

SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

For the First Half Year 2019

**“SEEK YE FIRST
THE KINGDOM
OF GOD”**

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CONTENTS

“Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God”

Introduction	7
1. The Eternal Kingdom	9
2. Adam Given Dominion	13
3. The Kingdom Usurped and Recovered	17
4. A Kingdom of Priests	21
5. Israel Requested a King	26
6. The King’s Responsibilities	31
7. Rise and Fall of the Kingdom of Israel	36
8. The Kingdom of Judah	42
<i>Missionary Report from the Emerging Countries of North Africa</i>	<i>47</i>
9. Prophecies Concerning God’s Kingdom	49
10. Proclamation of the Kingdom of Heaven	53
11. The Kingdom of Grace and the Kingdom of Glory	57
12. Spirituality and Entrance into the Kingdom	61
13. Keys of the Kingdom	65
14. Principles of the Kingdom	68
15. Righteousness, Peace, and Joy	72
16. Suffering for the Kingdom	77
17. Gospel of the Kingdom	81
<i>Missionary Report from the North American / Caribbean Division</i>	<i>84</i>
18. A Great Hindrance to Entering the Kingdom	86
19. Given to a People That Bears Fruit	90
20. Urgency in Advancing the Kingdom	94
21. The Kingdom Has Been At Hand Since John	98
22. Welcome into the Heavenly Kingdom	102
23. The Greatest in the Kingdom	106
24. Glimpse of the Kingdom	110
25. Signs of the Kingdom	113
26. Seated in the Kingdom	117
<i>Missionary Report from the General Conference Youth Department</i>	<i>121</i>

INTRODUCTION

After the prophet Malachi, almost four centuries of silence had passed when a new messenger was heard in the desert—the forerunner, John the Baptist. In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, the year 27 on our calendar, full of the Holy Spirit, John began to preach: “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” That same year, the Lord Jesus Christ was baptized and immediately began to preach: “Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Matthew 4:17. The disciples whom He called into special service, later the seventy, and then the apostolic church continued to preach the same glorious message. Considering the many references to “the kingdom of God” or “the kingdom of heaven” appearing in the apostolic writings, we may say that this message was the center of Christian preaching.

While the great expectation in Israel was the reestablishment of Israel as a nation, Jesus’ message was of God’s kingdom established in the human heart. The Scriptures state: “... When He was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.” Luke 17:20, 21.

Even after the disciples preached the message of the heavenly kingdom for three years, they still held the popular view of the people. Therefore, in His teaching and parables, Jesus repeated over and over again the nature of God’s kingdom. “Before leaving His disciples, Christ plainly stated the nature of His kingdom. He called to their minds what He had previously told them concerning it. He declared that it was not His purpose to establish in this world a temporal, but a spiritual kingdom. He was not to reign as an earthly king on David’s throne. Again He opened to them the Scriptures, showing that all He had passed through had been ordained in heaven, in the councils between the Father and Himself. All had been foretold by men inspired by the Holy Spirit. He said, You see that all I have revealed to you concerning My rejection as the Messiah has come to pass. All I have said in regard to the humiliation I should endure and the death I should die, has been verified. On the third day I rose again. Search the Scriptures more diligently, and you will see that in all these things the specifications of prophecy concerning Me have been fulfilled.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 820.

Nevertheless, up to the very last moment, the disciples still expected an earthly kingdom to be established. Right before His ascension, when Jesus repeated the promise of the Holy Spirit, they asked: “Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” Acts 1:6. How important it is not to be influenced by popular ideas!

In the days of John the Baptist, the good news of the kingdom of heaven’s being at hand was not new. In the very first books of the Bible, all through the

prophets' writings, and in the Psalms, the message was constantly repeated to establish faith in the Lord and to lift up hope in the reality of His heavenly kingdom. In the Old Testament writings, while many verses present God's dominion and sovereignty as universal, with man being encompassed within His realm (1 Chronicles 29:11; Psalm 22:28, 29; 103:19; 145:13; Daniel 4:3), others depict the redeemed in a very special position in His kingdom of glory. Daniel 2:44; 7:27.

How was it that the kingdom of God could be proclaimed as being at hand in Jesus' days? It was indeed near in reality, in the Person and mission of Jesus, the Messiah and Son of God. Matthew 12:28. His message presented the nature of God's kingdom as spiritual, for it is to be understood first as God's power in the individual heart and life and then as a spiritual realm characterized by righteousness, peace, joy, endurance, love, and humility. Romans 14:17; Matthew 5:10, 20. The Spirit of prophecy terms it the "kingdom of grace" that has already begun. The "kingdom of glory," which the redeemed will inherit when suffering, sin, and death exist no more, is still future and is reserved for those who have been partakers of the kingdom of grace.

The gospel is the power of salvation from sin and death (Romans 1:16, 17) and includes the good news of the kingdom, the message that is to be preached everywhere. Jesus said: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." Matthew 24:14. It was the message of hope and salvation that caused Abraham to look "for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10); and the Lord instructed His disciples to pray: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Matthew 6:10.

Therefore, what should we do? "... Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness;..." Matthew 6:33. "Christ calls upon the members of His church to cherish the true, genuine hope of the gospel. He points them upward, distinctly assuring them that the riches that endure are above, not below. Their hope is in heaven, not on the earth. 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness,' He says; 'and all these things'—all that is essential for your good—'shall be added unto you.'..."

"We should never forget that we are placed on trial in this world, to determine our fitness for the future life." —*Counsels on Stewardship*, pp. 218, 22.

May these lessons inspire us to pray for the coming of the kingdom of heaven and to seek for it above all, so that we may be part of the kingdom of grace now and soon enter the kingdom of glory.

—*The brethren of the General Conference Ministerial Department*

**SPECIAL SABBATH SCHOOL OFFERING FOR
THE GENERAL CONFERENCE RETIREMENT FUND**

GOD BLESS YOUR LOVING SACRIFICE FOR HIM!

1

Sabbath, January 5, 2019

The Eternal Kingdom

“By humiliation, suffering, and rejection Christ purchased the salvation of the human race. By His death He made it possible for man to enjoy a home in His eternal kingdom.” —*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 14, p. 205.

THE LORD IS KING

1. **What did the psalmist recognize when he repeatedly praised the Lord? What will faithful parents do?**

Psalm 84:3; 145:1 *Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God.... ^{145:1} I will exolt thee, my God, O king; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever.*

Genesis 18:19 *For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.*

“God is our Lawgiver and King, and parents are to place themselves under His rule.” —*The Adventist Home*, p. 310.

“God is our King, and we are His subjects. A mere knowledge of His will does not set aside the necessity of offering earnest supplications to Him for help, and of diligently seeking, by obeying His law, to cooperate with Him in answering the prayers offered. Thus His kingdom is established in our hearts.” —*Signs of the Times*, November 18, 1903.

“In teaching them [Abraham to his household and children] the laws of God, he taught them that the Lord is our judge, our lawgiver and king, and that parents and children were to be ruled by Him...” —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 286.

2. **How immense is the kingly position of the Creator? Describe Him in your own words.**

Psalm 47:7, 8 *For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding. ⁸God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.*

Zechariah 14:9 *And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one.*

“God is our Father, who loves and cares for us as His children; He is also the great King of the universe. The interests of His kingdom are our interests, and we are to work for its upbuilding....

“We are now standing on the threshold of great and solemn events. A crisis is before us, such as the world has never witnessed. And sweetly to us, as to the first disciples, comes the assurance that God’s kingdom ruleth over all. The program of coming events is in the hands of our Maker. The Majesty of heaven has the destiny of nations, as well as the concerns of His church, in His own charge.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 107, 121.

THE ETERNAL KINGDOM

- 3. Is His noble and holy dignity as King limited to a certain span of history? Tell about your experience when you first realized God’s eternal nature.**

Psalm 10:16 *The Lord is King for ever and ever: the heathen are perished out of his land.*

Jeremiah 10:10 *But the Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation.*

1 Timothy 1:17 *Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

“The Scriptures declare that upon one occasion, when the angels of God came to present themselves before the Lord, Satan came also among them (Job 1:6), not to bow before the Eternal King....” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 518.

“The intellect, the reason, the talents of men, are the gifts of God to be employed to His glory, for the upbuilding of His eternal kingdom. It is the spiritual and moral character that is of value in the sight of Heaven, and that will survive the grave and be made glorious with immortality for the endless ages of eternity.... Only those who have appreciated the grace of Christ, which has made them heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus, will rise from the grave bearing the image of their Redeemer.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 258, 259.

“Brethren, may God help us to preach the message in its purity, that the sound may go to earth’s remotest bounds, and souls be gathered out, such as shall finally be saved with us in His eternal kingdom.” —*General Conference Bulletin*, January 1, 1900.

- 4. Although on the earth there are lords, kings, sovereigns, and rulers, who is in reality the true, just, loving King? Is He also King in your mind and heart?**

Psalm 22:28 *For the kingdom is the Lord's: and he is the governor among the nations.*

Daniel 2:20, 21 *Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: ²¹And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding.*

1 Timothy 6:15 *Which in his times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of Lords.*

"I prayed," he said, "to the God of heaven." In that brief prayer, Nehemiah pressed into the presence of the King of kings and won to his side a power that can turn hearts as the rivers of waters are turned." —*Conflict and Courage*, p. 262.

"Let us be hopeful and courageous. Despondency in God's service is sinful and unreasonable. He knows our every necessity. To the omnipotence of the King of kings our covenant-keeping God unites the gentleness and care of the tender shepherd. His power is absolute, and it is the pledge of the sure fulfillment of His promises to all who trust in Him. He has means for the removal of every difficulty, that those who serve Him and respect the means He employs may be sustained. His love is as far above all other love as the heavens are above the earth. He watches over His children with a love that is measureless and everlasting." —*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 481, 482.

FOUNDATION OF GOD'S KINGDOM

5. What attributes characterize God's kingdom? Tell what it means to delight in such a holy realm.

Romans 14:17 *For the kingdom of God is ... righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*

Psalm 116:5 *Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful.*

Isaiah 35:8 *And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.*

"The kingdom of God consisteth not in outward show. Light will not be received by following selfish plans, but by looking unto Jesus, following Christ's leading, not the suppositions of men. The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 497.

"Let every business transaction be done in righteousness, remembering that we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, 'For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give an account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block, or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.... Let not then your good be evil spoken of: for the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' Romans 14:11-17." —*The Health Food Ministry*, p. 75.

6. Rejoicing in and desiring the happiness of all living beings, to whom will the Creator one day give the kingdom, dominion, and greatness over all the earth?

Daniel 7:18, 27 *But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever....²⁷ And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.*

“The kingdom of God’s grace is now being established, as day by day hearts that have been full of sin and rebellion yield to the sovereignty of His love. But the full establishment of the kingdom of His glory will not take place until the second coming of Christ to this world. ‘The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven,’ is to be given to ‘the people of the saints of the Most High.’ Daniel 7:27. They shall inherit the kingdom prepared for them ‘from the foundation of the world.’ Matthew 25:34. And Christ will take to Himself His great power and will reign.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 108.

“The great plan of redemption results in fully bringing back the world into God’s favor. All that was lost by sin is restored. Not only man but the earth is redeemed, to be the eternal abode of the obedient. For six thousand years Satan has struggled to maintain possession of the earth. Now God’s original purpose in its creation is accomplished. ‘The saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.’ Daniel 7:18.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 342.

SEEK GOD’S KINGDOM ABOVE ALL ELSE

7. With this glorious prospect right ahead, what should be the first and most serious interest of our lives?

Luke 12:31 *But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

Matthew 6:33 *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

“‘All these things,’ said Jesus, ‘do the nations of the world seek after.’ ‘Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.’ Luke 12: 30; Matthew 6:32, 33. I have come to open to you the kingdom of love and righteousness and peace. Open your hearts to receive this kingdom, and make its service your highest interest. Though it is a spiritual kingdom, fear not that your needs for this life will be uncared-for. If you give yourself to God’s service, He who has all power in heaven and earth will provide for your needs.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 99.

“Here is presented definitely that man is dependent upon God for every breath he draws. The beating heart, the throbbing pulse, every nerve and muscle in the living organism, are kept in order and activity by the power of an infinite

God. '... Seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.' Matthew 6:31-33." —*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 15, pp. 98, 99.

* * *

2

Sabbath, January 12, 2019

Adam Given Dominion

"Among the lower creatures Adam had stood as king, and so long as he remained loyal to God, all nature acknowledged his rule; but when he transgressed, this dominion was forfeited. The spirit of rebellion, to which he himself had given entrance, extended throughout the animal creation...." —*Conflict and Courage*, p. 19.

1. At the beginning, whom did the Lord create to have dominion over the earth and everything in it?

Genesis 1:26-28 *And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. ²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. ²⁸And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.*

"Man was the crowning act of the creation of God, made in the image of God, and designed to be a counterpart of God.... Man is very dear to God, because he was formed in His own image." —*My Life Today*, p. 126.

"Adam was crowned king in Eden. To him was given dominion over every living thing that God had created. The Lord blessed Adam and Eve with intelligence such as He had not given to any other creature. He made Adam the rightful sovereign over all the works of His hands. Man, made in the divine image, could contemplate and appreciate the glorious works of God in nature." —*Confrontation*, pp. 10, 11.

"The earth is God's, and He has committed all things to His Son. Adam was to reign subject to Christ. When Adam betrayed his sovereignty into Satan's hands, Christ still remained the rightful King." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 129.

2. Even centuries after the fall, under whom did the Scriptures say that everything in this earth was placed?

Psalm 115:15, 16 *Ye are blessed of the Lord which made heaven and earth. ¹⁶The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's: but the earth hath he given to the children of men.*

Deuteronomy 32:8 *When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.*

“Thus Christ sought to teach the disciples the truth that in God’s kingdom there are no territorial lines, no caste, no aristocracy; that they must go to all nations, bearing to them the message of a Saviour’s love. But not until later did they realize in all its fullness that God ‘hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us.’ Acts 17:26, 27.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 20.

“In words of matchless beauty and tenderness, the apostle Paul set before the sages of Athens the divine purpose in the creation and distribution of races and nations. ‘God that made the world and all things therein,’ declared the apostle, ‘hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him.’ Acts 17:24-27.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 500.

GOD’S PLAN AND PROMISES

3. How did the Psalmist describe the dominion, glory, and honor that man received from God?

Psalm 8:4-6 *What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him? ⁵For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. ⁶Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.*

“The earth [was] originally given to man as his kingdom....” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 674; *The Adventist Home*, p. 540.

“At his creation Adam was placed in dominion over the earth. But by yielding to temptation, he was brought under the power of Satan. ‘Of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.’ 2 Peter 2:19.... God created the earth to be the abode of holy, happy beings. The Lord ‘formed the earth and made it; He hath established it, He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited.’ Isaiah 45:18. That purpose will be fulfilled, when, renewed by the power of God, and freed from sin and sorrow, it shall become the eternal abode of the redeemed. ‘The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever.’ ‘And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him.’ Psalm 37:29; Revelation 22:3.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 67.

4. What did prophecy declare concerning the children or descendants of God’s people?

Psalm 45:15, 16 *With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace. ¹⁶Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.*

"The Bible reveals the true philosophy of history. In those words of matchless beauty and tenderness spoken by the apostle Paul to the sages of Athens is set forth God's purpose in the creation and distribution of races and nations: He 'hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him.' Acts 17:26, 27. God declares that whosoever will may come 'into the bond of the covenant.' Ezekiel 20:37. In the creation it was His purpose that the earth be inhabited by beings whose existence should be a blessing to themselves and to one another, and an honor to their Creator. All who will may identify themselves with this purpose. Of them it is spoken, 'This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise.' Isaiah 43:21." —*Education*, pp. 173, 174.

5. Besides this great privilege, what was the Lord's plan from the beginning? Who knew this, and what did he look forward to?

Matthew 25:34 *Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*

Hebrews 11:9, 10 *By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: ¹⁰For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*

"Better than all the friendship of the world is the friendship of Christ's re-deemed.... And better than all the words of earthly praise will be the Saviour's words to His faithful servants [Matthew 25:34 quoted]." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 374.

"It is recorded of the holy men of old that God was not ashamed to be called their God. The reason assigned is that instead of coveting earthly possessions or seeking happiness in worldly plans or aspirations they placed their all upon the altar of God and made disposition of it to build up His kingdom. They lived only for God's glory and declared plainly that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth, seeking a better country, that is, an heavenly. Their conduct proclaimed their faith. God could entrust to them His truth and could leave the world to receive from them a knowledge of His will." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 188.

THE SON'S MISSION

6. To reach this supreme goal, who was established as King in spiritual Zion, among His people?

Psalms 2:6, 7; 110:1, 2; 45:6 *Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. ⁷I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.... ^{110:1}The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I*

make thine enemies thy footstool. ²The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies....^{45:6}Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.

“Not only man but the earth had by sin come under the power of the wicked one, and was to be restored by the plan of redemption. At his creation Adam was placed in dominion over the earth. But by yielding to temptation, he was brought under the power of Satan. ‘Of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.’ 2 Peter 2:19. When man became Satan’s captive, the dominion which he held, passed to his conqueror. Thus Satan became ‘the god of this world.’ 2 Corinthians 4:4. He had usurped that dominion over the earth which had been originally given to Adam. But Christ, by His sacrifice paying the penalty of sin, would not only redeem man, but recover the dominion which he had forfeited. All that was lost by the first Adam will be restored by the second.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 67.

“Shall we not consecrate ourselves to God without reserve? Christ, the King of glory, gave Himself a ransom for us. Can we withhold anything from Him? Shall we think our poor, unworthy selves too precious, our time or property too valuable, to give to Jesus? No, no; the deepest homage of our hearts, the most skillful service of our hands, our talents of ability and of means—all are but too poor an offering to bring to Him who was slain and has ‘redeemed us to God by His blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.’” —*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 236.

7. Therefore, who is recognized and trusted as King by those who will inherit the promised kingdom?

Psalm 2:11, 12 *Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. ¹²Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.*

John 5:23 *That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.*

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

“Apart from Christ we have no merit, no righteousness. Our sinfulness, our weakness, our human imperfection make it impossible that we should appear before God unless we are clothed in Christ’s spotless righteousness. We are to be found in Him not having our own righteousness, but the righteousness which is in Christ. Then in the name that is above every name, the only name given among men whereby men can be saved, claim the promise of God, saying, ‘Lord, forgive my sin; I put my hands into Thy hand for help, and I must have it, or perish. I now believe.’ The Saviour says to the repenting sinner, ‘No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me’ (John 14:6), ‘and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.’ John 6:37. ‘I am thy salvation.’ Psalm 35:3.” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 333, 334.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

"The earth originally given to man as his kingdom, betrayed by him into the hands of Satan, and so long held by the mighty foe, has been brought back by the great plan of redemption. All that was lost by sin has been restored. 'Thus saith the Lord ... that formed the earth and made it; He hath established it, He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited.' Isaiah 45:18. God's original purpose in the creation of the earth is fulfilled as it is made the eternal abode of the redeemed. 'The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever.' Psalm 37:29." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 674.

"The great plan of redemption results in fully bringing back the world into God's favor. All that was lost by sin is restored. Not only man but the earth is redeemed, to be the eternal abode of the obedient. For six thousand years Satan has struggled to maintain possession of the earth. Now God's original purpose in its creation is accomplished. 'The saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.' Daniel 7:18." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 342.

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3

Sabbath, January 19, 2019

The Kingdom Usurped and Recovered

"When the conflict was renewed upon the earth, Satan again won a seeming advantage. By transgression, man became his captive, and man's kingdom also was betrayed into the hands of the archrebel. Now the way seemed open for Satan to establish an independent kingdom, and to defy the authority of God and His Son. But the plan of salvation made it possible for man again to be brought into harmony with God, and to render obedience to His law, and for both man and the earth to be finally redeemed from the power of the wicked one." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 331.

LOSS OF INNOCENCE

1. What happened to the dominion over the earth when the first man sinned? Whose servants do those who sin become?

Genesis 3:17-19 *And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; ¹⁸Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; ¹⁹In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.*

John 8:34 *Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever commit-teth sin is the servant of sin.*

Romans 6:16 *Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?*

“When God made man, He made him ruler over the earth and all living creatures. So long as Adam remained loyal to Heaven, all nature was in subjection to him. But when he rebelled against the divine law, the inferior creatures were in rebellion against his rule.” —*Conflict and Courage*, p. 18.

“Not only man but the earth had by sin come under the power of the wicked one, and was to be restored by the plan of redemption. At his creation Adam was placed in dominion over the earth. But by yielding to temptation, he was brought under the power of Satan. ‘Of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.’ 2 Peter 2:19.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 67.

2. In addition to Adam, in whom did the great adversary work? How deep did the darkness go among Adam’s offspring?

Ephesians 2:2 *Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.*

2 Corinthians 4:4 *In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*

“When our first parents were placed in the beautiful garden of Eden, they were tested in regard to their loyalty to God. They were free to choose the service of God, or by disobedience to ally themselves with the enemy of God and man.... If they disregarded God’s commands, and listened to the voice of Satan, as he spoke through the serpent, they would not only forfeit their claim to Eden, but to life itself.” —*That I May Know Him*, p. 14.

“Immortality, promised to man on condition of obedience, had been forfeited by transgression. Adam could not transmit to his posterity that which he did not possess; and there could have been no hope for the fallen race had not God, by the sacrifice of His Son, brought immortality within their reach.... Every man may come into possession of this priceless blessing if he will comply with the conditions. All ‘who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality,’ will receive ‘eternal life.’ Romans 2:7.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 533.

LOSS OF DOMINION

3. Because of his disobedience, what did man lose? Who became the prince of this world?

John 12:31; 14:30 *Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out....^{14:30} Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.*

“Not only had man come under the power of the deceiver, but the earth itself, the dominion of man, was usurped by the enemy.” –*Bible Echo*, July 15, 1893.

“When Satan declared to Christ, ‘The kingdom and glory of the world are delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it’, he stated what was true only in part, and he declared it to serve his own purpose of deception. Satan’s dominion was that wrested from Adam, but Adam was the vicegerent of the Creator. His was not an independent rule. The earth is God’s, and He has committed all things to His Son. Adam was to reign subject to Christ. When Adam betrayed his sovereignty into Satan’s hands, Christ still remained the rightful King. Thus the Lord had said to King Nebuchadnezzar, ‘The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will.’ Daniel 4:17. Satan can exercise his usurped authority only as God permits.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 129, 130.

4. After the devil wrested the dominion of this earth from Adam and claimed it as his own, to whom did he “offer” it?

Matthew 4:8-10 *Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; ⁹And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. ¹⁰Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*

Luke 4:6 *All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.*

“Now the tempter offered to yield up the power he had usurped. Christ might deliver Himself from the dreadful future by acknowledging the supremacy of Satan. But to do this was to yield the victory in the great controversy.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 129.

“Satan claimed the kingdom of earth as his and insinuated to Jesus that all His sufferings might be saved: that He need not die to obtain the kingdoms of this world; if He would worship him He might have all the possessions of earth and the glory of reigning over them. But Jesus was steadfast. He knew that the time was to come when He would by His own life redeem the kingdom from Satan, and that, after a season, all in heaven and earth would submit to Him. He chose His life of suffering and His dreadful death, as the way appointed by His Father that He might become a lawful heir to the kingdoms of earth and have them given into His hands as an everlasting possession. Satan also will be given into His hands to be destroyed by death, nevermore to annoy Jesus or the saints in glory.” –*Early Writings*, p. 158.

VICTORY OF THE LAMB AND REDEMPTION

5. Were man and the world abandoned to the tempter and usurper? What plan was put into action to gain the victory over sin and restore man’s freedom and dignity?

Genesis 3:15 *And 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.*

Revelation 5:8, 9 *And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. ⁹And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.*

"When the conflict was renewed upon the earth, Satan again won a seeming advantage. By transgression, man became his captive, and man's kingdom also was betrayed into the hands of the archrebel. Now the way seemed open for Satan to establish an independent kingdom, and to defy the authority of God and His Son. But the plan of salvation made it possible for man again to be brought into harmony with God, and to render obedience to His law, and for both man and the earth to be finally redeemed from the power of the wicked one." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 331.

"The divine Intercessor presents the plea that all who have overcome through faith in His blood be forgiven their transgressions, that they be restored to their Eden home, and crowned as joint heirs with Himself to 'the first dominion.' Micah 4:8.... Christ now asks that this plan be carried into effect as if man had never fallen. He asks for His people not only pardon and justification, full and complete, but a share in His glory and a seat upon His throne." —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 483, 484.

6. How different were the behavior and ministry of the second Adam in comparison to those of the first Adam? What destiny became possible for Adam and his descendants as the result of Christ's sacrifice?

Romans 5:12, 17 *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:... ¹⁷For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.*

1 Corinthians 15:21-23 *For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.*

"Adam, in his innocence, had enjoyed open communion with his Maker; but sin brought separation between God and man, and the atonement of Christ alone could span the abyss and make possible the communication of blessing or salvation from heaven to earth. Man was still cut off from direct approach to his Creator, but God would communicate with him through Christ and angels....

"When man became Satan's captive, the dominion which he held passed to his conqueror. Thus Satan became 'the god of this world.' 2 Corinthians 4:4. He had usurped that dominion over the earth which had been originally given to Adam. But Christ, by His sacrifice paying the penalty of sin, would not only redeem man, but recover the dominion which he had forfeited. All that was lost by the first Adam will be restored by the second.... That purpose will be fulfilled, when, renewed by the power of God, and freed from sin and sorrow, it shall become the eternal abode of the redeemed.... 'And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him.' Psalm 37:29; Revelation 22:3." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 67.

7. What will finally happen to the kingdom that was betrayed into the hands of the deceiver? For how long will Jesus work to restore God's authority and kingdom?

1 Corinthians 15:24-26 *Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. ²⁵For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. ²⁶The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.*

Acts 3:21 *Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.*

"When Adam fell and lost the liberty of a son of God, and brought himself into captivity to Satan, infinite pity filled the heart of Jesus. He took the field of conflict to fight in man's behalf, that all who desired to leave the cruel bondage of the 'god of this world,' might be set free, to serve the living God.... The nature of man had become so weakened by transgression, that it was an impossibility for him to overcome in his own strength; for he was led captive at the will of Satan; but, through the strength of Christ, every one may be an overcomer. We may be more than conquerors through Him who has 'loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood.'" —*Review and Herald*, February 28, 1888.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

"God's original purpose in the creation of the earth is fulfilled as it is made the eternal abode of the redeemed. 'The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever.' Psalm 37:29. The time has come to which holy men have looked with longing since the flaming sword barred the first pair from Eden—the time for 'the redemption of the purchased possession.' The earth originally given to man as his kingdom, betrayed by him into the hands of Satan, and so long held by the mighty foe, has been brought back by the great plan of redemption." —*The Adventist Home*, p. 540.

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4

Sabbath, January 26, 2019

A Kingdom of Priests

"God, in His infinite wisdom, chose Israel as the depository of priceless treasures of truth for all nations. He gave them His law as the standard of the character they were to develop before the world, before angels, and before the unfallen worlds. They were to reveal to the world the laws of the government of heaven. By precept and example they were to bear a decided testimony for the truth. The

glory of God, His majesty and power, were to be revealed in all their prosperity. They were to be a kingdom of priests and princes.”—(*The Southern Work*, January 10, 1905) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 1180, 1181.

KINGDOM OF PRIESTS

1. Who is the first priest of the Most High mentioned in the Holy Scriptures? What additional position did he occupy?

Genesis 14:18, 19 *And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.¹⁹ And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth.*

“It was Christ that spoke through Melchisedek, the priest of the most high God. Melchisedek was not Christ, but he was the voice of God in the world, the representative of the Father. And all through the generations of the past, Christ has spoken; Christ has led His people, and has been the light of the world. When God chose Abraham as a representative of His truth, He took him out of his country, and away from his kindred, and set him apart. He desired to mold him after His own model. He desired to teach him according to His own plan.”—(*Review and Herald*, February 18, 1890) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1093.

“Ask Abraham, he will tell you, It is ‘Melchisedek King of Salem,’ King of Peace. Genesis 14:18.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 578.

2. When Israel was established as a holy people, what was the Lord’s intention for them? What parts of the promise show that the Lord wished to establish a spiritual kingdom?

Exodus 19:5, 6 *Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: ⁶And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.*

“Their obedience to the law of God would make them marvels of prosperity before the nations of the world. He who could give them wisdom and skill in all cunning work would continue to be their teacher, and would ennoble and elevate them through obedience to His laws. If obedient, they would be preserved from the diseases that afflicted other nations, and would be blessed with vigor of intellect.... God furnished them with every facility for becoming the greatest nation on the earth.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 288.

CONSECRATION OF THE FIRSTBORN AND THE LEVITES

3. When Israel was still in Egypt, whom did the Lord choose to be specifically dedicated to Him?

Exodus 13:2 *Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine.*

Numbers 3:13 *Because all the firstborn are mine; for on the day that I smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto me all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast: mine shall they be: I am the Lord.*

"The dedication of the firstborn had its origin in the earliest times. God had promised to give the Firstborn of heaven to save the sinner. This gift was to be acknowledged in every household by the consecration of the firstborn son. He was to be devoted to the priesthood, as a representative of Christ among men.

"In the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, the dedication of the firstborn was again commanded.... Thus the law for the presentation of the firstborn was made particularly significant. While it was a memorial of the Lord's wonderful deliverance of the children of Israel, it prefigured a greater deliverance, to be wrought out by the only-begotten Son of God. As the blood sprinkled on the doorposts had saved the firstborn of Israel, so the blood of Christ has power to save the world."
—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 51.

4. When the people fell into grave apostasy, who took a firm stand for the Lord? Because of this, what tribe was chosen to be dedicated to the holy sanctuary service and maintenance?

Exodus 32:26, 29 *Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him....²⁹For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the Lord,... that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day.*

Numbers 1:50; 3:10-12 *But thou shalt appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of testimony, and over all the vessels thereof, and over all things that belong to it: they shall bear the tabernacle, and all the vessels thereof; and they shall minister unto it, and shall encamp round about the tabernacle....³⁻¹⁰And thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on their priest's office: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.¹¹And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, ¹²And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the firstborn that openeth the matrix among the children of Israel: therefore the Levites shall be mine.*

"By divine direction the tribe of Levi was set apart for the service of the sanctuary. In the earliest times every man was the priest of his own household. In the days of Abraham the priesthood was regarded as the birthright of the eldest son. Now, instead of the firstborn of all Israel, the Lord accepted the tribe of Levi for the work of the sanctuary. By this signal honor He manifested His approval of their fidelity, both in adhering to His service and in executing His judgments when Israel apostatized in the worship of the golden calf. The priesthood, however, was restricted to the family of Aaron. Aaron and his sons alone were permitted to minister before the Lord; the rest of the tribe were entrusted with the charge of the tabernacle and its furniture, and they were to attend upon the priests in their ministration, but they were not to sacrifice, to burn incense, or to see the holy things till they were covered." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 350.

"After the tabernacle service was established, the Lord chose the tribe of Levi in the place of the firstborn of all Israel to minister in the sanctuary. But the firstborn were still to be regarded as the Lord's, and were to be bought back by a ransom." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 51.

5. What great privilege was entrusted to the priests of the Lord? What knowledge was to be preserved by all who were honored to be His messengers?

Isaiah 61:6 *But ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves.*

Exodus 25:22 *And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.*

Malachi 2:7 *For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.*

"The sins of the people were transferred in figure to the officiating priest, who was a mediator for the people." —(*Signs of the Times*, March 14, 1878) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1111.

"God has promised that His faithful, obedient servants shall be exalted to be priests and kings." —(*Signs of the Times*, November 16, 1888.

"Prophets were continually arising and claiming to have special messages to this effect. Judah was to be honored as the place of power and glory. The kingdoms of the world and the riches of the Gentiles were to be placed at their feet, and they were to be exalted as priests and kings unto God. Those who did not believe in these great things for the Jewish nation were pronounced infidels. If their prayers did not abound in these glowing expectations, they were treated as worse than useless." —(*Signs of the Times*, January 10, 1900) *Lift Him Up*, p. 135.

6. In addition to performance of the sacrifices and services in the sanctuary, as well as its maintenance, what other ministry was entrusted to the priests?

Leviticus 10:11 *And that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses.*

Deuteronomy 33:9, 10 *Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant. ¹⁰They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar.*

"After the settlement in Canaan the divine precepts were to be repeated daily in every home; they were to be written plainly upon the doorposts and gates, and spread upon memorial tablets. They were to be set to music and chanted by young and old. Priests were to teach these holy precepts in public assemblies, and the rulers of the land were to make them their daily study. 'Meditate therein day and night,' the Lord commanded Joshua concerning the book of the law. Joshua 1:8....

"Daily the Levites 'taught the good knowledge of the Lord;' and those who had prepared their hearts to seek God, found pardon.... The ... worshipers determined

to spend another seven days in learning more fully the way of the Lord. The teaching priests continued their work of instruction from the book of the law....

"Nearly a century before, during the first Passover celebrated by Hezekiah, provision had been made for the daily public reading of the book of the law to the people by teaching priests." —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 464, 465, 337, 392.

A CALL TO GOD'S PEOPLE

7. According to the apostolic writings, to whom is the dignity of being a holy and royal priesthood extended? How do you see this privilege of every member, not just of certain selected individuals?

1 Peter 2:5, 9 *Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ....⁹ But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.*

"Mark the figure presented in verse five: 'Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.' Then these lively stones are exerting a tangible, practical influence in the Lord's spiritual house. They are a holy priesthood, performing pure, sacred service. They offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God." —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 461.

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

8. Where will those who joyfully and faithfully serve the Lord here on earth have the privilege of serving as priests and kings? How will they receive the grace and honor to serve as kings?

Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:6 *And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen....^{5:10} And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth....^{20:6} Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.*

"Before entering the City of God, the Saviour bestows upon His followers the emblems of victory and invests them with the insignia of their royal state. The glittering ranks are drawn up in the form of a hollow square about their King, whose form rises in majesty high above saint and angel, whose countenance beams upon them full of benignant love. Throughout the unnumbered host of the redeemed

every glance is fixed upon Him.... Upon the heads of the overcomers, Jesus with His own right hand places the crown of glory.... In every hand are placed the victor's palm and the shining harp. Then, as the commanding angels strike the note, every hand sweeps the harp strings with skillful touch, awaking sweet music in rich, melodious strains." —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 645, 646

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

Deuteronomy 26:17-19; 28:13

"'Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God:' He said; 'the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.... It shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which He sware unto thy fathers: And He will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee.... Thou shalt be blessed above all people:...' Deuteronomy 7:6-14.

"In these words are set forth the conditions of all true prosperity, conditions with which, if they fulfill the purpose of their establishment, all our institutions must comply." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 222, 223.

"God desired to make of His people Israel a praise and a glory. Every spiritual advantage was given them. God withheld from them nothing favorable to the formation of character that would make them representatives of Himself." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 288.

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5

Sabbath, February 2, 2019

Israel Requested a King

"God desired His people to look to Him alone as their Lawgiver and their Source of strength. Feeling their dependence upon God, they would be constantly drawn nearer to Him. They would become elevated and ennobled, fitted for the high destiny to which He had called them as His chosen people. But when a man was placed upon the throne, it would tend to turn the minds of the people from God. They would trust more to human strength, and less to divine power, and the errors of their king would lead them into sin and separate the nation from God." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 606.

ISRAEL'S GOVERNMENT

- 1. Describe the government that was established in Israel at the time of Moses. Where did the authority reside?**

Numbers 11:16, 17, 24, 25 *And the Lord said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee. ¹⁷And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone.... ²⁴And Moses went out, and told the people the words of the Lord, and gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle. ²⁵And the Lord came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease.*

Deuteronomy 16:18 *Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment.*

“The government of Israel was administered in the name and by the authority of God. The work of Moses, of the seventy elders, of the rulers and judges, was simply to enforce the laws that God had given; they had no authority to legislate for the nation. This was, and continued to be, the condition of Israel’s existence as a nation. From age to age men inspired by God were sent to instruct the people and to direct in the enforcement of the laws.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 603.

2. In the time of Samuel, what did the people think about this type of organization? What request did the elders of Israel present to the prophet?

1 Samuel 8:4, 5 *Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, ⁵And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.*

“When the Israelites first settled in Canaan they acknowledged the principles of the theocracy, and the nation prospered under the rule of Joshua. But increase of population and intercourse with other nations brought a change. The people adopted many of the customs of their heathen neighbors and thus sacrificed to a great degree their own peculiar, holy character. Gradually they lost their reverence for God and ceased to prize the honor of being His chosen people. Attracted by the pomp and display of heathen monarchs, they tired of their own simplicity. Jealousy and envy sprang up between the tribes. Internal dissensions made them weak; they were continually exposed to the invasion of their heathen foes, and the people were coming to believe that in order to maintain their standing among the nations, the tribes must be united under a strong central government. As they departed from obedience to God’s law, they desired to be freed from the rule of their divine Sovereign; and thus the demand for a monarchy became widespread throughout Israel.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 603.

WANTING A DIFFERENT RULER

3. Was he pleased with this? According to the Lord, what was behind the people’s request? What does the Spirit of prophecy say about this?

1 Samuel 8:6-8 *But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the Lord. ⁷And the Lord said unto Samuel, Harken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. ⁸According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.*

"The prophet was reproved for grieving at the conduct of the people toward himself as an individual. They had not manifested disrespect for him, but for the authority of God, who had appointed the rulers of His people. Those who despise and reject the faithful servant of God show contempt, not merely for the man, but for the Master who sent him. It is God's words, His reproofs and counsel, that are set at naught; it is His authority that is rejected.

"The days of Israel's greatest prosperity had been those in which they acknowledged Jehovah as their King—when the laws and the government which He had established were regarded as superior to those of all other nations. Moses had declared to Israel concerning the commandments of the Lord: 'This is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' Deuteronomy 4:6. But by departing from God's law the Hebrews had failed to become the people that God desired to make them, and then all the evils which were the result of their own sin and folly they charged upon the government of God. So completely had they become blinded by sin." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 605.

4. Did the people really fathom what would result from what they were requesting? How clear was the Lord's answer informing them about the claims a king would make?

1 Samuel 8:9, 10 *Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them. ¹⁰And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked of him a king.*

"Samuel was instructed to grant the request of the people, but to warn them of the Lord's disapproval, and also make known what would be the result of their course." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 607.

"The Lord had, through His prophets, foretold that Israel would be governed by a king. But it by no means follows that this form of government was according to His will. Though He foresees all things, He often permits men to take their own course, when they refuse to be guided by the counsels of infinite wisdom. In this instance, He instructed Samuel to grant their request, but to faithfully warn them of the Lord's disapproval, and also make known what would be the result of their course: 'Now therefore hearken unto their voice. Howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.'" —*Signs of the Times*, July 13, 1882.

CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR CHOICE

- 5. Were they informed that the kind of king they asked for would create more problems than he would solve? In addition to the risks mentioned in the Scriptures, what other problem was connected with a monarchy?**

1 Samuel 8:11-17 *And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. ¹²And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. ¹³And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. ¹⁴And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. ¹⁵And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. ¹⁶And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. ¹⁷He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants.*

“The Lord had, through His prophets, foretold that Israel would be governed by a king; but it does not follow that this form of government was best for them or according to His will. He permitted the people to follow their own choice, because they refused to be guided by His counsel. Hosea declares that God gave them a king in His anger. Hosea 13:11. When men choose to have their own way, without seeking counsel from God, or in opposition to His revealed will, He often grants their desires, in order that, through the bitter experience that follows, they may be led to realize their folly and to repent of their sin....

“Besides all this, the king would require a tenth of all their income, the profits of their labor, or the products of the soil. ‘Ye shall be his servants,’ concluded the prophet. ‘And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king....’ However burdensome,... when once a monarchy was established, they could not set it aside at pleasure.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 605, 606.

- 6. Did the people realize that their request was not the best and that one day they would be very sorry for it? What reasons did they give for wanting this?**

1 Samuel 8:18-20 *And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day. ¹⁹Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; ²⁰That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.*

“‘Like all the nations.’ The Israelites did not realize that to be in this respect unlike other nations was a special privilege and blessing. God had separated the Israelites from every other people, to make them His own peculiar treasure. But they, disregarding this high honor, eagerly desired to imitate the example of the heathen! And still the longing to conform to worldly practices and customs exists among the professed people of God. As they depart from the Lord they become ambitious for the gains and honors of the world. Christians are constantly seeking

to imitate the practices of those who worship the god of this world. Many urge that by uniting with worldlings and conforming to their customs they might exert a stronger influence over the ungodly. But all who pursue this course thereby separate from the Source of their strength. Becoming the friends of the world, they are the enemies of God." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 607.

SORROW FOR SAMUEL AND THE LORD

7. Can we grasp how Samuel felt when he heard the people's conclusion? Nevertheless, what was the Lord's response?

1 Samuel 8:21, 22 *And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the Lord. ²²And the Lord said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city.*

"With deep sadness Samuel listened to the words of the people; but the Lord said unto him, 'Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king.' The prophet had done his duty. He had faithfully presented the warning, and it had been rejected. With a heavy heart he dismissed the people, and himself departed to prepare for the great change in the government.

"Samuel's life of purity and unselfish devotion was a perpetual rebuke both to self-serving priests and elders and to the proud, sensual congregation of Israel. Although he assumed no pomp and made no display, his labors bore the signet of Heaven. He was honored by the world's Redeemer, under whose guidance he ruled the Hebrew nation. But the people had become weary of his piety and devotion; they despised his humble authority and rejected him for a man who should rule them as a king." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 607.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

"Those who act a part in God's great cause are not to follow the example of worldlings... He who depends on men for strength and influence leans on a broken reed.

"Depending on men has been the great weakness of the church. Men have dishonored God by failing to appreciate His sufficiency, by coveting the influence of men. Thus Israel became weak. The people wanted to be like the other nations of the world, and they asked for a king. They desired to be guided by human power which they could see, rather than by the divine.... They made their own choice, and the result was seen in the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the nation....

"What must have been the power of the enemy upon Solomon, a man whom Inspiration has thrice called the beloved of God, and to whom was committed the great work of building the temple! In that very work Solomon made an alliance with idolatrous nations, and through his marriages he bound himself up with heathen women through whose influence he in his later years forsook the temple of God to worship in the groves he had prepared for their idols." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 249, 250.

* * *

The King's Responsibilities

"Before man can belong to the kingdom of Christ, his character must be purified from sin and sanctified by the grace of Christ.... Christ longs to manifest His grace, and stamp His character and image upon the whole world.... He came to establish a kingdom of righteousness, and He would not be bought; He would not abandon His purpose. This earth is His purchased inheritance, and He would have men free and pure and holy." —*God's Amazing Grace*, p. 27.

THE ANOINTED OF THE LORD

1. According to the Lord's instruction, were the kings of Israel to be established by self-appointment or popular acclamation? What education was the selected individual to receive before becoming king?

1 Samuel 10:1; 16:12, 13 *Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?...^{16:12} And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he.¹³ Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.*

"God permits men to be placed in positions of responsibility." —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 484.

"Earnest efforts should be made to present before men and women the example that Christ has left them in His life of sacrifice. He laid aside His royal robe and kingly crown, and yielding up His high position as Commander of the heavenly host, He clothed His divinity with humanity, and for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might come into possession of eternal riches." —*Review and Herald*, September 19, 1899.

"Candidly and seriously we are to consider the question, Have we humbled ourselves before God, that the Holy Spirit may work through us with transforming power? As children of God, it is our privilege to be worked by His Spirit. When self is crucified, the Holy Spirit takes the broken-hearted ones, and makes them vessels unto honor.... Jesus Christ will make such men and women superior in mental, physical, and moral power. The graces of the Spirit will give solidity to the character." —(*The Southern Review*, December 5, 1899) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 366.

2. What respect did the people have for the king, knowing that he was the Lord's anointed? See 1 Samuel 24:1-7; 26 for the circumstances of the examples.

Psalm 132:17 *There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.*

1 Samuel 24:6; 26:16 *And he said unto his men, The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord....* ^{26:16} *This thing is not good that thou hast done. As the Lord liveth, ye are worthy to die, because ye have not kept your master, the Lord's anointed. And now see where the king's spear is, and the cruse of water that was at his bolster.*

"David ought not to have distrusted God for one moment. He had cause for trusting in Him: he was the Lord's anointed, and in the midst of danger he had been protected by the angels of God; he had been armed with courage to do wonderful things; and if he had but removed his mind from the distressing situation in which he was placed, and had thought of God's power and majesty, he would have been at peace even in the midst of the shadows of death; he could with confidence have repeated the promise of the Lord, '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.' Isaiah 54:10." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 657.

PROPHECY AND INSTRUCTIONS

3. Had the Lord already known that Israel would ask for a king to lead them? What had Moses instructed the people concerning this, according to the Lord's word?

Deuteronomy 17:14, 15 *When thou art come unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; ¹⁵Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the Lord thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother.*

"The Lord foresaw that Israel would desire a king, but He did not consent to a change in the principles upon which the state was founded. The king was to be the vicegerent of the Most High. God was to be recognized as the Head of the nation, and His law was to be enforced as the supreme law of the land....

"The king was not to be an absolute monarch, but was to hold his power in subjection to the will of the Most High. This address was recorded in a book, wherein were set forth the prerogatives of the prince and the rights and privileges of the people. Though the nation had despised Samuel's warning, the faithful prophet, while forced to yield to their desires, still endeavored, as far as possible, to guard their liberties." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 603, 611.

"While a monarchical form of government for Israel had been foretold in prophecy, the regulation had been established that only those should be raised to the throne who were chosen by Jehovah Himself. The Hebrews still so far respected the authority of God as to leave the selection entirely to His hands." —*Signs of the Times*, July 20, 1882.

4. What were the kings and all other leaders to have and to study? What else did the prophet Samuel prepare as special guidelines for the king?

Deuteronomy 17:18, 19; 31:9 *And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: ¹⁹And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them:... ^{31:9}And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and unto all the elders of Israel.*

1 Samuel 10:25 *Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the Lord. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house.*

“Directions were given that he who should sit on the throne of Israel should ‘write him a copy’ of the statutes of Jehovah ‘in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites.’ ‘It shall be with him,’ the Lord said, ‘and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.’ Deuteronomy 17:18-20....

“Samuel then set before the people ‘the manner of the kingdom,’ stating the principles upon which the monarchical government was based, and by which it should be controlled.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 52, 611.

NO CONFIDENCE IN HUMAN BEINGS

5. What did the people want when they asked for a king? However, what did the Lord want for them?

1 Samuel 8:20 *That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.*

Deuteronomy 17:16, first part *But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses:...*

Psalms 20:7; 146:3 *Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.... ^{146:3}Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.*

Isaiah 33:22 *For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us.*

“Before there could be any hope of prosperity for Israel they must be led to repentance before God. In consequence of sin they had lost their faith in God and their discernment of His power and wisdom to rule the nation—lost their confidence in His ability to vindicate His cause. Before they could find true peace they must be led to see and confess the very sin of which they had been guilty. They had declared the object of the demand for a king to be, ‘That our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.’ Samuel recounted the history of Israel, from the day when God brought them from Egypt. Jehovah, the King of kings,

had gone out before them and had fought their battles. Often their sins had sold them into the power of their enemies, but no sooner did they turn from their evil ways than God's mercy raised up a deliverer. The Lord sent Gideon and Barak, and 'Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and ye dwelt safe.' Yet when threatened with danger they had declared, 'A king shall reign over us,' ..." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 614, 615.

6. What instruction was given concerning the marriage of the king? What happened when this principle was disregarded?

Deuteronomy 17:17, first part *Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away:...*

1 Kings 11:1, 2, 4 *But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; ²Of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love.... ⁴For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father.*

"God commanded Moses to warn the people against their having a plurality of wives. 'Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away.'" —*Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 395.

"In connection with this instruction the Lord particularly cautioned the one who might be anointed king not to 'multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away:...' —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 52.

"Solomon's course brought its sure penalty. His separation from God through communication with idolaters ruined him. As he cast off his allegiance to God, he lost the mastery of himself. His moral efficiency was gone, as power is gone from a paralytic. His fine sensibilities became blunted, his conscience seared. Association with idolaters corrupted his faith. The instruction that God had given to serve as a barrier for his safety—'neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold'—was disregarded, and Solomon gave himself up to the worship of false gods. He became the tool of Satan and a slave to impulse." —*Review and Herald*, December 21, 1905.

DANGERS OF WEALTH AND PRIDE

7. What other instruction was given? What was its purpose?

Deuteronomy 17:17, second part ... *Neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.*

Jeremiah 9:23 *Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches.*

Mark 10:24 *And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!*

“Neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.’

“True goodness is accounted of Heaven as true greatness. The condition of the moral affections determines the worth of the man. A man may have property and intellect, and yet be valueless, because the glowing fire of goodness has never burned upon the altar of his heart, because his conscience has been seared, blackened and crisped, with selfishness and sin. When the lust of the flesh is controlling the man, and the evil passions of the carnal nature are permitted to rule, skepticism in regard to the realities of the Christian religion is encouraged, and doubts are expressed, as though it was a special virtue to doubt.” —*Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, pp. 395, 396.

“They [the disciples] had been taught to look upon the rich as the favorites of heaven; worldly power and riches they themselves hoped to receive in the Messiah’s kingdom....

“Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!...” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 393, 394.

8. How was a person who was selected as king to regard himself in relation to the people? Similarly, what did the Lord say about all who receive responsibilities among His people?

Deuteronomy 17:20 *That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.*

1 Samuel 15:17 *And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel?*

Mark 10:42, 43 *But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. ⁴³But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister.*

“... Foreseeing the perils that would beset those who might be chosen as rulers of Israel, gave Moses instruction for their guidance. Directions were given that he who should sit on the throne of Israel should ‘write him a copy’ of the statutes of Jehovah ‘in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites.’ [Deuteronomy 17:18-20 quoted.]” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 52.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

2 Samuel 5:1-3

2 Chronicles 32:25

Deuteronomy 28:7

“... The Lord, foreseeing the perils that would beset those who might be chosen as rulers of Israel, gave Moses instruction for their guidance.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 52.

“The part which Joseph acted in connection with the scenes of the gloomy

prison, was that which raised him finally to prosperity and honor. God designed that he should obtain an experience by temptations, adversity, and hardships, to prepare him to fill an exalted position." —*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 146; *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1097.

"The children of Israel were to occupy all the territory which God appointed them.... But it was God's purpose that by the revelation of His character through Israel men should be drawn unto Him. To all the world the gospel invitation was to be given. Through the teaching of the sacrificial service Christ was to be uplifted before the nations, and all who would look unto Him should live.... As the numbers of Israel increased they were to enlarge their borders, until their kingdom should embrace the world." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 290.

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Sabbath, February 16, 2019

Rise and Fall of the Kingdom of Israel

"'Like all the nations.' The Israelites did not realize that to be in this respect unlike other nations was a special privilege and blessing. God had separated the Israelites from every other people, to make them His own peculiar treasure. But they, disregarding this high honor, eagerly desired to imitate the example of the heathen! And still the longing to conform to worldly practices and customs exists among the professed people of God.... Becoming the friends of the world, they are the enemies of God. For the sake of earthly distinction they sacrifice the unspeakable honor to which God has called them, of showing forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. 1 Peter 2:9." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 607.

SAUL, THE FIRST KING

1. Fulfilling the wishes of the people, who became Israel's first king? Even though he had some victories against the nation's enemies, how did his reign end?

1 Samuel 9:26, 27; 10:1; 15:26, 27 *And they arose early: and it came to pass about the spring of the day, that Samuel called Saul to the top of the house, saying, Up, that I may send thee away. And Saul arose, and they went out both of them, he and Samuel, abroad. ²⁷And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on,) but stand thou still a while, that I may show thee the word of God.... ^{10:1}Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?... ^{15:26}And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel. ²⁷And as Samuel turned about*

to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent.

“By command of God, Saul had been anointed as king over Israel. Because of his disobedience the Lord declared that the kingdom should be taken from him; and yet how tender and courteous and forbearing was the conduct of David toward him! In seeking the life of David, Saul came into the wilderness and, unattended, entered the very cave where David with his men of war lay hidden. ‘And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the Lord said unto thee,... I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee.... And he said unto his men, The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord’s anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord.’” —*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 484, 485.

DAVID AND SOLOMON

2. Who succeeded Saul on the throne, and how was he considered by the Lord because of his spirit? How long did the second, best-known king of Israel reign?

1 Samuel 13:14 *But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee.*

1 Kings 2:10, 11; 3:14 *So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David. ¹¹And the days that David reigned over Israel were forty years: seven years reigned he in Hebron, and thirty and three years reigned he in Jerusalem.... ^{3:14}And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days.*

“So long as his will was controlled by the will of God, so long as he yielded to the discipline of His Spirit, God could crown his efforts with success. But when Saul chose to act independently of God, the Lord could no longer be his guide, and was forced to set him aside. Then He called to the throne ‘a man after His own heart’ (1 Samuel 13:14)—not one who was faultless in character, but who, instead of trusting to himself, would rely upon God, and be guided by His Spirit; who, when he sinned, would submit to reproof and correction.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 636.

“... It was when David was pure, and walking in the counsel of God, that God called him a man after His own heart. When David departed from God, and stained his virtuous character by his crimes, he was no longer a man after God’s own heart.... The terrible calamity that God permitted to come upon David, who, for his integrity, was once called a man after God’s own heart, is evidence to after generations that God would not justify any one in transgressing His commandments....” —*Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 379.

3. What report is given of the first part of King Solomon’s reign? Since God, the true King, gave him his authority, on what throne did Solomon sit?

1 Kings 4:21, 24, 25 *And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life.... ²⁴For he had dominion over all the region*

on this side the river, from Tiphshah even to Azzah, over all the kings on this side the river: and he had peace on all sides round about him. ²⁵And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon.

1 Chronicles 17:14; 28:5; 29:23 *But I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom for ever: and his throne shall be established for evermore....* ^{28:5}*And of all my sons, (for the Lord hath given me many sons,) he hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel....* ^{29:23}*Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him.*

“While Solomon exalted the law of heaven, God was with him, and wisdom was given him to rule over Israel with impartiality and mercy. At first, as wealth and worldly honor came to him, he remained humble, and great was the extent of his influence. ‘Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river [Euphrates] unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt.’ ‘He ... had peace on all sides round about him. And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree,... all the days of Solomon.’ 1 Kings 4:21, 24, 25.” — *Prophets and Kings*, p. 51.

4. Did Solomon always maintain this blessed position? What did the Lord state about his kingdom?

1 Kings 11:4-6, 11-13 *For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. ⁵For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. ⁶And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father....* ¹¹*Wherefore the Lord said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. ¹²Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. ¹³Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen.*

“But after a morning of great promise his life was darkened by apostasy. History records the melancholy fact that he who had been called Jedidiah—‘Beloved of the Lord’ (2 Samuel 12:25, margin)—he who had been honored by God with tokens of divine favor so remarkable that his wisdom and uprightness gained for him worldwide fame, he who had led others to ascribe honor to the God of Israel, turned from the worship of Jehovah to bow before the idols of the heathen....

“For a time God in His compassionate mercy overruled this terrible mistake; and the king, by a wise course, could have checked at least in a large measure the evil forces that his imprudence had set in operation. But Solomon had begun to lose sight of the Source of his power and glory.” — *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 51-54.

“Though he afterward repented, his repentance did not prevent the fruition of the evil he had sown.” — *Education*, p. 49.

REHOBOAM AND THE DIVISION

5. Did Rehoboam possess the same wisdom as his grandfather David or his father Solomon? What terrible division came about as the consequence of his unwise, reckless attitude?

1 Kings 11:43; 12:3, 4, 12-16, 19 *And Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead....^{12:3}And Jeroboam and all the congregation of Israel came, and spake unto Rehoboam, saying, ⁴Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee....¹²So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had appointed, saying, Come to me again the third day.¹³And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the old men's counsel that they gave him; ¹⁴And spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.¹⁵Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the Lord, that he might perform his saying, which the Lord spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat.¹⁶So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? Neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents....¹⁹So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day.*

"The Lord did not allow Rehoboam to carry out the policy he had outlined. Among the tribes were many thousands who had become thoroughly aroused over the oppressive measures of Solomon's reign, and these now felt that they could not do otherwise than rebel against the house of David....

"The breach created by the rash speech of Rehoboam proved irreparable. Thenceforth the twelve tribes of Israel were divided, the tribes of Judah and Benjamin composing the lower or southern kingdom of Judah, under the rulership of Rehoboam...." —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 90, 91.

THE NORTHERN KINGDOM

6. In opposition to Rehoboam, who was left with only the tribe of Judah and part of Benjamin, who took the leadership of the other ten tribes? Acting in a very human manner, what did the king introduce in the northern kingdom?

1 Kings 12:20, 28-30 *And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was come again, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only....²⁸Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.²⁹And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan.³⁰And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan.*

“... The ten northern tribes formed and maintained a separate government, known as the kingdom of Israel, with Jeroboam as their ruler.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 91.

“Placed on the throne by the ten tribes who had rebelled against the house of David, Jeroboam was in a position to do much toward bringing about a spiritual reformation in his kingdom. Had he used his influence in strengthening the confidence of the people in the God of heaven as their Supreme Ruler, he might have encouraged multitudes to seek after righteousness. Under the rulership of Solomon, he had revealed discretion, aptitude, and sound judgment; and the knowledge of spiritual things that he had gained during years of faithful service he could have used to bring untold blessings to those who had chosen him as their leader. But instead of advancing in the way of righteousness, he failed to make God his trust.” —*Review and Herald*, July 17, 1913.

7. What was the spiritual condition of the northern kingdom—Israel—at the time of King Ahab? How did the Lord bring about a reformation through the prophet Elijah?

1 Kings 18:18-21 *And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim. ¹⁹Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table. ²⁰So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel. ²¹And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.*

“The people forgot that the hills and valleys, the streams and fountains, were in the hand of the living God, that He controlled the sun, the clouds of heaven, and all the powers of nature.

“Through faithful messengers the Lord sent repeated warnings to the apostate king and the people, but in vain were these words of reproof. In vain did the inspired messengers assert Jehovah's right to be the only God in Israel; in vain did they exalt the laws that He had entrusted to them. Captivated by the gorgeous display and the fascinating rites of idol worship, the people followed the example of the king and his court, and gave themselves up to the intoxicating, degrading pleasures of a sensual worship. In their blind folly they chose to reject God and His worship. The light so graciously given them had become darkness. The fine gold had become dim. Alas, how had the glory of Israel departed! Never before had the chosen people of God fallen so low in apostasy.” —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 115, 116.

END OF THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL

8. How did the history and existence of the northern kingdom develop and conclude? Who was its last king, and how did he act?

2 Kings 17:1-7, 18 *In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah began Hoshea the son of Elah to reign in Samaria over Israel nine years. ²And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, but not as the kings of Israel that were before him. ³Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria; and Hoshea became his servant, and gave him presents. ⁴And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea: for he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and brought no present to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year: therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison. ⁵Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. ⁶In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. ⁷For so it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods,... ¹⁸Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only.*

"The prophet [Isaiah] was to witness the invasion of Judah by the combined armies of northern Israel and of Syria; he was to behold the Assyrian hosts encamped before the chief cities of the kingdom. During his lifetime, Samaria was to fall, and the ten tribes of Israel were to be scattered among the nations....

"The destruction that befell the northern kingdom was a direct judgment from Heaven. The Assyrians were merely the instruments that God used to carry out His purpose....

"In the terrible judgments brought upon the ten tribes the Lord had a wise and merciful purpose. That which He could no longer do through them in the land of their fathers He would seek to accomplish by scattering them among the heathen." —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 305, 291, 292.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

"The prophet says, 'Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me,...' —*Peter's Counsel to Parents*, p. 46.

"Many have borne so few burdens, their hearts have known so little real anguish, they have felt so little perplexity and distress in behalf of others, that they cannot understand the work of the true burden bearer.... The child may wonder at his father's fears and perplexities. These appear needless to him. But when years of experience shall have been added to his life, when he himself comes to bear its burdens, he will look back upon his father's life and understand that which was once so incomprehensible. Bitter experience has given him knowledge...." —*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 483, 484

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***Please read the Missionary Report from the
Emerging Countries of North Africa on page 47***

8

Sabbath, February 23, 2019

The Kingdom of Judah

“To the ‘profane wicked prince’ had come the day of final reckoning. ‘Remove the diadem,’ the Lord decreed, ‘and take off the crown.’ Not until Christ Himself should set up His kingdom was Judah again to be permitted to have a king. ‘I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it,’ was the divine edict concerning the throne of the house of David; ‘and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him.’ Ezekiel 21:25-27....

“The remnant of Judah were to go into captivity, to learn through adversity the lessons they had refused to learn under circumstances more favorable. From this decree of the holy Watcher there could be no appeal.” —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 451, 453.

FIVE FAITHFUL KINGS

- 1. Who was one king of Judah, the southern kingdom, who acted faithfully, as did his forefather David? What positive testimony is given of his son as well?**

1 Kings 15:9, 11; 22:41, 43 *And in the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel reigned Asa over Judah.... ¹¹And Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did David his father.... ^{22:41}And Jehoshaphat the son of Asa began to reign over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel.... ⁴³And he walked in all the ways of Asa his father; he turned not aside from it, doing that which was right in the eyes of the Lord.*

“During the greater part of this time of apostasy in Israel, Asa was ruling in the kingdom of Judah. For many years ‘Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God: for he took away the altars of the strange gods, and the high places, and brake down the images, and cut down the groves: and commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment. Also he took away out of all the cities of Judah the high places and the sun [margin] images: and the kingdom was quiet before him.’ 2 Chronicles 14:2-5....

“In his efforts to rule wisely, Jehoshaphat endeavored to persuade his subjects to take a firm stand against idolatrous practices. Many of the people in his realm ‘offered and burnt incense yet in the high places.’ 1 Kings 22:43. The king did not

at once destroy these shrines; but from the beginning he tried to safeguard Judah from the sins characterizing the northern kingdom under the rule of Ahab, of whom he was a contemporary for many years. Jehoshaphat himself was loyal to God.... Because of his integrity, the Lord was with him, and 'established the kingdom in his hand.' 2 Chronicles 17:3-5." —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 110, 190, 191.

2. After a time of apostasy under various monarchs, what three kings of Judah are mentioned as being faithful to God?

2 Kings 12:1, 2; 14:1, 3 *In the seventh year of Jehu Jehoash began to reign; and forty years reigned he in Jerusalem....² And Jehoash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all his days wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him....^{14:1} In the second year of Joash son of Jehoahaz king of Israel reigned Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah....³ And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, yet not like David his father: he did according to all things as Joash his father did.*

"The tabernacle, as afterward the temple, was erected wholly by freewill offerings; and to provide for necessary repairs and other expenses, Moses directed that as often as the people were numbered, each should contribute a half shekel for 'the service of the tabernacle.' In the time of Nehemiah a contribution was made yearly for this purpose.... From time to time sin offerings and thank offerings were brought to God. These were presented in great numbers at the annual feasts. And the most liberal provision was made for the poor." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 526.

3. Who was another descendant of David who has a good report in the Scriptures?

2 Kings 15:1, 3 *In the twenty and seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel began Azariah son of Amaziah king of Judah to reign....³ And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah had done.*

"The long reign of Uzziah [also known as Azariah] in the land of Judah and Benjamin was characterized by a prosperity greater than that of any other ruler since the death of Solomon, nearly two centuries before. For many years the king ruled with discretion. Under the blessing of Heaven his armies regained some of the territory that had been lost in former years. Cities were rebuilt and fortified, and the position of the nation among the surrounding peoples was greatly strengthened. Commerce revived, and the riches of the nations flowed into Jerusalem. Uzziah's name 'spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong.' 2 Chronicles 26:15.

"This outward prosperity, however, was not accompanied by a corresponding revival of spiritual power. The temple services were continued as in former years, and multitudes assembled to worship the living God; but pride and formality gradually took the place of humility and sincerity. Of Uzziah himself it is written: 'When he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the Lord his God.' Verse 16." —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 303, 304.

4. What king surpassed the previous rulers and was famous for his integrity in following the Lord's will?

2 Kings 18:1, 3, 5-7 *Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign....³And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father did....⁵He trusted in the Lord God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.⁶For he clave to the Lord, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses.⁷And the Lord was with him; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth: and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not.*

"In sharp contrast with the reckless rule of Ahaz was the reformation wrought during the prosperous reign of his son. Hezekiah came to the throne determined to do all in his power to save Judah from the fate that was overtaking the northern kingdom. The messages of the prophets offered no encouragement to halfway measures. Only by most decided reformation could the threatened judgments be averted.

"In the crisis, Hezekiah proved to be a man of opportunity. No sooner had he ascended the throne than he began to plan and to execute. He first turned his attention to the restoration of the temple services, so long neglected; and in this work he earnestly solicited the cooperation of a band of priests and Levites who had remained true to their sacred calling. Confident of their loyal support, he spoke with them freely concerning his desire to institute immediate and far-reaching reforms." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 331.

5. After the apostasies of a number of kings, whom did the Lord bless in bringing about a thorough reformation in the kingdom of Judah, the southern kingdom?

2 Kings 22:1, 2; 23:3, 4 *Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty and one years in Jerusalem....²And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left....^{23:3}And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all their heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant.⁴And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the Lord all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the host of heaven: and he burned them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Bethel.*

"With the accession of Josiah to the throne, where he was to rule for thirty-one years, those who had maintained the purity of their faith began to hope that the downward course of the kingdom was checked; for the new king, though only eight years old, feared God, and from the very beginning 'he did that which

was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left.' 2 Kings 22:2. Born of a wicked king, beset with temptations to follow in his father's steps, and with few counselors to encourage him in the right way, Josiah nevertheless was true to the God of Israel. Warned by the errors of past generations, he chose to do right, instead of descending to the low level of sin and degradation to which his father and his grandfather had fallen. He 'turned not aside to the right hand or to the left.' As one who was to occupy a position of trust, he resolved to obey the instruction that had been given for the guidance of Israel's rulers, and his obedience made it possible for God to use him as a vessel unto honor." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 384.

FALL OF JUDAH

- 6. Although the kingdom of Judah survived for a while after that of Israel, did the people and the last kings learn the lesson that the Lord had given to the northern kingdom? What happened in the time of Zedekiah, the last king of the southern kingdom?**

2 Chronicles 36:11, 12, 17, 18 *Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. ¹²And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord his God, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the Lord.... ¹⁷Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand. ¹⁸And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all these he brought to Babylon.*

"The children of Israel were taken captive to Babylon because they separated from God, and no longer maintained the principles that had been given to keep them free from the methods and practices of the nations who dishonored God. The Lord could not give them prosperity, He could not fulfill His covenant with them, while they were untrue to the principles He had given them zealously to maintain. By their spirit and their actions they misrepresented His character, and He permitted them to be taken captive. Because of their separation from Him, He humbled them. He left them to their own ways, and the innocent suffered with the guilty." —(*Review and Herald*, May 2, 1899) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 1040.

- 7. What ended with the fall of Judah under a direct descendant of King David? Nevertheless, what hopeful, glorious plan did God promise for the future?**

Jeremiah 13:18 *Say unto the king and to the queen, Humble yourselves, sit down: for your principalities shall come down, even the crown of your glory.*

Lamentations 5:16 *The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us, that we have sinned!*

Jeremiah 33:15-17 *In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righ-*

teousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. ¹⁶In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness. ¹⁷For thus saith the Lord; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel.

"Zedekiah was faithfully instructed through the prophet Jeremiah, how he might be preserved from the calamities that would surely come upon him if he did not change his course and serve the Lord. The calamities came, because he would not, through obedience, place himself under the protection of God. With his eyes put out, he was led in chains of captivity to Babylon.

"What a sad and awful warning is this to those who harden themselves under reproof, and who will not humble themselves in repentance, that God may save them!" —(Letter 281, 1905) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 1040.

"The dark years of destruction and death marking the end of the kingdom of Judah would have brought despair to the stoutest heart had it not been for the encouragements in the prophetic utterances of God's messengers. Through Jeremiah in Jerusalem, through Daniel in the court of Babylon, through Ezekiel on the banks of the Chebar, the Lord in mercy made clear His eternal purpose and gave assurance of His willingness to fulfill to His chosen people the promises recorded in the writings of Moses. That which He had said He would do for those who should prove true to Him, He would surely bring to pass. 'The word of God ... liveth and abideth forever.' 1 Peter 1:23." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 464.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

2 Chronicles 21:7

The Great Controversy, p. 19.

Prophets and Kings, p. 113.

"Because Israel had been chosen to preserve the knowledge of God in the earth, they had been, from their first existence as a nation, the special objects of Satan's enmity, and he had determined to cause their destruction. He could do them no harm while they were obedient to God; therefore he had bent all his power and cunning to enticing them into sin. Ensnared by his temptations they had transgressed the law of God and thus separated from the Source of their strength, and had been left to become the prey of their heathen enemies. They were carried into captivity to Babylon, and there remained for many years. Yet they were not forsaken of the Lord. His prophets were sent to them with reproofs and warnings. The people were awakened to see their guilt, they humbled themselves before God, and returned to Him with true repentance. Then the Lord sent them messages of encouragement, declaring that He would deliver them from their captivity and restore them to His favor." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 468.

MISSIONARY REPORT

Emerging Countries of North Africa

To be read on Sabbath, February 23, 2019

*The Special Sabbath School Offering
will be gathered on Sabbath, March 2, 2019*

“After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.” Revelation 7:9.

“Among earth’s inhabitants, scattered in every land, there are those who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Like the stars of heaven, which appear only at night, these faithful ones will shine forth when darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people. In heathen Africa, in the Catholic lands of Europe and of South America, in China, in India, in the islands of the sea, and in all the dark corners of the earth, God has in reserve a firmament of chosen ones that will yet shine forth amidst the darkness, revealing clearly to an apostate world the transforming power of obedience to His law.” *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 363.

The missionary work is progressing well in Africa. Since the message of Reformation first entered this continent, we have seen God opening doors for His messengers to penetrate with the light into the dark corners of Africa. The work began in southern Africa in the late 1920s. The first countries to receive the message of Reformation were Zimbabwe and South Africa. Some brethren began to work in South Africa, and it advanced to central Africa.

By God’s grace, the message entered east Africa in the 1970s; the first country to receive the message in was Tanzania. Since then the work has spread to almost every country in east Africa. From there it advanced into west Africa. When you look at the map, you will see that the work and message have enlightened many people in south, central, east, and west Africa. However, missionaries cannot rest and say, “We have done our work,” for some places have not yet been reached.

When you look at the other side of the continent—north Africa—you will see that a heavy cloud of darkness still hovers over Libya, Egypt, Chad, Algeria, Niger, Tunisia, and Morocco. The dominating religions in these countries are Islam, Catholicism, and one percent other religions. Also, the dominant languages are French and Arabic.

It is a desire and in the plans of the African Division and the General Conference to enter this area of Africa. It may not be easy to enter these countries, but by the help of the Lord it is possible. There are many people who are searching for the true faith. Some of them have friends and relatives in

countries that we have just entered, including Burkina Faso, Mali, and Senegal. So, we plan to train some people from these places to enter and spread the message of Reformation. The other effective way is to open naturopathic clinics wherever possible. This will make it possible to reach many people within a short period of time.

Therefore, the African Division and the General Conference are appealing to the brethren all over the world to support the work in this part of Africa by making offerings so the work may be established quickly.

May the Lord touch your hearts to give abundantly for this project. As we join hands to extend the gospel message, we will realize that together we are fulfilling the great commission that the Lord gave in His last parting words to the disciples.

In ancient Israel, through Moses God made an appeal for the people's support to build the sanctuary. What were the results? "The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the Lord, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work, which the Lord had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses." "And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing. For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much." Exodus 35:29; 36:6, 7.

Your generous offerings will help to finish enlightening all of Africa by supporting missionaries to enter the dark areas that are waiting for the message.

God bless you and your gifts. Hallelujah!

*—Alfred Ngwenya
African Division President*

SPECIAL SABBATH SCHOOL OFFERING FOR THE Emerging Countries of North Africa

*Let your offerings reflect the abundant love
you have received from Heaven!*

9

Sabbath, March 2, 2019

Prophecies Concerning God's Kingdom

"A careful study of the working out of God's purpose in the history of nations and in the revelation of things to come, will help us to estimate at their true value things seen and things unseen, and to learn what is the true aim of life. Thus, viewing the things of time in the light of eternity, we may, like Daniel and his fellows, live for that which is true and noble and enduring. And learning in this life the principles of the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, that blessed kingdom which is to endure for ever and ever, we may be prepared at His coming to enter with Him into its possession." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 548.

THE SCEPTER WILL REMAIN WITH THE TRIBE OF JUDAH

- 1. What was stated by the patriarch Jacob when he blessed his children? How was this supported by another prophecy given during the wilderness journey two hundred years later?**

Genesis 49:10 *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.*

Numbers 24:17 *I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.*

"The hope of Israel was embodied in the promise made at the time of the call of Abraham, and afterward repeated again and again to his posterity.... And when, at last, the Saviour Himself walked and talked among the sons of men, He bore witness to the Jews of the patriarch's bright hope of deliverance through the coming of a Redeemer. 'Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day,' Christ declared; 'and he saw it, and was glad.' John 8:56.

"This same blessed hope was foreshadowed in the benediction pronounced by the dying patriarch Jacob upon his son Judah...." —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 683, 684.

"The prophecy of Balaam had declared, 'There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel.' Numbers 24:17. Could this strange star [that guided the wise men to Bethlehem] have been sent as a harbinger of the Promised

One? The magi had welcomed the light of heaven-sent truth; now it was shed upon them in brighter rays. Through dreams they were instructed to go in search of the newborn Prince." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 60.

2. What wonderful prophecy did the Lord proclaim concerning David's kingdom?

2 Samuel 7:14, 16 *I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men:...¹⁶And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.*

1 Chronicles 17:14 *But I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom for ever: and his throne shall be established for evermore.*

"... Educate the youth to understand the purity and excellence of the laws of that kingdom which is to stand for ever and ever,..." —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 397, 398.

"In the answer to His mother, Jesus showed for the first time that He understood His relation to God. Before His birth the angel had said to Mary, 'He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever.' Luke 1:32, 33." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 81, 82.

"He [Paul] proceeded to give a history of the manner in which the Lord had dealt with the Jews from the time of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, and how a Saviour had been promised, of the seed of David.... Thus with power he preached Jesus as the Saviour of men, the Messiah of prophecy." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 170.

AN ETERNAL THRONE

3. In presenting the message about raising up David's branch and tabernacle, to what kingdom did the prophets Jeremiah and Amos refer?

Jeremiah 23:5 *Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.*

Amos 9:11 *In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old.*

"Jeremiah also bore witness of the coming Redeemer as a Prince of the house of David: 'Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is His name whereby He shall be called, The Lord Our Righteousness.' And again: 'Thus saith the Lord: David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel; neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before Me to offer burnt offerings, and to kindle meat offerings, and to do sacrifice continually.' Jeremiah 23:5, 6; 33:17, 18." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 223.

4. What characterizes the kingdom that the Psalms refer to in announcing the throne of God's Son?

Psalms 2:6, 7; 45:6, 7 *Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. ⁷I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.... ^{45:6}Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. ⁷Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.*

"The cross of Christ will be the science and the song of the redeemed through all eternity. In Christ glorified they will behold Christ crucified. Never will it be forgotten that He whose power created and upheld the unnumbered worlds through the vast realms of space, the Beloved of God, the Majesty of heaven, He whom cherub and shining seraph delighted to adore—humbled Himself to uplift fallen man; that He bore the guilt and shame of sin, and the hiding of His Father's face, till the woes of a lost world broke His heart and crushed out His life on Calvary's cross. That the Maker of all worlds, the Arbiter of all destinies, should lay aside His glory and humiliate Himself from love to man will ever excite the wonder and adoration of the universe. As the nations of the saved look upon their Redeemer and behold the eternal glory of the Father shining in His countenance; as they behold His throne, which is from everlasting to everlasting, and know that His kingdom is to have no end, they break forth in rapturous song: 'Worthy, worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by His own most precious blood!'" —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 651, 652.

THE ETERNAL PRINCE OF PEACE

5. According to Isaiah's prophecies, what are some special characteristics of the Son's kingdom?

Isaiah 9:6, 7; 11:1, 2, 5 *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.... ^{11:1}And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:²And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord;... ⁵And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.*

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

"The Sovereign of the universe was not alone in His work of beneficence. He had an associate—a co-worker who could appreciate His purposes, and could share His joy in giving happiness to created beings. 'In the beginning was the

Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.' John 1:1, 2. Christ, the Word, the only begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father—one in nature, in character, in purpose—the only being that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God. 'His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.' Isaiah 9:6."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 34.

6. What other wonderful traits identify God's kingdom?

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

Zechariah 9:9, 10 *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. ¹⁰And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.*

"At the time of Christ's first advent the priests and scribes of the Holy City ... might have discerned the signs of the times and proclaimed the coming of the Promised One. The prophecy of Micah designated His birthplace; Daniel specified the time of His advent. Micah 5:2; Daniel 9:25." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 313.

"... With glad voices the children sounded His praise.... The temple echoed and re-echoed with their acclamations, 'Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord!' 'Behold, thy King cometh unto thee; He is just, and having salvation!' Psalm 118:26; Zechariah 9:9. 'Hosanna to the Son of David!'" —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 592.

"Earthly kingdoms rule by the ascendancy of physical power. But in Christ's kingdom every carnal weapon, every instrument of coercion, is to be abolished. This kingdom is to be established to uplift and ennoble fallen humanity." —*Review and Herald*, December 4, 1900.

7. In harmony with the light given to Daniel the prophet, when will the establishment of God's kingdom take place? What does this great promise mean for all who live at the time of the end?

Daniel 2:44; 7:13, 14 *And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.... ^{7:13}I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. ¹⁴And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.*

"The dying words of Jacob filled them with hope: 'The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come.' Genesis 49:10. The waning power of Israel testified that the Messiah's coming was at hand.

The prophecy of Daniel pictured the glory of His reign over an empire which should succeed all earthly kingdoms; and, said the prophet, 'It shall stand forever.' Daniel 2:44. While few understood the nature of Christ's mission, there was a widespread expectation of a mighty prince who should establish his kingdom in Israel, and who should come as a deliverer to the nations." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 34.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

Early Writings, p. 244

"This life is a training school, where we are to be transformed, refined, and made meet for the society of saints in the kingdom of God, with whom we expect to associate throughout the ages of eternity. Let Christ's righteousness, the righteousness of the law of God, be the standard, and let the Christian's prayer be, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.' The world will soil the soul every day unless the cleansing blood is our reliance. Every thought is to be brought into captivity to Christ; every angry word is to be left unspoken. There must be no deception; selfishness or carelessness is a deviation from right. God's law should be the rule in all business transactions. This will lead to the payment of debts, that the character of God may be rightly represented. Truly 'the commandment is exceeding broad,' reaching to every thought and act of the life." —*Bible Echo*, July 29, 1895.

"This hope of redemption, through the advent of the Son of God as Saviour and King, has never become extinct in the hearts of men. From the beginning there have been some whose faith has reached out beyond the shadows of the present to the realities of the future. Adam, Seth, Enoch, Methuselah, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—through these and other worthies the Lord has preserved the precious revealings of His will. And it was thus that to the children of Israel, the chosen people through whom was to be given to the world the promised Messiah, God imparted a knowledge of the requirements of His law, and of the salvation to be accomplished through the atoning sacrifice of His beloved Son." —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 682, 683.

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10

Sabbath, March 9, 2019

Proclamation of the Kingdom of Heaven

"With no elaborate arguments or fine-spun theories did John declare his message. Startling and stern, yet full of hope, his voice was heard from the wilderness: 'Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Matthew 3:2. With a new, strange power it moved the people. The whole nation was stirred. Multitudes flocked to the wilderness." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 332.

1. **As John the Baptist prepared the way for the coming Messiah, what exciting message did he present to the people? Later, when Jesus sent out His disciples, what good news did He tell them to preach?**

Matthew 3:1, 2; 10:6, 7 *In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,² And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand....^{10:6} But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

"Just such a work as that which John did, is to be carried on in these last days. The Lord is giving messages to His people, through the instruments He has chosen, and He would have all heed the admonitions and warnings He sends. The message preceding the public ministry of Christ was, Repent, publicans and sinners; repent, Pharisees and Sadducees; 'for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'... As a people who believe in Christ's soon appearing, we have a definite message to bear—'Prepare to meet thy God.'" —(*The Southern Work*, March 21, 1905) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1184.

2. **From the beginning of His ministry in Judea and throughout the whole land, what message did Jesus proclaim? What were the people and the disciples' expectations concerning this?**

Matthew 4:17 *From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

Mark 1:14, 15 *Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, ¹⁵And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.*

"In Judea first the coming of the kingdom had been proclaimed, and the call to repentance had been given...

"His work there had continued some months before the Sermon on the Mount was given. The message He had proclaimed throughout the land, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand' (Matthew 4:17), had arrested the attention of all classes, and had still further fanned the flame of their ambitious hopes. The fame of the new Teacher had spread beyond the limits of Palestine, and, notwithstanding the attitude of the hierarchy, the feeling was widespread that this might be the hoped-for Deliverer. Great multitudes thronged the steps of Jesus, and the popular enthusiasm ran high.

"... Some of these disciples had joined themselves to Him at the beginning of His ministry, and nearly all the twelve had been associated together as members of the family of Jesus. Yet they also, misled by the teaching of the rabbis, shared the popular expectation of an earthly kingdom." —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 2, 3.

NATURE OF GOD'S KINGDOM

3. What did Jesus explain about the nature of His kingdom? Is it in any way similar to that of earthly kingdoms?

Mark 4:30, 31 *And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what comparison shall we compare it? ³¹It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth.*

"In the multitude that listened to Christ's teaching there were many Pharisees. These noted contemptuously how few of His hearers acknowledged Him as the Messiah. And they questioned with themselves how this unpretending teacher could exalt Israel to universal dominion. Without riches, power, or honor, how was He to establish the new kingdom? Christ read their thoughts and answered them:

"Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with what comparison shall we compare it?' In earthly governments there was nothing that could serve for a similitude. No civil society could afford Him a symbol. 'It is like a grain of mustard seed,' He said, 'which, when it is sown upon the earth, though it be less than all the seeds that are upon the earth, yet when it is sown, groweth up, and becometh greater than all the herbs, and putteth out great branches; so that the birds of the heaven can lodge under the shadow thereof.' Mark 4:30-32, R.V." – *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 76.

4. Is His kingdom temporal, with monarchs, rulers, and subjects?

Luke 22:25, 26, 29 *And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. ²⁶But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.... ²⁹And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me.*

"Just before leaving His disciples, Christ once more plainly stated the nature of His kingdom. He recalled to their remembrance things He had previously told them regarding it. He declared that it was not His purpose to establish in this world a temporal kingdom. He was not appointed to reign as an earthly monarch on David's throne." – *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 30.

THE KINGDOM IS PRESENT

5. What work and teaching of Jesus among the people showed that in His ministry the kingdom of God was already present and active?

Matthew 12:28 *But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.*

Luke 11:20 *But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.*

"When the promised Messiah was about to appear, the message of the forerunner of Christ was: Repent, publicans and sinners; repent, Pharisees and Saddu-

ceeds; 'for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Matthew 3:2." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 715.

"The kingdom of God comes not with outward show. It comes through the gentleness of the inspiration of His word, through the inward working of His Spirit, the fellowship of the soul with Him who is its life. The greatest manifestation of its power is seen in human nature brought to the perfection of the character of Christ." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 143.

6. What else showed that the kingdom of grace was already present?

Luke 16:16 *The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.*

Matthew 11:12 *And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.*

Luke 17:21 *Neither shall they say, Lo here! Or, lo there! For, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.*

"The kingdom of God begins in the heart. Look not here or there for manifestations of earthly power to mark its coming." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 506.

"I ask you, Is the kingdom of God within you? God's people are to be min-utemen, always ready, always composed in Jesus Christ. The time is now come when one moment we may be on solid earth, the next the earth may be heaving beneath our feet. Earthquakes will take place where least expected." —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 421.

THE GLORIOUS KINGDOM IS FUTURE

7. At the same time, what did the Lord teach about the coming of the kingdom of glory?

Matthew 6:10; 8:11 *Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven....^{8:11} And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.*

Luke 22:16 *For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.*

"Had they not just before proclaimed everywhere, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand'? Had not Christ Himself promised that many should sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God? Had He not promised to all who had left aught for His sake a hundredfold in this life, and a part in His kingdom? And had He not given to the twelve the special promise of positions of high honor in His kingdom—to sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel? Even now He had said that all things written in the prophets concerning Him should be fulfilled. And had not the prophets foretold the glory of the Messiah's reign?" —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 547, 548.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

“The message preceding the public ministry of the Son of God was, Repent, publicans; repent, Pharisees and Sadducees, ‘for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Matthew 3:2. Our message is not to be one of ‘peace and safety.’ 1 Thessalonians 5:3. As a people who believe in Christ’s soon appearing, we have a work to do, a message to bear—‘Prepare to meet thy God.’ Amos 4:12. We are to lift up the standard, and bear the third angel’s message—the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” —*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 150.

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11

Sabbath, March 16, 2019

The Kingdom of Grace and the Kingdom of Glory

“As the message of Christ’s first advent announced the kingdom of His grace, so the message of His second advent announces the kingdom of His glory. And the second message, like the first, is based on the prophecies.... The Saviour Himself has given signs of His coming, and He says, ‘When ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 234.

APPEARANCE OF THE KINGDOM

1. What startling prophecy did the Lord give one day regarding the appearance of God’s kingdom?

Mark 9:1 *And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.*

“The Saviour has seen the gloom of His disciples, and has longed to lighten their grief by an assurance that their faith has not been in vain. Not all, even of the twelve, can receive the revelation He desires to give. Only the three who are to witness His anguish in Gethsemane have been chosen to be with Him on the mount. Now the burden of His prayer is that they may be given a manifestation of the glory He had with the Father before the world was, that His kingdom may be revealed to human eyes, and that His disciples may be strengthened to behold it. He pleads that they may witness a manifestation of His divinity that will comfort them in the hour of His supreme agony with the knowledge that He is of a surety the Son of God and that His shameful death is a part of the plan of redemption.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 419-421.

2. How is this promise to be understood? What happened about a week later in confirmation of the Saviour's words? Describe the significance of this event.

Mark 9:2, 3 *And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. ³And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.*

Luke 9:29 *And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening.*

Matthew 17:2 *And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.*

"Jesus had told His disciples that there were some standing with Him who should not taste of death till they should see the kingdom of God come with power. At the transfiguration this promise was fulfilled. The countenance of Jesus was there changed and shone like the sun. His raiment was white and glistening. Moses was present to represent those who will be raised from the dead at the second appearing of Jesus. And Elijah, who was translated without seeing death, represented those who will be changed to immortality at Christ's second coming and will be translated to heaven without seeing death. The disciples beheld with astonishment and fear the excellent majesty of Jesus and the cloud that overshadowed them, and heard the voice of God in terrible majesty, saying, 'This is My beloved Son; hear Him.'" —*Early Writings*, p. 164.

"The disciples, awaking, behold the flood of glory that illuminates the mount. In fear and amazement they gaze upon the radiant form of their Master.... Upon the mount the future kingdom of glory was represented in miniature—Christ the King, Moses a representative of the risen saints, and Elijah of the translated ones." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 421.

HUMAN OPINIONS ABOUT THE KINGDOM

3. What conviction was held by certain people who had followed and heard Jesus' preaching? Even later, what erroneous ideas affected the believers in Thessalonica?

Luke 19:11 *And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.*

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 *Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, ²That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. ³Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.*

"Paul knew that there was before the church a time of great peril. He knew that faithful, earnest work would have to be done by those left in charge of the

churches; and he wrote to Timothy, 'I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.' 2 Timothy 4:1, 2." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 502, 503.

4. What parable did Jesus give to help them understand the issues of God's kingdom and the necessity of preparation for and effort in its behalf?

Luke 19:12, 13 *He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. ¹³And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.*

"When the Master went away, He gave to every man in every age and in every generation, His work; and He says to us all, 'Occupy till I come.'" —*Pastoral Ministry*, p. 104.

"God has left us in charge of His goods in His absence. Each steward has his own special work to do for the advancement of God's kingdom. No one is excused. The Lord bids us all, 'Occupy till I come.' By His own wisdom He has given us direction for the use of His gifts. The talents of speech, memory, influence, property, are to accumulate for the glory of God and the advancement of His kingdom. He will bless the right use of His gifts." —*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 116.

"Christ says, 'Occupy till I come.' Luke 19:13. It may be but a few years until our life's history shall close, but we must occupy till then." —(*Review and Herald*, April 21, 1896) *Last Day Events*, p. 76.

KINGDOM OF GRACE AND KINGDOM OF GLORY

5. Was the kingdom that Jesus proclaimed a present or a future reality? Describe the two aspects that are necessary to understand regarding how the Lord's kingdom functions.

Hebrews 4:16 *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

Matthew 12:28; 19:28 *But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.... ^{19:28}And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

"As used in the Bible, the expression 'kingdom of God' is employed to designate both the kingdom of grace and the kingdom of glory. The kingdom of grace is brought to view by Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews. After pointing to Christ, the compassionate intercessor who is 'touched with the feeling of our infirmities,' the apostle says: 'Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace.' Hebrews 4:15, 16. The throne of grace represents the kingdom of grace; for the existence of a throne implies the existence of a kingdom. In many of His parables Christ uses the expression 'the kingdom of heaven' to designate the work of divine grace upon the hearts of men. As used in the Bible,

the expression 'kingdom of God' is employed to designate both the kingdom of grace and the kingdom of glory." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 346.

6. After John the Baptist and Jesus, who were responsible to preach the good news of God's kingdom at hand? When did the kingdom of grace begin? When was it ratified and made secure?

Matthew 10:7 *And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.*

John 19:30 *When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.*

"The kingdom of grace was instituted immediately after the fall of man.... Yet it was not actually established until the death of Christ. Even after entering upon His earthly mission, the Saviour ... might have drawn back from the sacrifice of Calvary. In Gethsemane the cup of woe trembled in His hand. He might even then have wiped the blood-sweat from His brow, and have left the guilty race to perish in their iniquity.... But when the Saviour yielded up His life, and with His expiring breath cried out, 'It is finished,' then the fulfillment of the plan of redemption was assured. The promise of salvation made to the sinful pair in Eden was ratified. The kingdom of grace, which had before existed by the promise of God, was then established." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 347.

7. When will the kingdom of glory be established? Who will have the supreme joy of being part of it?

Matthew 25:31-35 *When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: ³²And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: ³³And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. ³⁴Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ³⁵For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in.*

"The announcement which had been made by the disciples in the name of the Lord was in every particular correct, and the events to which it pointed were even then taking place. 'The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand,' had been their message. At the expiration of 'the time'—the sixty-nine weeks of Daniel 9, which were to extend to the Messiah, 'the Anointed One'—Christ had received the anointing of the Spirit after His baptism by John in Jordan. And the 'kingdom of God' which they had declared to be at hand was established by the death of Christ. This kingdom was not, as they had been taught to believe, an earthly empire. Nor was it that future, immortal kingdom which shall be set up when 'the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High;' that everlasting kingdom, in which 'all dominions shall serve and obey Him.' Daniel 7:27....

"So the throne of glory represents the kingdom of glory; and this kingdom is referred to in the Saviour's words: 'When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory:

and before Him shall be gathered all nations.’ Matthew 25:31, 32. This kingdom is yet future. It is not to be set up until the second advent of Christ.” —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 346, 347.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

“The kingdom of grace is now being established, as day by day hearts that have been full of sin and rebellion yield to the sovereignty of His love. But the full establishment of the kingdom of His glory will not take place till the second coming of Christ to this world. ‘The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven’ is to ‘be given to the people of the saints of the Most High.’ They shall inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. And Christ will take to Himself His great power, and reign.” —*Review and Herald*, November 14, 1912.

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12

Sabbath, March 23, 2019

Spirituality and Entrance into the Kingdom

“Jesus spoke positively that unless a man is born again he cannot discern the kingdom which Christ came upon earth to set up....

“There must be a new birth, a new mind through the operation of the Spirit of God, which purifies the life and ennoble the character. This connection with God fits man for the glorious kingdom of Heaven.” —*Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, p. 132.

ESTABLISHED IN THE HEART

1. What did the Pharisees ask Jesus one day? What did His answer show?

Luke 17:20 *And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation.*

“Some of the Pharisees had come to Jesus demanding ‘when the kingdom of God should come.’ More than three years had passed since John the Baptist gave the message that like a trumpet call had sounded through the land, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Matthew 3:2. And as yet these Pharisees saw no indication of the establishment of the kingdom. Many of those who rejected John, and at every step had opposed Jesus, were insinuating that His mission had failed.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 506.

2. Are the throne or headquarters of the heavenly kingdom established in Jerusalem or some other geographical place on earth, as the Jews imagined? Where is the kingdom of God?

Luke 17:21 *The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! Or, lo, there! For, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.*

“Jesus answered, ‘The kingdom of God cometh not with outward show [margin]: neither shall they say, Lo here! Or, lo there! For, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.’ Luke 17:21. The kingdom of God begins in the heart. Look not here or there for manifestations of earthly power to mark its coming....

“The kingdom of God comes not with outward show. The gospel of the grace of God, with its spirit of self-abnegation, can never be in harmony with the spirit of the world. The two principles are antagonistic. ‘The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.’ 1 Corinthians 2:14.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 506, 509.

3. Can we imagine that the heavenly kingdom is reserved for some particular caste or aristocracy?

Galatians 3:26-29 *For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

“Thus Christ sought to teach the disciples the truth that in God’s kingdom there are no territorial lines, no caste, no aristocracy; that they must go to all nations, bearing to them the message of a Saviour’s love. But not until later did they realize in all its fullness that God ‘hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us.’ Acts 17:26, 27.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 20.

DIVINE RIGHTEOUSNESS

4. May we suppose that one will enter the Lord’s kingdom on the basis of his own goodness? What righteousness alone will enter there?

Matthew 5:20 *For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

“Men may profess faith in the truth; but if it does not make them sincere, kind, patient, forbearing, heavenly-minded, it is a curse to its possessors, and through their influence it is a curse to the world.

"The righteousness which Christ taught is conformity of heart and life to the revealed will of God. Sinful men can become righteous only as they have faith in God and maintain a vital connection with Him. Then true godliness will elevate the thoughts and ennoble the life. Then the external forms of religion accord with the Christian's internal purity. Then the ceremonies required in the service of God are not meaningless rites, like those of the hypocritical Pharisees." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 310.

5. What else did the Lord teach regarding entrance into the heavenly kingdom? What deep experience will be made by all who are part of that holy place?

John 3:3, 5 *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God....⁵ Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

"Have you at any time in your life been truly converted? Have you been born again? If you have not, then it is time for you to obtain the experience that Christ told one of the chief rulers that he must have. 'Ye must be born again,' He said. 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' That is, he cannot discern the requirements essential to having a part in that spiritual kingdom. 'Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.' John 3:3, 7. If you open your mind to the entrance of God's word, with a determination to practice that word, light will come; for the word gives understanding to the simple." —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 459.

DIVINE SPIRIT

6. What will be the spirit of all who receive free entrance into the kingdom of heaven? What does that mean?

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

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

"All who have a sense of their deep soul poverty, who feel that they have nothing good in themselves, may find righteousness and strength by looking unto Jesus.... We are not worthy of God's love, but Christ, our surety, is worthy, and is abundantly able to save all who shall come unto Him. Whatever may have been your past experience, however discouraging your present circumstances, if you will come to Jesus just as you are, weak, helpless, and despairing, our compassionate Saviour will meet you a great way off, and will throw about you His arms of love and His robe of righteousness." —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 8, 9.

7. How is this reality confirmed in the apostolic writings? When will the gates into the kingdom of salvation be opened wide?

2 Peter 1:5-11 *And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; ⁶And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; ⁷And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. ⁸For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. ¹⁰Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: ¹¹For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

“Here is the condition of the only saving election in the Word of God. We are to become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. 2 Peter 1:4. We are to add grace to grace, and the promise is, ‘If ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.’” —(*Manuscript 57, 1900*) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1114.

“We point you to the ladder set up on earth, reaching to the city of God. Plant your feet on the ladder. Forsake your sins. Climb step by step and you will reach God above the ladder, and the Holy City of God....

“When the successive steps have all been mounted, when the graces have been added one after another, the crowning grace is the perfect love of God—supreme love to God and love to our fellow men. And then the abundant entrance into the kingdom of God.” —*Our High Calling*, p. 75.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

“In the Sermon on the Mount He [Christ] sought to undo the work that had been wrought by false education, and to give His hearers a right conception of His kingdom and of His own character. Yet He did not make a direct attack on the errors of the people.... He taught them of something infinitely better than they had known. Without combating their ideas of the kingdom of God, He told them the conditions of entrance therein, leaving them to draw their own conclusions as to its nature. The truths He taught are no less important to us than to the multitude that followed Him. We no less than they need to learn the foundation principles of the kingdom of God.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 299.

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Keys of the Kingdom

“The keys of the kingdom of heaven’ are the words of Christ. All the words of Holy Scripture are His, and are here included. These words have power to open and to shut heaven. They declare the conditions upon which men are received or rejected. Thus the work of those who preach God’s word is a savor of life unto life or of death unto death. Theirs is a mission weighted with eternal results.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 413, 414.

DIVINE ORACLES

1. What was committed to Israel so that they would be able to obtain knowledge and truth?

Romans 2:17, 18, 20; 3:1, 2 *Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God,¹⁸ And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law....²⁰ An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law...^{3:1} What advantage then hath the Jew?...² Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.*

Deuteronomy 4:8 *And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?*

“So with Israel. God had chosen the seed of Abraham. With a high arm He had delivered them from bondage in Egypt. He had made them the depositaries of sacred truth for the blessing of the world. He had entrusted to them the living oracles that they might communicate the light to others. But His stewards had used these gifts to enrich and exalt themselves.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 369.

“The apostle [Paul] regarded himself as ‘debtor both to the Greeks, and to the barbarians,’ as well as to the Jews; but he never lost sight of the decided advantages possessed by the Jews over others, ‘chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.’” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 380.

2. Nevertheless, in view of what the people generally were like in his days, what words of the Lord did the prophet Hosea write?

Hosea 4:6 *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.*

“The words of God to ancient Israel have a solemn warning to the church and its leaders today. Of Israel the Lord said, ‘I have written to him the great things of My law; but they were counted as a strange thing.’ Hosea 8:12. [Hosea 4:6 quoted.]” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 306.

"Had Israel heeded the messages of the prophets, they would have been spared the humiliation that followed. It was because they had persisted in turning aside from His law that God was compelled to let them go into captivity. 'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge,' was His message to them through Hosea. 'Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee:... seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God.' Hosea 4:6." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 297.

THE KEY OF KNOWLEDGE TAKEN AWAY

3. Was it any better in the time of Jesus? What had especially the leaders done with the key of knowledge?

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

Mark 6:34 *And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.*

"We should beware of indulging the spirit which controlled the Jews. They would not learn of Christ, because His explanation of the Scriptures did not agree with their ideas; therefore they became spies upon His track, 'laying wait for Him, and seeking to catch something out of His mouth, that they might accuse Him.' Let us not bring upon ourselves the fearful denunciation of the Saviour's words, 'Woe unto you, lawyers! For ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.'" —*Gospel Workers* (1982), p. 128.

"Rather than yield their pride of opinion, they [the Jews] closed their eyes to all the evidences of His Messiahship, and they not only rejected the message of salvation themselves, but they steeled the hearts of the people against Jesus. Their history should be a solemn warning to us.... Let us beware that we do not refuse the light God sends, because it does not come in a way to please us.... If there are any who do not see and accept the light themselves, let them not stand in the way of others." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 728.

4. In removing the key of knowledge, what were the scribes and Pharisees actually doing with the kingdom of heaven?

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

"The teachings of the scribes and Pharisees were of a character to turn the people away from the unadulterated truth that was to be presented by the Great Teacher when He should enter upon His mission. The only hope of the people was to open their hearts and minds to the light sent from heaven by His prophet, the forerunner of Christ.

"These lessons are for us. Those who claim to know the truth and understand the great work to be done for this time are to consecrate themselves to God, soul, body, and spirit. In heart, in dress, in language, in every respect they are to be sep-

arate from the fashions and practices of the world. They are to be a peculiar and holy people. It is not their dress that makes them peculiar, but because they are a peculiar and holy people, they cannot carry the marks of likeness to the world.” –*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 310, 311.

5. Because of their negative and unfruitful spirit and actions, what was going to happen with the kingdom of God that had been entrusted to them?

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

“Christ would have averted the doom of the Jewish nation if the people had received Him. But envy and jealousy made them implacable. They determined that they would not receive Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. They rejected the Light of the world, and thenceforth their lives were surrounded with darkness as the darkness of midnight. The doom foretold came upon the Jewish nation. Their own fierce passions, uncontrolled, wrought their ruin. In their blind rage they destroyed one another. Their rebellious, stubborn pride brought upon them the wrath of their Roman conquerors. Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple laid in ruins, and its site plowed like a field.” –*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 295, 296.

RECEIVING THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM

6. Therefore, to whom have the keys of the kingdom been entrusted? What is to be understood by the expression “the key of the kingdom”?

Matthew 16:19 *And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

“... Jesus now honored him [Peter] as the representative of the whole body of believers. [Matthew 16:19 quoted.]...

“The Saviour did not commit the work of the gospel to Peter individually. At a later time, repeating the words that were spoken to Peter, He applied them directly to the church. And the same in substance was spoken also to the twelve as representatives of the body of believers.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 413, 414.

7. What result was expected from the message of God’s kingdom that was preached by John the Baptist, Jesus, and the disciples, who were all sent by Heaven?

Matthew 11:12 *And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.*

Luke 16:16 *The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.*

“A deep sense of our need and a great desire for the things for which we ask must characterize our prayers, else they will not be heard. But we are not to become weary and cease our petitions because the answer is not immediately

received. 'The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.' Matthew 11:12. The violence here meant is a holy earnestness, such as Jacob manifested. We need not try to work ourselves up into an intense feeling, but calmly, persistently, we are to press our petitions at the throne of grace. Our work is to humble our souls before God, confessing our sins, and in faith drawing nigh unto God.... It is the design of God to reveal Himself in His providence and in His grace. The object of our prayers must be the glory of God, not the glorification of ourselves...." —*That I May Know Him*, p. 272.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

"'The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.' This violence takes in the whole heart. To be double minded is to be unstable. Resolution, self-denial and consecrated effort are required for the work of preparation. The understanding and the conscience may be united; but if the will is not set to work, we shall make a failure. Every faculty and feeling must be engaged. Ardor and earnest prayer must take the place of listlessness and indifference. Only by earnest, determined effort and faith in the merits of Christ can we overcome, and gain the kingdom of heaven." —(*The Youth's Instructor*, May 24, 1900) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, pp. 1095, 1096.

"In secret prayer the soul should be laid bare to the inspecting eye of God.... How precious is secret prayer—the soul communing with God! Secret prayer is to be heard only by the prayer-hearing God. No curious ear is to receive the burden of petitions. Calmly, yet fervently, the soul is to reach out after God; and sweet and abiding will be the influence emanating from Him who sees in secret, whose ear is open to the prayer arising from the heart. He who in simple faith holds communion with God will gather to himself divine rays of light to strengthen and sustain him in the conflict with Satan." —*That I May Know Him*, p. 272.

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14

Sabbath, April 6, 2019

Principles of the Kingdom

"It was Christ who, amid thunder and flame, had proclaimed the law upon Mount Sinai. The glory of God, like devouring fire, rested upon its summit, and the mountain quaked at the presence of the Lord. The hosts of Israel, lying prostrate upon the earth, had listened in awe to the sacred precepts of the law. What a contrast to the scene upon the mount of the Beatitudes! Under the summer sky, with no sound to break the stillness but the song of birds, Jesus unfolded the principles of His kingdom. Yet He who spoke to the people that day in accents of love, was opening to them the principles of the law proclaimed upon Sinai." —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 45.

UNDERSTANDING THE PRINCIPLES

- 1. What fundamental principles of God's government are more stable than earth and heaven in the kingdom of grace? Are they as certain in our decisions and lives as well?**

Matthew 5:17, 18 *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. ¹⁸For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.*

Luke 16:17 *And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.*

"The moral law was never a type or a shadow. It existed before man's creation, and will endure as long as God's throne remains. God could not change nor alter one precept of His law in order to save man; for the law is the foundation of His government. It is unchangeable, unalterable, infinite, and eternal. 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...." —*God's Amazing Grace*, p. 80.

"The law was given to convict them of sin, and reveal their need of a Saviour. It would do this as its principles were applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit. This work it is still to do. In the life of Christ the principles of the law are made plain; and as the Holy Spirit of God touches the heart, as the light of Christ reveals to men their need of His cleansing blood and His justifying righteousness, the law is still an agent in bringing us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.' Psalm 19:7." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 308.

- 2. What will happen if we take lightly some teachings of the Lord, or just one commandment, and still hope to enter the kingdom of heaven? How will we be considered in God's kingdom as we teach and faithfully practice His sacred commandments?**

Matthew 5:19 *Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

"The followers of Christ are to become like Him—by the grace of God to form characters in harmony with the principles of His holy law. This is Bible sanctification." —*God's Amazing Grace*, p. 20.

"Whenever men choose their own way, they place themselves in controversy with God. They will have no place in the kingdom of heaven, for they are at war with the very principles of heaven. In disregarding the will of God, they are placing themselves on the side of Satan, the enemy of God and man. Not by one word, not by many words, but by every word that God has spoken, shall man live. We cannot disregard one word, however trifling it may seem to us, and be safe. There is not a commandment of the law that is not for the good and happiness of man, both in this life and in the life to come. In obedience to God's law, man is surrounded

as with a hedge and kept from the evil. He who breaks down this divinely erected barrier at one point has destroyed its power to protect him; for he has opened a way by which the enemy can enter to waste and ruin.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 52.

LOOKING BENEATH THE SURFACE

3. How do external actions compare with man’s thoughts? How far reaching are the principles on which the Ten Commandments are based?

Matthew 5:27-30 *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: ²⁸But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. ²⁹And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. ³⁰And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.*

“The righteousness which Christ taught is conformity of heart and life to the revealed will of God. Sinful men can become righteous only as they have faith in God and maintain a vital connection with Him. Then true godliness will elevate the thoughts and ennoble the life. Then the external forms of religion accord with the Christian’s internal purity. Then the ceremonies required in the service of God are not meaningless rites, like those of the hypocritical Pharisees.

“Jesus takes up the commandments separately, and explains the depth and breadth of their requirement. Instead of removing one jot of their force, He shows how far reaching their principles are, and exposes the fatal mistake of the Jews in their outward show of obedience. He declares that by the evil thought or the lustful look the law of God is transgressed. One who becomes a party to the least injustice is breaking the law and degrading his own moral nature. Murder first exists in the mind. He who gives hatred a place in his heart is setting his feet in the path of the murderer, and his offerings are abhorrent to God.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 310.

4. What other holy principle characterizes the Lord’s kingdom and must be part of our lives?

Matthew 5:43-45 *Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. ⁴⁴But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; ⁴⁵That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*

“The Saviour goes farther than this. He says, ‘If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.’ Matthew 5:24, 25. 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.

"God pours His blessings upon all. 'He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.' He is 'kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.' Luke 6:35. He bids us to be like Him. 'Bless them that curse you,' said Jesus; 'do good to them that hate you,... that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.' These are the principles of the law, and they are the wellsprings of life." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 310, 311.

FROM THEORY AND WORDS TO FACT

5. If we sound religious and often speak the Lord's name, is this a guarantee of entrance into the heavenly kingdom? According to Jesus, what is critical in this matter?

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

"God has elected a character in harmony with His law, and anyone who shall reach the standard of His requirement will have an entrance into the kingdom of glory. Christ Himself said, 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not on the Son shall not see life.' John 3:36.... And in the Revelation He declares, 'Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.' Revelation 22:14. As regards man's final salvation, this is the only election brought to view in the Word of God." —*God's Amazing Grace*, p. 350.

"True character is not shaped from without, and put on; it radiates from within. If we wish to direct others in the path of righteousness, the principles of righteousness must be enshrined in our own hearts. Our profession of faith may proclaim the theory of religion, but it is our practical piety that holds forth the word of truth. The consistent life, the holy conversation, the unswerving integrity, the active, benevolent spirit, the godly example—these are the mediums through which light is conveyed to the world." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 307.

6. How does a spirit of retaliation compare with the Lord's character? How does the golden rule characterize the heavenly kingdom?

Matthew 7:12 *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.*

"The Jews cultivated a spirit of retaliation.... But those who at any supposed provocation feel at liberty to indulge anger or resentment are opening the heart to Satan. Bitterness and animosity must be banished from the soul if we would be in harmony with heaven." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 310.

"The golden rule is the principle of true courtesy, and its truest illustration is seen in the life and character of Jesus. Oh, what rays of softness and beauty shone forth in the daily life of our Saviour! What sweetness flowed from His very presence! The same spirit will be revealed in His children. Those with whom Christ dwells will be surrounded with a divine atmosphere. Their white robes of purity

will be fragrant with perfume from the garden of the Lord....

"No man who has the true ideal of what constitutes a perfect character will fail to manifest the sympathy and tenderness of Christ. The influence of grace is to soften the heart, to refine and purify the feelings, giving a heaven-born delicacy and sense of propriety." —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 135.

GOD'S WILL AND THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM

7. In the Lord's prayer, what two requests reflect the spirit of heaven? What is the relationship between God's will and the coming of the kingdom?

Matthew 6:10 *Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*

"The first half of the prayer Jesus has taught us is in regard to the name and kingdom and will of God—that His name may be honored, His kingdom established, His will performed. When you have thus made God's service your first interest, you may ask with confidence that your own needs may be supplied. If you have renounced self and given yourself to Christ, you are a member of the family of God, and everything in the Father's house is for you. All the treasures of God are opened to you, both the world that now is and that which is to come. The ministry of angels, the gift of His Spirit, the labors of His servants—all are for you. The world, with everything in it, is yours so far as it can do you good. Even the enmity of the wicked will prove a blessing by disciplining you for heaven. If 'ye are Christ's,' 'all things are yours.' 1 Corinthians 3:23, 21." —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 110.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

"Thus Christ set forth the principles of His kingdom, and showed them to be the great rule of life. To impress the lesson He adds an illustration. It is not enough, He says, for you to hear My words. By obedience you must make them the foundation of your character. Self is but shifting sand. If you build upon human theories and inventions, your house will fall. By the winds of temptation, the tempests of trial, it will be swept away. But these principles that I have given will endure. Receive Me; build on My words." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 314.

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15

Sabbath, April 13, 2019

Righteousness, Peace, and Joy

"From childhood to manhood, Christ taught that 'the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' He was the Truth. The Spirit of God was upon Him. Why? Because He did not by one act of disobedience separate Himself from God. The grace of God was upon Him, and

He grew in favor with God and man. He lived a life of unceasing humiliation, and through it all His character was lovely. The peace of God was with Him, and this peace was uninterrupted. In the sorrows of others He could always speak peace to the soul; for His peace was the result of supreme rectitude and loyalty, and was completely His own. None could give it; none could take it away." —*The Youth's Instructor*, September 8, 1898.

ESSENCE OF THE DIVINE KINGDOM

1. Explain some of the differences between the nature of human institutions and that of God's kingdom. What makes it a very special reality?

Romans 14:17 *For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*

"The Lord calls for minutemen, men who will be prepared to speak words in season and out of season that will arrest the attention and convict the heart. The kingdom of God consisteth not in outward show. Light will not be received by following selfish plans, but by looking unto Jesus, following Christ's leading, not the suppositions of men. The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 497.

2. Therefore, what will occupy the first place in all of our interests? What is genuine and eternal about the righteousness of God's kingdom?

Matthew 6:3; 5:6 *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you....* ^{5:6}*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*

1 Timothy 6:11 *But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.*

Romans 1:17 *For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.*

"The promises are, 'A new heart will I give you'; 'I will put My Spirit within you.' This provision is made for us through the merit of Christ's righteousness: 'And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.' Isaiah 32:17. Those who experience the change spoken of in these words will find that their restlessness and disquietude are all taken away, and they will find rest unto their souls in Christ. His merit, His righteousness, are imputed to the believing soul, and the believer has inward peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." —*The Faith I Live By*, p. 121.

"The disciples of Christ must obtain righteousness of a different character from that of the Pharisees, if they would enter the kingdom of heaven. God offered them, in His Son, the perfect righteousness of the law. If they would open their hearts fully to receive Christ, then the very life of God, His love, would dwell in them, transforming them into His own likeness; and thus through God's free gift they would possess the righteousness which the law requires." —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 54, 55.

3. How can we receive that righteousness which opens the door of the Lord's kingdom?

Romans 3:21, 22; 5:17 *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; ²²Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:.... ^{5:17}For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.*

Ephesians 2:8 *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.*

"The thought that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, not because of any merit on our part, but as a free gift from God, is a precious thought. The enemy of God and man is not willing that this truth should be clearly presented; for he knows that if the people receive it fully, his power will be broken. If he can control minds so that doubt and unbelief and darkness shall compose the experience of those who claim to be the children of God, he can overcome them with temptation. That simple faith that takes God at His word should be encouraged. God's people must have that faith which will lay hold of divine power.... Those who believe that God for Christ's sake has forgiven their sins should not, through temptation, fail to press on to fight the good fight of faith. Their faith should grow stronger until their Christian life, as well as their words, shall declare, 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.'" —*Gospel Workers* (1892), p. 103.

PEACE AFTER VICTORY OVER SIN

4. What is the origin of true, lasting peace? What destroys our own peace and that in our relationships with others?

2 Chronicles 20:30 *So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet: for his God gave him rest round about.*

Isaiah 66:12, first part *For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river,...*

"Men and women are to watch themselves; they are to be constantly on guard, allowing no word or act that would cause their good to be evil spoken of. He who professes to be a follower of Christ is to watch himself, keeping himself pure and undefiled in thought, word, and deed. His influence upon others is to be uplifting. His life is to reflect the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness.... Eternal vigilance is the price of safety....

"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. Matthew 8:23-27. 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 ... will find deliverance. His grace ... quiets the strife of human passion, and in His love the heart is at rest." —*God's Amazing Grace*, p. 101.

- 5. To have peace in our hearts and with others, in what relationship must there first be harmony? If we desire to rejoice in God's kingdom of peace, how important is it to strive for peace here and now?**

Romans 5:1, 2 *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: ²By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

Hebrews 12:14 *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.*

"But even here Christians may have the joy of communion with Christ; they may have the light of His love, the perpetual comfort of His presence. Every step in life may bring us closer to Jesus, may give us a deeper experience of His love, and may bring us one step nearer to the blessed home of peace.

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

JOY IN THE LORD

- 6. What is the Lord's desire for all of His followers always, including right now?**

John 16:24 *Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.*

1 Peter 1:8 *Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.*

"The Lord would have all His sons and daughters happy, peaceful, and obedient." —*The Faith I Live By*, p. 121.

"We open to ourselves the floodgates of woe or joy. If we permit our thoughts to be engrossed with the troubles and trifles of earth, our hearts will be filled with unbelief, gloom, and foreboding. If we set our affections on things above, the voice of Jesus will speak to our hearts, murmuring will cease, and vexing thoughts will be lost in praise to our Redeemer. Those who dwell upon God's great mercies and are not unmindful of His lesser gifts, will put on the girdle of gladness and make melody in their hearts to the Lord. Then they will enjoy their work. They will stand firm at their post of duty. They will have a placid temper, a trustful spirit." —*Christ Triumphant*, p. 234.

- 7. When is one able to say that joy is part of God's kingdom?**

Philippians 4:4 *Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.*

Romans 12:12 *Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer.*

Psalms 5:11; 51:12 *But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them*

ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee. ^{51:12}Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

“Though he was a prisoner, Paul was not discouraged. Instead, a note of triumph rings through the letters that he wrote from Rome to the churches.... ‘Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.’ Philippians 4:6-8.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 484.

“Happiness that is sought from selfish motives, outside of the path of duty, is ill-balanced, fitful, and transitory; it passes away, and the soul is filled with loneliness and sorrow; but there is joy and satisfaction in the service of God; the Christian is not left to walk in uncertain paths; he is not left to vain regrets and disappointments. If we do not have the pleasures of this life, we may still be joyful in looking to the life beyond.” —*The Faith I Live By*, p. 121.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

“The great change that is seen in the life of a sinner after conversion is not brought about by any human goodness....

“He who is rich in mercy has imparted His grace to us. Then let praise and thanksgiving ascend to Him, because He has become our Saviour. Let His love, filling our hearts and minds, flow forth from our lives in rich currents of grace. When we were dead in trespasses and sins, He quickened us into spiritual life. He brought grace and pardon, filling the soul with new life. Thus the sinner passes from death to life. He now takes up his new duties in Christ’s service. His life becomes true and strong, filled with good works. ‘Because I live,’ Christ said, ‘ye shall live also.’” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 319.

“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.

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Suffering for the Kingdom

"We must be partakers of Christ's sufferings here, if we would share in His glory hereafter.... We have but a little space of time left in which to work for God. Nothing should be too dear to sacrifice for the salvation of the scattered and torn flock of Jesus. Those who make a covenant with God by sacrifice now, will soon be gathered home to share a rich reward, and possess the new kingdom forever and ever." —*Christian Experiences and Teaching of Ellen G. White*, p. 104.

COMPANION IN TRIBULATION AND IN THE KINGDOM

1. **Do we have any idea of the sacrifices, risks, and suffering that the children and servants of the Lord have to face during their life and ministry? What did the messengers of the Lord see ahead of them when they had to suffer?**

2 Thessalonians 1:5 *Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer.*

2 Corinthians 11:24-28 *Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. ²⁵Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; ²⁶In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; ²⁷In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. ²⁸Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.*

"In all ages God's appointed witnesses have exposed themselves to reproach and persecution for the truth's sake. Joseph was maligned and persecuted because he preserved his virtue and integrity. David, the chosen messenger of God, was hunted like a beast of prey by his enemies. Daniel was cast into a den of lions because he was true to his allegiance to heaven. Job was deprived of his worldly possessions, and so afflicted in body that he was abhorred by his relatives, and friends; yet he maintained his integrity. Jeremiah could not be deterred from speaking the words that God had given him to speak; and his testimony so enraged the king and princes that he was cast into a loathsome pit. Stephen was stoned because he preached Christ and Him crucified. Paul was imprisoned, beaten with rods, stoned, and finally put to death because he was a faithful messenger for God to the Gentiles. And John was banished to the Isle of Patmos 'for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.'" —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 575.

2. **Why was the apostle John exiled on the isle of Patmos? What is always connected to the way and entrance into God's kingdom?**

Matthew 7:13, first part, 14 *Enter ye in at the strait gate:... ¹⁴Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

Revelation 1:9 *I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

Acts 14:21, 22 *And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, ²²Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.*

“Our path to the Paradise of God will be often intercepted by the tempter, who is intent on weakening our faith by hiding the rays of the Sun of Righteousness. Our Saviour has warned us that through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God. ‘These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.’ ‘Peace I leave with you, 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.’ For every service we render, every self-denial, every sacrifice we make, the Lord has guaranteed to requite us, not because it is a debt He owes, but because His heart is full of infinite love, full of mercy and tenderness. In this life He will repay us a hundredfold, and in the world to come He will give us everlasting life.”
—*Signs of the Times*, October 22, 1896.

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ENDURE TEMPTATION

3. What certainty will God’s children of faith have when they must endure tribulations for His kingdom?

Romans 8:28 *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

1 Peter 5:10 *But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.*

James 1:12 *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.*

“Christianity is a religion of progress. Light from God is full and ample, waiting our demand upon it. Whatever blessings the Lord may give, He has an infinite supply beyond, an inexhaustible store from which we may draw....

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

4. What relationship exists between trials and temptations and the kingdom appointed by Christ to His faithful followers?

Luke 22:28, 29 *Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. ²⁹And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me.*

Romans 5:3, 4 *And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; ⁴And patience, experience; and experience, hope.*

“What a promise is this! Christ’s faithful ones are to be sharers with Him in the kingdom He has received from His Father. This is a spiritual kingdom, in which those who are most active in serving their brethren are the greatest. Christ’s servants, under His direction, are to administer the affairs of His kingdom. They are to eat and drink at His table, that is, be admitted to near communion with Him.

“Those who search for worldly distinction and glory make a sad mistake. It is the one who denies self, giving to others the preference, who will sit nearest to Christ on His throne. He who reads the heart sees the true merit possessed by His lowly, self-sacrificing disciples, and because they are worthy He places them in positions of distinction, though they do not realize their worthiness and do not seek for honor....” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 67.

5. If we suffer for the Lord now, what will the future with Him be like?

2 Timothy 2:11, 12 *It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: ¹²If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us.*

“The power of persecution may hinder or restrain the efforts of the minister; but it cannot hinder the operation of the word of truth upon hearts and consciences. Paul may be bound, he may be a prisoner in chains, but the word of God cannot be bound. It will accomplish the work whereunto it is sent, and human forces cannot prevent it.... The condition on the part of the believer, if he is dead with Christ, is that he have his life hid with Christ in God. He must steadfastly believe the truth, and walk humbly before God, in the light that He gives, without turning away, or falling from the holy commandment delivered unto Him. He must believe God. He must rest in His word with that confidence and strength of faith, that makes him willing to suffer the loss of all things for Christ’s sake.... His conversation must be in heaven; and while he is engaging in communion with God; he must hold intercourse with men, and shine as a light in the world.” —*Review and Herald*, September 11, 1888.

TRIBULATION AND GLORY

6. How does the coming kingdom compare with the difficulties and tribulations that are part of today’s existence?

Romans 8:18 *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

2 Corinthians 4:17, 18 *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh*

for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; ¹⁸While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

"The Holy Spirit irradiated the soul of Paul with light from heaven, and he was assured that he had an interest in the purchased possession reserved for the faithful. Paul's language was strong. He was not able to find words of sufficient force to express the excellency of that glory, honor, and immortality which believers would receive when Christ should come. Compared with the scene upon which his mind's eye was dwelling, all temporal afflictions were but momentary, light afflictions, unworthy of thought. Viewed in the light of the cross, the things of this life were vanity and emptiness. The glory that attracted him was substantial, weighty, durable, beyond the power of language to describe." —(*Manuscript 58, 1900*) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, pp. 1099, 1100.

7. What is the Lord's view of those who are afflicted and persecuted for righteousness' sake? What stands before them as their great hope and rejoicing?

Matthew 5:10-12 *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. ¹²Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*

Hebrews 11:36-40 *And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: ³⁷They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; ³⁸(Of whom the world was not worthy: they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. ³⁹And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: ⁴⁰God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.*

"Christianity promises no exemption from sorrow. 'We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.' Acts 14:22. Faith is needed, strong, trusting faith, which believes that God will bring His children into no temptation greater than they are able to bear. What such faith has power to do is told by Paul in his letter to the Hebrews. Speaking of those who in the face of persecution and death had maintained an unshaken trust in God, he says: [Hebrews 11:33-37 quoted]." —*In Heavenly Places*, p. 268.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

"Holiness, dignity, honor, and felicity in the presence of God are things now unseen except by the eye of faith. But the things which are seen, worldly honor, worldly pleasure, riches, and glory, are eclipsed by the excellency, the beauty, and resplendent glory of the things now unseen. The things of this world are temporal, enduring only for a time, while the things which are not seen are eternal, enduring through endless ages. To secure this infinite treasure is to gain everything and lose nothing." —(*Manuscript 58, 1900*) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1100.

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17

Sabbath, April 27, 2019

Gospel of the Kingdom

“Jesus said, ‘This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations.’ Matthew 24:14. His kingdom will not come until the good tidings of His grace have been carried to all the earth. Hence, as we give ourselves to God, and win other souls to Him, we hasten the coming of His kingdom. Only those who devote themselves to His service ... pray in sincerity, ‘Thy kingdom come.’ ...” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 348.

PREACHING AND HEALING

- 1. How extensive was Jesus’ ministry? What is written about His preaching in the synagogues of Galilee?**

Luke 4:43, 44 *And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent. ⁴⁴And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee.*

“Would that all who have the light of truth would follow the example set by Christ, and not expend their God-given time and ability and means in one or two places, when the light of truth is to go to all the world. The wonderful display of grace shown in the gospel message is to be carried to all places.” —*This Day with God*, p. 107.

- 2. In every city and village, what message did He present? What other great work was directly connected with the message?**

Luke 9:11; 7:22 *And the people, when they knew it, followed him: and he received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.... ^{7:22}Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.*

“Christ ‘went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing all manner of sickness.’ He preached in the synagogues because thus He could reach the many who gathered there. Then He went out and taught by the seaside and in the great thoroughfares of travel. The precious truths that He had to proclaim were not to be confined to synagogues....” —*Evangelism*, p. 54.

THE APOSTLES PREACHED THE SAME MESSAGE

3. Who else was commissioned to present the same amazing message? Again, what was directly connected with their preaching activities?

Matthew 10:7, 8 *And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. ⁸Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.*

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

Acts 8:12 *But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.*

“When Jesus sent forth the Twelve on their first mission of mercy, He commissioned them ‘to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.’ Luke 9:2.... The fulfillment of the Saviour’s commission by the disciples made their message the power of God unto salvation, and through their efforts many were brought to a knowledge of the Messiah.” —*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 465.

“... Physical healing is bound up with the gospel commission. [Matthew 10:7, 8 quoted.]” —*Counsels on Health*, p. 497.

4. What message held the first priority in the Redeemer’s ministry, and why? What else do the Scriptures call that message?

Matthew 4:23 *And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.*

Mark 1:14 *Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.*

“As Jesus travelled through Galilee, teaching and healing, multitudes flocked to Him from the cities and villages. Many came even from Judea and the adjoining provinces. Often He was obliged to hide Himself from the people. The enthusiasm ran so high that it was necessary to take precautions lest the Roman authorities should be aroused to fear an insurrection. Never before had there been such a period as this for the world. Heaven was brought down to men. Hungering and thirsting souls that had waited long for the redemption of Israel now feasted upon the grace of a merciful Saviour....” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 12.

THE KINGDOM WAS THE GOOD NEWS

5. What is the meaning of the word “gospel”? Therefore, what does it mean to preach “the gospel of the kingdom”?

Matthew 9:35 *And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.*

Luke 8:1 *And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him.*

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

“The good news of a Saviour—Christ dying as our sacrifice upon Calvary, Christ pleading as our High Priest and Intercessor before God, Christ our King and Deliverer, coming to redeem His children—this is the message to be carried to all the world, to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.” — *The Home Missionary*, November 1, 1890.

6. Years later, in his fruitful ministry, how did the apostle Paul proclaim the same eternal message to the world?

Acts 20:25; 28:31 *And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more....* ^{28:31} *Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.*

“Since they themselves desired it, Paul bade them set a day when he could present to them the truths of the gospel. At the time appointed, many came together, ‘to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.’ He related his own experience, and presented arguments from the Old Testament Scriptures with simplicity, sincerity, and power.

“The apostle showed that religion does not consist in rites and ceremonies, creeds and theories. If it did, the natural man could understand it by investigation, as he understands worldly things. Paul taught that religion is a practical, saving energy, a principle wholly from God, a personal experience of God’s renewing power upon the soul.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 451.

A UNIVERSAL MESSAGE

7. Therefore, how favored is Christ’s church to be entrusted with the gospel of the kingdom in times past, now, and in the future?

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

“His kingdom will not come until the good tidings of His grace shall have been carried to all the earth.” —*In Heavenly Places*, p. 340.

“There is a day that God hath appointed for the close of this world’s history: ‘This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.’ Prophecy is fast fulfilling. More, much more, should be said about these tremendously important subjects. The day is at hand when the destiny of souls will be fixed forever....” —*Latter Day Events*, p. 16.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

“Christ tells us when the day of His kingdom will be ushered in. He does not say that all the world will be converted, but that ‘this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.’ Matthew 24:14. By giving the gospel to the world, it is in our power to hasten the coming of the day of God. Had the church of Christ done her appointed work as the Lord ordained, the whole world would before this have been warned, and the Lord Jesus would have come to the earth in power and great glory.” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 353.

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MISSIONARY REPORT **from the North American/Caribbean Division** ***To be read on Sabbath, April 27, 2019***

The Special Sabbath School Offering
will be gathered on Sabbath, May 4, 2019

“Give glory to the Lord, and declare His praise in the islands.” Isaiah 42:12.

Dear brothers and sisters in the Lord,

The General Conference delegates who met in Italy in September 2017 decided to create a new division—the North American/Caribbean Division—in a territory that was overseen in the past by the General Conference. This area needed a major push, because there are many islands in the Caribbean region that have not heard the message of present truth.

The North American/Caribbean Division is composed of the American Union, including the Puerto Rican Field and eight fields that are not under a union—Canada, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, Cuba, Aruba, Curacao, and Suriname. This large territory was discovered in an expedition led by Christopher Columbus in October 12, 1492, and is where the Millerite and Adventist movements were born in 1831.

The Division covers 19,591,840 square kilometers (7,564,451 square miles) with a population of 405 million people. The United States and Canada occupy the continent, and there is a vast territory of islands in the Caribbean Sea—more than 109 islands and hundreds of cays, small islands of sand formed by coral with vegetation that is part of different countries. There are currently 28 dependent countries and territories in the Sea. Some islands have achieved independence, others are in process, and others are linked to England, Holland, France, the U.S.A., etc. These islands are the destination of thousands of tourists who seek a warm climate, lovely beaches with beautiful,

transparent water and abundant marine life, and paradisaical panoramas with tropical vegetation.

The standard of living in most of the islands is quite high, for they are small tourist areas and dependent territories. The languages spoken include Spanish, English, French, Dutch, Creole, and additional native languages.

The Reform Movement has members in seven of the 28 main Caribbean islands and maintains contacts with interested individuals in several other islands. There are still many places where people have not had the opportunity to hear the present truth. Although the North American/Caribbean Division has a great challenge to reach these areas with the message, there is a great desire to fulfill this mission. Finances, the many languages, and necessary personnel are the primary difficulties.

In 2017, several Caribbean islands and cities along the coast of the United States were severely impacted by eighteen storms and hurricanes, leaving more than a thousand people dead, although there is no exact number of human losses, and causing considerable property damage of approximately \$281.14 billion. The believers also suffered property damage in these storms; several church buildings were damaged and their roofs destroyed. In some places, about six months after the storms, electricity and drinking water have not been fully restored to homes. But in spite of the heavy rains and winds that caused severe flooding, the hand of God and His fatherly care were seen protecting the lives of His faithful children.

In addition to the storms, large fires in the western United States destroyed lives and caused severe damage. What are all these catastrophes telling us?

The Lord urges His children to proclaim the message of warning to the world and to call people in the great cities to repentance. He is speaking and giving an opportunity for His church to finish the work of Heaven especially in the areas that have been affected by the invisible messengers.

We appeal to every believer around the world to give generously to finance missionaries who can be sent to different Caribbean islands. Let us work together to reach the territories that are still in darkness and to support the repair of the churches that have been damaged in catastrophes.

Thank you in advance for all the support you give to the North American/Caribbean Division with your offerings and constant prayers.

—Pablo Hunger
North American/Caribbean Division President

**SPECIAL SABBATH SCHOOL OFFERING FOR
The North American/Caribbean Division**

*God bless your generous offerings
coming from a devoted, loving heart!*

18

Sabbath, May 4, 2019

A Great Hindrance to Entering the Kingdom

“Jesus touched the plague spot in the young ruler’s heart, which, if not healed, would destroy his soul. He showed him that he was not keeping the commandments of God, since he did not love God supremely, and his neighbor as himself. Jesus offered to make him His companion and a laborer in bringing souls into the kingdom of heaven. The young man had wealth, education, position, and influence, and was therefore qualified to work intelligently and successfully for the Master. But his love of the world prevented him from accepting the invitation of Christ.” —*Review and Herald*, March 21, 1878.

LIFE AND DEATH QUESTION

- 1. Who came running to the Master one day and, before speaking, knelt before Him? Calling Jesus “good Master,” what willingness did he reveal?**

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

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

- 2. In His answer, what was Jesus asking him and us to take to heart? Why did the Master list only the commandments that are related to one’s neighbor?**

Mark 10:19 *Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.*

“The Lord desires every one of us to be decidedly in earnest. We cannot afford to make a mistake in spiritual matters. The life-and-death question with us is, ‘What shall I do that I may be saved, eternally saved?’ ‘What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life—a life that measures with the life of God?’ This is a question that it becomes every one of us to consider carefully....” —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 98.

“In reply to this question Jesus told him that obedience to the commandments of God was necessary if he would obtain eternal life; and He quoted several of the commandments which show man’s duty to his fellow men.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 518, 519.

“He [Judas] had come to Christ in the same spirit as did the young man who had great possessions, who inquired, ‘Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?’... In this requirement Jesus touched the plague-spot of his heart—selfishness and covetousness.” —*Review and Herald*, August 15, 1893.

3. Comparing the young man’s answer to the prayer of the Pharisee in the temple, what similarity is there? How deep was his understanding of the commandments, as indicated by his quick response?

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

Luke 18:11, 12 *The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. ¹²I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.*

“The young man answered without hesitation, ‘All these things have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet?’ His conception of the law was external and superficial. Judged by a human standard, he had preserved an unblemished character. To a great degree his outward life had been free from guilt; he verily thought that his obedience had been without a flaw. Yet he had a secret fear that all was not right between his soul and God.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 391.

“Jesus looked with love upon the young man, and faithfully pointed out to him his deficiency in keeping the divine law. He did not love his neighbor as himself. His selfish love of riches was a defect, which, if not remedied, would debar him from heaven.” —*Counsels on Stewardship*, pp. 210, 211.

“This ruler had a high estimate of his own righteousness. He did not really suppose that he was defective in anything. He thought that there was no defect in his character....” —*The Youth’s Instructor*, May 20, 1897.

ONE THING YOU LACK

4. Knowing what was in his heart, what counsel did the Lord give him to fill his spiritual void? What similar counsel is given to us?

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

"He needed the love of God in the soul. This lack, unless supplied, would prove fatal to him; his whole nature would become corrupted. By indulgence, selfishness would strengthen. That he might receive the love of God, his supreme love of self must be surrendered....

"But self must yield; his will must be given into Christ's control. The very holiness of God was offered to the young ruler. He had the privilege of becoming a son of God, and a co-heir with Christ to the heavenly treasure. But he must take up the cross, and follow the Saviour in the path of self-denial." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 519, 520.

"He told him that if he would have eternal life, he must obey God's requirements, lift the cross, and follow Him." —*The Youth's Instructor*, May 20, 1897.

"After calling attention to His own self-denying, cross-bearing life, Jesus entreated the young man to come and imitate His example, telling him that he should thus lay up treasure in heaven." —*Review and Herald*, January 15, 1880.

- 5. If he was not willing to leave all and become a disciple of the Son, what must be said of his past service for the Father? Who had really been and now continued to be his master?**

Mark 10:22 *And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.*

"His exalted position and his possessions were exerting a subtle influence for evil upon his character. If cherished, they would supplant God in his affections. To keep back little or much from God was to retain that which would lessen his moral strength and efficiency; for if the things of this world are cherished, however uncertain and unworthy they may be, they will become all-absorbing....

"His claim that he had kept the law of God was a deception. He showed that riches were his idol. He could not keep the commandments of God while the world was first in his affections. He loved the gifts of God more than he loved the Giver. Christ had offered the young man fellowship with Himself. 'Follow Me,' He said.... He refused the offer of eternal life, and went away, and ever after the world was to receive his worship." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 520.

"This world-loving man desired heaven; but he wanted to retain his wealth, and he renounced immortal life for the love of money and power. Oh, what a miserable exchange! Yet many who profess to be keeping all the commandments of God are doing the same thing." —*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 211.

OVERCOMING EVERY HINDRANCE

- 6. Describe the great hindrance that keeps many from the Lord's kingdom.**

Mark 10:23, 25 *And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!... ²⁵It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.*

"As the young man turned away, Jesus said to His disciples, 'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God.' These words astonished the disciples. They had been taught to look upon the rich as the favorites of heaven; worldly power and riches they themselves hoped to receive in the Messiah's kingdom; if the rich were to fail of entering the kingdom, what hope could there be for the rest of men?" —*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 393, 394.

"Heaven's treasure could be obtained only by exchanging the earthly and temporal for the eternal." —*The Youth's Instructor*, May 20, 1897.

7. When do riches become a serious problem, barring the way into the kingdom of heaven?

Mark 10:24 *And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!*

Psalms 62:10, last part ... *If riches increase, set not your heart upon them.*

Luke 12:15 *Take heed,... for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*

"Now they realized that they themselves were included in the solemn warning. In the light of the Saviour's words, their own secret longing for power and riches was revealed." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 394.

"The Lord reveals man's relative estimate of time and eternity, of earth and heaven. He has admonished us: 'If riches increase, set not your heart upon them.' Psalm 62:10. They have a value when used for the good of others and the glory of God; but no earthly treasure is to be your portion, your god, or your saviour." —*The Faith I Live By*, p. 170.

8. When the disciples heard this, what did they exclaim? What did the Lord say about how to overcome this serious obstacle?

Mark 10:26, 27 *And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? ²⁷And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.*

Matthew 6:19-21 *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: ²⁰But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: ²¹For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

"To the rich no less than to the poor are the words of the Holy Spirit spoken, 'Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price.' 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20. When men believe this, their possessions will be held as a trust, to be used as God shall direct, for the saving of the lost, and the comfort of the suffering and the poor. With man this is impossible, for the heart clings to its earthly treasure. The soul that is bound in service to mammon is deaf to the cry of human need. But with God all things are possible. By beholding the matchless love of Christ, the selfish heart will be melted and subdued. The rich man will be led, as was Saul the Phar-

isee, to say, 'What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.' Philippians 3:7, 8. Then they will not count anything their own. They will joy to regard themselves as stewards of the manifold grace of God, and for His sake servants of all men." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 394, 395.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

"The kingdom of heaven is of a higher order than any earthly kingdom. Whether we shall have a higher position or a lower position, will not be determined by our rank, wealth, or education, but by the character of the obedience rendered to the word of God. Those who have been actuated by selfishness and human ambition, who have been striving to be greatest, who have been self-important, who have felt above confessing mistakes and errors, will have no place in the kingdom of God. Whether men will be honored as members of the royal family of God, will be determined by the manner in which they bear the test and proving of God that is brought to bear upon them in this life. Those who have not been self-denying, who have not manifested sympathy for the woes of others, who have not cultivated the precious attributes of love, who have not manifested forbearance and meekness in this life, will not be changed when Christ comes...." —*God's Amazing Grace*, p. 60.

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19

Sabbath, May 11, 2019

Given to a People That Bears Fruit

"The Saviour Himself, during His earthly ministry, foretold the spread of the gospel among the Gentiles. In the parable of the vineyard He declared to the impenitent Jews, 'The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.' Matthew 21:43. And after His resurrection He commissioned His disciples to go 'into all the world' and 'teach all nations.' They were to leave none unwarned, but were to 'preach the gospel to every creature.' Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 174.

SPIRITUAL GOODS ENTRUSTED TO HUSBANDMEN

- 1. What parable did Jesus present to show the great blessing of receiving the kingdom of God? After one prepares the soil and plants a vineyard, what does he naturally expect?**

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

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

"To this people were committed the oracles of God. They were hedged about by the precepts of His law, the everlasting principles of truth, justice, and purity. Obedience to these principles was to be their protection, for it would save them from destroying themselves by sinful practices. And as the tower in the vineyard, God placed in the midst of the land His holy temple." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 287, 288.

2. How conscious were the workers of their great privileges and responsibilities in the vineyard? How ready were they to meet the expectations of the owner by giving him the fruit that was his?

Mark 12:2, 3 *And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. ³And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty.*

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

"If obedient, they would be preserved from the diseases that afflicted other nations, and would be blessed with vigor of intellect. The glory of God, His majesty and power, were to be revealed in all their prosperity. They were to be a kingdom of priests and princes. God furnished them with every facility for becoming the greatest nation on the earth....

"But Israel did not fulfill God's purpose. The Lord declared, 'I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto Me?' Jeremiah 2:21. 'Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself.' Hosea 10:1." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 288, 290.

"... As the husbandmen were to return to the Lord a due proportion of the fruits of the vineyard, so God's people were to honor Him by a life corresponding to their sacred privileges. But as the husbandmen had killed the servants whom the master sent to them for fruit, so the Jews had put to death the prophets whom God sent to call them to repentance. Messenger after messenger had been slain." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 596.

EXPECTING AND ASKING FOR THE FRUIT

3. Instead of being grateful for the great benefits that they had received, how did the husbandmen treat the messengers sent by the Lord of the vineyard a second and a third time?

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

Luke 20:11, 12 *And again he sent another servant: and they beat him also, and entreated him shamefully, and sent him away empty. ¹²And again he sent a third: and they wounded him also, and cast him out.*

“For centuries God looked with patience and forbearance upon the cruel treatment given to His ambassadors, at His holy law prostrate, despised, trampled underfoot. He swept away the inhabitants of the Noachian world with a flood. But when the earth was again peopled, men drew away from God, and renewed their hostility to Him, manifesting bold defiance. Those whom God rescued from Egyptian bondage followed in the footsteps of those who had preceded them. Cause was followed by effect; the earth was being corrupted.” —*Review and Herald*, July 17, 1900.

4. Having one son, what did the owner of the vineyard decide to do? Did the workers respect the son and give him what they owed him?

Mark 12:6 *Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.*

Luke 20:13 *Then said the Lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him.*

Matthew 21:37-39 *But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. ³⁸But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. ³⁹And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.*

“Christ, the Beloved of God, came to assert the claims of the Owner of the vineyard; but the husbandmen treated Him with marked contempt, saying, We will not have this man to rule over us. They envied Christ’s beauty of character. His manner of teaching was far superior to theirs, and they dreaded His success. He remonstrated with them, unveiling their hypocrisy, and showing them the sure results of their course of action. This stirred them to madness. They smarted under the rebukes they could not silence. They hated the high standard of righteousness which Christ continually presented. They saw that His teaching was placing them where their selfishness would be uncloaked, and they determined to kill Him. They hated His example of truthfulness and piety and the elevated spirituality revealed in all He did. His whole life was a reproof to their selfishness, and when the final test came, the test which meant obedience unto eternal life or disobedience unto eternal death, they rejected the Holy One of Israel.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 293, 294.

CHANGE OF WORKERS

5. In the parable, who is represented by the son who was slain and also by the stone that was rejected in the prophecy? How deserving were those husbandmen to continue working in the vineyard?

Matthew 21:40-42 *When the Lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? ⁴¹They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall ren-*

der him the fruits in their seasons. ⁴²Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

Mark 12:9 What shall therefore the Lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.

"Christ designed that the Pharisees should answer as they did. He designed that they should condemn themselves. His warnings, failing to arouse them to repentance, would seal their doom, and He wished them to see that they had brought ruin on themselves. He designed to show them the justice of God in the withdrawal of their national privileges, which had already begun, and which would end, not only in the destruction of their temple and their city, but in the dispersion of the nation." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 597.

- 6. What is represented by the vineyard that was placed in the hands of the husbandmen? Was the kingdom of God a future gift that they had been blessed to work with, or was it also a gift for the present?**

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

"Christ would have averted the doom of the Jewish nation if the people had received Him. But envy and jealousy made them implacable. They determined that they would not receive Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. They rejected the Light of the world, and thenceforth their lives were surrounded with darkness as the darkness of midnight. The doom foretold came upon the Jewish nation. Their own fierce passions, uncontrolled, wrought their ruin....

"As a people the Jews had failed of fulfilling God's purpose, and the vineyard was taken from them. The privileges they had abused, the work they had slighted, was entrusted to others." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 295, 296.

SPECIAL PRIVILEGES FOR THE CHURCH

- 7. After studying this parable, who do you believe the husbandmen were who received this great gift and forfeited it? How does this parable apply to the church today, for it has also received the divine oracles of God's kingdom to work with and produce fruit for the Master?**

Matthew 21:44-46 And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. ⁴⁵And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. ⁴⁶But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.

"The parable of the vineyard applies not alone to the Jewish nation. It has a lesson for us. The church in this generation has been endowed by God with great privileges and blessings, and He expects corresponding returns.

"We have been redeemed by a costly ransom. Only by the greatness of this ransom can we conceive of its results. On this earth, the earth whose soil has been

moistened by the tears and blood of the Son of God, are to be brought forth the precious fruits of Paradise. In the lives of God's people the truths of His word are to reveal their glory and excellence. Through His people Christ is to manifest His character and the principles of His kingdom." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 296.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

Do you think that we are bringing forth more fruit than did those in Jesus' generation? What are you doing to give to the Lord the expected fruit of your work? What do you expect to do in the future?

"The Jews had often repeated the words of this prophecy while teaching the people in the synagogues, applying it to the coming Messiah. But Jesus connected the heir so cruelly slain with the stone which the builders rejected, but which eventually became the principal stone of the whole building. Christ Himself was the originator of the Jewish system, the very foundation of the costly temple, the antitype to whom all the sacrificial services pointed. The Jews had watched with apparent anxiety for the coming of Christ. The scribes, who were learned in the law and acquainted with the declarations of the prophets regarding His coming, knew from prophetic history that the time of looking and waiting for His advent to the world had expired. Through the parables which Jesus spoke to the Jews, He brought their minds to prophecies which had foretold the very things which were then being enacted. He sought by every means within His power to awaken their consciences and to enlighten their understanding, that they might consider well the steps they were meditating." —*Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 3, p. 35.

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20

Sabbath, May 18, 2019

Urgency in Advancing the Kingdom

"God's people must receive the warning and work for souls right where they are, for people do not realize their great need and peril. Christ sought the people where they were, and placed before them the great truths in regard to His kingdom. As He went from place to place, He blessed and comforted the suffering and healed the sick. This is our work. God would have us relieve the necessities of the destitute. The reason that the Lord does not manifest His power more decidedly is because there is so little spirituality among those who claim to believe the truth." —*Medical Ministry*, p. 319; *A Call to Medical Evangelism and Health Education*, p. 11.

DISCIPLESHIP WITH HEAVENLY GOALS

1. How did Jesus reply to a scribe who offered voluntarily to follow Him wherever He went? Was He happy about such a spontaneous offer? What can be seen in the Redeemer's response?

Matthew 8:19 *And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.*

Luke 9:57, 58 *And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. ⁵⁸And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.*

“While Jesus was preparing the disciples for their ordination, one who had not been summoned urged his presence among them. It was Judas Iscariot, a man who professed to be a follower of Christ. He now came forward, soliciting a place in this inner circle of disciples. With great earnestness and apparent sincerity he declared, ‘Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest.’ Jesus neither repulsed nor welcomed him, but uttered only the mournful words: ‘The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head.’ Matthew 8:19, 20. Judas believed Jesus to be the Messiah; and by joining the apostles, he hoped to secure a high position in the new kingdom. This hope Jesus designed to cut off by the statement of His poverty.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 293, 294.

2. What did He say to a man who asked for time to take care of what he considered his most urgent duty?

Matthew 8:21 *And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.*

Luke 9:59 *And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.*

“No earthly ties, no earthly considerations, should weigh one moment in the scale against duty to the cause and work of God. Jesus severed His connection from everything to save a lost world; and He requires of us a full and entire consecration. There are sacrifices to be made for the interests of God’s cause. The sacrifice of feeling is the most keen that is required of us; yet, after all, it is a small sacrifice. You have plenty of friends, and if the feelings are only sanctified, you need not feel that you are making a very great sacrifice. You do not leave your wife among heathen. You are not called to tread the burning African desert, or to face prisons, and encounter trial at every step. Be careful how you appeal to your sympathies, and let human feelings and personal considerations mingle with your efforts and labors for the cause of God. He demands unselfish and willing service. You can render this, and yet do all your duties to your family; but hold this as a secondary matter.” —*Gospel Workers* (1892), p. 248.

URGENCY OF GOD’S KINGDOM

3. What should have precedence—our commitments or the spiritual ministry? What great importance and urgency are there in becoming the Lord’s disciple and calling people to the heavenly kingdom?

Matthew 8:22 *But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.*

Luke 9:60 *Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.*

“When souls are deciding for or against the truth, do not, I beseech you, allow yourselves to be drawn away from your field of labor. Do not abandon it to the enemy, I might say, even if one lay dead in your house. Christ said, ‘Follow Me; and let the dead bury their dead.’ If you could only see the importance of the work as it has been presented to me, the paralysis that is upon many would be shaken off, and there would be a rising from the dead and a coming to life through Jesus Christ.... If we firmly take our stand as God’s workmen, saying, ‘The Lord has given us a message, and we cannot be faithful watchmen unless we stand at our post of duty; we will carry the work through at all hazards,’ then we shall find that angels of God will minister to our households at home....” —*Evangelism*, p. 655.

4. **What instruction did the apostle Paul give Timothy as a minister in the spiritual vineyard? Was he to engage in the ministry only after his comforts were supplied and the obstacles were removed?**

2 Timothy 4:2, 5; 2:3 *Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.... ⁵But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.... ^{2,3}Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.*

“Paul was about to finish his course, and he desired Timothy to take his place, guarding the church from the fables and heresies by which the enemy, in various ways, would endeavor to lead them from the simplicity of the gospel. He admonished him to shun all temporal pursuits and entanglements that would prevent him from giving himself wholly to his work for God; to endure with cheerfulness the opposition, reproach, and persecution to which his faithfulness would expose him; to make full proof of his ministry by employing every means within his reach of doing good to those for whom Christ died.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 506, 507.

FIRST PLACE

5. **Is there logic in a request someone made to Jesus to be carried out before he would follow Him? Is it wise to put our own thinking or benefits in first place?**

Luke 9:61 *And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.*

1 Corinthians 9:16 *For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!*

Matthew 6:33, first part *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness;...*

“There are no circumstances of sufficient importance to call a minister from an interest created by the presentation of truth. Even sickness and death are of less consequence than the salvation of souls for whom Christ made so immense a sacrifice. Those who feel the importance of the truth, and the value of souls for whom Christ died, will not leave an interest among the people for any consideration. They will say: Let the dead bury their dead. Home interests, lands and houses, should not have the least power to attract from the field of labor. If ministers allow these temporal things to divert them from the work, the only course for them to pursue is to leave all, possess no lands or temporal interests which will have an influence to draw them from the solemn work of these last days. One soul is of more value than the entire world. How can men who profess to have given themselves to the sacred work of saving souls, allow their small temporal possessions to engross their minds and hearts, and keep them from the high calling they profess to have received from God?” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 540, 541.

6. Why did Jesus answer as He did? Is it possible to be active in the kingdom of God and carry out one's own interests at the same time?

Luke 9:62 *And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.*

2 Timothy 2:4 *No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.*

“To everyone who becomes a partaker of His grace, the Lord appoints a work for others. Individually we are to stand in our lot, saying, ‘Here am I; send me.’ Whether a man be a minister of the Word or a physician, whether he be merchant or farmer, professional man or mechanic, the responsibility rests upon him. It is his work to reveal to others the gospel of their salvation. Every enterprise in which he engages should be a means to this end.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 222.

GOD'S KINGDOM AND HIS PEOPLE'S MISSION

7. How many times did the Lord repeat the command to Peter to go and take care of His lambs and sheep? Did this indicate that the preaching of the kingdom is merely an option or a full commission that the Lord has entrusted to each of His disciples?

John 21:15-17 *So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. ¹⁶He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. ¹⁷He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.*

Acts 20:24, last part, 25 ... *Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵And now, behold, I know that ye all,*

among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.

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

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

“You are God’s employed servants, delegated to build up His kingdom in the earth, and you are to do your part in saving the souls for whom Christ has paid the price of His own blood. Is it then a slight matter to teach in the Sabbath school, without a preparation of heart for this momentous work? Many who undertake teaching a class feel little interest in it, and they mar the sacred work by their unconsecrated efforts.” —*Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 121.

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21

Sabbath, May 25, 2019

The Kingdom Has Been at Hand Since John

“When Jesus sent forth the twelve on their first mission of mercy, He commissioned them ‘to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.’ Luke 9:2. ‘As ye go,’ He said, ‘preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.’ Matthew 10:7, 8. And as they ‘went through the towns, preaching the gospel, and healing everywhere’ (Luke 9:6), the blessing of heaven accompanied their labors. The fulfillment of the Saviour’s commission by the disciples made their message the power of God unto salvation, and through their efforts many were brought to a knowledge of the Messiah.” —*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 465.

PROCLAIMED BY MOSES AND THE PROPHETS

- 1. What was written by Moses about the coming Redeemer? What extraordinary mission would He accomplish?**

Deuteronomy 18:15 *The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.*

Genesis 3:15 *And 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.*

“Plain and specific prophecies had been given regarding the appearance of the Promised One. To Adam was given an assurance of the coming of the Redeemer. The sentence pronounced on Satan, ‘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), was to our first parents a promise of the redemption to be wrought out through Christ.

“To Abraham was given the promise that of his line the Saviour of the world should come: ‘In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.’ ‘He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.’ Genesis 22:18; Galatians 3:16.

“Moses, near the close of his work as a leader and teacher of Israel, plainly prophesied of the Messiah to come. ‘The Lord thy God,’ he declared to the assembled hosts of Israel, ‘will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him ye shall hearken.’” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 222.

2. According to the prophets, what other great work would the Messiah fulfill? How is the holy reality of the spiritual kingdom pictured?

Isaiah 61:1-3; 40:11 *The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; ²To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; ³To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.... ^{40:11}He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.*

“Isaiah prophesied: ‘There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.’ ‘Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He hath glorified thee.’ Isaiah 11:1; 55:3-5.

“Jeremiah also bore witness of the coming Redeemer as a Prince of the house of David: ‘Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is His name whereby He shall be called, The Lord Our Righteousness.’ Jeremiah 23:5, 6.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 223.

3. How did Jesus confirm God's kingdom as active from ancient times until the beginning of John's ministry? What core message became its reality?

Luke 16:16 *The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.*

"In the commission to His disciples, Christ not only outlined their work, but gave them their message. Teach the people, He said, 'to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.' The disciples were to teach what Christ had taught. That which He had spoken, not only in person, but through all the prophets and teachers of the Old Testament, is here included. Human teaching is shut out.... Nothing that does not bear His superscription is to be recognized in His kingdom." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 826.

"Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph.' 'Nathanael answered and saith unto Him, Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel.' John 1:45, 49." —*Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 26.

4. If Moses and the prophets proclaimed the coming of God's kingdom in the Messiah, could that proclamation fail? Why was it impossible for Jesus and His disciples to preach a different message?

Matthew 5:18 *For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.*

Luke 16:17 *And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.*

"... Concerning the law of Ten Commandments the psalmist declares, 'Forever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven.' Psalm 119:89. And Christ Himself says, 'Think not that I am come to destroy the law.... Verily I say unto you'—making the assertion as emphatic as possible—'Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.' Matthew 5:17, 18. Here He teaches, not merely what the claims of God's law had been, and were then, but that these claims should hold as long as the heavens and the earth remain. The law of God is as immutable as His throne. It will maintain its claims upon mankind in all ages." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 365.

"... Christ came not to destroy but to fulfill the law. Not one jot or tittle of God's moral standard could be changed to meet man in his fallen condition. Jesus died that He might ascribe unto the repenting sinner His own righteousness, and make it possible for man to keep the law." —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 312.

CONFIRMATION OF THE SAME GREAT TRUTH

5. What shows that the time of John's ministry did not end the messages of Moses and the prophets but was the beginning of the fulfillment of God's kingdom?

Matthew 11:12, 13 *And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. ¹³For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.*

“John went forth to herald the Lord’s anointed, and call men to repentance, saying: ‘Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is He that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make His paths straight.’ Matthew 3:2, 3. ‘Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’ Luke 3:5, 6. ‘Now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.’ Luke 3:9.” –*The Youth’s Instructor*, May 17, 1900.

6. What is sure in Jesus’ word and the disciples’ message?

Luke 9:1, 2; 10:9, 11 *Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. ²And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.... ^{10:9}And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.... ¹¹Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.*

“During the life of Christ the sick and afflicted were objects of His special care. When He sent out His disciples He commissioned them to heal the sick as well as to preach the gospel. When He sent forth the seventy He commanded them to heal the sick, and next to preach that the kingdom of God had come nigh unto them.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 225.

“Christ has given an example, and the Lord will certainly bless the efforts of those who will move out in the fear of God, bearing the message the Saviour gave to the first disciples, ‘The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.’” –*Evangelism*, pp. 51, 52.

PARTAKERS OF THE BLESSED INHERITANCE

7. Therefore, what wonderful messages could the apostles write with trust and joy?

Colossians 1:12, 13 *Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: ¹³Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.*

1 Peter 1:3-5 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

“Of the poor in spirit Jesus says, ‘Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’ This kingdom is not, as Christ’s hearers had hoped, a temporal and earthly dominion. Christ was opening to men the spiritual kingdom of His love, His grace, His righteousness.

The ensign of the Messiah's reign is distinguished by the likeness of the Son of man. His subjects are the poor in spirit, the meek, the persecuted for righteousness' sake. The kingdom of heaven is theirs. Though not yet fully accomplished, the work is begun in them which will make them 'meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.' Colossians 1:12." —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 8.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

"The apostle Paul says that God hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.' Colossians 1:13. And everyone who has passed from death unto life is able to 'set to his seal that God is true.' John 3:33. He can testify, 'I needed help, and I found it in Jesus. Every want was supplied, the hunger of my soul was satisfied.'" —*Steps to Christ*, p. 112.

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Sabbath, June 1, 2019

Welcome into the Heavenly Kingdom

"Those who have been actuated by selfishness and human ambition, who have been striving to be greatest, who have been self-important, who have felt above confessing mistakes and errors, will have no place in the kingdom of God. Whether men will be honored as members of the royal family of God, will be determined by the manner in which they bear the test and proving of God that is brought to bear upon them in this life. Those who have not been self-denying, who have not manifested sympathy for the woes of others, who have not cultivated the precious attributes of love, who have not manifested forbearance and meekness in this life, will not be changed when Christ comes." —*God's Amazing Grace*, p. 60.

COMMANDMENTS AND KINGDOM

- 1. After having confirmed the validity of the commandments, what did the Lord say about those who by words or actions break or annul even one principle? What does it mean to be considered the last in God's kingdom?**

Matthew 5:19, first part *Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven...*

"That is, he shall have no place therein. For he who willfully breaks one commandment, does not, in spirit and truth, keep any of them. 'Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.' James 2:10.

"It is not the greatness of the act of disobedience that constitutes sin, but the fact of variance from God's expressed will in the least particular; for this shows

that there is yet communion between the soul and sin. The heart is divided in its service. There is a virtual denial of God, a rebellion against the laws of His government.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 51.

2. Why does the violation or annulling of a commandment have such grave consequences?

Psalm 119:4 *Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently.*

James 2:10 *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*

“Were men free to depart from the Lord’s requirements and to set up a standard of duty for themselves, there would be a variety of standards to suit different minds and the government would be taken out of the Lord’s hands. The will of man would be made supreme, and the high and holy will of God—His purpose of love toward His creatures—would be dishonored, disrespected.

“Whenever men choose their own way, they place themselves in controversy with God. They will have no place in the kingdom of heaven, for they are at war with the very principles of heaven. In disregarding the will of God, they are placing themselves on the side of Satan, the enemy of God and man.... There is not a commandment of the law that is not for the good and happiness of man, both in this life and in the life to come. In obedience to God’s law, man is surrounded as with a hedge and kept from the evil. He who breaks down this divinely erected barrier at one point has destroyed its power to protect him; for he has opened a way by which the enemy can enter to waste and ruin.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 51, 52.

3. On the other hand, what will be experienced by those who love and keep the holy law? In the kingdom of heaven, how will those who sincerely and willingly obey and teach the commandments be regarded?

Deuteronomy 6:3 *That thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son’s son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.*

Isaiah 48:18 *O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.*

Matthew 5:19, last part ... *But whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

“The qualities which shine with greatest luster in the kingdoms of the world, have no place in Christ’s spiritual kingdom. That which is highly exalted among men, and brings exaltation to its possessor, such as caste, rank, position, or wealth, is not esteemed in the spiritual kingdom. The Lord says, ‘Them that honor Me, I will honor.’ 1 Samuel 2:30. In Christ’s kingdom men are distinguished according to their piety....

“The kingdom of heaven is of a higher order than any earthly kingdom. Whether we shall have a higher position or a lower position, will not be determined by our rank, wealth, or education, but by the character of the obedience rendered to the word of God.” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 60.

4. What great testimony did Jesus give of His forerunner? In what sense was John the Baptist “much more than a prophet”?

Matthew 11:7-9 *And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? ⁸But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. ⁹But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.*

Luke 7:26 *But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet.*

“The witness borne of him after his death, by those who had heard his testimony to Jesus, was, ‘John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this Man were true.’ John 10:41. It was not given to John to call down fire from heaven, or to raise the dead, as Elijah did, nor to wield Moses’ rod of power in the name of God. He was sent to herald the Saviour’s advent, and to call upon the people to prepare for His coming. So faithfully did he fulfill his mission, that as the people recalled what he had taught them of Jesus, they could say, ‘All things that John spake of this Man were true.’ Such witness to Christ every disciple of the Master is called upon to bear....

“As the Messiah’s herald, John was ‘much more than a prophet.’ Luke 7:26. For while prophets had seen from afar Christ’s advent, to John it was given to behold Him, to hear the testimony from heaven to His Messiahship, and to present Him to Israel as the Sent of God.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 219, 220.

5. Although John the Baptist was recognized by Jesus as a messenger and the greatest human being to ever live, what did Jesus say about him in comparison with the least in the kingdom of heaven? Why?

Matthew 11:10, 11 *For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. ¹¹Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.*

Luke 7:28 *For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.*

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

6. What did Jesus say about entrance into the kingdom of God since the days of John's preaching? What did He mean by saying that "the violent take it by force"?

Matthew 11:12, 13 *And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. ¹³For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.*

"The teaching of John aroused in the hearts of many a great desire to have a part in the blessings that Christ was to bring, and they received the truth. These saw the need of reform. They must not only seek to enter in at the strait gate; they must strive and agonize in order to have the blessings of the gospel. Nothing save a vehement desire, a determined will, a fixedness of purpose, could resist the moral darkness that covered the earth as the pall of death. In order to obtain the blessings that it was their privilege to have, they must work earnestly, they must deny self." —*The Youth's Instructor*, May 17, 1900.

7. Therefore, what should be our greatest and first interest in life? How is it possible to evaluate Jesus' promise and labor wholeheartedly for the kingdom of heaven, as did the disciples in His time?

Matthew 6:33, first part; 11:15 *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness;... ^{11:15}He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

"This promise will never fail. We cannot enjoy the favor of God unless we comply with the conditions upon which His favor is bestowed. By so doing there will come to us that peace, contentment, and wisdom that the world can neither give nor take away.... A humble mind and a grateful heart will elevate us above petty trials and real difficulties. The less earnest, energetic, and vigilant we are in the service of the Master, the more will the mind dwell upon self, magnifying molehills into mountains of difficulty..." —*Conflict and Courage*, p. 370.

"My brethren, there is eternal life for us to win. Let us fight the good fight of faith. Not in the future, but now, is our probation. While it lingers, 'seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things'—the things which now so often serve Satan's purpose as snares to deceive and destroy—'shall be added unto you.'" —(*Review and Herald*, March 5, 1908) *Christian Service*, p. 21.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

"The prophet John was the connecting link between the two dispensations. As God's representative he stood forth to show the relation of the law and the prophets to the Christian dispensation. He was the lesser light, which was to be followed by a greater. The mind of John was illuminated by the Holy Spirit, that he might shed light upon his people; but no other light ever has shone or ever will shine so clearly upon fallen man as that which emanated from the teaching and example of Jesus. Christ and His mission had been but dimly understood as typified in the shadowy sacrifices." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 220.

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The Greatest in the Kingdom

“... The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.’ Mark 10:45. Among His disciples Christ was in every sense a caretaker, a burden bearer. He shared their poverty, He practiced self-denial on their account, He went before them to smooth the more difficult places, and soon He would consummate His work on earth by laying down His life. The principle on which Christ acted is to actuate the members of the church which is His body. The plan and ground of salvation is love. In the kingdom of Christ those are greatest who follow the example He has given, and act as shepherds of His flock.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 550.

AMBITION AND DISPUTE

1. **What discussion concerning the kingdom arose among the disciples as they were walking along the way? What did this reveal about them?**

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

Mark 9:33, 34 *And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? ³⁴But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest.*

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

“When Christ and the disciples were alone in the house,... Jesus called the others to Him, and asked, ‘What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?’ Mark 9:33. The presence of Jesus, and His question, put the matter in an entirely different light from that in which it had appeared to them while they were contending by the way. Shame and self-condemnation kept them silent. Jesus had told them that He was to die for their sake, and their selfish ambition was in painful contrast to His unselfish love.

“When Jesus told them that He was to be put to death and to rise again, He was trying to draw them into conversation in regard to the great test of their faith.... But although He had spoken so plainly of what awaited Him, His mention of the fact that He was soon to go to Jerusalem again kindled their hope that the kingdom was about to be set up. This had led to questioning as to who should fill the highest offices.... At last one ventured to ask Jesus, ‘Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 434, 435.

2. **How did the Lord address their concerns? What example did He use to replace their ambition and desire for position with sincerity and humility?**

Mark 9:35 *And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.*

Luke 9:47, 48 *And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him, ⁴⁸And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.*

"If we would but learn the wonderful lessons which Jesus sought to teach His disciples from a little child, how many things that now seem insurmountable difficulties would wholly disappear! When the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?... Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

"'Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.' Matthew 18:1-4." —*The Adventist Home*, pp. 279, 280.

THE RIGHT WAY

3. What great changes did He say need to take place in the life of one who desires to be prepared to enter the heavenly kingdom?

Matthew 18:2, 3 *And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, ³And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

"The path to heaven is no smoother now than in the days of our Saviour. All our sins must be put away. Every darling indulgence that hinders our religious life must be cut off. The right eye or the right hand must be sacrificed if it cause us to offend. Are we willing to renounce our own wisdom and to receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child? Are we willing to part with self-righteousness? Are we willing to give up our chosen worldly associates? Are we willing to sacrifice the approbation of men? The prize of eternal life is of infinite value. Will we put forth efforts and make sacrifices proportionate to the worth of the object to be attained?" —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 222.

4. Explaining His teaching, what is it about children that Jesus said will make a person greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

Matthew 18:4 *Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

Mark 10:14, 15 *But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. ¹⁵Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.*

"I saw that the strength of the children of God is in their humility. When they are little in their own eyes, Jesus will be to them their strength and their righteousness, and God will prosper their labors." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 307.

“To be great in God’s kingdom is to be a little child in humility, in simplicity of faith, and in the purity of love. All pride must perish, all jealousy be overcome, all ambition for supremacy be given up, and the meekness and trust of the child be encouraged. All such will find Christ their rock of defense, their strong tower. In Him they may trust implicitly, and He will never fail them.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 130.

LOVING ATTENTION AND ESTEEM, NOT REBUKE AND OFFENSE

5. What incident showed that the disciples had little interest in and attention for children? What similar risk can we run because of ambition or insensitivity?

Matthew 19:13, 14; 18:6, 7 *Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.... ^{18:6}But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. ⁷Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!*

“Let the minister not forget to encourage the precious lambs of the flock. Christ, the majesty of heaven, said, ‘Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.’ Jesus does not send the children to the rabbis; He does not send them to the Pharisees; for He knows that these men would teach them to reject their best friend. The mothers that brought their children to Jesus, did well. Remember the text, ‘Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.’ Mark 10:14. Let mothers now lead their children to Christ. Let ministers of the gospel take the little children in their arms, and bless them in the name of Jesus. Let words of tenderest love be spoken to the little ones; for Jesus took the lambs of the flock in His arms, and blessed them.” —(*Review and Herald*, March 24, 1896) *Evangelism*, pp. 349, 350.

6. If we are truly interested in the kingdom of heaven, what will we focus on instead of being ambitious or aspiring to a position?

Matthew 18:8, 9 *Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. ⁹And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.*

“Any habit or practice that would lead into sin, and bring dishonor upon Christ, would better be put away, whatever the sacrifice. That which dishonors God cannot benefit the soul. The blessing of heaven cannot attend any man in violating the eternal principles of right. And one sin cherished is sufficient to work the degradation of the character, and to mislead others. If the foot or the hand would be cut off, or even the eye would be plucked out, to save the body from death, how much

more earnest should we be to put away sin, that brings death to the soul!" —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 439.

7. What thought will help us to maintain respect for one another? What esteem should we have for those considered as the least?

Matthew 18:10 *Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.*

Philippians 2:3, 4 *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. ⁴Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*

"If our lives are filled with holy fragrance, if we honor God by having good thoughts toward others, and doing good deeds to bless others, it matters not whether we live in a cottage or a palace. Circumstances have but little to do with the experiences of the soul. It is the spirit cherished which gives coloring to all our actions. A man at peace with God and his fellow men cannot be made miserable. Envy will not be in his heart; evil surmising will find no room there; hatred cannot exist. The heart in harmony with God is lifted above the annoyances and trials of this life. But a heart where the peace of Christ is not, is unhappy, full of discontent; the person sees defects in everything, and he would bring discord into the most heavenly music.... Those whose hearts are filled with love of self will store away evil thoughts of their brethren and will talk against God's instrumentalities. Passions kept warm and fierce by Satan's promptings are a bitter fountain, ever sending forth bitter streams to poison the life of others.... Let each one who claims to follow Christ esteem himself less and others more." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 488.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

"In the providence of God we are associated with those who are inexperienced, with many who need pity and compassion. They need succor, for they are weak. Young men need help. In the strength of Him whose lovingkindness is exercised toward the helpless, the ignorant, and those counted as the least of His little ones, we must labor for their future welfare, for the shaping of Christian character. The very ones who need help the most will at times try our patience sorely. 'Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones,' Christ says, 'for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven.' Matthew 18:10. And to those who minister to these souls, the Saviour declares: 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.' Matthew 25:40." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 348.

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Glimpse of the Kingdom

“Jesus told His disciples that there were some standing with Him who should not taste of death till they should see the kingdom of God come with power. At the transfiguration this promise was fulfilled. The fashion of Jesus’ countenance was changed, and shone like the sun. His raiment was white and glistening.” —*The Story of Redemption*, p. 207; *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1, p. 43.

“The Saviour’s promise to the disciples was now fulfilled. Upon the mount the future kingdom of glory was represented in miniature—Christ the King, Moses a representative of the risen saints, and Elijah of the translated ones.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 421.

1. What startling announcement about the heavenly kingdom did Jesus make to His disciples one day?

Luke 9:27 *But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.*

Mark 9:1 *And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.*

“Previous to His transfiguration, Jesus had told His disciples that there were some then with Him who should not see death until they should see the kingdom of God come with power. In the transfiguration on the mount, this promise was fulfilled, for they there saw the kingdom of Christ in miniature.” —*Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, pp. 336, 337.

TRANSFIGURATION AND GLORY

2. Was He speaking of His coming at the time of the end or of a manifestation that would take place during the time of the disciples? What happened about a week later when He went up into a mountain to pray?

Mark 9:2 *And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them.*

“At the transfiguration this promise was fulfilled. The countenance of Jesus was there changed and shone like the sun. His raiment was white and glistening. Moses was present to represent those who will be raised from the dead at the second appearing of Jesus. And Elijah, who was translated without seeing death, represented those who will be changed to immortality at Christ’s second coming and will be translated to heaven without seeing death. The disciples beheld with

astonishment and fear the excellent majesty of Jesus and the cloud that overshadowed them, and heard the voice of God in terrible majesty, saying, 'This is My beloved Son; hear Him.'" —*Early Writings*, p. 164.

"In these glorified ones, the disciples saw in miniature a representation of the kingdom of the redeemed." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 227.

3. What happened when Jesus was transfigured? How is He described in another glorious appearance?

Luke 9:29 *And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening.*

Mark 9:3 *And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.*

Matthew 17:2 *And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.*

Revelation 1:16 *And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.*

"Now the burden of His prayer is that they may be given a manifestation of the glory He had with the Father before the world was, that His kingdom may be revealed to human eyes, and that His disciples may be strengthened to behold it. He pleads that they may witness a manifestation of His divinity that will comfort them in the hour of His supreme agony with the knowledge that He is of a surety the Son of God and that His shameful death is a part of the plan of redemption.

"His prayer is heard. While He is bowed in lowliness upon the stony ground, suddenly the heavens open, the golden gates of the city of God are thrown wide, and holy radiance descends upon the mount, enshrouding the Saviour's form. Divinity from within flashes through humanity, and meets the glory coming from above. Arising from His prostrate position, Christ stands in godlike majesty. The soul agony is gone. His countenance now shines 'as the sun,' and His garments are 'white as the light.' Matthew 17:2." —*God's Amazing Grace*, p. 346.

GOD'S VOICE

4. In that extraordinary scene, who appeared in glory and talked with the Saviour?

Matthew 17:3 *And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.*

Luke 9:31, 32 *Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. ³²But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him.*

They beheld Jesus clothed with the light of heaven; they heard the 'voice out of the cloud' (Luke 9:35), acknowledging Him as the Son of God; they saw Moses, representing those who will be raised from the dead at the time of the second

advent; and there also stood Elijah, representing those who at the close of earth's history will be changed from mortal to immortal and be translated to heaven without seeing death." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 227.

"Jesus was clothed with the glory of Heaven, and proclaimed by the Father's voice to be the Son of God. Moses was present, representing those who will be raised from the dead at the second coming of Christ; and Elijah, who was translated to heaven without seeing death, represented those who will be living on earth at the time of Christ's second appearing, and who will be changed from mortal to immortal, and be translated to heaven without seeing death." —*Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, pp. 336, 337.

5. What other extraordinary manifestation occurred as He was speaking with Moses and Elijah? What effect did this have on the disciples?

Matthew 17:5, 6 *While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. ⁶And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.*

Luke 9:34 *While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud.*

"While they were still gazing on the scene upon the mount, 'a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him.' As they beheld the cloud of glory, brighter than that which went before the tribes of Israel in the wilderness; as they heard the voice of God speak in awful majesty that caused the mountain to tremble, the disciples fell smitten to the earth. They remained prostrate, their faces hidden, till Jesus came near, and touched them, dispelling their fears with His well-known voice, 'Arise, and be not afraid.' Matthew 17:5, 7. Venturing to lift up their eyes, they saw that the heavenly glory had passed away, the forms of Moses and Elijah had disappeared. They were upon the mount, alone with Jesus." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 425.

FAITH IN THE COMING KINGDOM

6. After this wonderful event, what did Jesus instruct the three disciples? Why was this event not to be related to anyone until after His resurrection?

Matthew 17:9 *And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.*

"At the foot of the mountain a large company had gathered, led hither by the disciples who had remained behind, but who knew whither Jesus had resorted. As the Saviour drew near, He charged His three companions to keep silence concerning what they had witnessed, saying, 'Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.' Matthew 7:9. The revelation made to the disciples was to be pondered in their own hearts, not to be published abroad. To relate it to the multitudes would excite only ridicule or idle wonder. And even the

nine apostles would not understand the scene until after Christ had risen from the dead. How slow of comprehension even the three favored disciples were, is seen in the fact that notwithstanding all that Christ had said of what was before Him, they queried among themselves what the rising from the dead should mean. Yet they asked no explanation from Jesus." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 426, 427.

7. Knowing about the transfiguration, what can we expect in the near future?

Matthew 26:64 *Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.*

2 Timothy 4:1 *I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom.*

"‘Hereafter,’ said Jesus, ‘shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.’ Matthew 26:64. In these words Christ presented the reverse of the scene then taking place. He, the Lord of life and glory, would be seated at God’s right hand. He would be the judge of all the earth, and from His decision there could be no appeal. Then every secret thing would be set in the light of God’s countenance, and judgment be passed upon every man according to his deeds." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 707, 708.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

"The disciples, awaking, behold the flood of glory that illuminates the mount. In fear and amazement they gaze upon the radiant form of their Master.... Beside Him are two heavenly beings, in close converse with Him. They are Moses, who upon Sinai had talked with God; and Elijah, to whom the high privilege was given ... never to come under the power of death.... Upon the mount the future kingdom of glory was represented in miniature—Christ the King, Moses a representative of the risen saints, and Elijah of the translated ones." —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 346.

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25

Sabbath, June 22, 2019

Signs of the Kingdom

"There are in the world today many who close their eyes to the evidences that Christ has given to warn men of His coming. They seek to quiet all apprehension, while at the same time the signs of the end are rapidly fulfilling, and the world is hastening to the time when the Son of man shall be revealed in the clouds of heaven.... It is sinful to be indifferent to the signs which are to precede the second coming of Christ.... ‘Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.’ 1 Thessalonians 5:6." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 260.

WARNING SIGNS

- 1. What prophecies concerning the kingdom of glory did the Saviour give? Besides the signs in nature, what conditions will exist among the nations?**

Luke 21:25 *And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring.*

Matthew 24:29 *Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.*

"A world is represented in the destruction of Jerusalem, and the warning given then by Christ comes sounding down the line to our time.... Yes, they shall pass their borders, and destruction will be in their track. They will engulf the ships that sail upon their broad waters, and with the burden of their living freight, they will be hurried into eternity, without time to repent." —*Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 417.

- 2. What will happen to the powers of earth and heaven? How will people feel when they see such frightening events?**

Luke 21:26 *Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.*

"There will be calamities by land and by sea, 'men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.' In just the same manner as He ascended will He come the second time to our world. 'And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.' Luke 21:26-28.

"Those in the world, having lost their connection with God, are making desperate, insane efforts to make centers of themselves. This causes distrust of one another, which is followed by crime. The kingdoms of the world will be divided against themselves. Fewer and fewer will become the sympathetic cords which bind man in brotherhood to his fellow man. The natural egotism of the human heart will be worked upon by Satan. He will use the uncontrolled wills and violent passions which were never brought under the control of God's will...." —*Selected Messages*, book 3, pp. 417, 418.

JESUS' GLORIOUS APPEARING

- 3. After all these events occur, what powerful, glorious, long-expected event will take place? Who will appear triumphantly in the clouds of heaven?**

Luke 21:27 *And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.*

“The Lord is soon to come, and we must be prepared to meet Him in peace. Let us be determined to do all in our power to impart light to those around us. We are not to be sad, but cheerful, and we are to keep the Lord Jesus ever before us. He is soon coming, and we must be ready and waiting for His appearing. Oh, how glorious it will be to see Him and be welcomed as His redeemed ones! Long have we waited, but our hope is not to grow dim. If we can but see the King in His beauty we shall be forever blessed.... We are nearing the time when Christ will come in power and great glory to take His ransomed ones to their eternal home.”
—Testimonies for the Church, vol. 8, p. 253.

4. What relation is there between signs of the end and the believers’ redemption? Therefore, what special attention should we give to the signs taking place around us?

Luke 21:28 *And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.*

“The words of Jesus Christ are spoken to us living down here in the close of this earth’s history. ‘When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.’ Luke 21:28. The nations are in unrest. Times of perplexity are upon us. The waves of the sea are roaring; men’s hearts are failing them for fear and for expectation of those things that are coming upon the earth; but those who believe on the Son of God will hear His voice amid the storm, saying, ‘It is I; be not afraid.’ Matthew 14:27.... We see the world lying in wickedness and apostasy. Rebellion to the commandments of God seems almost universal. Amid the tumult of excitement with confusion in every place, there is a work to be done in the world.” *—Evangelism, p. 18.*

5. How can we know that we are truly paying attention to the signs of the times? How aware of and prepared for Jesus’ coming are we, as He mentioned in the parable of the fig tree showing that summer is near?

Luke 21:29, 30 *And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand.*

“Christ had bidden His people watch for the signs of His advent and rejoice as they should behold the tokens of their coming King. ‘When these things begin to come to pass,’ He said, ‘then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.’ He pointed His followers to the budding trees of spring, and said: ‘When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.’ Luke 21:28, 30, 31.” *—The Great Controversy, pp. 308, 309.*

THE KINGDOM AT HAND

6. Having earnestly prayed and waited, what will the redeemed experience?

Luke 21:31 *So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.*

Matthew 25:34 *Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*

“Heaven is worth everything to us. We must not run any risk in this matter. We must take no venture here. We must know that our steps are ordered by the Lord. May God help us in the great work of overcoming. He has crowns for those that overcome. He has white robes for the righteous. He has an eternal world of glory for those who seek for glory, honor, and immortality. Everyone who enters the city of God will enter it as a conqueror. He will not enter it as a condemned criminal, but as a son of God. And the welcome given to everyone who enters there will be, ‘Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’ Matthew 25:34.” —*Temperance*, p. 114.

7. When will everything be finished? What assurance did the Lord give His children about this greatly anticipated event?

Luke 21:32, 33 *Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. ³³Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.*

“At the close of the great papal persecution, Christ declared, the sun should be darkened, and the moon should not give her light. Next, the stars should fall from heaven. And He says, ‘Learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that He is near, even at the doors.’ Matthew 24:32, 33, margin.

“Christ has given signs of His coming. He declares that we may know when He is near, even at the doors. He says of those who see these signs, ‘This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.’ These signs have appeared. Now we know of a surety that the Lord’s coming is at hand. ‘Heaven and earth shall pass away,’ He says, ‘but My words shall not pass away.’ Luke 21:32, 33.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 632.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

“Soon grievous troubles will arise among the nations—troubles that will not cease until Jesus comes. As never before we need to press together, serving Him who has prepared His throne in the heavens and whose kingdom ruleth over all. God has not forsaken His people, and our strength lies in not forsaking Him.

“The judgments of God are in the land. The wars and rumors of wars, the destruction by fire and flood, say clearly that the time of trouble, which is to increase until the end, is very near at hand. We have no time to lose. The world is stirred with the spirit of war. The prophecies of the eleventh of Daniel have almost reached their final fulfillment....” —*Maranatha*, p. 25.

“Better than all the friendship of the world is the friendship of Christ’s redeemed. Better than a title to the noblest palace on earth is a title to the mansions our Lord has gone to prepare. And better than all the words of earthly praise will be the Saviour’s words to His faithful servants, ‘Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’ Matthew 25:34.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 374.

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Please read the Missionary Report
from the General Conference Youth Department on page 121

26

Sabbath, June 29, 2019

Seated in the Kingdom

“There is a right way and a wrong way, and in one or the other each human being is following. Those who truly believe in Christ live a life of holy obedience. They are sanctified through the truth. Their piety is not a pretense, but a reality. They have a sanctified Christian experience in holy living.

“Let us make sure that we are perfecting Christian characters through belief of the truth. We cannot be too particular in regard to this. If we fail here, our life work will bring us no reward. Those who believe in Christ, and give up their will and their plans for God’s will and God’s plans enter upon a life of Christlikeness. This is the only way to gain salvation.” —*Review and Herald*, May 19, 1903.

THE NUMBER SAVED

- 1. What question was addressed to the Lord? Why is this question so significant?**

Luke 13:23 *Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved?*

“When we read that many will seek to enter in and shall not be able, then we want to understand what we shall do in order to succeed. This to us is a mournful statement, that there are those who will fail to enter in at the strait gate because they only seek to enter in, and do not strive....

“We are in a world where sin and iniquity prevail, and we want to know what we shall do in order to inherit life. We cannot any of us afford to miss the great reward that is presented before the overcomer. We want to know that the steps that we are taking are heavenward instead of earthward....” —*In Heavenly Places*, p. 263.

- 2. According to Jesus’ reply, how many will seek to enter God’s kingdom? Because many will not be able, what did He urge His listeners and everyone to do?**

Luke 13:24 *And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*

Matthew 7:14 *Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

"The belated traveler, hurrying to reach the city gate by the going down of the sun, could not turn aside for any attractions by the way. His whole mind was bent on the one purpose of entering the gate. The same intensity of purpose, said Jesus, is required in the Christian life. I have opened to you the glory of character, which is the true glory of My kingdom. It offers you no promise of earthly dominion; yet it is worthy of your supreme desire and effort. I do not call you to battle for the supremacy of the world's great empire, but do not therefore conclude that there is no battle to be fought nor victories to be won. I bid you strive, agonize, to enter into My spiritual kingdom." —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 141.

NOT KNOWN

3. Why will some people be unable to enter the kingdom? What do Jesus' words mean: "I know you not whence ye are"?

Luke 13:25 *When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are.*

Matthew 25:11, 12 *Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. ¹²But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.*

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' John 3:16. No man who is not a partaker of this self-sacrificing love is prepared to labor for God. Many are blundering along, clinging to their burden of selfishness, as if it were a precious treasure, keeping diligently their own way. When they knock at the gate of heaven, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open unto us,' many a man will hear the words, 'No one enters here but those who can receive the heavenly benediction, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Matthew 25:21. But thou hast faithfully served thyself, worked for thine own selfish interest, been good to thyself. Thou hast not laid up a treasure in heaven.'" —*Selected Messages*, book 2, pp. 211, 212.

4. For some people, what reasons do they believe should give them the right to enter the holy kingdom? What terrible answer will they hear?

Luke 13:26, 27 *Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. ²⁷But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.*

"In this life they have not entered into fellowship with Christ; therefore they know not the language of heaven, they are strangers to its joy. 'What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.' 1 Corinthians 2:11.

"Saddest of all words that ever fell on mortal ear are those words of doom, 'I know you not.' Matthew 25:12. The fellowship of the Spirit, which you have slighted, could alone make you one with the joyous throng at the marriage feast. In that scene you cannot participate. Its light would fall on blinded eyes, its melody

upon deaf ears. Its love and joy could awake no chord of gladness in the world-be-numbed heart. You are shut out from heaven by your own unfitness for its companionship." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 413.

5. What torment will people suffer when they will find themselves excluded from the kingdom, with no possibility to improve or change their condition?

Luke 13:28, 30 *There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out....* ³⁰*And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.*

"Not until the personal advent of Christ can His people receive the kingdom.... We have seen by the scriptures just given that when the Son of man comes, the dead are raised incorruptible and the living are changed. By this great change they are prepared to receive the kingdom; for Paul says: 'Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.' 1 Corinthians 15:50. Man in his present state is mortal, corruptible; but the kingdom of God will be incorruptible, enduring forever. Therefore man in his present state cannot enter into the kingdom of God. But when Jesus comes, He confers immortality upon His people; and then He calls them to inherit the kingdom of which they have hitherto been only heirs." —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 322, 323.

6. What door is closed to those who continue to live in sin? Who will not inherit the kingdom of God?

1 Corinthians 6:9, 10 *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,* ¹⁰*Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.*

Galatians 5:19-21 *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these;* ²⁰*Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,* ²¹*Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

"Those represented in these words have mingled the sacred with the common. They profess to believe the truth, but they cannot carry dishonest practices in the narrow road and through the strait gate. By their actions they show that they have chosen the road in which the world travels....

"We shall meet those who have so perverted the conscience that they are unable to discern the precious truth of God's word. Then let all be careful with whom they connect. When men show themselves unimpressible, unable to appreciate the pearl of great price; when they deal dishonestly with God and with their fellow men; when they show that the fruit they bear is the fruit of the forbidden tree, beware lest, by connecting with them, you lose your connection with God. They give evidence that God is not working with them, and the knowledge gained

by a connection with them is misleading. You can not be a savor of life unto them; for they will not appreciate the word of God.” —*Review and Herald*, August 1, 1899.

CHILDREN OF THE KINGDOM

7. What great change is necessary for anyone to be able to enter the kingdom of glory? Where will those come from who have the joy of sitting down in the kingdom?

John 3:3, 5 *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God....⁵ Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

Luke 13:29 *And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.*

Isaiah 49:12 *Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.*

Matthew 8:11 *And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.*

Luke 14:15 *And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.*

“The gifts of His grace through Christ are free to all. There is no election but one’s own by which any may perish. God has set forth in His word the conditions upon which every soul will be elected to eternal life—obedience to His commandments, through faith in Christ. God has elected a character in harmony with His law, and any one who shall reach the standard of His requirement, will have an entrance into the kingdom of glory. Christ Himself said, ‘He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.’ John 3:36.” —*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 23.

“Those who stand fast shall have an abundant entrance into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” —(*Manuscript 4*, 1888) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 972.

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

“We point you to the mansions Christ is preparing for all those who love Him. We point you to that city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. We show you its massive walls, with the twelve foundations, and tell you that these walls must be scaled. You look discouraged at the magnitude of the work before you. We point you to the ladder set up on earth, reaching to the city of God. Plant your feet on the ladder. Forsake your sins. Climb step by step and you will reach God above the ladder, and the Holy City of God....

“When the successive steps have all been mounted, when the graces have been added one after another, the crowning grace is the perfect love of God—supreme love to God and love to our fellow men. And then the abundant entrance into the kingdom of God.” —*Our High Calling*, p. 75.

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MISSIONARY REPORT
from the General Conference Youth Department
To be read on Sabbath, June 29, 2019

The Special Sabbath School Offering
will be gathered on Sabbath, July 6, 2019

Dear brothers and sisters of the church of Christ,

I greet you fraternally with the word of the Lord: “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy word.” Psalm 119:9.

The General Conference Youth Department was created to help our beloved youth worldwide. We know that they are the future of the church. Future husbands and wives, professionals, colporteurs, Bible workers, ministers, and, above all, responsible citizens of this world are developed in the circle of the church. Hence there is a great need to help them develop the potential that God has given them.

Youth is a period of considerable vulnerability. The young person is easily influenced and at the same time possesses powerful gifts that God has given him or her to be a great blessing in the church and society by submitting to the Master. That is why the devil directs all his darts against the young people to induce them to sin and thus destroy their influence for God. All sorts of attractions are presented in the attempts to infatuate and darken their senses.

Young people like Abel, Isaac, Joseph, Samuel, David, Jeremiah, the girl who served Naaman’s wife, Daniel, his three Hebrew companions, Mary the mother of Jesus, John, Timothy, and many others dedicated their lives to God’s service; and great was their influence! They left a pleasant fragrance in the world, a powerful influence that inspired millions of young people and adults by their example. Today brave, strong young people who are willing to offer their lives on the altar of service are needed more than ever before. Time is coming to an end, and Christ’s return is near. The church needs to make plans inspired by God to encourage every young person to serve the Master with all his or her strength and to carry the message of salvation and eternal life to a world that is rapidly approaching destruction.

“Young men and women are invited to give God the strength of their youth, that through the exercise of their powers, through keen thought and vigorous action, they may bring glory to Him and salvation to their fellow men.” —*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 535.

In view of the sacred duty and privilege that God gives the young people, the church has the responsibility to support them and provide them with the Christian education that will help them reach the goal. This work has a very

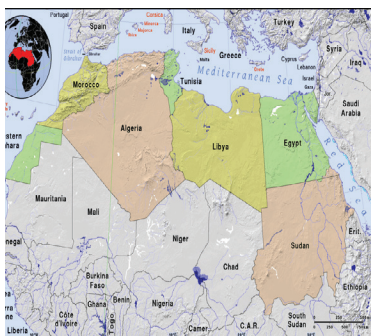
high priority. We need to put into the hands of the youth the materials and tools that will inspire them to give their hearts and minds to Jesus.

By God's grace, the Youth Department has developed a plan for the next five years (until 2022) that encompasses various objectives, activities, and the creation of materials to help the leaders and youth counselors in the churches in cooperation with the youth leaders of the fields and unions. We invite you to see this plan at www.uponhighplaces.org.

This work will take a lot of time, effort, prayer, and financial support. I am privileged to ask you for your prayers, advice, and finances so these projects to help, inspire, and support the young people will become reality. The funds will be used to develop an international youth hymnal, materials for youth leaders, face-to-face support in fields and unions, international youth conferences, morning devotions in several languages, a team of young professional volunteers to develop projects in needy countries, websites, video recordings, and more.

With the help of God, we will be able to fulfill all these objectives and thus uplift the young people in the church. Let us remember that an offering given with all our hearts will be very blessed. "... For all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee." 1 Chronicles 29:14. Consider how many young people will be helped and led to make their covenant with God through your offerings. Thank you for your support.

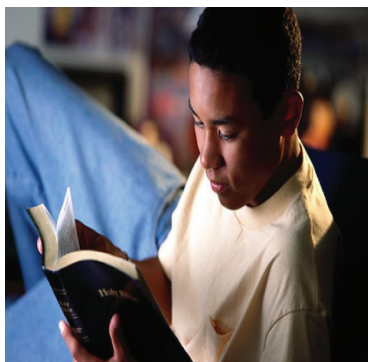
—Jose V. Giner
General Conference Youth Department Leader



EMERGING COUNTRIES OF NORTH AFRICA



NORTH AMERICAN / CARIBBEAN DIVISION



GENERAL CONFERENCE

YOUTH DEPARTMENT