewed after the image of Him who created him.”—*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 321.

2. As a natural consequence of this reconciliation, what ministry has He entrusted to us? 2 Corinthians 5:18-20.

“Says the apostle: ‘God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.’ Only as we contemplate the great plan of redemption can we have a just appreciation of the character of God. The work of creation was a manifestation of His love; but the gift of God to save the guilty and ruined race, alone reveals the infinite depths of divine tenderness and compassion. ‘God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ While the law of God is maintained, and its justice vindicated, the sinner can be pardoned. The dearest gift that heaven itself had to bestow has been poured out that God ‘might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.’ By that gift men are uplifted from the ruin and degradation of sin to become children of God.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 739.

“What amazing love! that brought the Son of God to earth to be made sin for us, that we might be reconciled to God, and elevated to a life with Him in His mansions in glory. Oh, what is man, that such a price should be paid for his redemption!” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 211, 212.

RECONCILIATION BETWEEN MAN AND MAN

3. Since Jesus offered such a great sacrifice to reconcile the world to God, how should we treat other individuals? Luke 17:3, 4.

“If your brethren err, you are to forgive them. When they come to you with confession, you should not say, I do not think they are humble enough. I do not think they feel their confession. What right have you to judge them, as if you could read the heart? The word of God says, ‘If he repent, forgive him. And if he trespasses against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.’ Luke 17:3, 4. And not only seven times, but seventy times seven—just as often as God forgives you.

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

4. As children of God, with whom should we first seek reconciliation before appearing at the altar of God to confess our sins? Should we wait for our brother to make the first move? Matthew 5:23, 24; Mark 11:25; Matthew 18:15.

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

"... If you are grieved because your neighbors or friends are doing wrong to their own hurt, if they are overtaken in fault, follow the Bible rule. 'Tell him his fault between thee and him alone.' As you go to the one you suppose to be in error, see that you speak in a meek and lowly spirit; for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. The erring can be restored in no other way than in the spirit of meekness, gentleness, and tender love. Be careful in your manner. Avoid anything in look or gesture, word or tone, that savors of pride or self-sufficiency. Guard yourself against a word or look that would exalt yourself, or place your goodness and righteousness in contrast with their failings. Beware of the most distant approach to disdain, overbearing, or contempt.... Let there be no reproach, no railing accusation, no token of warmth but that of earnest love. Above all, let there be no shadow of hate or ill will, no bitterness or sourness of expression. Nothing but kindness and gentleness can flow from a heart of love.... Bear in mind that the success of reproof depends greatly upon the spirit in which it is given. Do not neglect earnest prayer...." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 52, 53.

AS GOD FORGIVES US

5. How should we forgive our brothers and sisters? What happens to our sins when we forgive willingly and lovingly? Ephesians 4:32; Luke 6:36; Matthew 6:14, 15.

"Let the tenderness and mercy that Jesus has revealed in His own precious life be an example to us of the manner in which we should treat our fellow beings.... The erring can be restored in no other way than in the spirit of meekness, gentleness, and tender love.

"In all your transactions with your fellow men never forget that you are dealing with God's property. Be kind; be pitiful; be courteous. Respect God's purchased possession. Treat one another with tenderness and courtesy.

"If you have enmity, suspicion, envy, and jealousy in your hearts, you have a work to do to make these things right. Confess your sins; come into harmony with your brethren. Speak well of them. Throw out no unfavorable hints, no suggestions that will awaken distrust in the minds of others. Guard their reputation as sacredly as you would have them guard yours; love them as you would be loved of Jesus." —*My Life Today*, p. 235.

6. Will we able to bring a true message of reconciliation to the world if we are not reconciled to our brothers or sisters? Luke 6:42.

“He who is guilty of wrong is the first to suspect wrong. By condemning another he is trying to conceal or excuse the evil of his own heart....

“Jesus bids the accuser first cast the beam out of his own eye, renounce his censorious spirit, confess and forsake his own sin, before trying to correct others. For ‘a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.’ Luke 6:43. This accusing spirit which you indulge is evil fruit, and shows that the tree is evil....

“You must *be* good before you can *do* good. You cannot exert an influence that will transform others until your own heart has been humbled and refined and made tender by the grace of Christ. When this change has been wrought in you, it will be as natural for you to live to bless others as it is for the rosebush to yield its fragrant bloom or the vine its purple clusters.”
—*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 126-128.

BROTHERLY COMMUNION

7. What level of harmony was achieved by the apostolic church in Jerusalem? What was a daily blessed occurrence for them? Acts 2:42, 46, 47; Ephesians 4:1-4.

“The apostle exhorts his brethren to manifest in their lives the power of the truth which he had presented to them. By meekness and gentleness, forbearance and love, they were to exemplify the character of Christ and the blessings of His salvation. There is but one body, and one Spirit, one Lord, one faith. As members of the body of Christ all believers are animated by the same spirit and the same hope. Divisions in the church dishonor the religion of Christ before the world and give occasion to the enemies of truth to justify their course. Paul’s instructions were not written alone for the church in his day. God designed that they should be sent down to us. What are we doing to preserve unity in the bonds of peace?

“When the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the early church, the brethren loved one another.... Those primitive Christians were few in numbers, without wealth or honor, yet they exerted a mighty influence. The light of the world shone out from them. They were a terror to evildoers wherever their character and their doctrines were known. For this cause they were hated by the wicked and persecuted even unto death.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 239, 240.

8. What is necessary to attain to that brotherly communion that characterized the apostolic church? 1 John 1:7.

“Christ and His word are in perfect harmony. Received and obeyed, they open a sure path for the feet of all who are willing to walk in the light as Christ is in the light. If the people of God would appreciate His word,

we should have a heaven in the church here below.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 193.

“The Lord has given us in His word definite, unmistakable instructions, by obedience to which we may preserve union and harmony in the church. Brethren and sisters, are you giving heed to these inspired injunctions? Are you Bible readers and doers of the word? Are you striving to fulfill the prayer of Christ that His followers might be one? ‘The God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God.’ ‘Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.’” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 248.

AN OBJECT LESSON: STRUCK, WOUNDED, AND READY TO FORGIVE

One day a man threw a rock at a dog to drive it away, but the result was rather unusual. The rock hit its target and injured the poor animal’s paw. But what was the dog’s reaction? Instead of running away, the dog limped to the man and licked the hand that had thrown the rock.

Seeing the dog’s reaction, the man understood the words of Jesus and said: “This dog has preached to me a sermon as no preacher has ever done. In no human being have I found such a willingness to forgive one’s enemy.”

In Jesus’ time, those who were wronged reacted by giving a light blow on the cheek of their adversary with the left hand, thus expressing their contempt. For the recipient of the blow the gesture was more offensive than painful. What a surprise it must have been for them to hear Jesus say, “Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.” Jesus wanted to teach them not to be vengeful but to show a loving spirit to forgive and to return good for evil.

Yes, the modern world also needs to see in every human being the image of the Redeemer. We should be a people who work for peace. We should always show a heart willing to forgive even those who are unreasonable and provocative. Do we give proof by a calm, peaceful spirit that Jesus lives in us?

MISSIONARY REPORT FROM THE
GENERAL CONFERENCE
MEDICAL MISSIONARY DEPARTMENT

To be read on Sabbath, September 27, 2008

*The Special Sabbath School Offering
will be gathered on Sabbath, October 4, 2008*

“And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.” Luke 10:9.

“How shall we reveal Christ? I know of no better way ... than to take hold of the medical missionary work in connection with the ministry....

“Medical missionary work brings to humanity the gospel of release from suffering. It is the pioneer work of the gospel. It is the gospel practiced, the compassion of Christ revealed. Of this work there is great need, and the world is open for it. God grant that the importance of medical missionary work shall be understood, and that new fields may be immediately entered.” —*Medical Ministry*, pp 319, 239.

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

Jesus is our great Example. He was a great Medical Missionary. He taught, preached, and healed the people. He commissioned His followers to carry on the work of medical missions until He returns in glory. Others before us have taken the gospel health message and shared it with enthusiasm. This Reform Movement is indebted to the self-sacrificing work of the late Pastor Carlos Kozel and his co-worker Pastor Raul Escobar. They pioneered the work of health throughout the Americas, opening clinics, giving medical missionary seminars, and publishing health books and natural medicine encyclopedias. Others, like the late Dr. Ferdinand Drogenik, who established a beautiful sanitarium in Nonnweiler, Germany, have laid a foundation of healing based on the Holy Scriptures. What are we to do today to push forward the medical missionary work?

The General Conference receives many Macedonian calls to conduct medical missions around the world. Pastors urge us to devise new health literature and books for canvassing. Our workers in different

parts of the world request practical medical missionary seminars.

To meet this need, professional medical personnel need to be engaged to assist in devising up-to-date health literature. Health DVDs, videos, compact discs, and Internet websites need to be developed to reach both the developed and the developing world with the wonderful health reform and temperance message. More medical teams need to be sent to Africa, Asia, Europe, the Pacific Islands, and the Americas to conduct medical missionary seminars. Our people need to be empowered with appropriate training and expertise in using simple remedies for common illnesses, in preventing disease, and in fostering healthy families.

Will you help us meet this demand by making a significant contribution to the Medical Missionary Department? Will you make a sacrifice and donate funds to this department so more doctors and health professionals can assist us at the General Conference and be commissioned to go to unions and fields to present seminars and workshops on health reform? Will you help finance the development of new health literature? Oh, I pray and hope that you will support us with your prayers and gifts. May *Jehovah rophi* bless you with health, peace, and love.

—Idel Suarez, Jr., Ph.D.

General Conference Medical Missionary Department Leader

SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

Fourth Quarter 2008
Children of Light

INTRODUCTION

“ ‘Ye are the light of the world.’
“As Jesus taught the people, He made His lessons interesting and held the attention of His hearers by frequent illustrations from the scenes of nature about them. The people had come together while it was yet morning. The glorious sun, climbing higher and higher in the blue sky, was chasing away the shadows that lurked in the valleys and among the narrow defiles of the mountains. The glory of the eastern heavens had not yet faded out. The sunlight flooded the land with its splendor; the placid surface of the lake reflected the golden light and mirrored the rosy clouds of morning. Every bud and flower and leafy spray glistened with dewdrops. Nature smiled under the benediction of a new day, and the birds sang sweetly among the trees. The Saviour looked upon the company before Him, and then to the rising sun, and said to His disciples, ‘Ye are the light of the world.’ As the sun goes forth on its errand of love, dispelling the shades of night and awakening the world to life, so the followers of Christ are to go forth on their mission, diffusing the light of heaven upon those who are in the darkness of error and sin.

“In the brilliant light of the morning, the towns and villages upon the surrounding hills stood forth clearly, making an attractive feature of the scene. Pointing to them, Jesus said, ‘A city set on a hill cannot be hid.’ And he added, ‘Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under the

bushel, but on the stand; and it shineth unto all that are in the house.' R.V. Most of those who listened to the words of Jesus were peasants and fishermen whose lowly dwellings contained but one room, in which the single lamp on its stand shone to all in the house. Even so, said Jesus, 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.'

"No other light ever has shone or ever will shine upon fallen man save that which emanates from Christ. Jesus, the Saviour, is the only light that can illuminate the darkness of a world lying in sin. Of Christ it is written, 'In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.' John 1:4. It was by receiving of His life that His disciples could become light bearers. The life of Christ in the soul, His love revealed in the character, would make them the light of the world.

"Humanity has in itself no light. Apart from Christ we are like an unkindled taper, like the moon when her face is turned away from the sun; we have not a single ray of brightness to shed into the darkness of the world. But when we turn toward the Sun of Righteousness, when we come in touch with Christ, the whole soul is aglow with the brightness of the divine presence." —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 39, 40.

The Special Sabbath School Offering is for the
**GENERAL CONFERENCE MEDICAL
MISSIONARY DEPARTMENT**
*Let your offering be an expression
of your heartfelt support of this work*

1

Sabbath, October 4, 2008

Hope in a Dark World

MEMORY VERSE

“For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.” Ephesians 5:8.

OBJECTIVES

- To identify darkness in the heart of man as expressed in his attitude.
- To see the effect of darkness in the way the church and the nation are led.
- To come out of the abyss and power of darkness by being set free by Jesus Christ.

INTRODUCTION

“Our hearts are evil, and we cannot change them. ‘Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.’ ‘The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.’ Job 14:4; Romans 8:7. Education, culture, the exercise of the will, human effort, all have their proper sphere, but here they are powerless. They may produce an outward correctness of behavior, but they cannot change the heart; they cannot purify the springs of life.” —*Steps to Christ*, p. 18.

THE SPIRITUAL DARKNESS OF SIN

1. **What is the person who dwells in spiritual darkness compared to? Ezekiel 37:4; Matthew 23:27.**

“There are too many in families and in the church who make little account of glaring inconsistencies. There are young men who appear what they are not. They seem honest and true; but they are like whited sepulchers, fair without, but corrupt to the core. The heart is spotted, stained

with sin; and thus the record stands in the heavenly courts. A process has been going on in the mind that has made them callous, past feeling. But if their characters, weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, are pronounced wanting in the great day of God, it will be a calamity that they do not now comprehend. Truth, precious, untarnished truth, is to be a part of the character.” —*Colporteur Ministry*, p. 51.

2. To whom does the symbol of the dry bones apply? Isaiah 5:20; 1 Corinthians 4:5.

“But not only does this simile of the dry bones apply to the world, but also to those who have been blessed with great light; for they also are like the skeletons of the valley. They have the form of men, the framework of the body; but they have not spiritual life. But the parable does not leave the dry bones merely knit together into the forms of men; for it is not enough that there is symmetry of limb and feature. The breath of life must vivify the bodies, that they may stand upright, and spring into activity. These bones represent the house of Israel, the church of God, and the hope of the church is the vivifying influence of the Holy Spirit. The Lord must breathe upon the dry bones, that they may live.” —*Ye Shall Receive Power*, p. 45.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN

3. How does sin affect the leadership of the church and of the nation? 1 Timothy 3:5; Proverbs 14:34; Proverbs 2:13-15.

“Christ pronounces a woe upon all who transgress the law of God. He pronounced a woe upon the lawyers in His day because they exercised their power to afflict those who looked to them for justice and judgment. All the terrible consequences of sin will come to those who, even though they may be nominal church members, regard it as a light matter to set aside the law of Jehovah, and to make no distinction between good and evil.” —*This Day with God*, p. 222.

“The history of Achan teaches the solemn lesson that for one man’s sin the displeasure of God will rest upon a people or a nation till the transgression is searched out and punished. Sin is corrupting in its nature. One man infected with its deadly leprosy may communicate the taint to thousands. Those who occupy responsible positions as guardians of the people are false to their trust if they do not faithfully search out and reprove sin....” —*Conflict and Courage*, p. 120.

4. What happens when one tries to cover up sin? Judges 7:8-10, 20-25; Acts 5:3-5.

“Infinite Wisdom saw that this signal manifestation of the wrath of God was necessary to guard the young church from becoming demoralized. Their numbers were rapidly increasing. The church would have been endangered if, in the rapid increase of converts, men and women had been added who, while professing to serve God, were worshipping mammon. This judgment testified that men cannot deceive God, that He detects the hidden sin of the heart, and that He will not be mocked. It was designed as a warning to the church, to lead them to avoid pretense and hypocrisy, and to beware of robbing God.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 73, 74.

“Shame, defeat, and death were brought upon Israel by one man’s sin. That protection which had covered their heads in the time of battle was withdrawn. Various sins that are cherished and practiced by professed Christians bring the frown of God upon the church....” —*Conflict and Courage*, p. 119.

HOPE AMID DARKNESS

5. What do we need in place of a legalistic religion? John 7:37; Hebrews 7:25.

“I wished to meditate, to pray, [that I might know] in what manner we could work to present the subject of sin and atonement in the Bible light before the people. They were greatly needing this kind of instruction that they might give the light to others and have the blessed privilege of being workers together with God in gathering in and bringing home the sheep of His fold. What power must we have from God that icy hearts, having only a legal religion, should see the better things provided for them—Christ and His righteousness! A life-giving message was needed to give life to the dry bones.” —(Manuscript 24, 1888) *Selected Messages*, Book 3, p.177.

6. What is the divine plan for setting the captives of darkness free? 2 Corinthians 4:6; Acts 26:18.

“The Lord takes no pleasure in seeing us spiritually weak.... We have conflicts and trials to meet, but we need not fail or be discouraged....

“God can only be honored when we who profess to believe in Him are conformed to His image. We are to represent to the world the beauty of holiness, and we shall never enter the gates of the city of God until we perfect a Christlike character. If we, with trust in God, strive for sanctification, we shall receive it....

“The acceptance of the blessings of God brings righteousness and peace. The fruit of righteousness is quietness and assurance forever. We must have simplicity and Godlike sincerity. We must have that wisdom which cometh from above. Our Christian experience must be animated by piety, and instinct with the divine life.” —(Manuscript 38, March 26, 1899) *The Upward Look*, p. 99.

7. What should be our greatest longing? Hosea 6:3; Malachi 4:2.

“I want my gratitude offering constantly ascending to God. I long to have a deeper sense of His goodness and of His changeless love. I long daily for the waters of life.... I must continually have my strength in God. My dependence must not waver. No human agency must come between my soul and my God. The Lord is our only hope. In Him I trust, and He will never, no never, fail me. He hath hitherto helped me when under great discouragement....” —*That I May Know Him*, p. 266.

“The soul of the believer will go out in intense longing to know and understand more of the truth and righteousness of Christ. All who advance in the divine life will have increased ability to search for truth as for hid treasure, and will appropriate the truth to their own souls.” —*Lift Him Up*, p. 267.

2

Sabbath, October 11, 2008

From Darkness to Light

MEMORY VERSE

“Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” John 8:12.

OBJECTIVES

- To identify the Light that dispels darkness by means of its two natures.
- To discover the power of light in the effect it has upon the soul.

INTRODUCTION

“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.” John 12:36.

“When the Light of the world passes by, privilege will be discerned in hardship, order in confusion, success in apparent failure. Calamities will be seen as disguised blessings; woes, as mercies. Laborers from the common people, sharing the sorrows of their fellow men as their Master shared the sorrows of the whole human race, will by faith see Him working with them.” —*Education*, p. 270.

1. How do the two natures of Christ shine in darkness? John 8:12; 1 Timothy 3:16.

“This truth has been to many a cause of doubt and unbelief. When Christ came into the world—the Son of God and the Son of man—He was not understood by the people of His time. Christ stooped to take upon Himself human nature, that He might reach the fallen race and lift them up. But the minds of men had become darkened by sin, their faculties were benumbed and their perceptions dulled, so that they could not discern His divine character beneath the garb of humanity.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 746.

2. Why are the two natures of Christ so important for this dark world? John 1:14; Hebrews 2:16, 17.

“Was the human nature of the Son of Mary changed into the divine nature of the Son of God? No; the two natures were mysteriously blended in one person—the man Christ Jesus. In Him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. When Christ was crucified, it was His human nature that died. Deity did not sink and die; that would have been impossible. Christ, the sinless One, will save every son and daughter of Adam who accepts the salvation proffered them, consenting to become the children of God. The Saviour has purchased the fallen race with His own blood.” —*Lift Him Up*, p. 76.

“The deep necessity of man for a divine teacher was known in heaven. The pity and sympathy of God were exercised in behalf of man, fallen and bound to Satan’s chariot-car; and when the fullness of time was come, He sent forth His Son. The One appointed in the counsels of heaven came to the earth as an instructor. He was no less a being than the Creator of the world, the Son of the Infinite God. The rich benevolence of God gave Him to our world; and to meet the necessities of humanity, He took on Him human nature. To the astonishment of the heavenly host, He walked this earth as the Eternal Word. Fully prepared, He left the royal courts to come to a world marred and polluted with sin. Mysteriously He allied Himself to human nature. ‘The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.’” —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 399, 400.

3. If the blood of Christ represents His human nature, why is it so important in heaven? Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 9:12.

“The religious services, the prayers, the praise, the penitent confession of sin ascend from true believers as incense to the heavenly sanctuary, but

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

4. What is the great value of Christ's work before the heavenly throne? Hebrews 10:19, 20.

"We are in the great day of atonement, and the sacred work of Christ for the people of God that is going on at the present time [1882] in the heavenly sanctuary should be our constant study."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 520.

"O that all could behold our precious Saviour as He is, a Saviour. Let His hand draw aside the veil which conceals His glory from our eyes. It shows Him in His high and holy place. What do we see? Our Saviour, not in a position of silence and inactivity. He is surrounded with heavenly intelligences, cherubims and seraphims, ten thousand times ten thousand of angels. All these heavenly beings have one object above all others, in which they are intensely interested—His church in a world of corruption."—(Letter 89c, 1897) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7A, p. 481.

THE POWER OF THE LIGHT ILLUMINATING

THE CHAMBERS OF THE MIND

5. How does divine light enlighten the soul? Ezekiel 11:19; Hebrews 8:10.

"But when the heart yields to the influence of the Spirit of God, the conscience will be quickened, and the sinner will discern something of the depth and sacredness of God's holy law, the foundation of His government in heaven and on earth. The 'Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,' illumines the secret chambers of the soul, and the hidden things of darkness are made manifest. John 1:9. Conviction takes hold upon the mind and heart. The sinner has a sense of the righteousness of Jehovah and feels the terror of appearing, in his own guilt and uncleanness, before the Searcher of hearts. He sees the love of God, the beauty of

holiness, the joy of purity; he longs to be cleansed and to be restored to communion with Heaven.” *Steps to Christ*, p. 24.

6. How can we tell if the light has had an effect upon us? 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 John 5:2-4.

“And if the law is written in the heart, will it not shape the life? Obedience—the service and allegiance of love—is the true sign of discipleship. Thus the Scripture says, ‘This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.’ ‘He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.’ 1 John 5:3; 2:4. Instead of releasing man from obedience, it is faith, and faith only, that makes us partakers of the grace of Christ, which enables us to render obedience.” *Steps to Christ*, pp. 60, 61.

“Obedience to these commands is the only evidence man can give that he possesses a genuine, saving knowledge of God. Love for God is demonstrated by love for those for whom Christ has died.” *That I May Know Him*, p. 9.

7. How powerful are the rays of light in reaching the sinner? Romans 7:12.

“The law of God, as presented in the Scriptures, is broad in its requirements. Every principle is holy, just, and good. The law lays men under obligation to God; it reaches to the thoughts and feelings; and it will produce conviction of sin in every one who is sensible of having transgressed its requirements. If the law extended to the outward conduct only, men would not be guilty in their wrong thoughts, desires, and designs. But the law requires that the soul itself be pure and the mind holy, that the thoughts and feelings may be in accordance with the standard of love and righteousness.” *Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 211.

8. What must we be careful with so that we do not become corrupted? Matthew 5:28; Hebrews 12:12-15.

“Many of the young are eager for books. They read everything they can obtain. Exciting love stories and impure pictures have a corrupting influence. Novels are eagerly perused by many, and, as the result, their imagination becomes defiled.... The mind takes pleasure in contemplating scenes which awaken the lower and baser passions. These vile images, seen through defiled imagination, corrupt the morals and prepare the deluded, infatuated beings to give loose rein to lustful passions....” *Marantha*, p. 143.

**9. How can we remain under the effect of the divine light?
John 5:21; 15:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:23.**

“A motive power is working within to transform the character. A constraining influence received from heaven is working like the leaven hid in the meal. The love of Jesus has come into the heart with its redeeming power to conquer the entire being, soul, body, and spirit.” —(Manuscript 82, June 26, 1898, “The Leaven of Truth”) *This Day with God*, p. 186.

“It is the character, not the placing of our names on the church books, that makes us Christians.” —*The Upward Look*, p. 28.

**10. What is the result of having passed from darkness to light?
1 Thessalonians 5:23; Ephesians 4:13.**

“Truth, precious truth, is sanctifying in its influence. The sanctification of the soul by the operation of the Holy Spirit is the implanting of Christ’s nature in humanity. It is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ revealed in character, and the grace of Christ brought into active exercise in good works. Thus the character is transformed more and more perfectly after the image of Christ in righteousness and true holiness. There are broad requirements in divine truth stretching out into one line after another of good works. The truths of the gospel are not unconnected; uniting they form one string of heavenly jewels, as in the personal work of Christ, and like threads of gold they run through the whole of Christian work and experience.” —*Selected Messages*, Book 3, p. 198.

The Lighthouse of Faith

MEMORY TEXT

“Saving faith is a transaction, by which those who receive Christ join themselves in covenant relation with God. A living faith means an increase of vigor, a confiding trust, by which, through the grace of Christ, the soul becomes a conquering power.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 62.

OBJECTIVES

- To distinguish saving faith from its definition.
- To understand that faith in Christ is indispensable to face the investigative judgment.
- To see, through the experiences of various individuals in the Bible, that faith produces good actions.

INTRODUCTION

“An awakening power must be revealed in every believer. We must no longer act like sinners, while as Christians we should be revealing a living, saving faith. Living faith in Christ Jesus will produce fruit. There will be a holy, unwavering devotion to the Lord. Laboring with an eye single to His glory, we shall be sustained amidst the perils of the last days.” —*The Upward Look*, p. 244.

SAVING FAITH

1. What is the definition of saving faith? Hebrews 11:1.

“Faith, saving faith, is to be taught. The definition of this faith in Jesus Christ may be described in few words: It is the act of the soul by which the whole man is given over to the guardianship and control of Jesus Christ. He abides in Christ and Christ abides in the soul by faith as supreme. The believer commits his soul and body to God and with assurance may say, Christ is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day. All who will do this will be saved unto life eternal. There will be an assurance that the soul is washed in the blood of Christ and clothed with His righteousness and precious in the sight of Jesus. Our thoughts and our hopes are on the second advent of our Lord. That is the day when the Judge of all the earth will reward the trust of His people.” —(Manuscript 6, 1889) *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 531.

2. What is the covering of faith? When does one receive this covering? Isaiah 1:18; 1 John 1:7.

“The Lord Jesus Christ has prepared a covering—the robe of His own righteousness—that He will put on every repenting, believing soul who by faith will receive it. Said John, ‘Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world’ (John 1:29). Sin is the transgression of the law. Christ died to make it possible for every man to have his sins taken away.” —*The Upward Look*, p. 378.

“If we have not experienced that repentance which is not to be repented of, and have not with true humiliation of soul and brokenness of spirit confessed our sins, abhorring our iniquity, we have never truly sought for the forgiveness of sin; and if we have never sought, we have never found the peace of God. The only reason why we do not have remission of sins that are past is that we are not willing to humble our hearts and comply with the conditions of the word of truth....” —*Steps to Christ*, p. 38.

3. What danger is there of confusing saving faith with presumption? 1 Corinthians 2:5; Romans 14:23, last part.

“Men boast of illumination, which in reality is the blindest presumption, for they are in opposition to the plain Word of God. Many exalt human reason, idolize human wisdom, and set the opinions of men above the revealed wisdom of God.... Among the great mass of professed Christians the grievous character of the transgression of the law of God is not understood. They do not realize that salvation can be obtained only through the blood of Christ....” —*That I May Know Him*, p. 206.

“But faith is in no sense allied to presumption. Only he who has true faith is secure against presumption. For presumption is Satan’s counterfeit of faith. Faith claims God’s promises, and brings forth fruit in obedience. Presumption also claims the promises, but uses them as Satan did, to excuse transgression. Faith would have led our first parents to trust the love of God, and to obey His commands. Presumption led them to transgress His law, believing that His great love would save them from the consequence of their sin. It is not faith that claims the favor of Heaven without complying with the conditions on which mercy is to be granted. Genuine faith has its foundation in the promises and provisions of the Scriptures.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 126.

FAITH FOCUSED ON THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY

4. How can we enter the heavenly sanctuary, and why must we do so? Hebrews 4:16; 6:20.

“The intercession of Christ in man’s behalf in the sanctuary above is as essential to the plan of salvation as was His death upon the cross. By His death He began that work which after His resurrection He ascended to complete in heaven. We must by faith enter within the veil, ‘whither the forerunner is for us entered.’ [Hebrews 6:20.] There the light from the cross of Calvary is reflected. There we may gain a clearer insight into the mysteries of redemption. The salvation of man is accomplished at an infinite expense to Heaven; the sacrifice made is equal to the broadest demands of the broken law of God. Jesus has opened the way to the Father’s throne, and through His mediation the sincere desire of all who come to Him in faith may be presented before God.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 489.

5. What work that Jesus is performing in the heavenly sanctuary should be accepted by faith? Hebrews 9:24; 7:25; 4:14-16.

“The third angel closes his message thus: ‘Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.’ As he repeated these words, he pointed to the heavenly sanctuary. The minds of all who embrace this message are directed to the most holy place, where Jesus stands before the ark, making His final intercession for all those for whom mercy still lingers and for those who have ignorantly broken the law of God. This atonement is made for the righteous dead as well as for the righteous living. It includes all who died trusting in Christ, but who, not having received the light upon God’s commandments, had sinned ignorantly in transgressing its precepts.” —*Early Writings*, p. 254.

6. What scene illustrates Christ’s intercession? Who are benefited by it, and who are not? 1 John 2:1, 2; Exodus 32:33.

“As the books of record are opened in the Judgment, the lives of all who have believed on Jesus come in review before God. Beginning with those who first lived upon the earth, our Advocate presents the cases of each successive generation, and closes with the living. Every name is mentioned, every case closely investigated. Names are accepted, names rejected. When any have sins remaining upon the books of record, unrepented of and unforgiven, their names will be blotted out of the book of life, and the record of their good deeds will be erased from the book of God’s remembrance....

“It is those who by faith follow Jesus in the great work of the atonement, who receive the benefits of His mediation in their behalf; while those who reject the light which brings to view this work of ministration, are not benefited thereby.” —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 483, 430.

THE LIGHTHOUSE OF FAITH ON THE EARTH

7. What firm decisions do men and women of faith make? Comment on the experiences made by people of faith listed in Hebrews 11.

“Doing, not saying merely, is expected of the followers of Christ. It is through action that character is built.... Not those whose hearts are touched by the Spirit, not those who now and then yield to its power, but they that are led by the Spirit, are the sons of God.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 149, 150.

“Wherever they sought refuge, the followers of Christ were hunted like beasts of prey. They were forced to seek concealment in desolate and solitary places. ‘Destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy; they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.’ [Hebrews 11:36, 37, 38.] The catacombs afforded shelter for thousands. Beneath the hills outside the city of Rome, long galleries had been tunneled through earth and rock; the dark and intricate network of passages extended for miles beyond the city walls. In these underground retreats, the followers of Christ buried their dead; and here also, when suspected and proscribed, they found a home. When the Lifegiver shall awaken those who have fought the good fight, many a martyr for Christ’s sake will come forth from those gloomy caverns.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 40.

8. What relationship is there between faith and works? James 2:17-26; 1 John 2:4.

“Justice, truth, and mercy, are the fruits of faith. We need to walk in the light of God’s law: then good works will be the fruit of our faith, the proceeds of a heart renewed every day. The tree must be made good before the fruit can be good. We must be wholly consecrated to God. Our will must be made right before the fruit can be good. We must have no fitful religion. ‘Whatsoever ye do ... do all to the glory of God.’” —*Bible Training School*, June 1, 1915.

9. What do many people think about the relationship between faith and action? John 8:39; Genesis 26:5.

“There are many who fail to understand the relation of faith and works. They say, ‘Only believe in Christ, and you are safe. You have nothing to do with keeping the law.’ But genuine faith will be manifest in obedience. Said Christ to the unbelieving Jews, ‘If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham.’ John 8:39. And concerning the father of

the faithful the Lord declares, 'Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.' Genesis 26:5."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 153, 154.

4

Sabbath, October 25, 2008

As Children of Light

MEMORY VERSE

"But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Proverbs 4:18.

OBJECTIVES

- To learn to know well the true kingdom of light that drives away darkness.
- To reveal, through personal testimony, that we are children of the light.
- To give a good testimony of the light through our physical, mental, and spiritual health.

INTRODUCTION

"But those who live for God and heaven, pointing out the way of life to others, will find that the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. And they will hear by and by the welcome invitation, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' The joy of Christ was that of seeing souls saved in His glorious kingdom; and for this joy He 'endured the cross, despising the shame.' But soon 'He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.' How happy will those be, who, having shared in His work, are permitted to share in His joy!"—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 213.

THE KINGDOM OF LIGHT

1. **Who is the center of the kingdom of light? What are His rays? John 1:4, 14.**

"Just as the sun compares with the lesser lights in the heavens, so did Christ, the Source of light, compare with the teachers of His day.... Measured by finite minds, men are called learned and great, but with all their boasted wisdom, their science and learning, they cannot thus know God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.... No man who has ever lived, or who ever will live, can claim to be the infallible guide, the supreme revealer of

truth. Men may seek to reach the highest standard in learning, but there is One, 'a teacher sent from God,' who still stands higher than they. No human teacher can equal Him." —*That I May Know Him*, p. 97.

2. What is the sceptre of the kingdom of light? Psalm 45:6; Matthew 6:33.

"Of Christ it is written, 'Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.'" —*The Signs of the Times*, September 4, 1893.

3. Who else is part of the kingdom of light? What do they see, and of what do they drink daily? John 7:37; 4:14; Revelation 17:14; 19:7, 8.

"All who choose Christ's kingdom of love and righteousness and peace, making its interest paramount to all other, are linked to the world above, and every blessing needed for this life is theirs. In the book of God's providence, the volume of life, we are each given a page. That page contains every particular of our history; even the hairs of the head are numbered. God's children are never absent from His mind." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 313.

"We must each come to the fountain and drink for ourselves. A thousand around us may take of the stream of salvation, but we shall not be refreshed unless we drink of the healing stream ourselves. We must see the beauty, the light of God's Word for ourselves, and kindle our taper at the divine altar, that we may go to the world, holding forth the Word of life as a bright, shining lamp...." —*That I May Know Him*, p. 172.

CHILDREN OF LIGHT IN A DARK WORLD

4. What will characterize our Christian service if it is to be a source of light? Matthew 5:14-16; 25:14, 15.

"The parable of the talents ... has a personal and individual application to every man, woman, and child possessed of the powers of reason.... When the master of the house called his servants he gave to every man his work. The whole family of God are included in the responsibility of using their Lord's goods. Every individual, from the lowliest and most obscure to the greatest and most exalted, is a moral agent endowed with abilities for which he is accountable to God.... The spiritual, mental, and physical

ability, the influence, station, possessions, affections, sympathies, all are precious talents to be used in the cause of the Master for the salvation of souls for whom Christ died.”—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 224.

“To walk in the light means advancement and progress in spiritual attainments. Paul declared, ‘Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but ... forgetting those things which are behind,’ constantly beholding the Pattern, I reach ‘forth unto those things which are before.’ To walk in the light means to ‘walk uprightly,’ to walk ‘in the way of the Lord,’ to ‘walk by faith,’ to ‘walk in the Spirit,’ to ‘walk in the truth,’ to ‘walk in love,’ to ‘walk in the newness of life.’ It is ‘perfecting holiness in the fear of God.’” —*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 200.

5. What attitude do God’s children have toward sin? Ephesians 5:11-13.

“The true people of God, who have the spirit of the work of the Lord and the salvation of souls at heart, will ever view sin in its real, sinful character. They will always be on the side of faithful and plain dealing with sins which easily beset the people of God.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 266.

6. What should be taken into consideration when evil must be rebuked? Galatians 6:1, 2.

“While ministers of Christ must denounce sin and ungodliness, impurity and falsehood, while they are sometimes called to rebuke iniquity among the high as well as the low, showing them that the indignation of God will fall upon the transgressors of His law, yet they should not be overbearing or tyrannical; they should manifest kindness and love, a spirit to save rather than to destroy.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 486.

7. How careful should we be with the defects of our brethren? Why? Hebrews 12:15.

“God does not want us to place ourselves upon the judgment seat and judge each other.... When we see errors in others, let us remember that we have faults graver, perhaps, in the sight of God than the fault we condemn in our brother. Instead of publishing his defects, ask God to bless him and to help him to overcome his error. Christ will approve of this spirit and action, and will open the way for you to speak a word of wisdom that will impart strength and help to him who is weak in the faith....

“Instead of finding fault with others, let us be critical with ourselves. The question with each one of us should be, Is my heart right before God?

Will this course of action glorify my Father which is in heaven? If you have cherished a wrong spirit, let it be banished from the soul. It is your duty to eradicate from your heart everything that is of a defiling nature. Every root of bitterness should be plucked up, lest others be contaminated by its baleful influence. Do not allow one poisonous plant to remain in the soil of your heart. Root it out this very hour, and plant in its stead the plant of love. Let Jesus be enshrined in the soul.”—*That I May Know Him*, p. 187.

RAYS OF LIGHT IN THE HEALTH MESSAGE

8. What other rays of light has the Lord bestowed upon His people to make them shine in the world? 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20.

“December 10, 1871, I was again shown that the health reform is one branch of the great work which is to fit a people for the coming of the Lord. It is as closely connected with the third angel’s message as the hand is with the body. The law of ten commandments has been lightly regarded by man; but the Lord would not come to punish the transgressors of that law without first sending them a message of warning. The third angel proclaims that message. Had men ever been obedient to the law of ten commandments, carrying out in their lives the principles of those precepts, the curse of disease now flooding the world would not be.

“Men and women cannot violate natural law by indulging depraved appetite and lustful passions, and not violate the law of God. Therefore He has permitted the light of health reform to shine upon us, that we may see our sin in violating the laws which He has established in our being. All our enjoyment or suffering may be traced to obedience or transgression of natural law.”—*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 69.

9. How can we preserve spiritual and physical health? Philip- pians 4:8.

“God desires us to reach the standard of perfection made possible for us by the gift of Christ. He calls upon us to make our choice on the right side, to connect with heavenly agencies, to adopt principles that will restore in us the divine image. In His written word and in the great book of nature He has revealed the principles of life. It is our work to obtain a knowledge of these principles, and by obedience to cooperate with Him in restoring health to the body as well as to the soul.”—*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 16.

“Since the mind and the soul find expression through the body, both mental and spiritual vigor are in great degree dependent upon physical strength and activity; whatever promotes physical health, promotes the development of a strong mind and a well-balanced character. Without health, no one can as distinctly understand or as completely fulfill

his obligations to himself, to his fellow beings, or to his Creator. Therefore the health should be as faithfully guarded as the character. A knowledge of physiology and hygiene should be the basis of all educational effort.” —*Child Guidance*, pp. 360, 361.

10. How can we have a living experience and receive advancing light? 1 John 3:18, 19.

“If we ever know the truth, it will be because we practice it. We must have a living experience in the things of God before we are able to understand His word. This experimental knowledge is what strengthens the intellect and builds us up into Christ our living Head.” —*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 97.

“The people of God must move from a settled principle, making it their first principle to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness and then go on from light to still greater light....” —*This Day with God*, p. 50.

5

Sabbath, November 1, 2008

Shining Garments

MEMORY VERSE

“And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” *Revelation 7:14*.

OBJECTIVES

- To prove that the natural man is in a miserable spiritual condition and his own acts keep him in this condition.
- To be able to distinguish between the garments of heavenly origin and those that are manmade.
- To understand the meaning of justification, reconciliation, and redemption.

INTRODUCTION

“The white robes are the garments of Christ’s righteousness, and all who have this righteousness are partakers of the divine nature. They have written upon them, ‘The name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will

write upon him my new name' (verse 12)." —(Letter 48, June 1, 1898, to a believer in Australia) *The Upward Look*, p. 166.

DECADENCE, PERVERSION, AND LICENTIOUS HABITS

1. In what miserable moral and spiritual condition is one who is unconverted? Job 25:6; Isaiah 1:6, 18.

"... In Job 25:6; Psalm 22:6; and Isaiah 41:14, man, as weak and despised, is compared with a worm—not necessarily of any particular kind.

"The Heb. *rimmah*, the maggot, which lives on putrid food (Exodus 16:24) and corpses (Job 21:26; 24:20; Isaiah 14:11), and which sometimes feeds on wounds (Job 7:5). Feeble man is compared with it (chap. 25:6)." —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary*, p. 1153.

"Thus it is that God desires to fulfill for us His purpose of grace. By the power of His love, through obedience, fallen man, a worm of the dust, is to be transformed, fitted to be a member of the heavenly family, a companion through eternal ages of God and Christ and the holy angels. Heaven will triumph, for the vacancies made by the fall of Satan and his host will be filled by the redeemed of the Lord." —(Manuscript 21, February 16, 1900, "God's Love Manifested") *The Upward Look*, p. 61.

2. How has man tried to improve his spiritual condition on his own? Genesis 3:7; Isaiah 64: 6, 7.

"This is what the transgressors of God's law have done ever since the day of Adam and Eve's disobedience. They have sewed together fig leaves to cover the nakedness caused by transgression. They have worn the garments of their own devising, by works of their own they have tried to cover their sins, and make themselves acceptable with God....

"Only the covering which Christ Himself has provided can make us meet to appear in God's presence. This covering, the robe of His own righteousness, Christ will put upon every repenting, believing soul." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 311.

THE COST OF THE GARMENTS

3. What is the cost of the garments woven in the loom of heaven? Romans 3:24, 25.

"The wedding garment, provided at infinite cost, is freely offered to every soul. By the messengers of God are presented to us the righteousness of Christ, justification by faith, the exceeding great and precious promises of God's word, free access to the Father by Christ, the comfort of the Spirit,

the well-grounded assurance of eternal life in the kingdom of God. What could God do for us that He has not done in providing the great supper, the heavenly banquet?" —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 317.

4. How are the forgiveness and cleansing of God's people portrayed in prophecy? Zechariah 3:3-5; Luke 15:20-24.

"In the symbolic prophecy of Zechariah, Satan is seen standing at the right hand of the Angel of the Lord, accusing Joshua, the high priest, who is clothed in filthy garments, and resisting the work that the Angel desires to do for him. This represents the attitude of Satan toward every soul whom Christ is seeking to draw unto Himself. The enemy leads us into sin, and then he accuses us before the heavenly universe as unworthy of the love of God. But 'the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?' " —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 116, 117.

"No sin can be tolerated in those who shall walk with Christ in white. The filthy garments are to be removed, and Christ's robe of righteousness is to be placed upon us. By repentance and faith we are enabled to render obedience to all the commandments of God, and are found without blame before Him. Those who shall meet the approval of God are now afflicting their souls, confessing their sins, and earnestly pleading for pardon through Jesus their Advocate. Their attention is fixed upon Him, their hopes, their faith, are centered on Him, and when the command is given, 'Take away the filthy garments, and clothe him with change of raiment, and set a fair miter upon his head,' they are prepared to give Him all the glory of their salvation." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 472.

5. How important and indispensable are these shining garments in welcoming the King of kings? Revelation 3:5; Matthew 22:11-14.

"In that day the redeemed will shine forth in the glory of the Father and the Son. The angels, touching their golden harps, will welcome the King and His trophies of victory—those who have been washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. A song of triumph shall peal forth, filling all heaven. Christ has conquered. He enters the heavenly courts, accompanied by His redeemed ones, the witnesses that His mission of suffering and sacrifice has not been in vain." —*The Adventist Home*, p. 550.

SPIRITUAL AND JUDICIAL MEANINGS OF JUSTIFICATION

6. What is the significance of divine justification spiritually and judicially? What is the forgiveness that God grants us? Romans 3:23-24; Ephesians 2:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21.

“... This mercy and goodness is wholly undeserved. The grace of Christ is [given] freely to justify the sinner without merit or claim on his part. Justification is a full, complete pardon of sin. The moment a sinner accepts Christ by faith, that moment he is pardoned. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to him, and he is no more to doubt God’s forgiving grace.” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1071.

“The Lord imputes unto the believer the righteousness of Christ and pronounces him righteous before the universe. He transfers his sins to Jesus, the sinner’s representative, substitute, and surety. Upon Christ He lays the iniquity of every soul that believeth. ‘He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.’ 2 Corinthians 5:21.” —*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 392.

“But forgiveness has a broader meaning than many suppose. When God gives the promise that He ‘will abundantly pardon,’ He adds, as if the meaning of that promise exceeded all that we could comprehend: ‘My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.’ Isaiah 55:7-9. God’s forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness for sin, but reclaiming from sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart. David had the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, ‘Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.’ Psalm 51:10. And again he says, ‘As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us.’ Psalm 103:12.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 114.

RECONCILIATION AND REDEMPTION

7. What is God’s forgiveness of our sins intimately related to? John 1:12, 13; 2 Corinthians 5:18, 19.

“God was to be manifest in Christ, ‘reconciling the world unto Himself.’ 2 Corinthians 5:19. Man had become so degraded by sin that it was impossible for him, in himself, to come into harmony with Him whose nature is purity and goodness. But Christ, after having redeemed man from the condemnation of the law, could impart divine power to unite with human effort. Thus by repentance toward God and faith in Christ the fallen children of Adam might once more become ‘sons of God.’ 1 John 3:2.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 64.

“While the law of God is maintained, and its justice vindicated, the sinner can be pardoned. The dearest gift that heaven itself had to bestow has been poured out that God ‘might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.’ By that gift men are uplifted from the ruin and degradation of sin to become children of God. Says Paul: ‘Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.’ —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 739.

8. How can the blessings of forgiveness and redemption be described? Romans 5:1; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:10.

“The work of redemption involves consequences of which it is difficult for man to have any conception. ‘Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.’ 1 Corinthians 2:9. As the sinner, drawn by the power of Christ, approaches the uplifted cross, and prostrates himself before it, there is a new creation. A new heart is given him. He becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. Holiness finds that it has nothing more to require. God Himself is ‘the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.’ Romans 3:26. And ‘whom He justified, them He also glorified.’ Romans 8:30. Great as is the shame and degradation through sin, even greater will be the honor and exaltation through redeeming love. To human beings striving for conformity to the divine image there is imparted an outlay of heaven’s treasure, an excellency of power, that will place them higher than even the angels who have never fallen.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp.162, 163.

9. How will converted Christians walk? Ephesians 4:13; Revelation 3:4.

“When in conversion the sinner finds peace with God through the blood of the atonement, the Christian life has but just begun. Now he is to ‘go on unto perfection;’ to grow up ‘unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 470.

“When we are clothed with the wedding garment of His righteousness, we become one with Him, and He says of us, ‘They shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy.’ His saints will behold Him in His glory, with no dimming veil between.” —(*The Youth’s Instructor*, October 28, 1897) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 925.

“Christ will clothe His faithful ones with His own righteousness, that He may present them to His Father ‘a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.’ Ephesian 5:27. Their names stand enrolled in the book of life, and concerning them it is written, ‘They shall walk with Me in white; for they are worthy.’ Revelation 3:4.” —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 484, 485.

God's Covenant with the Children of Light

MEMORY VERSE

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Romans 6:4.

OBJECTIVES

- To answer God's call to receive the true preparation for baptism.
- To understand that God and man pledge a mutual covenant.
- To acknowledge that for the believer true baptism means death of the old spiritual man and resurrection of the new spiritual man in Christ.
- To lift one's eyes constantly to heaven and reach the promised goal.

INTRODUCTION

"The blessings of God's covenant are mutual....

"By our baptismal pledge we avouched and solemnly confessed the Lord Jehovah as our Ruler. We virtually took a solemn oath, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, that henceforth our lives would be merged into the life of these three great agencies, that the life we should live in the flesh would be lived in faithful obedience to God's sacred law." —*God's Amazing Grace*, p. 150.

CALLS TO THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT

1. **What command did Jesus give His disciples as part of the fulfillment of the great gospel commission? Matthew 28:18, 19.**

"As Christians submit to the solemn rite of baptism, He registers the vow that they make to be true to Him. This vow is their oath of allegiance. They are baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Thus they are united with the three great powers of heaven. They pledge themselves to renounce the world and to observe the laws of the kingdom of God. Henceforth they are to walk in newness of life. No longer are they to follow the traditions of men. No longer are they to follow dishonest methods. They are to obey the statutes of the kingdom of heaven. They are to seek God's honor. If they will be true to their vow, they will be

furnished with grace and power that will enable them to fulfill all righteousness. 'As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.' –(Letter 129, 1903) *Evangelism*, pp. 307, 308.

2. What is the great spiritual meaning of baptism? Romans 6:1-4; Colossians 2:12.

“Baptism is a most solemn renunciation of the world. Self is by profession dead to a life of sin. The waters cover the candidate, and in the presence of the whole heavenly universe the mutual pledge is made. In the name of the Father, and Son, and the Holy Spirit, man is laid in his watery grave, buried with Christ in baptism, and raised from the water to live the new life of loyalty to God. The three great powers in heaven are witnesses; they are invisible but present.” –*The Faith I Live By*, p. 146.

“As a Christian submits to the solemn rite of baptism, the three highest powers in the universe—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—place Their approval on his act, pledging Themselves to exert Their power in his behalf as he strives to honor God. He is buried in the likeness of Christ’s death, and is raised in the likeness of His resurrection....” –*Reflecting Christ*, p. 107.

BAPTISMAL PREPARATION AND MATURITY

3. What is required of the penitent one before the sacred rite of baptism? Psalm 51:1-3; Acts 2:38.

“All who live have sins to wash away.... True repentance of sin, faith in the merits of Jesus Christ, and baptism into His death, to be raised out of the water to live a new life, are the first steps in the new birth....” –*Lift Him Up*, p. 79.

“Repentance, faith, and baptism are the requisite steps in conversion.” –(Letter 174, 1909) *Evangelism*, p. 306.

“The steps in conversion, plainly marked out, are repentance, faith in Christ as the world’s Redeemer, faith in His death, burial, and resurrection, shown by baptism, and His ascension on high to plead in the sinner’s behalf.” –*Lift Him Up*, p. 79.

4. What other requirements for baptism are presented in the Scriptures?

Matthew 3:2, 8:

Acts 3:19; 1 Peter 3:21:

Matthew 28:20:

“Before man can find a home in the church, before passing the threshold of God’s spiritual kingdom, he is to receive the impress of the divine name, ‘The Lord our righteousness.’ Jeremiah 23:6....

“Before baptism, there should be a thorough inquiry as to the experience of the candidates. Let this inquiry be made, not in a cold and distant way, but kindly, tenderly, pointing the new converts to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Bring the requirements of the gospel to bear upon the candidates for baptism....

“The principles of the Christian life should be made plain to those who have newly come to the truth. None can depend upon their profession of faith as proof that they have a saving connection with Christ. We are not only to say, ‘I believe,’ but to practice the truth.” —*Evangelism*, pp. 307, 311, 312, 308, 309.

THE NEW BIRTH

5. What thorough transformation is implied by the new birth? John 3:3-6.

“There must be a new birth, a new mind through the operation of the Spirit of God, which purifies the life and ennobles the character. This connection with God fits man for the glorious kingdom of heaven....

“There must be a power working from within, a new life from above, before men can be changed from sin to holiness.” —*The Faith I Live By*, p. 96.

6. Once we have received Jesus in the heart, what invitation is extended to us? John 15:5-8.

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

“Salvation is not to be baptized, not to have our names upon the church books, not to preach the truth. But it is a living union with Jesus Christ to be renewed in heart, doing the works of Christ in faith and labor of love, in patience, meekness, and hope. Every soul united to Christ will be a living missionary to all around him.” —(Letter 55, 1886) *Evangelism*, p. 319.

BAPTISM

7. How should the rite of baptism be conducted? What influence should it exert? Romans 6:4.

“And the repentant believer, who takes the steps required in conversion, commemorates in his baptism the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. He goes down into the water in the likeness of Christ’s death and burial, and he is raised out of the water in the likeness of His resurrection—not to take up the old life of sin, but to live a new life in Christ Jesus.” —(*Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 3, p. 204) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1113.

“The one who administers the ordinance of baptism should seek to make it an occasion of solemn, sacred influence upon all spectators. Every ordinance of the church should be so conducted as to be uplifting in its influence.” —*Evangelism*, p. 314.

LOOKING FORWARD

8. After giving our life to the Lord, what should we not do? Luke 9:62; Hebrews 10:38; 1 Corinthians 9:24.

“Many who should be setting their tents nearer to the land of Canaan are pitching their camp nearer to Egypt. They are not living in the light of the Sun of Righteousness. Many attend places of amusement to gratify the taste, but no spiritual strength is gained by so doing, and you will find yourself on the losing side. To encourage the love of amusement is to discourage the love of religious exercises, for the heart becomes so crowded with trifling, with what is pleasing to the natural heart, that there is no room for Jesus....” —*That I May Know Him*, p. 307.

“All should learn their lesson from this, that they are individually amenable to God. When they love God with all their hearts, they will be wise unto salvation. They will do His will, and their light will ever be their glory, and be undiminished because they recognize and fear and serve their Lord. The solemn work rests upon every soul to consider that he is a servant of Jesus Christ, solemnly pledged by his baptismal vows to clothe himself with the righteousness of Christ. Will we carry out the living example of the Lord Jesus?” —*This Day with God*, p. 128.

9. What is the divine wish when one makes the solemn baptismal vow? Psalm 119:106, 126-128.

“As Christians submit to the solemn rite of baptism, He registers the vow that they make to be true to Him. This vow is their oath of allegiance.” —*The Faith I Live By*, p. 145.

10. After baptism, how does one wait for the Lord Jesus’ second coming? John 14:23; 1 Timothy 6:14.

“Instruction is thus of vital importance before and after baptism. Without adequate instruction in the great vital truths of the gospel, there can be no true religious life. At the same time, it is the wonderful love of Christ that subdues hearts. Without genuine love for Christ the doctrines and forms of religion lose their meaning and value.” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 557.

“God’s people are to be distinguished as a people who serve Him fully, wholeheartedly, taking no honor to themselves, and remembering that by a most solemn covenant they have bound themselves to serve the Lord, and Him only.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 17.

10. After baptism, what is one’s responsibility? Colossians 3:1-4; John 6:27.

“Those who have taken part in the solemn rite of baptism have pledged themselves to seek for those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God; pledged themselves to labor earnestly for the salvation of sinners. God asks those who take His name, How are you using the powers that have been redeemed by the death of My Son? Are you doing all in your power to rise to a greater height in spiritual understanding? Are you adjusting your interest and actions in harmony with the momentous claims of eternity?” —*The Faith I Live By*, p. 146.

7

Sabbath, November 15, 2008

Regenerated Children

MEMORY VERSE

“And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” *Ephesians 4:23, 24.*

OBJECTIVES

- To study the methods heaven uses in the work of spiritual regeneration.
- To look for the results of spiritual regeneration in one’s life.
- To study the transformation of character as a consequence of regeneration.

INTRODUCTION

“Regeneration is the only path by which we can reach the holy city. It is narrow and the gate by which we enter is strait, but along it we are to lead men

and women and children, teaching them that in order to be saved, they must have a new heart and a new spirit. The old hereditary traits of character are to be overcome. The natural desires of the soul must be changed. All deception, all falsifying, all evil-speaking must be put away. The new life, which makes men and women Christlike, is to be lived. We are, as it were, to swim against the current of evil." *—This Day with God*, p. 108.

THE MEANS OF REGENERATION

1. What is the powerful source of man's regeneration? Titus 3:5; Psalm 19:7-12.

"Those who believe in Jesus Christ are changed from being rebels against the law of God into obedient servants and subjects of His kingdom. They are born again, regenerated, sanctified through the truth." *—Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 332.

"There are those who have known the pardoning love of Christ and who really desire to be children of God, yet they realize that their character is imperfect, their life faulty, and they are ready to doubt whether their hearts have been renewed by the Holy Spirit. To such I would say, Do not draw back in despair. We shall often have to bow down and weep at the feet of Jesus because of our shortcomings and mistakes, but we are not to be discouraged." *—Steps to Christ*, p. 64.

2. Can we know exactly when the regeneration of a believer begins? John 3:3-8.

"A person may not be able to tell the exact time or place, or trace all the chain of circumstances in the process of conversion; but this does not prove him to be unconverted. Christ said to Nicodemus, 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.' John 3:8. Like the wind, which is invisible, yet the effects of which are plainly seen and felt, is the Spirit of God in its work upon the human heart." *—Steps to Christ*, p. 57.

3. Is it possible to see if a person has undergone this miraculous regeneration? Ephesians 4:23, 24.

"The mighty power of the Holy Spirit works an entire transformation in the character of the human agent, making him a new creature in Christ Jesus.... The words and actions express the love of the Saviour. There is no striving for the highest place. Self is renounced. The name of Jesus is written on all that is said and done.

“Is not this, the renewal of man, the greatest miracle that can be performed? What cannot the human agent do who by faith takes hold of the divine power?” —*The Faith I Live By*, p. 137.

FRUITS OF REGENERATION

4. What are some of the spiritual results of regeneration? Matthew 7:17.

Romans 6:12, 14:	Liberation from the power of sin
Romans 6:6; 1 John 3:9:	Hatred of sin
Romans 6:4, 5:	Spiritual resurrection
Ephesians 4:24:	Likeness to God in righteousness and holiness
Ezekiel 36:27:	Obedience to God’s commandments

“It is not learning you need so much as it is inward renovation. You need not to have your curiosity satisfied so much as to have a new heart....” —*Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 64.

“Nicodemus had come to the Lord thinking to enter into a discussion with Him, but Jesus laid bare the foundation principles of truth. He said to Nicodemus, It is not theoretical knowledge you need so much as spiritual regeneration. You need not to have your curiosity satisfied, but to have a new heart. You must receive a new life from above before you can appreciate heavenly things.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 171.

5. What other holy fruit do individuals who have experienced regeneration bear?

2 Peter 1:4:	Partaking of the divine nature
1 John 5:1:	Deep love for God
1 John 4:7:	Sincere brotherly love

“We are members of His mystical body. He is the head, controlling all the members of the body. Jesus Himself, in His infinite mercy, is working on human hearts, effecting spiritual transformations so amazing that angels look on with astonishment and joy. The same unselfish love that characterizes the Master is seen in the character and life of His true followers. Christ expects that men will become partakers of His divine nature while in this world, thus not only reflecting His glory to the praise of God, but illumining the darkness of the world with the radiance of heaven. Thus will be fulfilled the words of Christ: ‘Ye are the light of the world.’” —*Lift Him Up*, p. 289.

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

REGENERATION AND REFORM

6. Can we speak about regeneration in our life if the corresponding fruits are not seen? Matthew 12:33; Luke 6:43, 44.

“Many are deceived as to their true condition before God. They congratulate themselves upon the wrong acts which they do not commit, and forget to enumerate the good and noble deeds which God requires of them, but which they have neglected to perform. It is not enough that they are trees in the garden of God. They are to answer his expectation by bearing fruit. He holds them accountable for their failure to accomplish all the good which they could have done, through his grace strengthening them. In the books of heaven they are registered as cumberers of the ground.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 601.

“Not by its name, but by its fruit, is the value of a tree determined. If the fruit is worthless, the name cannot save the tree from destruction.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 107.

“But if brain and nerve and muscle are all employed in the service of self, you are not making God and heaven the first consideration of your life. It is impossible to be weaving the graces of Christ into your character while you are putting all your energies on the side of the world. You may be successful in heaping up treasure on the earth, for the glory of self; but ‘where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.’ Eternal considerations will be made of secondary importance. You may take part in the outward forms of worship; but your service will be an abomination to the God of heaven.” —*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 217.

7. Is regeneration an option or a necessity? What is the consequence of not experiencing the new birth? 1 Corinthians 15:30; John 3:3.

“‘Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ John 3:3. He may conjecture and imagine, but without the eye of faith he cannot see the treasure. Christ gave His life to secure for us this inestimable treasure; but without regeneration through faith in His blood, there is no remission of sins, no treasure for any perishing soul.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 112.

BEGINNING IN THE HEART

8. Where does this regeneration and reformation begin? Proverbs 4:23; Matthew 12:35.

“Circumstances cannot work reforms. Christianity proposes a reformation in the heart. What Christ works within, will be worked out under the dictation of a converted intellect. The plan of beginning outside and trying to work inward has always failed, and always will fail. God’s plan with you is to begin at the very seat of all difficulties, the heart, and then from out of the heart will issue the principles of righteousness; the reformation will be outward as well as inward.” —*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 35.

“All true reformation begins with soul-cleansing. It is by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the mind through the power of the Holy Spirit, that a change is wrought in the life.” —*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 105.

9. If this miracle takes place in us, what marvelous promises are ours? 1 John 5:4; 1 Corinthians 15:57; 1 Corinthians 10:13.

“The heart of man may be the abode of the Holy Spirit. The peace of Christ, which passeth understanding, may rest in your soul; and the transforming power of His grace may work in your life, and fit you for the courts of glory. But if brain and nerve and muscle are all employed in the service of self, you are not making God and heaven the first consideration of your life.” —*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 217.

10. What deep desire is present every day? Romans 5:5.

“This love is the life of God, working with transforming power in the soul, perfecting Christian character, making human beings partakers of the divine nature. Through Christ this living stream of love and life flows to the world....

“Eternal redemption never looked so exceedingly precious as at the present time, and I never felt more deeply in earnest to overcome on every point as now. There must be no defects in our character, not one. Every spot and wrinkle must be effaced by the blood of the Lamb. Our own peculiar traits of character will disappear when the transforming power of the grace of God is felt upon our hearts. The fruits we bear in patience, kindness, forbearance, and self-denial will testify of us that we have learned of Jesus.” —*The Upward Look*, p. 154.

Stability of the Children of Light

MEMORY VERSE

“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” James 1:22.

OBJECTIVES

- To realize that spiritual growth is obtained from knowing the Lord better every day.
- To foster personal spiritual development within the family and in the church.
- To become aware that there is no progress if the inspired truth is not practiced by faith and in love.
- To understand that spiritual growth occurs when there is steadiness of faith and principles.

INTRODUCTION

“The very conflicts and rebuffs we meet are to make us stronger and give stability to our faith. We are not to be swayed, like a reed in the wind, by every passing influence. Our souls, warmed and invigorated by the truths of the gospel and refreshed by divine grace, are to open and expand and shed their fragrance upon others. Clad in the whole armor of righteousness, we can meet any influence and our purity remain untarnished.” —*Counsels on Health*, p. 400.

WEAK OR FIRM

- 1. How can we give our children a solid education? On the other hand, how is the foundation for future spiritual stability undermined? Give examples. Proverbs 22:6; Psalm 144:12.**

“We are living in an age when almost everything is superficial. There is but little stability and firmness of character, because the training and education of children from their cradle is superficial. Their character is built upon sliding sand. Self-denial and self-control have not been molded into their characters. They have been petted and indulged until they are spoiled for practical life. The love of pleasure controls minds, and children are flattered and indulged to their ruin.” —*Child Guidance*, pp. 184, 185.

"She kept the boy as long as she could,... Yet even here he [Moses] did not lose the impressions received in childhood. The lessons learned at his mother's side could not be forgotten. They were a shield from the pride, the infidelity, and the vice that flourished amid the splendor of the court."
—*Conflict and Courage*, p. 80.

- 2. As Christians, how are we called upon to show our commitment to the principles we profess? Compare your life to the life of Jesus. What can be said about the steadfastness of your faith and your consistent adherence to the principles of life which flow from that faith? Matthew 4:1-11; Hebrews 13:9.**

"The life of Christ was designed to show that purity, stability, and firmness of principle are not dependent upon a life freed from hardships, poverty, and adversity. The trials and privations of which so many youth complain, Christ endured without murmuring. And this discipline is the very experience the youth need, which will give firmness to their characters, and make them like Christ, strong in spirit to resist temptation. They will not, if they separate from the influence of those who would lead them astray and corrupt their morals, be overcome by the devices of Satan. Through daily prayer to God, they will have wisdom and grace from Him to bear the conflict and stern realities of life, and come off victorious. Fidelity and serenity of mind can only be retained by watchfulness and prayer. Christ's life was an example of persevering energy, which was not allowed to become weakened by reproach, ridicule, privation or hardships." —*Messages to Young People*, pp. 79, 80.

- 3. What is the cause of instability in faith and of confusion of principles? James 1:5-8, 22; Revelation 14:7.**

"The reason why we have so few men of good mind, of stability and solid worth, is that God is not feared, God is not loved, the principles of religion are not carried out in the life as they should be." —*Child Guidance*, p. 507.

"We become weak because we fall under temptation and sin against God with our lips in talking discouragements and doubts, and talk on the off side and not on the side of hope and faith." —*The Upward Look*, p. 282.

"These doubts that bow down the soul we should each one bravely face, and tell the soul that we must conquer them at once. Make no delay, for there can be no peace where faith is lost. We need not express these doubts, for they may cause some poor soul to stumble. But examine them in the light of God's Word, then talk them over with Jesus with His Word of promise in your hand, and pray for their removal. Tell the Lord, 'Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.' Mark 9:24." —*That I May Know Him*, p. 227.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

4. How can we as individuals and as a family grow in grace? Luke 17:5, 6; 2 Peter 3:18; Romans 15:13.

“It is the privilege of the young, as they grow in Jesus, to grow in spiritual grace and knowledge. We may know more and more of Jesus through an interested searching of the Scriptures and then following the ways of truth and righteousness therein revealed. Those who are ever growing in grace will be steadfast in the faith, and moving forward. There should be an earnest desire in the heart of every youth who has purposed to be a disciple of Jesus Christ to reach the highest Christian standard, to be a worker with Christ. If he makes it his aim to be of that number who shall be presented faultless before the throne of God he will be continually advancing. The only way to remain steadfast is to progress daily in divine life. Faith will increase if, when brought in conflict with doubts and obstacles, it overcomes them....” —*That I May Know Him*, p. 161.

5. How can we grow spiritually in Christ’s church? Ephesians 4:11-15.

“Genuine faith is life, and where there is life there is growth. The life which Jesus imparts cannot but grow more and more abundantly. A living faith means an increase of vigor, a confiding trust, by which the soul becomes a conquering power. He who drinks of the water of life which Jesus gives, possesses within himself a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” —*That I May Know Him*, p. 227.

“Every Christian who is indeed a Christian must grow. He must constantly increase in wisdom and knowledge. Day by day he must approach more nearly to the full stature of a man in Christ Jesus. In order to be a follower of the Master, he must grow. He must advance into a deeper appreciation of the love of God and a clearer knowledge of His will. If his light does not shine more and more brightly, his faith becomes weak, his love grows feeble. And unless he sees and acknowledges his danger, he is doing the cause of God more harm than an avowed unbeliever.” —*The Upward Look*, p. 174.

CHRISTIAN STABILITY

6. What is the secret to gaining spiritual stability? John 15:4.

“Those who live in close fellowship with Christ will be promoted by Him to positions of trust. The servant who does the best he can for his master is admitted to familiar intercourse with one whose commands he loves to

obey. In the faithful discharge of duty we may become one with Christ, for those who are obeying God's commands may speak to Him freely. The one who talks most familiarly with his divine Leader has the most exalted conception of His greatness and is the most obedient to His commands." —*In Heavenly Places*, p. 58.

7. How far does the stability that God wants man to reach extend? Psalms 86:11; 16:8; 125:1.

"What was the strength of those who in the past have suffered persecution for Christ's sake? It was union with God, union with the Holy Spirit, union with Christ. Reproach and persecution have separated many from earthly friends, but never from the love of Christ. Never is the tempest-tried soul more dearly loved by His Saviour than when he is suffering reproach for the truth's sake. 'I will love him,' Christ said, 'and will manifest Myself to him.' John 14:21. When for the truth's sake the believer stands at the bar of earthly tribunals, Christ stands by his side. When he is confined within prison walls, Christ manifests Himself to him and cheers his heart with His love. When he suffers death for Christ's sake, the Saviour says to him, They may kill the body, but they cannot hurt the soul. 'Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.' 'Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.' John 16:33; Isaiah 41:10." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 85, 86.

8. Why is steadfastness to principle so important? Deuteronomy 5:29; Psalm 1:3.

"An eternity of bliss has been purchased for every son and daughter of Adam, and all may have a clear title to the immortal inheritance, the eternal substance, if they will in probationary time prove their obedience to the commandments of God. All will be tested in this life. If they ... by faith lay hold on the merits of Christ and serve God with all their hearts they will have a title to those mansions that Jesus has prepared for all that love Him....

"We should seek to understand all that the Word requires of us.... We cannot show greater honor to our God, whose we are by creation and redemption, than to give evidence to the beings of heaven, to the worlds unfallen, and to fallen men, that we diligently hearken unto all His commandments, which are the laws that govern His kingdom." —*That I May Know Him*, pp. 203, 297.

DEMONSTRATION OF GROWTH AND STABILITY

9. How did Ezra and Nehemiah show their maturity and steadfastness to God's holy will? Ezra 9:1-6; Nehemiah 13:15-21.

"His reign [Artaxerxes Longimanus] saw the return of a company of Jews under Ezra, the completion of the walls of Jerusalem by Nehemiah and his associates, the reorganization of the temple services, and the great religious reformations instituted by Ezra and Nehemiah. During his long rule he often showed favor to God's people, and in his trusted and well-beloved Jewish friends, Ezra and Nehemiah, he recognized men of God's appointment, raised up for a special work....

"The work of restoration and reform carried on by the returned exiles, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, presents a picture of a work of spiritual restoration that is to be wrought in the closing days of this earth's history....

"God's remnant people, standing before the world as reformers, are to show that the law of God is the foundation of all enduring reform and that the Sabbath of the fourth commandment is to stand as a memorial of creation, a constant reminder of the power of God. In clear, distinct lines they are to present the necessity of obedience to all the precepts of the Decalogue. Constrained by the love of Christ, they are to cooperate with Him in building up the waste places. They are to be repairers of the breach, restorers of paths to dwell in. See verse 12."—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 607, 677, 678.

10. What can be said about the integrity and steadfastness of Joseph in Egypt? Genesis 39:7-12, 20-23; 41:14, 37-42.

"Yet Joseph preserved his simplicity and his fidelity to God....

"... God was glorified by the faithfulness of His servant. It was His purpose that in purity and uprightness the believer in God should appear in marked contrast to the worshipers of idols—that thus the light of heavenly grace might shine forth amid the darkness of heathenism."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 214, 217.

11. What special responsibilities do God's people have in the world? 1 Peter 2:9.

"But in Joseph and Daniel, in Moses and Elijah, and many others, we have noble examples of the results of the true plan of living. Like faithfulness today will produce like results. To us it is written, 'Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.' 1 Peter 2:9."—*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 27.

"Are we following Christ with unswerving loyalty, keeping His life of perfect obedience, of purity and self-sacrifice, ever before us that by beholding we may become changed into His image? Do we strive to imitate His fidelity?"—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 298.

Permanent Light from the Sanctuary

MEMORY VERSE

“And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament....” Revelation 11:19, first part.

INTRODUCTION

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

A SOLEMN TIME

- 1. What proofs do we find in the Bible that Jesus Christ passed from the holy to the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary? Daniel 8:14; 7:13; Malachi 3:1; Matthew 25:1-13.**

“Christ had come, not to the earth, as they expected, but, as foreshadowed in the type, to the most holy place of the temple of God in heaven. He is represented by the prophet Daniel as coming at this time to the Ancient of days: ‘I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came’—not to the earth, but—‘to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him.’ Daniel 7:13.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 424.

- 2. Were the people prepared for that event in 1844? Malachi 3:2-4.**

“But the people were not yet ready to meet their Lord. There was still a work of preparation to be accomplished for them. Light was to be given, directing their minds to the temple of God in heaven; and as they should by faith follow their High Priest in His ministration there, new duties would be revealed. Another message of warning and instruction was to be given to the church....

“Those who are living upon the earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above, are to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator. Their robes must be spotless, their characters must be

purified from sin by the blood of sprinkling. Through the grace of God and their own diligent effort, they must be conquerors in the battle with evil.”
—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 424, 425.

3. Are we prepared to stand in the judgment? Do we understand the solemnity of this present time? Matthew 26:38-46.

“The Son of God went away the second time, and prayed, saying: ‘O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done.’ And again He came to His disciples and found them sleeping. Their eyes were heavy. By these sleeping disciples is represented a sleeping church, when the day of God’s visitation is nigh. It is a time of clouds and thick darkness, when to be found asleep is most perilous.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 205.

TWO CLASSES OF PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH

4. What is often the greatest surprise in the church? Matthew 25:1-4; 13:24-30.

“In the summer and autumn of 1844, the proclamation, ‘Behold, the Bridegroom cometh,’ was given. The two classes represented by the wise and foolish virgins were then developed—one class who looked with joy to the Lord’s appearing, and who had been diligently preparing to meet Him; another class that, influenced by fear, and acting from impulse, had been satisfied with a theory of the truth, but were destitute of the grace of God. In the parable, when the bridegroom came, ‘they that were ready went in with Him to the marriage.’” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 426.

5. What does the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary signify? Hebrews 9:22.

“While the investigative judgment is going forward in heaven, while the sins of penitent believers are being removed from the sanctuary, there is to be a special work of purification, of putting away of sin, among God’s people upon earth. This work is more clearly presented in the messages of Revelation 14....

“Paul states, as the reason why this cleansing must be performed with blood, that without shedding of blood is no remission. Remission, or putting away of sin, is the work to be accomplished....” —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 425, 417.

6. What will happen when the judgment is finished? Revelation 22:11.

“When this work shall have been accomplished, the followers of Christ will be ready for His appearing. ‘Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years.’ [Malachi 3:4.] Then the church which our Lord at His coming is to receive to Himself will be ‘a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.’ [Ephesians 5:27.] Then she will look forth ‘as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners’ [Canticles 6:10.]....

“When the work of investigation shall be ended, when the cases of those who in all ages have professed to be followers of Christ have been examined and decided, then, and not till then, probation will close, and the door of mercy will be shut. Thus in the one short sentence, ‘They that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut,’ we are carried down through the Saviour’s final ministration, to the time when the great work for man’s salvation shall be completed.” —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 425, 428.

A CORRECT EXPLANATION OF THE JUDGMENT

7. What is the most wonderful message from the heavenly sanctuary? Matthew 22:1-14; Daniel 7:14.

“The coming of the bridegroom, here brought to view, takes place before the marriage. The marriage represents the reception by Christ of His kingdom. The holy city, the New Jerusalem, which is the capital and representative of the kingdom, is called ‘the bride, the Lamb’s wife.’ Said the angel to John, ‘Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife.’ ‘He carried me away in the spirit,’ says the prophet, ‘and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.’ [Revelation 21:9, 10.] Clearly, then, the bride represents the holy city, and the virgins that go out to meet the bridegroom are a symbol of the church. In the Revelation the people of God are said to be the guests at the marriage supper. [Revelation 19:9.] If guests, they cannot be represented also as the bride. Christ, as stated by the prophet Daniel, will receive from the Ancient of days in heaven, ‘dominion, and glory, and a kingdom,’ he will receive the New Jerusalem, the capital of his kingdom, ‘prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.’ [Daniel 7:14; Revelation 21:2.] Having received the kingdom, He will come in His glory, as King of kings, and Lord of lords, for the redemption of His people, who are to ‘sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob,’ at His table in His kingdom [Matthew 8:11; Luke 22:30], to partake of the marriage supper of the Lamb.” —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 426, 427.

8. If we are the guests, what is our responsibility? 1 John 5:4; Romans 1:17.

“The proclamation, ‘Behold, the Bridegroom cometh,’ in the summer of 1844, led thousands to expect the immediate advent of the Lord. At the appointed time the Bridegroom came, not to the earth, as the people ex-

pected, but to the Ancient of days in heaven, to the marriage, the reception of His kingdom. 'They that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut.' They were not to be present in person at the marriage; for it takes place in heaven, while they are upon the earth. The followers of Christ are to 'wait for their Lord, when He will return from the wedding.' [Luke 12:36.] But they are to understand His work, and to follow Him by faith as He goes in before God. It is in this sense that they are said to go in to the marriage....

"It is those who by faith follow Jesus in the great work of the atonement, who receive the benefits of His mediation in their behalf; while those who reject the light which brings to view this work of ministration, are not benefited thereby."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 427, 430.

9. How should those who are invited to attend the wedding be dressed? What will happen to those who are not appropriately dressed? Matthew 22:11-13; Revelation 19:7, 8.

"In the parable of Matthew 22 the same figure of the marriage is introduced, and the investigative judgment is clearly represented as taking place before the marriage. Previous to the wedding the king comes in to see the guests [Matthew 22:11]—to see if all are attired in the wedding garment, the spotless robe of character washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. [Revelation 7:14.] He who is found wanting is cast out, but all who upon examination are seen to have the wedding garment on, are accepted of God, and accounted worthy of a share in His kingdom and a seat upon His throne. This work of examination of character, of determining who are prepared for the kingdom of God, is that of the investigative judgment, the closing work in the sanctuary above."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 428.

10. How does one have part in the work of the heavenly sanctuary? Matthew 21:44; 1 Peter 5:6.

"The storm of God's wrath is gathering; and those only will stand who respond to the invitations of mercy ... and become sanctified through obedience to the laws of the divine Ruler. The righteous alone shall be hid with Christ in God till the desolation be overpast. Let the language of the soul be:

"Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee;
Leave, O, leave me not alone!
Still support and comfort me.
Hide me, O my Saviour, hide!
Till the storm of life is past;
Safe into the haven guide,
O receive my soul at last!"—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 278.

The Seal of the Children of Light

MEMORY VERSE

“And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angel to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.” Revelation 7:2, 3.

OBJECTIVES

- To be aware of the sealing work and its importance for us.
- To know when the sealing work began and when it will end.
- To prepare to receive the seal of the living God.

THE SEAL OF THE LIVING GOD

1. What is a seal? Esther 8:10; Daniel 6:17; Exodus 39:30.

“A seal is defined to be an instrument of sealing, that which ‘is used by individuals, corporate bodies, and states, for making impressions on wax, upon instruments of writing, as an evidence of their authenticity.’ The original word in this text is defined, ‘A seal, i.e., a signet ring; a mark, stamp, badge; a token, a pledge.’ The verb signifies: ‘To secure to any one, to make sure; to set a seal or mark upon anything in token of its being genuine or approved; to attest, to confirm, to establish, to distinguish by a mark.’” —Uriah Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation*, pp. 454, 455.

2. What order does the angel receive? Ezekiel 9:3, 4; Revelation 7:2, 3.

3. What characterizes the seal of the living God? What does the Holy Spirit engrave in the mind? Ephesians 1:13; 4:30; Isaiah 8:16; Ezekiel 36:26, 27; Hebrews 8:10.

“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.” —*The Faith I Live By*, p. 287.

“The angel is to place a mark upon the forehead of all who are separated from sin and sinners, and the destroying angel will follow....” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 505.

“Those who are distrustful of self, who are humbling themselves before God and purifying their souls by obeying the truth—these are receiving the heavenly mold and preparing for the seal of God in their foreheads. When the decree goes forth and the stamp is impressed, their character will remain pure and spotless for eternity.” —*The Faith I Live By*, p. 288.

4. Where is the seal of God found? What are its elements? Ezekiel 20:12, 20; Exodus 31:16, 17.

“The seal of God’s law is found in the fourth commandment. This only, of all the ten, brings to view both the name and the title of the Lawgiver. It declares Him to be the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and thus shows His claim to reverence and worship above all others. Aside from this precept, there is nothing in the Decalogue to show by whose authority the law is given.” —*The Faith I Live By*, p. 287.

“In the ark was the golden pot of manna, Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tables of stone which folded together like a book. Jesus opened them, and I saw the ten commandments written on them with the finger of God. On one table were four, and on the other six. The four on the first table shone brighter than the other six. But the fourth, the Sabbath commandment, shone above them all; for the Sabbath was set apart to be kept in honor of God’s holy name. The holy Sabbath looked glorious—a halo of glory was all around it.” —*Early Writings*, pp. 32, 33.

“The Israelites placed over their doors a signature of blood, to show that they were God’s property. So the children of God in this age will bear the signature God has appointed. They will place themselves in harmony with God’s holy law. A mark is placed upon every one of God’s people just as verily as a mark was placed over the doors of the Hebrew dwellings, to preserve the people from the general ruin.” —*The Faith I Live By*, p. 287.

THE SEALING TIME

5. When did the sealing begin? When will it end? Ezekiel 9:11; Revelation 22:11.

“But we must now turn back to those who tenaciously clung to their confidence that prophecy had been fulfilled on October 22, 1844, and who with open minds and hearts stepped forward into the Sabbath and the sanctuary truths as the light of heaven illuminated their pathway....”

“I saw angels hurrying to and fro in heaven. An angel with a writer’s inkhorn by his side returned from the earth and reported to Jesus that his work was done, and the saints were numbered and sealed. Then I saw Jesus, who had been ministering before the ark containing the ten commandments, throw down the censer. He raised His hands, and with a loud voice said, ‘It is done.’” —*Early Writings*, pp. xviii, 279.

6. What work is presented in the prophecy as taking place in the end times? What events are related to the sealing? Revelation 7:1-3; 18:1-4.

“Before the work is closed up and the sealing of God’s people is finished, we shall receive the outpouring of the Spirit of God. Angels from heaven will be in our midst.”—*Maranatha*, p. 212.

7. Who will be resurrected in the partial resurrection? Daniel 12:2. How many will be sealed? Revelation 14:1.

“Graves are opened, and ‘many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth’ ‘awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.’ [Daniel 12:2.] All who have died in the faith of the third angel’s message come forth from the tomb glorified, to hear God’s covenant of peace with those who have kept his law. ‘They also which pierced Him’ [Revelation 1:7], those that mocked and derided Christ’s dying agonies, and the most violent opposers of His truth and His people, are raised to behold Him in His glory, and to see the honor placed upon the loyal and obedient.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 637.

“The 144,000 were all sealed and perfectly united. On their foreheads was written, God, New Jerusalem, and a glorious star containing Jesus’ new name. At our happy, holy state the wicked were enraged, and would rush violently up to lay hands on us to thrust us into prison, when we would stretch forth the hand in the name of the Lord, and they would fall helpless to the ground. Then it was that the synagogue of Satan knew that God had loved us who could wash one another’s feet and salute the brethren with a holy kiss, and they worshiped at our feet.”—*Early Writings*, p. 15.

WHO WILL RECEIVE GOD’S SEAL?

8. Who will receive the seal of God on his forehead? Daniel 12:3; Revelation 7:3; Galatians 5:24.

“Love is expressed in obedience, and perfect love casteth out all fear. Those who love God, have the seal of God in their foreheads, and work the works of God.”—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 51.

“Those that overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, will be the favored ones who shall receive the seal of the living God.”—*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 445.

“Those who receive the seal of the living God and are protected in the time of trouble must reflect the image of Jesus fully.”—*Early Writings*, p. 71.

9. What great privilege will the 144,000 have? Revelation 14:1-5; 15:2-4.

“Soon we heard the voice of God like many waters, which gave us the day and hour of Jesus’ coming. The living saints, 144,000 in number, knew and understood the voice, while the wicked thought it was thunder and an earthquake. When God spoke the time, He poured upon us the Holy Ghost, and our faces began to light up and shine with the glory of God, as Moses’ did when he came down from Mount Sinai.” —*Early Writings*, p. 15.

WHO ARE SHAKEN OUT?

10. What happens to the ones who do not have God’s seal? Ezekiel 9:5, 6.

“... Just as soon as God’s people are sealed and prepared for the shaking, it will come. Indeed, it has begun already. The judgments of God are now upon the land, to give us warning, that we may know what is coming.” —*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 10, p. 252.

“The numbers of this company had lessened. Some had been shaken out and left by the way. The careless and indifferent, who did not join with those who prized victory and salvation ... did not obtain it, and they were left behind in darkness, and their places were immediately filled by others taking hold of the truth....

“Satan is now using every device in this sealing time to keep the minds of God’s people from the present truth and to cause them to waver.” —*Early Writings*, pp. 271, 43.

11. What will prevent a person from being sealed?

“The seal of God will never be placed upon the forehead of an impure man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of the ambitious, world-loving man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of men or women of false tongues or deceitful hearts. All who receive the seal must be without spot before God—candidates for heaven....

“There are many even among those who teach the truth to others who will not receive the seal of God in their foreheads. They had the light of truth, they knew their Master’s will, they understood every point of our faith, but they had not corresponding works. These who were so familiar with prophecy and the treasures of divine wisdom should have acted their faith.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 216, 214.

“Some will urge that the Lord is not so particular in His requirements; that it is not their duty to keep the Sabbath strictly at so great loss, or to place themselves where they will be brought in conflict with the laws of

the land. But here is just where the test is coming, whether we will honor the law of God above the requirements of men. This is what will distinguish between those who honor God and those who dishonor Him. Here is where we are to prove our loyalty. The history of God's dealings with His people in all ages shows that He demands exact obedience." —*Historical Sketches*, pp. 216, 217.

12. Therefore, what should we do? 1 Peter 5:6; Hebrews 4:14-16; 10:37-39; 12:1, 2.

11

Sabbath, December 13, 2008

The Principle of Liberality

MEMORY VERSE

"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again." Luke 6:38.

OBJECTIVES

- To be well acquainted with the divine plan for Christian stewardship, which has existed since ancient times.
- To increase our knowledge of the different areas of Christian stewardship.
- To meditate about the promises that God has given the generous steward.

INTRODUCTION

"If the hearts of God's people were filled with love for Christ; if every church member were thoroughly imbued with the Spirit of self-sacrifice; if all manifested thorough earnestness, there would be no lack of funds for home or foreign missions. Our resources would be multiplied; a thousand doors of usefulness would be opened, and we should be invited to enter. Had the purpose of God been carried out by His people in giving to the world the message of mercy, Christ would, ere this, have come to the earth, and the saints would have received their welcome into the city of God." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 450.

ACKNOWLEDGING GOD'S PROPRIETORSHIP

- 1. How do the holy Scriptures say of God's position as Creator, Proprietor, and Ruler of the universe? 1 Chronicles 29:11-14; Haggai 2:8; Psalm 24:1, 2.**

"There are many who in their hearts charge God with being a hard master because He claims their possessions and their service. But we can bring to God nothing that is not already His. 'All things come of Thee,' said King David; 'and of Thine own have we given Thee.' 1 Chronicles 29:14. All things are God's, not only by creation, but by redemption. All the blessings of this life and of the life to come are delivered to us stamped with the cross of Calvary." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 362.

- 2. In relation to the tithe, first fruits, and offerings, who are the only ones who acknowledge that everything belongs to God? Genesis 14:18-20; 18:19; 26:5; Galatians 3:6-9.**

"The tithing system reaches back beyond the days of Moses. Men were required to offer to God gifts for religious purposes before the definite system was given to Moses, even as far back as the days of Adam. In complying with God's requirements, they were to manifest in offerings their appreciation of His mercies and blessings to them. This was continued through successive generations, and was carried out by Abraham, who gave tithes to Melchizedek, the priest of the most high God." —*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 69.

TEACHING LIBERALITY

- 3. What was the Levites' privilege in the Israelite economy? Numbers 18:20, 21; Nehemiah 10:37.**

"The appointed ministers of the sanctuary, the Levites received no landed inheritance; they dwelt together in cities set apart for their use, and received their support from the tithes and the gifts and offerings devoted to God's service. They were the teachers of the people, guests at all their festivities, and everywhere honored as servants and representatives of God. To the whole nation was given the command: 'Take heed to thyself that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest upon the earth.' 'Levi hath no part nor inheritance with his brethren; the Lord is his inheritance.' Deuteronomy 12:19; 10:9." —*Education*, pp. 148, 149.

4. How many different tithes were there in Israel as a nation? What was the purpose of each?

a) First tithe: Leviticus 27:30.

This tenth part came from all their possessions. "Concerning the first tithe, the Lord had declared, 'I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel.'" —*Review and Herald*, September 17, 1889, par. 1.

b) Second tithe: Deuteronomy 14:22-27.

"The consecration to God of a tithe of all increase, whether of the orchard and harvest field, the flocks and herds, or the labor of brain or hand, the devotion of a second tithe for the relief of the poor and other benevolent uses, tended to keep fresh before the people the truth of God's ownership of all, and of their opportunity to be channels of His blessings. It was a training adapted to kill out all narrowing selfishness, and to cultivate breadth and nobility of character." —*Education*, p. 44.

c) Another tithe: Deuteronomy 14:28, 29.

"Every third year, however, this second tithe was to be used at home, in entertaining the Levite and the poor, as Moses said, 'That they may eat within thy gates, and be filled.' Deuteronomy 26:12. This tithe would provide a fund for the uses of charity and hospitality." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 530.

THE PRESENT SYSTEM FOR PREACHING THE GOSPEL

5. Regarding the tithe, what is God's purpose for those who are consecrated to the ministry? 1 Corinthians 9:9, 14; 1 Timothy 5:18; Malachi 2:7.

"It was to this plan for the support of the ministry that Paul referred when he said, 'Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.' And later, in writing to Timothy, the apostle said, 'The laborer is worthy of his reward.' 1 Timothy 5:18." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 336.

"Let each regularly examine his income, which is all a blessing from God, and set apart the tithe as a separate fund, to be sacredly the Lord's. This fund should not in any case be devoted to any other use; it is to be devoted solely to support the ministry of the gospel. After the tithe is set apart, let gifts and offerings be apportioned, 'as God hath prospered' you." —(*Review and Herald*, May 9, 1893) *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 81.

6. Besides the tithe, what else belongs to God? Deuteronomy 26:1-11; Exodus 22:29; Nehemiah 10:37; Proverbs 3:9.

“God has laid His hand upon all things, both man and his possessions; for all belong to Him. He says, I am the owner of the world; the universe is Mine, and I require you to consecrate to My service the first fruits of all that I, through My blessing, have caused to come into your hands. God’s word declares, ‘Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits.’ ‘Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase.’ This tribute He demands as a token of our loyalty to Him.” —*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 72.

- 7. What part is taken from the tithes and first fruits received by the unions and forwarded to the General Conference for worldwide denominational missionary work? Numbers 18:26; Nehemiah 10:38.**

OFFERINGS

- 8. How can God’s plan regarding liberality be implemented? How should the principle of giving be practiced? 2 Chronicles 24:10; Psalm 96:8; Malachi 3:8.**

“This matter of giving is not left to impulse. God has given us definite instruction in regard to it. He has specified tithes and offerings as the measure of our obligation. And He desires us to give regularly and systematically. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, ‘Concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him.’ Let each regularly examine his income, which is all a blessing from God.... After the tithe is set apart, let gifts and offering be apportioned, ‘as God hath prospered’ you.” —*Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, pp. 129, 130.

- 9. What other kind of offerings should be considered for the proclamation of the gospel? Ezra 1:6; 1 Chronicles 25:7-9.**

“God’s work must be sustained by tithes and gifts and offerings.” —*The Upward Look*, p. 113.

“The responsibility of giving great or small donations is individual.” —*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 218.

EXPERIENCES WITH GOD’S PLAN

- 10. What experience can we have if we are faithful? Proverbs 11:25; Matthew 6:19-20.**

“Liberality is one of the directions of the Holy Spirit, and when the professed people of God withhold from the Lord His own in tithes and offerings, they meet with spiritual loss. The Lord does not reward a stinted liberality. He calls upon the people to honor Him with their substance, and with the first-fruits of all their increase....

“The qualities which it is essential for all to possess are those which marked the completeness of Christ’s character—His love, His patience, His unselfishness, and His goodness....” —*This Day with God*, pp. 97, 272.

11. What blessings has God promised all who are faithful? Luke 6:38.

“All our blessings come from His bountiful hand. In turn, He would have men and women show their gratitude by returning Him a portion in tithes and offerings—in thank offerings, in freewill offerings, in trespass offerings.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 75.

12. Besides being Owner of everything, what great sacrifice did God give for all mankind? 1 John 4:9, 10; Romans 4:25; 5:6, 7, 10; 2 Corinthians 8:9.

12

Sabbath, December 20, 2008

The Health Message

MEMORY VERSE

“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” 1 Corinthians 10:31.

OBJECTIVES

- To understand that health reform is the right arm of the third angel’s message.
- To appreciate and implement the Biblical message concerning physical health.
- To take good care of our bodies, as they belong to God.

INTRODUCTION

“In order to preserve health, temperance in all things is necessary.... Our heavenly Father sent the light of health reform to guard against the evils re-

sulting from a debased appetite, that those who love purity and holiness may know how to use with discretion the good things He has provided for them, and that by exercising temperance in daily life, they may be sanctified through the truth.” —*Child Guidance*, p. 396.

HEALTH AND THE THIRD ANGEL’S MESSAGE

- 1. How many visions about health reform did the Lord give His servant? What does God say regarding the third angel’s message and health? Revelation 14:12.**

“It was in the 1860’s—the decade of two basic health-reform visions (June 6, 1863, and December 25, 1865)....

“December 10, 1871, I was again shown that the health reform is one branch of the great work which is to fit a people for the coming of the Lord. It is as closely connected with the third angel’s message as the hand is with the body. The law of ten commandments has been lightly regarded by man; but the Lord would not come to punish the transgressors of that law without first sending them a message of warning. The third angel proclaims that message. Had men ever been obedient to the law of ten commandments, carrying out in their lives the principles of those precepts, the curse of disease now flooding the world would not be.” —*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 69.

- 2. What happens when such an important issue is neglected? 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20.**

“God has shown that health reform is as closely connected with the third angel’s message as the hand is united to the body. And there is nowhere to be found so great a cause of physical and moral degeneracy as a neglect of this important subject.... Whoever violates moral obligations in the matter of eating and dressing prepares the way to violate the claims of God in regard to eternal interests. Our bodies are not our own. God has claims upon us to take care of the habitation He has given us, that we may present our bodies to Him a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable. Our bodies belong to Him who made them, and we are in duty bound to become intelligent in regard to the best means of preserving from decay the habitation He has given us. If we enfeeble the body by self-gratification, by indulging the appetite, and by dressing in accordance with health-destroying fashions, in order to be in harmony with the world, we become enemies of God....” —*That I May Know Him*, p. 317.

- 3. Why are we called to practice health reform? 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 1 Corinthians 10:31.**

“In order to preserve health, temperance in all things is necessary—temperance in labor, temperance in eating and drinking. Our heavenly Father sent the light of health reform to guard against the evils resulting from a debased appetite, that those who love purity and holiness may know how to use with discretion the good things He has provided for them, and that by exercising temperance in daily life, they may be sanctified through the truth.” — *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 23.

4. What preparation does every minister and every believer need to receive in relation to the health message? Romans 13:11; Revelation 18:4.

“Ministers and people must act in concert. God’s people are not prepared for the loud cry of the third angel. They have a work to do for themselves which they should not leave for God to do for them. He has left this work for them to do. It is an individual work; one cannot do it for another. ‘Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.’ Gluttony is the prevailing sin of this age. Lustful appetite makes slaves of men and women, and beclouds their intellects and stupefies their moral sensibilities to such a degree that the sacred, elevated truths of God’s word are not appreciated. The lower propensities have ruled men and women.” — *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 32.

THE REFORM THAT GOD APPROVES

5. What was God’s original plan for man’s diet? Genesis 1:29; 2:9; Psalm 104:14.

“In order to know what are the best foods, we must study God’s original plan for man’s diet. He who created man and who understands his needs appointed Adam his food....

“Grains, fruits, nuts, and vegetables constitute the diet chosen for us by our Creator.” — *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 296, 297.

“Vegetables, fruits, and grains should compose our diet. Not an ounce of flesh meat should enter our stomachs. The eating of flesh is unnatural. We are to return to God’s original purpose in the creation of man.” — *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 380.

6. What drink did God design for man? Why do people sometimes crave wine and intoxicating beverages? Isaiah 48:21; Daniel 1:12; Proverbs 20:1; 23:31, 32.

“The demand for stimulants becomes more frequent and more difficult to resist. The system becomes more or less filled with poison, and the more debilitated it becomes, the greater is the desire for these things. One step in the wrong direction prepares the way for another. Many who would not be guilty of placing on their table wine or liquor of any kind will load their table with food which creates such a thirst for strong drink that to resist the temptation is almost impossible. Wrong habits of eating and drinking destroy the health and prepare the way for drunkenness....

“Under the head of stimulants and narcotics is classed a great variety of articles that, altogether, used as food or drink irritate the stomach, poison the blood, and excite the nerves. Their use is a positive evil.” —*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, pp. 123, 339.

7. How can proper nutrition prevent the so-called diseases of civilization? Exodus 15:26; Proverbs 4:20-22.

“Let the diet reform be progressive. Let the people be taught how to prepare food without the use of milk or butter. Tell them that the time will soon come when there will be no safety in using eggs, milk, cream, or butter, because disease in animals is increasing in proportion to the increase of wickedness among men. The time is near when, because of the iniquity of the fallen race, the whole animal creation will groan under the diseases that curse our earth.

God will give His people ability and tact to prepare wholesome food without these things. Let our people discard all unwholesome recipes.” —*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 349.

Note: Prominent diseases in the modern world are hypertension, obesity, certain types of diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, eating disorders, and some types of cancer.

8. How does the way we dress affect our physical health? In what way is this related to the third angel’s message? 1 Timothy 2:9.

“Temperance in all things is to be connected with the message, to turn the people of God from their idolatry, their gluttony, and their extravagance in dress and other things.” —*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 71.

“Do not, my sisters, trifle longer with your own souls and with God. I have been shown that the main cause of your backsliding is your love of dress. This leads to the neglect of grave responsibilities, and you find yourselves with scarcely a spark of the love of God in your hearts. Without delay renounce the cause of your backsliding, because it is sin against your own soul and against God.” — *Counsels on Health*, p. 603.

“There is a terrible sin upon us as a people, that we have permitted our church members to dress in a manner inconsistent with their faith. We must arise at once and close the door against the allurements of fashion. Unless we do this, our churches will become demoralized.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 648.

TEMPERANCE AND REGULARITY

9. Where and when is it appropriate to provide education in habits of temperance? Proverbs 22:6; Psalm 144:12.

“The Christian life is one of constant self-denial and self-control. These are the lessons to be taught the children from their infancy. Teach them that they must practice temperance, purity in thought and heart and act, that they belong to God because they have been bought with a price, even the precious blood of His dear Son.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 116.

10. Are regularity in eating, working, and resting important? Ecclesiastes 10:17; Exodus 20:8, 9.

“The stomach must have its regular periods for labor and rest; hence eating irregularly and between meals, is a most pernicious violation of the laws of health. With regular habits, and proper food, the stomach will gradually recover....

“Those who perform only manual labor, frequently work to excess without giving themselves periods of rest; while the intellectual class overwork the brain and suffer for want of the healthful vigor that physical labor gives. If the intellectual would to some extent share the burden of the laboring class and thus strengthen the muscles, the laboring class might do less and devote a portion of their time to mental and moral culture.... Health should be a sufficient inducement to lead them to unite physical with mental labor.”—*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, pp. 175, 181.

11. How should we use recreational time with the family? Mark 6:31.

“In order for children and youth to have health, cheerfulness, vivacity, and well-developed muscles and brains, they should be much in the open air and have well-regulated employment and amusement.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 339.

“There are modes of recreation which are highly beneficial to both mind and body. An enlightened, discriminating mind will find abundant means for entertainment and diversion, from sources not only innocent, but instructive. Recreation in the open air, the contemplation of the works of God in nature, will be of the highest benefit.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 496.

12. What is God's purpose for every individual? Isaiah 48:17. What are the results of practicing temperance? 2 Timothy 1:7; 2 Peter 1:5, 6.

"The observance of temperance and regularity in all things has a wonderful power. It will do more than circumstances or natural endowments in promoting that sweetness and serenity of disposition which count so much in smoothing life's pathway." —*Education*, p. 206.

"Those who, like Daniel, refuse to defile themselves, will reap the reward of their temperate habits. With their greater physical stamina and increased power of endurance, they have a bank of deposit upon which to draw in case of emergency." —*Temperance*, p. 101.

*Please read the Missionary Report
from Ethiopia on page 126*

13

Sabbath, December 27, 2008

The Divine Institution of Marriage

MEMORY VERSE

"And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you...."
Ephesians 5:2, 3.

OBJECTIVES

- To understand the origin of marriage as a divine institution.
- To study the principles upon which God intended this institution to be based.
- To consider the warnings about marriage in the Holy Scriptures.
- To enjoy the spiritual and social benefits of this sacred institution.

INTRODUCTION

"Marriage, a union for life, is a symbol of the union between Christ and His church. The spirit that Christ manifests toward His church is the spirit that the husband and wife are to manifest toward each other. If they love God su-

premely, they will love each other in the Lord, ever treating each other courteously, drawing in even cords. In their mutual self-denial and self-sacrifice they will be a blessing to each other....” —*The Adventist Home*, p. 95.

THE MARRIAGE INSTITUTION

1. What are the main concepts to be considered in marriage? Genesis 2:18.

“God Himself gave Adam a companion. He provided ‘an help meet for him’—a helper corresponding to him—one who was fitted to be his companion, and who could be one with him in love and sympathy. Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him. A part of man, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, she was his second self, showing the close union and the affectionate attachment that should exist in this relation.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 46.

“Then, as the Creator joined the hands of the holy pair in wedlock, saying, A man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one,’ He enunciated the law of marriage for all the children of Adam to the close of time. That which the eternal Father Himself had pronounced good was the law of highest blessing and development for man.” —*The Adventist Home*, p. 340.

2. What should be considered before marriage? Amos 3:3; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Proverbs 13:16.

“Let every step toward a marriage alliance be characterized by modesty, simplicity, sincerity, and an earnest purpose to please and honor God. Marriage affects the afterlife both in this world and in the world to come. A sincere Christian will make no plans that God cannot approve....

“Every marriage engagement should be carefully considered, for marriage is a step taken for life. Both the man and the woman should carefully consider whether they can cleave to each other through the vicissitudes of life as long as they both shall live.” —*The Adventist Home*, pp. 49, 340.

“No one who fears God can without danger connect himself with one who fears Him not. ‘Can two walk together, except they be agreed?’ (Amos 3:3). The happiness and prosperity of the marriage relation depends upon the unity of the parties; but between the believer and the unbeliever there is a radical difference of tastes, inclinations, and purposes. They are serving two masters, between whom there can be no concord. However pure and correct one’s principles may be, the influence of an unbelieving companion will have a tendency to lead away from God.... The Lord’s direction is, ‘Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers’ (2 Corinthians 6:14, 17, 18).” —*Conflict and Courage*, p. 57.

3. How should the marriage bond be preserved? Hebrews 13:4.

“All who enter into matrimonial relations with a holy purpose—the husband to obtain the pure affections of a woman’s heart, the wife to soften and improve her husband’s character and give it completeness—fulfill God’s purpose for them.

“Christ came not to destroy this institution, but to restore it to its original sanctity and elevation. He came to restore the moral image of God in man, and He began His work by sanctioning the marriage relation.” —*The Adventist Home*, p. 99.

“Marriage, when joined with purity and holiness, truth and righteousness, is one of the greatest blessings ever given to the human family....” —*In Heavenly Places*, p. 202.

4. What advice did the wise Solomon give regarding the institution of marriage? Proverbs 18:22; 5:18, 19.

“The divine love emanating from Christ never destroys human love, but includes it. By it human love is refined and purified, elevated and ennobled. Human love can never bear its precious fruit until it is united with the divine nature and trained to grow heavenward. Jesus wants to see happy marriages, happy firesides.

“Like every other one of God’s good gifts entrusted to the keeping of humanity, marriage has been perverted by sin; but it is the purpose of the gospel to restore its purity and beauty....

“The grace of Christ, and this alone, can make this institution what God designed it should be—an agent for the blessing and uplifting of humanity. And thus the families of earth, in their unity and peace and love, may represent the family of heaven.

“The condition of society presents a sad comment upon Heaven’s ideal of this sacred relation. Yet even for those who have found bitterness and disappointment where they had hoped for companionship and joy, the gospel of Christ offers a solace.” —*The Adventist Home*, pp. 99, 100.

MARRIAGE PRINCIPLES

5. On what principles did God intend marriage to be based?

a) Fellowship: “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” 2 Corinthians 6:14.

“Your companionship in the marriage relation should be close and tender, holy and elevated, breathing a spiritual power into your lives, that you may be everything to each other that God’s word requires. When you reach the condition that the Lord desires you to reach, you will find heaven below and God in your life.” —*The Adventist Home*, p. 112.

b) Temperance: “... Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” Galatians 5:23; “He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.” Proverbs 25:28.

c) Moral purity: “But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” Matthew 5:28.

“Like every other one of God’s good gifts entrusted to the keeping of humanity, marriage has been perverted by sin; but it is the purpose of the gospel to restore its purity and beauty.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 64.

d) True love: “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it.” “So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.” Ephesians 5:25, 28.

6. Although Adam had no human father or mother, why did he receive the marriage law in Genesis 2:24? What principles can be found in this divine command? Matthew 19:5, 6.

“Around each family there is a sacred circle that should be kept unbroken. Within this circle no other person has a right to come. Let not the husband or the wife permit another to share the confidences that belong solely to themselves.” —*The Faith I Live By*, p. 252.

7. What is the secret of happiness in marriage? Ephesians 5:33; Colossians 3:19; 1 Peter 3:7.

“Make Christ first and last and best in everything. As your love for Him becomes deeper and stronger, your love for each other will be purified and strengthened.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 361.

“The sweetest type of heaven is a home where the Spirit of the Lord presides.” —*The Faith I Live By*, p. 252.

“Only where Christ reigns can there be deep, true, unselfish affection.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 358.

DANGERS AND BENEFITS IN MARRIAGE

8. What dangers is marriage to counteract? 1 Corinthians 7:2.

“Polygamy was practiced at an early date. It was one of the sins that brought the wrath of God upon the antediluvian world. Yet after the Flood it again became widespread. It was Satan’s studied effort to pervert the marriage institution, to weaken its obligations and lessen its sacredness; for in no surer way could he deface the image of God in man and open the door to misery and vice.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 338.

9. What other warnings are given in the Scriptures regarding the marriage bond? 1 Corinthians 7:10, 11; Malachi 2:16; Luke 16:18.

10. Explain the spiritual and social benefits of a well-established marriage. Luke 1:5-6; 1 Peter 3:1-6.

“God desires His people to bring into their homes all the peace and joy and love that it is possible for them to have. The love that they bring into the home, they will bring into the church. My brethren and sisters, you can bring the peace of heaven into the home and into the church, if you will sanctify to God the talent of speech.” –*The Upward Look*, p. 210.

11. When is marriage a blessing? Genesis 2:18, 21-24; 1:27, 28.

“God celebrated the first marriage. Thus the institution has for its originator the Creator of the universe. ‘Marriage is honourable’; it was one of the first gifts of God to man, and it is one of the two institutions that, after the fall, Adam brought with him beyond the gates of Paradise. When the divine principles are recognized and obeyed in this relation, marriage is a blessing; it guards the purity and happiness of the race, it provides for man’s social needs, it elevates the physical, the intellectual, and the moral nature.” –*The Adventist Home*, pp. 25, 26.

12. In whom will all families be blessed? Why? Isaiah 45:25; Genesis 28:14; Galatians 3:16.

“In the call of Abraham the Lord had said, ‘I will bless thee;... and thou shalt be a blessing:... and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.’ Genesis 12:2, 3. The same teaching was repeated through the prophets.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 27.

MISSIONARY REPORT FROM ETHIOPIA

To be read on Sabbath, December 27, 2008

*The Special Sabbath School Offering
will be gathered on Sabbath, January 3, 2009*

“Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.” Psalm 68:31.

Every prophecy in the Bible has a time for its literal fulfillment. That is also the case with the prophecy about Ethiopia, which is quoted above. The Reformation message in the Laodicean period is gaining a stronghold in the African continent, and it recently entered this very strategic territory.

Ethiopia is a relatively large country with a population of more than 75 million people. It is located in the northeastern part of the African continent, just 4° north of the equator. About two thirds of the population are Christian, with the remainder being Muslim or adherents of other pagan religions.

In the apostolic era, as we read in Acts 8:26-39, the princes of Ethiopia (Biblical Land of Cush) traveled to Jerusalem to worship; and it was thus that Christianity was introduced to Ethiopia, while other parts of the continent remained in darkness. Even today, in the royal museum, one can find old paintings depicting the ministry of Jesus Christ and His disciples in spreading the gospel message.

Politically and culturally, Ethiopia is the only country in Africa that has never been colonized by a foreign power or nation. The Italians attempted to rule Ethiopia but were defeated in the Battle of Adwa. They managed to colonize only the region of Eritrea, which later separated from Ethiopia and became a sovereign state. For many centuries, the kingdom of Ethiopia was very strong and had an advanced system of government. It has a unique national language derived from an Aramaic tribe. English is now being introduced as a foreign language for the sake of communication. Also the staple traditional food is very special and unique.

During my first missionary visit to this country in December 2005, answering the invitation of Brother Gebre Assefa and Brother Sileshe, leader of a large group which had been separated from the Seventh-day Adventist Church for seven years, I was surprised to hear that apart from this group, there are no splinter or independent S.D.A. groups such as we experience frequently in other countries. I was very curious

to know the reason for this, because in Ethiopia the S.D.A. Church has the same weaknesses and problems as in other countries. The answer I got is that the Ethiopians are very united and careful in weighing and scrutinizing information and evidence before making decisions.

The group that separated from the S.D.A. Church in 1998 makes up the greater number of members in the whole country and is well organized, with local churches, fields, and a Union. It did not immediately form an organization separate from the S.D.A. Church because of some bitter experiences and persecution by the S.D.A. Church leadership, which reported them to the civil authorities for arrest. This motivated them to investigate various reform groups; and, in that process, while searching on the Internet, they came across our G.C. website, making them aware of the existence of the International Missionary Society, S.D.A. Church, Reform Movement. Therefore, they made a Macedonian call to the General Conference, which commissioned me to go there. After my first visit, a series of intensive seminars were organized. In April 2006, a health and spiritual seminar was conducted by Brethren Idel Suarez, Jr., Tzvetan Petkov, and myself.

Since there are many places to be visited to meet all of the interested souls, more seminars and spiritual meetings are needed in different parts of the country. Most of the leaders have shown a positive response to the Reform Movement, and we are working to reach as many as possible of those who separated from the S.D.A. Church, numbering well over 50,000. This means that we have to consider obtaining places of worship, because the S.D.A. Church claims the properties the groups use for worship services, which originally belonged to them.

Considering the wonderful way in which God is working to bless His children in Ethiopia, it is high time for His faithful children worldwide to be aware of the time in which we are living and share in God's work. Ethiopia's hand is now stretched out; will you make a special sacrifice and contribute to their blessings? May God reward your generosity.

*—Parmenas N. Shirima
Regional Representative*

