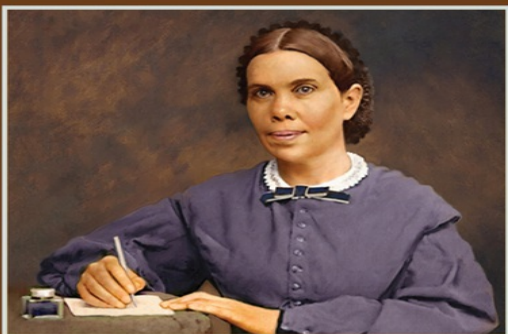


A Companion to the Adult Bible Study Guide

Ellen White Notes on The Book of Mark

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E. G. White
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The Book of Mark

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Lesson 1

The Beginning of the Gospel

Sabbath Afternoon, June 29

Why do we need a Matthew, a Mark, a Luke, a John, a Paul, and all the writers who have borne testimony in regard to the life and ministry of the Saviour? Why could not one of the disciples have written a complete record and thus have given us a connected account of Christ's earthly life? Why does one writer bring in points that another does not mention? Why, if these points are essential, did not all these writers mention them? It is because the minds of men differ. Not all comprehend things in exactly the same way. Certain Scripture truths appeal much more strongly to the minds of some than of others.

The same principle applies to speakers. One dwells at considerable length on points that others would pass by quickly or not mention at all. The whole truth is presented more clearly by several than by one. The Gospels differ, but the records of all blend in one harmonious whole.—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 432.

Mark's mother was a convert to the Christian religion, and her home at Jerusalem was an asylum for the disciples. There they were always sure of a welcome and a season of rest. It was during one of these visits of the apostles to his mother's home, that Mark proposed to Paul and Barnabas that he should accompany them on their missionary tour. He felt the favor of God in his heart and longed to devote himself entirely to the work of the gospel ministry.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 166.

It was here [in Pamphylia] that Mark, overwhelmed with fear and discouragement, wavered for a time in his purpose to give himself wholeheartedly to the Lord's work. Unused to hardships, he was disheartened by the perils and privations of the way. He had labored with success under favorable circumstances; but now, amidst the opposition and perils that so

often beset the pioneer worker, he failed to endure hardness as a good soldier of the cross. He had yet to learn to face danger and persecution and adversity with a brave heart. As the apostles advanced, and still greater difficulties were apprehended, Mark was intimidated and, losing all courage, refused to go farther and returned to Jerusalem.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 169.

Christian life is more than many take it to be. It does not consist wholly in gentleness, patience, meekness, and kindliness. These graces are essential; but there is need also of courage, force, energy, and perseverance. The path that Christ marks out is a narrow, self-denying path. To enter that path and press on through difficulties and discouragements requires men who are more than weaklings. . . .

Those who would win success [in missionary service] must be courageous and hopeful. They should cultivate not only the passive but the active virtues. While they are to give the soft answer that turns away wrath, they must possess the courage of a hero to resist evil. With the charity that endures all things, they need the force of character that will make their influence a positive power.—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 497.

Sunday, June 30: The Failed Missionary

Paul [judged] Mark unfavorably, and even severely, for a time. Barnabas, on the other hand, was inclined to excuse him because of his inexperience. He felt anxious that Mark should not abandon the ministry, for he saw in him qualifications that would fit him to be a useful worker for Christ. In after years his solicitude in Mark's behalf was richly rewarded, for the young man gave himself unreservedly to the Lord and to the work of proclaiming the gospel message in difficult fields. Under the blessing of God, and the wise training of Barnabas, he developed into a valuable worker.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 170.

To every man God has given a work to do in connection with His kingdom. Everyone who professes the name of Christ is to be an earnest, disinterested worker, ready to defend the principles of righteousness. Every soul should take an active part in advancing the cause of God. Whatever our calling, as Christians we have a work to do in making Christ known to the world. We are to be missionaries, having for our chief aim the winning of souls to

Christ.

To His church God has committed the work of diffusing light and bearing the message of His love. Our work is not to condemn, not to denounce, but to draw with Christ, beseeching men to be reconciled to God. We are to encourage souls, to attract them, and thus win them to the Saviour. If this is not our interest, if we withhold from God the service of heart and life, we are robbing Him of influence, of time, of money and effort. In failing to benefit our fellow men, we rob God of the glory that should flow to Him through the conversion of souls. . . .

Let those who desire to work for God begin at home, in their own household, in their own neighborhood, among their own friends. Here they will find a favorable missionary field. This home missionary work is a test, revealing their ability or inability for service in a wider field.—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 427, 428.

Christ and Him crucified should become the theme of our thoughts and stir the deepest emotions of our souls. The true followers of Christ will appreciate the great salvation which He has wrought for them; and wherever He leads the way, they will follow. They will consider it a privilege to bear whatever burdens Christ may lay upon them. It is through the cross alone that we can estimate the worth of the human soul. Such is the value of men for whom Christ died that the Father is satisfied with the infinite price which He pays for the salvation of man in yielding up His own Son to die for their redemption. . . .

What a responsible position, to unite with the Redeemer of the world in the salvation of men! This work calls for self-denial, sacrifice, and benevolence, for perseverance, courage, and faith.—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 634, 635.

Monday, July 1: A Second Chance

Barnabas was ready to go with Paul, but wished to take with them Mark, who had again decided to devote himself to the ministry. To this Paul objected. He “thought not good to take . . . with them” one who during their first missionary journey had left them in a time of need. He was not inclined to excuse Mark’s weakness in deserting the work for the safety and comforts

of home. He urged that one with so little stamina was unfitted for a work requiring patience, self-denial, bravery, devotion, faith, and a willingness to sacrifice, if need be, even life itself. So sharp was the contention that Paul and Barnabas separated, the latter following out his convictions and taking Mark with him. “So Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 202.

Since the earlier years of his profession of faith, Mark’s Christian experience had deepened. As he had studied more closely the life and death of Christ he had obtained clearer views of the Saviour’s mission, its toils and conflicts. Reading in the scars in Christ’s hands and feet the marks of His service for humanity, and the length to which self-abnegation leads to save the lost and perishing, Mark had become willing to follow the Master in the path of self-sacrifice. Now, sharing the lot of Paul the prisoner, he understood better than ever before that it is infinite gain to win Christ, infinite loss to win the world and lose the soul for whose redemption the blood of Christ was shed. In the face of severe trial and adversity, Mark continued steadfast, a wise and beloved helper of the apostle.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 455.

When God opens the way for the accomplishment of a certain work and gives assurance of success, the chosen instrumentality must do all in his power to bring about the promised result. In proportion to the enthusiasm and perseverance with which the work is carried forward will be the success given. God can work miracles for His people only as they act their part with untiring energy. He calls for men of devotion to His work, men of moral courage, with ardent love for souls, and with a zeal that never flags. Such workers will find no task too arduous, no prospect too hopeless; they will labor on, undaunted, until apparent defeat is turned into glorious victory. Not even prison walls nor the martyr’s stake beyond, will cause them to swerve from their purpose of laboring together with God for the upbuilding of His kingdom.—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 263.

Tuesday, July 2: The Messenger

The Godhead was stirred with pity for the race, and the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit gave Themselves to the working out of the plan of

redemption. In order fully to carry out this plan, it was decided that Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, should give Himself an offering for sin. What line can measure the depth of this love? God would make it impossible for man to say that He could have done more. With Christ He gave all the resources of heaven, that nothing might be wanting in the plan for man's uplifting. Here is love—the contemplation of which should fill the soul with inexpressible gratitude! Oh, what love, what matchless love! The contemplation of this love will cleanse the soul from all selfishness. It will lead the disciple to deny self, take up the cross, and follow the Redeemer.—*Counsels on Health*, p. 222.

God had promised [John] a sign by which he should know the Lamb of God. That sign was given as the heavenly dove rested upon Jesus, and the glory of God shone round about Him. John reached forth his hand, pointing to Jesus, and with a loud voice cried out, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!"

John informed his disciples that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the Saviour of the world. As his work was closing, he taught his disciples to look to Jesus, and follow Him as the Great Teacher. John's life was sorrowful and self-denying. He heralded the first advent of Christ, but was not permitted to witness His miracles, and enjoy the power manifested by Him. When Jesus should establish Himself as a teacher, John knew that he himself must die. His voice was seldom heard, except in the wilderness. His life was lonely. He did not cling to his father's family, to enjoy their society, but left them in order to fulfill his mission.—*Early Writings*, pp. 153, 154.

As a people, we must prepare the way of the Lord, under the overruling guidance of the Holy Spirit, for the spread of the gospel in its purity. The stream of living water is to deepen and widen in its course. In all fields, nigh and afar off, men will be called from the plow and from the more common commercial business vocations, that largely occupy the mind, and will become educated in connection with men who have had experience—men who understand the truth. Through most wonderful workings of God, mountains of difficulty will be removed and cast into the sea. . . .

As this call is obeyed, the message that means so much to the dwellers on the earth will be heard and understood. Men will know what is truth. Onward, and still onward, will the work advance. And marked events of Providence

will be seen and recognized in judgments and in blessings. The truth will bear away the victory.—Letter 230, July 5, 1906, to the elders of the Battle Creek Church.

Wednesday, July 3: Jesus' Baptism

When Christ bowed on the banks of Jordan, after His baptism, the heavens were opened, and the Spirit descended in the form of a dove, like burnished gold, and encircled Him with its glory; and the voice of God from the highest heaven was heard, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” The prayer of Christ in man’s behalf opened the gates of heaven, and the Father had responded, accepting the petition for the fallen race. Jesus prayed as our substitute and surety, and now the human family may find access to the Father through the merits of His well-beloved Son. This earth, because of transgression, had been struck off from the continent of heaven. Communication had ceased between man and his Maker; but the way has been opened so that he may return to the Father’s house. Jesus is “the way, the truth, and the life.” The gate of heaven has been left ajar, and the radiance from the throne of God shines into the hearts of those who love Him, even though they dwell in this sin-cursed earth. The light that encircled the divine Son of God will fall upon the pathway of all who follow in His footsteps. There is no reason for discouragement. The promises of God are sure and steadfast.—*My Life Today*, p. 260.

Christ’s prayer on the banks of the Jordan includes everyone who will believe in Him. The promise that you are accepted in the Beloved comes to you. Hold it with the grip of unyielding faith. God said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” This means that through the dark shadow which Satan has thrown athwart your pathway Christ has cleaved the way for you to the throne of the infinite God. He has laid hold of almighty power, and you are accepted in the Beloved.—*Lift Him Up*, p. 109.

While in the wilderness, Christ fasted, but He was insensible to hunger. Engaged in constant prayer to His Father for a preparation to resist the adversary, Christ did not feel the pangs of hunger. He spent the time in earnest prayer, shut in with God. It was as if He were in the presence of His Father. He sought for strength to meet the foe, for the assurance that He

would receive grace to carry out all that He had undertaken in behalf of humanity. The thought of the warfare before Him made Him oblivious to all else, and His soul was fed with the bread of life, just as today those tempted souls will be fed who go to God for aid. . . . He did not realize any sense of hunger until the forty days of His fast were ended. . . .

Christ knew that His Father would supply Him food when it would gratify Him to do so. He would not in this severe ordeal, when hunger pressed Him beyond measure, prematurely diminish one particle of the trial allotted to Him by exercising His divine power.—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1080.

Thursday, July 4: The Gospel According to Jesus

The gospel message, as given by the Saviour Himself, was based on the prophecies. The “time” which He declared to be fulfilled was the period made known by the angel Gabriel to Daniel. . . . “Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks” (Daniel 9:25), sixty-nine weeks, or four hundred and eighty-three years. The commandment to restore and build Jerusalem, as completed by the decree of Artaxerxes Longimanus (see Ezra 6:14; 7:1, 9, margin), went into effect in the autumn of 457 b.c. From this time four hundred and eighty-three years extend to the autumn of a.d. 27. According to the prophecy, this period was to reach to the Messiah, the Anointed One. In a.d. 27, Jesus at His baptism received the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and soon afterward began His ministry. Then the message was proclaimed, “The time is fulfilled.”—*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 12.

“I am the Good Shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.” “I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine. As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep.” . . .

This figure the prophet Isaiah had applied to the Messiah’s mission, in the comforting words, “O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your

God! . . . He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom.” Isaiah 40:9–11. . . .

Christ applied these prophecies to Himself, and He showed the contrast between His own character and that of the leaders in Israel. The Pharisees had just driven one from the fold, because he dared to bear witness to the power of Christ. They had cut off a soul whom the True Shepherd was drawing to Himself. In this they had shown themselves ignorant of the work committed to them, and unworthy of their trust as shepherds of the flock. Jesus now set before them the contrast between them and the Good Shepherd, and He pointed to Himself as the real keeper of the Lord’s flock. Before doing this, however, He speaks of Himself under another figure.—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 476, 477.

The Lord is . . . willing to work through human efforts now, and to accomplish great things through weak instrumentalities. It is essential to have an intelligent knowledge of the truth; for how else could we meet its wily opponents? The Bible must be studied, not alone for the doctrines it teaches, but for its practical lessons. You should never be surprised, you should never be without your armor on. Be prepared for any emergency, for any call of duty. Be waiting, watching for every opportunity to present the truth, familiar with the prophecies, familiar with the lessons of Christ. But do not trust in well-prepared arguments. Argument alone is not enough. God must be sought on your knees; you must go forth to meet the people through the power and influence of His Spirit.—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 1003.

Friday, July 5: For Further Reading

Selected Messages, “John Called to a Special Work,” book 1, pp. 411, 412.
The Acts of the Apostles, “Heralds of the Gospel,” pp. 166–176.

Lesson 2

A Day in the Ministry of Jesus

Sabbath Afternoon, July 6

After He had entered on His ministry, [Jesus] said, “I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.” John 9:4. Jesus did not shirk care and responsibility, as do many who profess to be His followers. . . . The positiveness and energy, the solidity and strength of character, manifested in Christ are to be developed in us, through the same discipline that He endured. And the grace that He received is for us.

So long as He lived among men, our Saviour shared the lot of the poor. He knew by experience their cares and hardships, and He could comfort and encourage all humble workers. Those who have a true conception of the teaching of His life will never feel that a distinction must be made between classes, that the rich are to be honored above the worthy poor.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 73.

Christ chose the foolish things of the world—those whom the world pronounced unlearned and ignorant—to confound the wise men of the world. The disciples were unlearned in the traditions of the rabbis, but with Christ as their example and teacher, they were gaining an education of the highest order; for they had before them a divine Example. Christ was presenting to them truths of the highest character.

Those whom God employs to do service for Him, He would have fitted in His way for that service. Those who preach Christ must learn of Christ daily, in order to understand the mystery of saving and serving the souls for whom He had died. . . . They must pattern after Him in all things, sharing His tender compassion and His sternness against all evil working.—Letter 53, February 2, 1905, to two leading workers at the newly established Paradise Valley Sanitarium.

The Saviour’s life on earth was a life of communion with nature and with

God. In this communion He revealed for us the secret of a life of power.

Jesus was an earnest, constant worker. Never lived there among men another so weighted with responsibilities. Never another carried so heavy a burden of the world's sorrow and sin. Never another toiled with such self-consuming zeal for the good of men. Yet His was a life of health. Physically as well as spiritually He was represented by the sacrificial lamb, "without blemish and without spot." 1 Peter 1:19. In body as in soul He was an example of what God designed all humanity to be through obedience to His laws.

As the people looked upon Jesus, they saw a face in which divine compassion was blended with conscious power. He seemed to be surrounded with an atmosphere of spiritual life. While His manners were gentle and unassuming, He impressed men with a sense of power that was hidden, yet could not be wholly concealed.—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 51.

Sunday, July 7: "Follow Me"

When Christ was upon this earth, He did not direct fishermen to leave their nets and boats, and go to the Jewish teachers to gain a preparation for the gospel ministry. Walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw "two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him" (Matthew 4:18–22).

This prompt obedience, without any question, without one promise of wages, seems remarkable. But the words of Christ were an invitation that implied all that He meant it should. There was an impelling influence in His words. There was no long explanation, but what He said had a drawing power.—*This Day With God*, p. 41.

Unexpected talent will be developed in those in the common walks of life. If men and women can only have the message of truth brought to them, many who hear will receive it. Those of every rank of life, high and low, rich and

poor, will accept the truth for this time. Some who are regarded as uneducated will be called to the service of the Master, even as the humble, unlearned fishermen were called by the Saviour. Men will be called from the plow, as was Elisha, and will be moved to take up the work that God has appointed them. They will begin to labor in simplicity and quietness, reading and explaining the Scriptures to others. Their simple efforts will be successful.—*This Day With God*, p. 115.

They were humble and unlearned men, those fishers of Galilee; but Christ, the light of the world, was abundantly able to qualify them for the position for which He had chosen them. The Saviour did not despise education; for when controlled by the love of God, and devoted to His service, intellectual culture is a blessing. But He passed by the wise men of His time, because they were so self-confident that they could not sympathize with suffering humanity, and become colaborers with the man of Nazareth. In their bigotry they scorned to be taught by Christ. The Lord Jesus seeks the co-operation of those who will become unobstructed channels for the communion of His grace. . . .

He who called the fishermen of Galilee is still calling men to His service. And He is just as willing to manifest His power through us as through the first disciples. However imperfect and sinful we may be, the Lord holds out to us the offer of partnership with Himself, of apprenticeship to Christ. He invites us to come under the divine instruction, that, uniting with Christ, we may work the works of God.—*Conflict and Courage*, p. 282.

Monday, July 8: An Unforgettable Worship Service

The demoniac partially comprehended that he was in the presence of One who could set him free; but when he tried to come within reach of that mighty hand, another's will held him, another's words found utterance through him.

The conflict between the power of Satan and his own desire for freedom was terrible. It seemed that the tortured man must lose his life in the struggle with the foe that had been the ruin of his manhood. But the Saviour spoke with authority and set the captive free. The man who had been possessed stood before the wondering people in the freedom of self-possession. . . .

Every man is free to choose what power he will have to rule over him. None have fallen so low, none are so vile, but that they may find deliverance in Christ. The demoniac, in place of prayer, could utter only the words of Satan; yet the heart's unspoken appeal was heard. No cry from a soul in need, though it fail of utterance in words, will be unheeded. Those who consent to enter into covenant with God are not left to the power of Satan or to the infirmity of their own nature.—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 91–93.

The same evil spirit that tempted Christ in the wilderness, and that possessed the maniac of Capernaum, controlled the unbelieving Jews. But with them he assumed an air of piety, seeking to deceive them as to their motives in rejecting the Saviour. Their condition was more hopeless than that of the demoniac, for they felt no need of Christ and were therefore held fast under the power of Satan. . . .

The leaders and teachers of Israel were powerless to resist the work of Satan. They were neglecting the only means by which they could have withstood evil spirits. It was by the word of God that Christ overcame the wicked one. The leaders of Israel professed to be the expositors of God's word, but they had studied it only to sustain their traditions, and enforce their man-made observances. By their interpretation they made it express sentiments that God had never given. Their mystical construction made indistinct that which He had made plain. They disputed over insignificant technicalities, and practically denied the most essential truths. Thus infidelity was sown broadcast. God's word was robbed of its power, and evil spirits worked their will.—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 256, 257.

True knowledge comes from God, and returns again to God. His children are to receive that they may give again. Those who through the grace of God have received intellectual and spiritual benefits are, as they advance, to draw others with them to a higher excellence. And this work, done to promote the good of others, will have the cooperation of unseen agencies. As we faithfully continue the work, we shall have high aspirations for righteousness, holiness, and a perfect knowledge of God.—Manuscript 108, September 1, 1898, "Higher Education."

Tuesday, July 9: More Sabbath Ministry

In the fisherman's home at Capernaum the mother of Peter's wife is lying sick of "a great fever," and "they tell Him of her." Jesus "touched her hand, and the fever left her," and she arose and ministered to the Saviour and His disciples. Luke 4:38; Mark 1:30; Matthew 8:15.

Rapidly the tidings spread. The miracle had been wrought upon the Sabbath, and for fear of the rabbis the people dared not come for healing until the sun was set. Then from the homes, the shops, the market places, the inhabitants of the city pressed toward the humble dwelling that sheltered Jesus. The sick were brought upon litters, they came leaning upon staffs, or, supported by friends, they tottered feebly into the Saviour's presence. . . .

Not until the last sufferer had been relieved did Jesus cease His work. It was far into the night when the multitude departed and silence settled down upon the home of Simon.—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 29.

Our confession of His faithfulness is Heaven's chosen agency for revealing Christ to the world. We are to acknowledge His grace as made known through the holy men of old; but that which will be most effectual is the testimony of our own experience. We are witnesses for God as we reveal in ourselves the working of a power that is divine. Every individual has a life distinct from all others, and an experience differing essentially from theirs. God desires that our praise shall ascend to Him, marked by our own individuality. These precious acknowledgments to the praise of the glory of His grace, when supported by a Christ-like life, have an irresistible power that works for the salvation of souls.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 347.

We are to bear Christ's yoke, to work as he worked for the salvation of the lost; and those who are partakers of his sufferings will also be partakers of his glory. The apostle says, "Ye are laborers together with God." Then let us take hold of his strength. Let every one who names the name of Christ among us become a laborer together with God. Let not the burden of the whole work fall on the ministers, but let every member of the church realize that he has a work to do. . . .

The Saviour's commission to his people is, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." O, how grievously has this work been neglected, and yet the famine-stricken world is perishing for the bread of life. Let every one surrender himself to God, accept the heavenly endowment of the Holy Spirit, and go forth to tell those who sit in darkness of a Saviour's

love and sacrifice, that they should not perish, but have everlasting life. In whatever place you take up your abode, be a light to the people, pointing out the path cast up for the ransomed of the Lord to walk in, and thus become laborers together with God.—*Bible Echo*, April 15, 1892.

Wednesday, July 10: The Secret of Jesus' Ministry

Behold the Son of God bowed in prayer to His Father! Though He is the Son of God, He strengthens His faith by prayer, and by communion with heaven gathers to Himself power to resist evil and to minister to the needs of men. As the Elder Brother of our race He knows the necessities of those who, compassed with infirmity and living in a world of sin and temptation, still desire to serve Him. He knows that the messengers whom He sees fit to send are weak, erring men; but to all who give themselves wholly to His service He promises divine aid. His own example is an assurance that earnest, persevering supplication to God in faith . . . will avail to bring to men the Holy Spirit's aid in the battle against sin.

[Everyone] who follows the example of Christ will be prepared to receive and use the power that God has promised to His church for the ripening of earth's harvest. Morning by morning, as the heralds of the gospel kneel before the Lord and renew their vows of consecration to Him, He will grant them the presence of His Spirit, with its reviving, sanctifying power.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 56.

All who are under the training of God need the quiet hour for communion with their own hearts, with nature, and with God. In them is to be revealed a life that is not in harmony with the world, its customs, or its practices; and they need to have a personal experience in obtaining a knowledge of the will of God. We must individually hear Him speaking to the heart. When every other voice is hushed, and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God. He bids us, "Be still, and know that I am God." Psalm 46:10. This is the effectual preparation for all labor for God. Amidst the hurrying throng, and the strain of life's intense activities, he who is thus refreshed will be surrounded with an atmosphere of light and peace. He will receive a new endowment of both physical and mental strength. His life will breathe out a fragrance, and will reveal a divine power

that will reach men's hearts.—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 58.

Early in the morning, Peter and his companions came to Jesus, saying that already the people of Capernaum were seeking Him. . . . But with surprise they heard Christ's words, "I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent."

In the excitement which then pervaded Capernaum, there was danger that the object of His mission would be lost sight of. Jesus was not satisfied to attract attention to Himself merely as a wonder worker or a healer of physical diseases. He was seeking to draw men to Him as their Saviour. While the people were eager to believe that He had come as a king, to establish an earthly reign, He desired to turn their minds away from the earthly to the spiritual. Mere worldly success would interfere with His work.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 260.

Thursday, July 11: Can You Keep a Secret?

Standing afar off, the leper catches a few words from the Saviour's lips. He sees Him laying His hands upon the sick. He sees the lame, the blind, the paralytic, and those dying of various maladies rise up in health, praising God for deliverance. His faith strengthens. Nearer and yet nearer he approaches to the listening throng. The restrictions laid upon him, the safety of the people, the fear with which all men regard him, are alike forgotten. He thinks only of the blessed hope of healing.

He is a loathsome spectacle. The disease has made frightful inroads, and his decaying body is horrible to look upon. At sight of him the people fall back. In their terror they crowd upon one another to escape from contact with him. Some try to prevent him from approaching Jesus, but in vain. He neither sees nor hears them. Their expressions of loathing are lost upon him. He sees only the Son of God, he hears only the voice that speaks life to the dying.

Pressing to Jesus, he casts himself at His feet with the cry, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean."

Jesus replies, "I will; be thou clean," and lays His hand upon him. Matthew 8:2, 3.

Immediately a change passes over the leper. His blood becomes healthy, the nerves sensitive, the muscles firm. The unnaturally white, scaly surface

peculiar to leprosy disappears; and his flesh becomes as the flesh of a little child.—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 68, 69.

The disciples sought to prevent their Master from touching him; for he who touched a leper became himself unclean. But in laying His hand upon the leper, Jesus received no defilement. The leprosy was cleansed. Thus it is with the leprosy of sin—deep-rooted, deadly, impossible to be cleansed by human power. . . . But Jesus, coming to dwell in humanity, receives no pollution. His presence was healing virtue for the sinner. Whoever will fall at His feet, saying in faith, “Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean,” shall hear the answer, “I will; be thou clean.”

In some instances of healing, Jesus did not at once grant the blessing sought. But in the case of leprosy no sooner was the appeal made than it was granted. When we pray for earthly blessings, the answer to our prayer may be delayed, or God may give us something other than we ask; but not so when we ask for deliverance from sin. It is His will to cleanse us from sin, to make us His children, and to enable us to live a holy life. Christ “gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.” Galatians 1:4. “And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us: and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.” 1 John 5:14, 15.—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 70.

Friday, July 12: For Further Reading

Reflecting Christ, “Fishers of Men Need the Divine Presence,” p. 237;
The Desire of Ages, “Thou Canst Make Me Clean,” pp. 262–266.

Lesson 3

Controversies

Sabbath Afternoon, July 13

The effect produced upon the people by the healing of the paralytic was as if heaven had opened and revealed the glories of the better world. As the man who had been cured passed through the throng, blessing God at every step and bearing his burden as if it were a feather's weight, the people fell back to give him room and with awe-stricken faces gazed upon him, whispering softly among themselves, "We have seen strange things today." Luke 5:26.

In the home of the paralytic there was great rejoicing when he returned to his family, carrying with ease the couch upon which he had been slowly borne from their presence but a short time before. They gathered round with tears of joy, hardly daring to believe their eyes. . . . Glad thanksgiving went up from that home, and God was glorified through His Son, who had restored hope to the hopeless and strength to the stricken one. This man and his family were ready to lay down their lives for Jesus. No doubt dimmed their faith, no unbelief marred their fealty to Him who had brought light into their darkened home.—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 78, 79.

Jesus knew that He could do the scribes and Pharisees no good, unless they would empty themselves of self-importance. He chose new bottles for His new wine of doctrine, and made fishermen and unlearned believers the heralds of His truth to the world. And yet, though His doctrine seemed new to the people, it was in fact not a new doctrine, but the revelation of the significance of that which had been taught from the beginning. It was His design that His disciples should take the plain, unadulterated truth for the guide of their life. They were not to add to His words, or give a forced meaning to His utterances. They were not to put a mystical interpretation upon the plain teaching of the Scriptures, and draw from theological stores to build up some man-made theory. It was through putting a mystical meaning upon the plain words of God, that sacred and vital truths were made of little

significance, while the theories of men were made prominent.—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1089.

Much fitful, spurious humility is seen among professed Christians. Some, determined to conquer self, place themselves as low as possible; but they try only in their own strength, and the next wave of praise or flattery carries them up out of sight. They are not willing to submit wholly to God, and He cannot work through them.

Take no glory whatever to yourself. Do not work with a divided mind, trying to serve God and self at the same time. Keep self out of sight. Let your words lead the weary and heavy-laden to Jesus, the compassionate Saviour. Work as seeing Him who is at your right hand, ready to give you strength for service. Your only safety is in entire dependence upon Christ.—*Mind Character, and Personality*, vol. 1, p. 39.

Sunday, July 14: Healing a Paralytic

When the poor, suffering paralytic was brought to the Saviour, the urgency of the case seemed not to admit of a moment's delay, for already dissolution was doing its work upon the body. When those who bore him upon his bed saw that they could not come directly into the presence of Christ, they at once tore open the roof and let down the bed whereon the sick of the palsy lay. Our Saviour saw and understood his condition perfectly. He also knew that this wretched man had a sickness of the soul far more aggravating than bodily suffering. He knew that the greatest burden he had borne for months was on account of sins. The crowd of people waited with almost breathless silence to see how Christ would treat this case, apparently so hopeless, and were astonished to hear the words which fell from His lips: "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee."

These were the most precious words that could fall upon the ear of that sick sufferer, for the burden of sin had lain so heavily upon him that he could not find the least relief. Christ lifts the burden that so heavily oppressed him. . . . The mind being restored to peace and happiness, the suffering body can now be reached.—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 168.

The rabbis had waited anxiously to see what disposition Christ would make

of this case. They recollected how the man had appealed to them for help, and they had refused him hope or sympathy. Not satisfied with this, they had declared that he was suffering the curse of God for his sins. These things came fresh to their minds when they saw the sick man before them. They marked the interest with which all were watching the scene, and they felt a terrible fear of losing their own influence over the people. . . .

Fixing His glance upon them, beneath which they cowered, and drew back, Jesus said, "Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins," He said, turning to the paralytic, "Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." . . .

The Pharisees were dumb with amazement and overwhelmed with defeat. They saw that here was no opportunity for their jealousy to inflame the multitude. The wonderful work wrought upon the man whom they had given over to the wrath of God had so impressed the people that the rabbis were for the time forgotten. They saw that Christ possessed a power which they had ascribed to God alone; yet the gentle dignity of His manner was in marked contrast to their own haughty bearing. They were disconcerted and abashed, recognizing, but not confessing, the presence of a superior being. . . . From the home of Peter . . . they went away to invent new schemes for silencing the Son of God.—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 268–270.

Monday, July 15: Calling Levi and the Question of Fasting

In his grateful humility, Matthew desired to show his appreciation of the honor bestowed upon him, and, calling together those who had been his associates in business, in pleasure, and sin, he made a great feast for the Saviour. If Jesus would call him, who was so sinful and unworthy, He would surely accept his former companions who were, thought Matthew, far more deserving than himself. Matthew had a great longing that they should share the benefits of the mercies and grace of Christ. He desired them to know that Christ did not, as did the scribes and Pharisees, despise and hate the publicans and sinners. He wanted them to know Christ as the blessed Saviour. . . .

Jesus never refused an invitation to such a feast. The object ever before Him was to sow in the hearts of His hearers the seeds of truth, through His

winning conversation to draw hearts to Himself. In His every act Christ had a purpose, and the lesson which He gave on this occasion was timely and appropriate. By this act He declared that even publicans and sinners were not excluded from His presence. Publicans and sinners could now bear the testimony that Christ honored them with His presence and conversed with them.—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1120.

In the scribes, Pharisees, and rulers, Jesus found not the bottles for His new wine. He was obliged to turn from them to humble men, whose hearts were not filled with envy, covetousness, and self-righteousness. The lowly fishermen obeyed the call of the divine Teacher, while the scribes and Pharisees refused to become converted.

The disciples that Jesus called were uneducated, and were far from being perfect in character when Jesus united them with Himself; but they were willing to learn from the greatest Teacher the world ever knew. They were truly converted men, and became the new bottles into which Jesus could pour the new wine of His kingdom.—*Lift Him Up*, p. 259.

The rabbis had a saying that there is rejoicing in heaven when one who has sinned against God is destroyed; but Jesus taught that to God the work of destruction is a strange work. . . .

Every soul whom Christ has rescued is called to work in His name for the saving of the lost. This work had been neglected in Israel. Is it not neglected today by those who profess to be Christ's followers? . . .

When you turn from those who seem unpromising and unattractive, do you realize that you are neglecting the souls for whom Christ is seeking? At the very time when you turn from them, they may be in the greatest need of your compassion. In every assembly for worship, there are souls longing for rest and peace. They may appear to be living careless lives, but they are not insensible to the influence of the Holy Spirit. Many among them might be won for Christ.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 190, 191.

Tuesday, July 16: The Lord of the Sabbath

As the Jews departed from God, and failed to make the righteousness of Christ their own by faith, the Sabbath lost its significance to them. Satan was

seeking to exalt himself and to draw men away from Christ, and he worked to pervert the Sabbath, because it is the sign of the power of Christ. The Jewish leaders accomplished the will of Satan by surrounding God's rest day with burdensome requirements. In the days of Christ the Sabbath had become so perverted that its observance reflected the character of selfish and arbitrary men rather than the character of the loving heavenly Father. The rabbis virtually represented God as giving laws which it was impossible for men to obey. . . . It was the work of Christ to clear away these misconceptions.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 283.

The Jewish teachers prided themselves on their knowledge of the Scriptures, and in the Saviour's answer there was an implied rebuke for their ignorance of the Sacred Writings. "Have ye not read so much as this," He said, "what David did, when himself was an hungered, and they which were with him; how he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the shewbread, . . . which it is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone?" "And He said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." . . . Luke 6:3, 4; Mark 2:27, 28.

If it was right for David to satisfy his hunger by eating of the bread that had been set apart to a holy use, then it was right for the disciples to supply their need by plucking the grain upon the sacred hours of the Sabbath. . . .

The object of God's work in this world is the redemption of man; therefore that which is necessary to be done on the Sabbath in the accomplishment of this work is in accord with the Sabbath law. Jesus then crowned His argument by declaring Himself the "Lord of the Sabbath,"—One above all question and above all law.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 285.

I cannot too strongly urge all our church members, all who are true missionaries, all who believe the third angel's message, all who turn away their feet from the Sabbath, to consider the message of the fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah. The work of beneficence enjoined in this chapter is the work that God requires His people to do at this time. It is a work of His own appointment. . . . "thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in." Verse 12. God's memorial, the seventh-day Sabbath, the sign of His work in creating the world, has been displaced by the man of sin. God's people have a special work to do in repairing the breach that has been made

in His law; and the nearer we approach the end, the more urgent this work becomes. All who love God will show that they bear His sign by keeping His commandments.—*Welfare Ministry*, p. 33.

Wednesday, July 17: Sandwich Story: Part 1

When Christ was upon this earth, the people flocked to hear Him. So simple and plain were His words that the most unlearned among the people could understand Him, and His hearers listened as if spellbound. This enraged the scribes and Pharisees. They were filled with envy because the people listened so attentively to the words of this new Teacher. They determined to break His hold upon the multitudes. They began by attacking His character, saying that He was born in sin, and that He cast out devils through the prince of the devils. Thus were fulfilled the words “They hated me without a cause” (John 15:25; cf. Psalm 69:4). The Jewish leaders maligned and persecuted the One who is chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely.—*The Upward Look*, p. 325.

There are none so hardened as those who have slighted the invitation of mercy, and done despite to the Spirit of grace. The most common manifestation of the sin against the Holy Spirit is in persistently slighting Heaven’s invitation to repent. Every step in the rejection of Christ is a step toward the rejection of salvation, and toward the sin against the Holy Spirit.

In rejecting Christ the Jewish people committed the unpardonable sin; and by refusing the invitation of mercy, we may commit the same error. We offer insult to the Prince of life, and put Him to shame before the synagogue of Satan and before the heavenly universe when we refuse to listen to His delegated messengers, and instead listen to the agents of Satan, who would draw the soul away from Christ. So long as one does this, he can find no hope or pardon, and he will finally lose all desire to be reconciled to God.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 324.

What constitutes the sin against the Holy Ghost? It is willfully attributing to Satan the work of the Holy Spirit. For example, suppose that one is a witness of the special work of the Spirit of God. He has convincing evidence that the work is in harmony with the Scriptures, and the Spirit witnesses with his spirit that it is of God. Afterward, however . . . he declares that that which

he had before acknowledged to be the power of the Holy Spirit was the power of Satan. It is through the medium of His Spirit that God works upon the human heart; and when men willfully reject the Spirit and declare it to be from Satan, they cut off the channel by which God can communicate with them. By denying the evidence which God has been pleased to give them, they shut out the light which had been shining in their hearts, and as the result they are left in darkness. Thus the words of Christ are verified: "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" For a time, persons who have committed this sin may appear to be children of God; but when circumstances arise to develop character and show what manner of spirit they are of, it will be found that they are on the enemy's ground. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 634.

Thursday, July 18: Sandwich Story: Part 2

The sons of Joseph were far from being in sympathy with Jesus in His work. The reports that reached them in regard to His life and labors filled them with astonishment and dismay. They heard that He devoted entire nights to prayer, that through the day He was thronged by great companies of people, and did not give Himself time so much as to eat. His friends felt that He was wearing Himself out by His incessant labor; they were unable to account for His attitude toward the Pharisees, and there were some who feared that His reason was becoming unsettled.

His brothers heard of this, and also of the charge brought by the Pharisees that He cast out devils through the power of Satan. They felt keenly the reproach that came upon them through their relation to Jesus. They knew what a tumult His words and works created, and were not only alarmed at His bold statements, but indignant at His denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees. They decided that He must be persuaded or constrained to cease this manner of labor, and they induced Mary to unite with them, thinking that through His love for her they might prevail upon Him to be more prudent. —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 321.

While Jesus was still teaching the people, His disciples brought the message that His mother and His brothers were without, and desired to see Him. He knew what was in their hearts, and "He answered and said unto him

that told Him, Who is My mother? and who are My brethren? And He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples, and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother.”

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

Here and there an individual member of a family is true to the convictions of his conscience, and is compelled to stand alone. The line of demarcation is made distinct. One stands upon the Word of God, the others upon the traditions and sayings of men. . . .

The peace that Christ gave to His disciples, and for which we pray, is the peace that is born of truth, a peace that is not to be quenched because of division. Without may be wars and fightings, jealousies, envies, hatred, strife; but the peace of Christ is not that which the world giveth or taketh away.—*Our High Calling*, p. 328.

Friday, July 19: For Further Reading

Selected Messages, “Christ Holds Control,” book 1, pp. 83, 84;
The Desire of Ages, “The Sabbath,” pp. 281–289.

Lesson 4

Parables

Sabbath Afternoon, July 20

For His own wise purpose the Lord veils spiritual truths in figures and symbols. Through the use of figures of speech the plainest and most telling rebuke was often given to His accusers and enemies, and they could find in His words no occasion to condemn Him. In parables and comparisons He found the best method of communicating divine truth. In simple language, using figures and illustrations drawn from the natural world, He opened spiritual truth to His hearers, and gave expression to precious principles that would have passed from their minds, and left scarcely a trace, had He not connected His words with stirring scenes of life, experience, or nature. In this way He called forth their interest, aroused inquiry, and when He had fully secured their attention, He decidedly impressed upon them the testimony of truth. In this way He was able to make sufficient impression upon the heart so that afterward His hearers could look upon the thing with which He connected His lesson, and recall the words of the divine Teacher. —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 236.

So wide was Christ's view of truth, so extended His teaching, that every phase of nature was employed in illustrating truth. The scenes upon which the eye daily rests were all connected with some spiritual truth, so that nature is clothed with the parables of the Master.

In the earlier part of His ministry, Christ had spoken to the people in words so plain that all His hearers might have grasped truths which would make them wise unto salvation. But in many hearts the truth had taken no root, and it had been quickly caught away. "Therefore speak I to them in parables," He said; "because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. . . . For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed." Matthew 13:13–15.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 20.

Christ had truths to present which the people were unprepared to accept or even to understand. For this reason also He taught them in parables. By connecting His teaching with the scenes of life, experience, or nature, He secured their attention and impressed their hearts. Afterward, as they looked upon the objects that illustrated His lessons, they recalled the words of the divine Teacher. To minds that were open to the Holy Spirit, the significance of the Saviour's teaching unfolded more and more. Mysteries grew clear, and that which had been hard to grasp became evident.

Jesus sought an avenue to every heart. By using a variety of illustrations, He not only presented truth in its different phases, but appealed to the different hearers. Their interest was aroused by figures drawn from the surroundings of their daily life. None who listened to the Saviour could feel that they were neglected or forgotten. The humblest, the most sinful, heard in His teaching a voice that spoke to them in sympathy and tenderness.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 21.

Sunday, July 21: The Parable of the Sower

Christ's mission was not understood by the people of His time. The manner of His coming was not in accordance with their expectations. The Lord Jesus was the foundation of the whole Jewish economy. Its imposing services were of divine appointment. They were designed to teach the people that at the time appointed One would come to whom those ceremonies pointed. But the Jews had exalted the forms and ceremonies and had lost sight of their object. The traditions, maxims, and enactments of men hid from them the lessons which God intended to convey. These maxims and traditions became an obstacle to their understanding and practice of true religion. And when the Reality came, in the person of Christ, they did not recognize in Him the fulfillment of all their types, the substance of all their shadows. . . .

The gospel of Christ was a stumbling block to them because they demanded signs instead of a Saviour. They expected the Messiah to prove His claims by mighty deeds of conquest, to establish His empire on the ruins of earthly kingdoms. This expectation Christ answered in the parable of the sower. Not by force of arms, not by violent interpositions, was the kingdom of God to prevail, but by the implanting of a new principle in the hearts of men.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 34.

By the parable of the sower, Christ illustrates the things of the kingdom of heaven, and the work of the great Husbandman for His people. Like a sower in the field, He came to scatter the heavenly grain of truth. And His parable teaching itself was the seed with which the most precious truths of His grace were sown. Because of its simplicity the parable of the sower has not been valued as it should be. From the natural seed cast into the soil, Christ desires to lead our minds to the gospel seed, the sowing of which results in bringing man back to his loyalty to God. He who gave the parable of the tiny seed is the Sovereign of heaven, and the same laws that govern earthly seed sowing govern the sowing of the seeds of truth.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 33.

Next to the Bible, nature is to be our great lessonbook. . . . As we sow the seed and cultivate the plant, we are to remember that God created the seed, and He gives it to the earth. By His divine power He cares for that seed. It is by His appointment that the seed in dying gives its life to the blade and to the ear which contains in itself other seeds to be treasured and again put into the earth to yield their harvest. We may also study how the co-operation of man acts a part. The human agent has his part to act, his work to do. This is one of the lessons which nature teaches, and we shall see in it a solemn, a beautiful work.—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 185.

Monday, July 22: Jesus' Interpretation

That with which the parable of the sower chiefly deals is the effect produced on the growth of the seed by the soil into which it is cast. By this parable Christ was virtually saying to His hearers, It is not safe for you to stand as critics of My work, or to indulge disappointment because it does not meet your ideas. The question of greatest importance to you is, How do you treat My message? Upon your reception or rejection of it your eternal destiny depends.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 43.

Throughout the parable of the sower, Christ represents the different results of the sowing as depending upon the soil. In every case the sower and the seed are the same. Thus He teaches that if the word of God fails of accomplishing its work in our hearts and lives, the reason is to be found in ourselves. But the result is not beyond our control. True, we cannot change ourselves; but the power of choice is ours, and it rests with us to determine

what we will become. The wayside, the stony-ground, the thorny-ground hearers need not remain such. The Spirit of God is ever seeking to break the spell of infatuation that holds men absorbed in worldly things, and to awaken a desire for the imperishable treasure. It is by resisting the Spirit that men become inattentive to or neglectful of God's word. They are themselves responsible for the hardness of heart that prevents the good seed from taking root, and for the evil growths that check its development.

The garden of the heart must be cultivated. The soil must be broken up by deep repentance for sin. Poisonous, Satanic plants must be uprooted. The soil once overgrown by thorns can be reclaimed only by diligent labor. So the evil tendencies of the natural heart can be overcome only by earnest effort in the name and strength of Jesus. . . . This work He desires to accomplish for us, and He asks us to co-operate with Him.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 56.

We are not to allow the things of this world so to absorb the attention that mind and body are completely engrossed. Thus those around us are robbed of the kindly words and deeds that would help them in the upward way. The channel of light is clogged with worldly matters. The grace that Christ is longing to impart, He cannot bestow. Many are coming to have less and less strength to impart to others, because they do not receive power from the Source of all power. God calls upon them to separate from the things which corrode the mind and spoil the religious experience.

All are pressed with urgent cares, burdens, and duties; but the greater the pressure upon you, the heavier the burdens you have to bear, the greater your need of divine aid. Jesus will be your helper. You need constantly the light of life to lighten your pathway, and then its divine rays will reflect upon others.—*Our High Calling*, p. 280.

Tuesday, July 23: The Reason for the Parables

Jesus desired to awaken inquiry. He sought to arouse the careless, and impress truth upon the heart. Parable teaching was popular, and commanded the respect and attention, not only of the Jews, but of the people of other nations. No more effective method of instruction could He have employed. If His hearers had desired a knowledge of divine things, they might have understood His words; for He was always willing to explain them to the

honest inquirer.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 20.

Christ gave His disciples to understand that He preached in parables and hid the great truths He presented under similitudes that persons who have not the truth or the love of it, whose hearts are misled by their own tempers and gratified inclinations, could not know of His doctrines. . . .

The unfruitful hearers are specified by our Lord as the skeptical, the superficial, or the secular. These cannot discern the moral glory of the truth or its practical personal application to their own hearts. They lack that faith which overcomes the world, and as the sure consequence the world overcomes them.—*This Day With God*, p. 361.

[Jesus] had another reason for teaching in parables. Among the multitudes that gathered about Him, there were priests and rabbis, scribes and elders, Herodians and rulers, world-loving, bigoted, ambitious men, who desired above all things to find some accusation against Him. Their spies followed His steps day after day, to catch from His lips something that would cause His condemnation, and forever silence the One who seemed to draw the world after Him. The Saviour understood the character of these men, and He presented truth in such a way that they could find nothing by which to bring His case before the Sanhedrin. In parables He rebuked the hypocrisy and wicked works of those who occupied high positions, and in figurative language clothed truth of so cutting a character that had it been spoken in direct denunciation, they would not have listened to His words, and would speedily have put an end to His ministry. But while He evaded the spies, He made truth so clear that error was manifested, and the honest in heart were profited by His lessons. Divine wisdom, infinite grace, were made plain by the things of God's creation. Through nature and the experiences of life, men were taught of God. "The invisible things of Him since the creation of the world," were "perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and divinity." Romans 1:20, R. V.

In the Saviour's parable teaching is an indication of what constitutes the true "higher education." . . . In all His teaching, Christ brought the mind of man in contact with the Infinite Mind. He did not direct the people to study men's theories about God, His word, or His works. He taught them to behold Him as manifested in His works, in His word, and by His providences.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 22.

Wednesday, July 24: Lamp and Measuring Basket

As Jesus taught the people, He made His lessons interesting and held the attention of His hearers by frequent illustrations from the scenes of nature about them. . . . The Saviour looked upon the company before Him, and then to the rising sun, and said to His disciples, “Ye are the light of the world.” As the sun goes forth on its errand of love, dispelling the shades of night and awakening the world to life, so the followers of Christ are to go forth on their mission, diffusing the light of heaven upon those who are in the darkness of error and sin.

In the brilliant light of the morning, the towns and villages upon the surrounding hills stood forth clearly, making an attractive feature of the scene. Pointing to them, Jesus said, “A city set on a hill cannot be hid.” And He added, “Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under the bushel, but on the stand; and it shineth unto all that are in the house.” R.V. Most of those who listened to the words of Jesus were peasants and fishermen whose lowly dwellings contained but one room, in which the single lamp on its stand shone to all in the house. Even so, said Jesus, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 38, 39.

God has given you light, not to hide under a bushel, but to set on a candlestick that all in the house may be benefited. Your light should shine to others to enlighten souls for whom Christ died. The grace of God ruling in your heart, and bringing your mind and thoughts into subjection to Jesus, would make you [powerful] on the side of Christ and the truth. . . .

To save souls should be the lifework of everyone who professes Christ. We are debtors to the world for the grace given us of God, for the light which has shone upon us, and for the discovered beauty and power of the truth.—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 52, 53.

In all business transactions, we are to let the light shine decidedly. There is to be no sharp practice. Everything is to be done with the strictest integrity. Better consent to lose something financially than to gain a few shillings by sharp practice. We shall lose nothing in the end by fair dealing. We are to live the law of God in our world, and perfect a character after the divine similitude. All business, with those in the faith and those not in the faith, is to

be transacted on square, righteous principles. Everything is to be seen in the light of God's law, everything done without fraud, without duplicity, without one tinge of guile. . . .

"A false balance is abomination to the Lord."—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1158.

Thursday, July 25: Parable of Growing Seed

Jesus taught by illustrations and parables drawn from nature and from the familiar events of everyday life. In this way He associated natural things with spiritual, linking the things of nature and the life experience of His hearers with the sublime truths of the written word. And whenever afterward their eyes rested on the objects with which He has associated eternal truth, His lessons were repeated.

One of Christ's most beautiful and impressive parables is that of the sower and the seed. "So is the kingdom of God," He said, "as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." Mark 4:26–28. . . . He who gave this parable, Himself created the tiny seed, gave it its vital properties, and ordained the laws that should govern its growth; and He made it a living illustration of truth in both the natural and the spiritual world.—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 140.

As Jesus spoke this parable, the mustard plant could be seen far and near, lifting itself above the grass and grain, and waving its branches lightly in the air. Birds flitted from twig to twig, and sang amid the leafy foliage. Yet the seed from which sprang this giant plant was among the least of all seeds. At first it sent up a tender shoot, but it was of strong vitality, and grew and flourished until it reached its present great size. So the kingdom of Christ in its beginning seemed humble and insignificant. Compared with earthly kingdoms it appeared to be the least of all. By the rulers of this world Christ's claim to be a king was ridiculed. Yet in the mighty truths committed to His followers the kingdom of the gospel possessed a divine life. And how rapid was its growth, how widespread its influence! When Christ spoke this parable, there were only a few Galilean peasants to represent the new

kingdom. Their poverty, the fewness of their numbers, were urged over and over again as a reason why men should not connect themselves with these simple-minded fishermen who followed Jesus. But the mustard seed was to grow and spread forth its branches throughout the world. When the earthly kingdoms whose glory then filled the hearts of men should perish, the kingdom of Christ would remain, a mighty and far-reaching power.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 77.

[The] kingdom of Christ is like no earthly government. It is a representation of the characters of those who compose the kingdom. "Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God?" Christ asked, "or with what comparison shall we liken it?" He could find nothing on earth that would serve as a perfect comparison. His court is one where holy love presides, and whose offices and appointments are graced by the exercise of charity. He charges His servants to bring pity and loving-kindness, His own attributes, into all their office work, and to find their happiness and satisfaction in reflecting the love and tender compassion of the divine nature on all with whom they associate.—*The Review and Herald*, March 19, 1908.

Friday, July 26: For Further Reading

The Upward Look, "To Every Man His Work," p. 273;
God's Amazing Grace, "Unlike Earthly Kingdoms," p. 14.

Lesson 5

Miracles Around the Lake

Sabbath Afternoon, July 27

At the birth of Jesus, Satan knew that One had come with a divine commission to dispute his dominion. He trembled at the angel's message attesting the authority of the newborn King. Satan well knew the position that Christ had held in heaven as the Beloved of the Father. That the Son of God should come to this earth as a man filled him with amazement and with apprehension. He could not fathom the mystery of this great sacrifice. His selfish soul could not understand such love for the deceived race. The glory and peace of heaven, and the joy of communion with God, were but dimly comprehended by men; but they were well known to Lucifer, the covering cherub. Since he had lost heaven, he was determined to find revenge by causing others to share his fall. This he would do by causing them to undervalue heavenly things, and to set the heart upon things of earth.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 115.

Christ was to identify Himself with the interests and needs of humanity. He who was one with God has linked Himself with the children of men by ties that are never to be broken. Jesus is “not ashamed to call them brethren” (Hebrews 2:11); He is our Sacrifice, our Advocate, our Brother, bearing our human form before the Father's throne, and through eternal ages one with the race He has redeemed—the Son of man. And all this that man might be uplifted from the ruin and degradation of sin that he might reflect the love of God and share the joy of holiness. . . .

Such love is without a parallel. Children of the heavenly King! Precious promise! Theme for the most profound meditation! The matchless love of God for a world that did not love Him! The thought has a subduing power upon the soul and brings the mind into captivity to the will of God. The more we study the divine character in the light of the cross, the more we see mercy, tenderness, and forgiveness blended with equity and justice, and the more

clearly we discern innumerable evidences of a love that is infinite.—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 14, 15.

He who had said, “I lay down my life, that I might take it again” (John 10:17), came forth from the grave to life that was in Himself. Humanity died; divinity did not die. In His divinity, Christ possessed the power to break the bonds of death. He declares that He has life in Himself to quicken whom He will.

All created beings live by the will and power of God. They are recipients of the life of the Son of God. However able and talented, however large their capacities, they are replenished with life from the Source of all life. He is the spring, the fountain, of life. Only He who alone hath immortality, dwelling in light and life, could say, “I have power to lay it [my life] down, and I have power to take it again” (John 10:18).—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 301.

Sunday, July 28: Calming a Storm

Absorbed in their efforts to save themselves, [the disciples] had forgotten that Jesus was on board. Now, seeing their labor vain and only death before them, they remembered at whose command they had set out to cross the sea. In Jesus was their only hope. . . .

Suddenly a flash of lightning pierces the darkness, and they see Jesus lying asleep, undisturbed by the tumult. . . . As the lightning’s glare reveals Him, they see the peace of heaven in His face; they read in His glance self-forgetful, tender love, and, their hearts turning to Him, cry, “Lord, save us: we perish.”

Never did a soul utter that cry unheeded. As the disciples grasp their oars to make a last effort, Jesus rises. He stands in the midst of His disciples, while the tempest rages. . . . He lifts His hand, so often employed in deeds of mercy, and says to the angry sea, “Peace, be still”. . . .

As Jesus rested by faith in the Father’s care, so we are to rest in the care of our Saviour.—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 334–336.

Our God has heaven and earth at His command, and He knows just what we need. We can see only a little way before us; “but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” Hebrews 4:13. Above the distractions of the earth He sits enthroned; all things are open to

His divine survey; and from His great and calm eternity He orders that which His providence sees best.

Not even a sparrow falls to the ground without the Father's notice. Satan's hatred against God leads him to delight in destroying even the dumb creatures. It is only through God's protecting care that the birds are preserved to gladden us with their songs of joy. . . . "Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." Matthew 10:31.—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, pp. 272, 273.

Our divine Lord is equal to any emergency. With Him nothing is impossible. He has shown His great love for us by living a life of self-denial and sacrifice and by dying a death of agony. Come to Christ just as you are. . . . Cast yourself wholly on His mercy. There is no difficulty within or without that cannot be surmounted in His strength.

Some have stormy tempers; but He who calmed the stormy Sea of Galilee will say to the troubled heart, "Peace, be still." There is no nature so rebellious that Christ cannot subdue it, no temper so stormy that He cannot quell it, if the heart is surrendered to His keeping.

He who commits his soul to Jesus need not despond. We have an all-powerful Saviour. Looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith, you can say, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea" (Psalm 46:1, 2).—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 17.

Monday, July 29: Can You Hear a Whisper Above a Shout?

At the command of Jesus the evil spirits departed from their victims, leaving them calmly sitting at the Saviour's feet, subdued, intelligent, and gentle. But the demons were permitted to sweep a herd of swine into the sea; and to the dwellers of Gadara the loss of these outweighed the blessings which Christ had bestowed, and the divine Healer was entreated to depart. This was the result which Satan designed to secure. By casting the blame of their loss upon Jesus, he aroused the selfish fears of the people and prevented them from listening to His words. Satan is constantly accusing Christians as

the cause of loss, misfortune, and suffering, instead of allowing the reproach to fall where it belongs—upon himself and his agents. . . .

This event was permitted to take place that the disciples might witness the cruel power of Satan upon both man and beast. The Saviour desired His followers to have a knowledge of the foe whom they were to meet, that they might not be deceived and overcome by his devices. It was also His will that the people of that region should behold His power to break the bondage of Satan and release his captives. And though Jesus Himself departed, the men so marvelously delivered, remained to declare the mercy of their Benefactor.—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 514, 515.

Though the people of Gergesa had not received Jesus, He did not leave them to the darkness they had chosen. When they bade Him depart from them, they had not heard His words. They were ignorant of that which they were rejecting. Therefore He sent the light to them, and by those to whom they would not refuse to listen.

In causing the destruction of the swine, it was Satan's purpose to turn the people away from the Saviour and prevent the preaching of the gospel in that region. But this very occurrence roused the country as nothing else could have done, and directed attention to Christ. Though the Saviour Himself departed, the men whom He had healed remained as witnesses to His power. Those who had been mediums of the prince of darkness became channels of light, messengers of the Son of God. When Jesus returned to Decapolis, the people flocked about Him, and for three days thousands from all the surrounding country heard the message of salvation.—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 98.

The strength of every soul is in God and not in man. Quietness and confidence is to be the strength of all who give their hearts to God. Christ has not a casual interest in us but an interest stronger than a mother for her child. . . . Our Saviour has purchased us by human suffering and sorrow, by insult, reproach, abuse, mockery, rejection and death. He is watching over you, trembling child of God. He will make you secure under His protection. . . . Our weakness in human nature will not bar our access to the heavenly Father, for He [Christ] died to make intercession for us.—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 77.

Tuesday, July 30: On the Roller Coaster With Jesus

[Jesus] remained by the seaside for a time, teaching and healing, and then repaired to the house of Levi-Matthew to meet the publicans at the feast. Here Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, found Him.

This elder of the Jews came to Jesus in great distress, and cast himself at His feet, exclaiming, “My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray Thee, come and lay Thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.”

Jesus set out at once with the ruler for his home. Though the disciples had seen so many of His works of mercy, they were surprised at His compliance with the entreaty of the haughty rabbi.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 342.

In making His way through the multitude, the Saviour came near to where the afflicted woman was standing. Again and again she had tried in vain to get near Him. Now her opportunity had come. She could see no way of speaking to Him. She would not seek to hinder His slow advance. But she had heard that healing came from a touch of His garments; and, fearful of losing her one chance for relief, she pressed forward. . . .

Christ knew every thought of her mind, and He was making His way to where she stood. He realized her great need, and He was helping her to exercise faith.

As He was passing, she reached forward and succeeded in barely touching the border of His garment. That moment she knew that she was healed. In that one touch was concentrated the faith of her life, and instantly her pain and feebleness disappeared.—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 59, 60.

Christ did not ask [“Who touched Me?”] for His own information. He had a lesson for the people, for His disciples, and for the woman. He wished to inspire the afflicted with hope. He wished to show that it was faith which had brought the healing power. The woman’s trust must not be passed by without comment. God must be glorified by her grateful confession. Christ desired her to understand that He approved her act of faith. He would not have her depart with a half blessing only. She was not to remain in ignorance of His knowledge of her suffering, or of His compassionate love and of His approval of her faith in His power to save to the uttermost all who come to Him. . . .

Finding concealment vain, she came forward trembling, and cast herself at

His feet. With grateful tears she told Him, before all the people, why she had touched His garment, and how she had been immediately healed. She feared that her act in touching His garment had been one of presumption; but no word of censure came from Christ's lips. . . . "Daughter," He said gently, "be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace." Verse 48. How cheering were these words to her. Now no fear that she had given offense embittered her joy.—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 60, 61.

Wednesday, July 31: Rejection and Reception

The words of Jesus to His hearers in the synagogue [at Nazareth] struck at the root of their self-righteousness, pressing home upon them the bitter truth that they had departed from God and forfeited their claim to be His people. Every word cut like a knife as their real condition was set before them. They now scorned the faith with which Jesus had at first inspired them. They would not admit that He who had sprung from poverty and lowliness was other than a common man.

Their unbelief bred malice. Satan controlled them, and in wrath they cried out against the Saviour. They had turned from Him whose mission it was to heal and restore; now they manifested the attributes of the destroyer.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 239.

The disciples' message was the same as that of John the Baptist and of Christ Himself: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." They were to enter into no controversy with the people as to whether Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah; but in His name they were to do the same works of mercy as He had done. . . .

The disciples on their first missionary tour were to go only to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." If they had now preached the gospel to the Gentiles or the Samaritans, they would have lost their influence with the Jews. By exciting the prejudice of the Pharisees they would have involved themselves in controversy which would have discouraged them at the outset of their labors. Even the apostles were slow to understand that the gospel was to be carried to all nations. Until they themselves could grasp this truth they were not prepared to labor for the Gentiles. If the Jews would receive the gospel, God purposed to make them His messengers to the Gentiles.

Therefore they were first to hear the message.—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 350 351.

Because the rulers did not believe on Him, the people were not willing to accept Jesus. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. They could not endure to be governed by His sober, self-denying life. They wished to enjoy the honor which the world bestows. Yet many followed the Son of God and listened to His instructions, feasting upon the words which fell so graciously from His lips. His words were full of meaning, yet so plain that the weakest could understand them.

Satan and his angels blinded the eyes and darkened the understanding of the Jews, and stirred up the chief of the people and the rulers to take the Saviour's life. . . . I saw that many of the magistrates and elders did believe on Jesus; but Satan kept them from acknowledging it; they feared the reproach of the people more than they feared God.

Thus far the cunning and hatred of Satan had not broken up the plan of salvation. The time for the accomplishment of the object for which Jesus came into the world was drawing near.—*Early Writings*, pp. 160, 161.

Thursday, August 1: A Different Kind of Messiah

When the question comes home to your heart, "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" let not your answer be the response of unbelief. When the disciples heard the Saviour's direction, "Give ye them to eat," all the difficulties arose in their minds. They questioned, Shall we go away into the villages to buy food? So now, when the people are destitute of the bread of life, the Lord's children question, Shall we send for someone from afar, to come and feed them? But what said Christ? "Make the men sit down," and He fed them there. So when you are surrounded by souls in need, know that Christ is there. Commune with Him. Bring your barley loaves to Jesus.

The means in our possession may not seem to be sufficient for the work; but if we will move forward in faith, believing in the all-sufficient power of God, abundant resources will open before us. If the work be of God, He Himself will provide the means for its accomplishment. He will reward honest, simple reliance upon Him. . . . If we go to the Source of all strength, with our hands of faith outstretched to receive, we shall be sustained in our

work, even under the most forbidding circumstances, and shall be enabled to give to others the bread of life.—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 370, 371.

Though the finite minds of men are inadequate to enter into the counsels of the Infinite One, or to understand fully the working out of His purposes, yet often it is because of some error or neglect on their own part that they so dimly comprehend the messages of Heaven. Not infrequently the minds of the people, and even of God's servants, are so blinded by human opinions, the traditions and false teaching of men, that they are able only partially to grasp the great things which He has revealed in His word. Thus it was with the disciples of Christ, even when the Saviour was with them in person. Their minds had become imbued with the popular conception of the Messiah as a temporal prince, who was to exalt Israel to the throne of the universal empire, and they could not understand the meaning of His words foretelling His sufferings and death.—*The Great Controversy*, p. 344.

In consideration of the shortness of time we as a people should watch and pray, and in no case allow ourselves to be diverted from the solemn work of preparation for the great event before us. Because the time is apparently extended, many have become careless and indifferent in regard to their words and actions. They do not realize their danger and do not see and understand the mercy of our God in lengthening their probation, that they may have time to form characters for the future, immortal life. Every moment is of the highest value. . . . God has a people upon the earth who in faith and holy hope are tracing down the roll of fast-fulfilling prophecy and are seeking to purify their souls by obeying the truth, that they may not be found without the wedding garment when Christ shall appear.—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 306.

Friday, August 2: For Further Reading

The Desire of Ages, "The Touch of Faith," pp. 342–348.
My Life Today, "With Peace," p. 336.

Lesson 6

Inside Out

Sabbath Afternoon, August 3

From its earliest years the Jewish child was surrounded with the requirements of the rabbis. Rigid rules were prescribed for every act, down to the smallest details of life. Under the synagogue teachers the youth were instructed in the countless regulations which as orthodox Israelites they were expected to observe. But Jesus did not interest Himself in these matters. From childhood He acted independently of the rabbinical laws. The Scriptures of the Old Testament were His constant study, and the words, “Thus saith the Lord,” were ever upon His lips.

As the condition of the people began to open to His mind, He saw that the requirements of society and the requirements of God were in constant collision. Men were departing from the word of God, and exalting theories of their own invention. They were observing traditional rites that possessed no virtue. Their service was a mere round of ceremonies; the sacred truths it was designed to teach were hidden from the worshipers. He saw that in their faithless services they found no peace. They did not know the freedom of spirit that would come to them by serving God in truth. Jesus had come to teach the meaning of the worship of God, and He could not sanction the mingling of human requirements with the divine precepts.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 84.

To the multitude, and afterward more fully to His disciples, Jesus explained that defilement comes not from without, but from within. Purity and impurity pertain to the soul. It is the evil deed, the evil word, the evil thought, the transgression of the law of God, not the neglect of external, man-made ceremonies, that defiles a man.

The disciples noted the rage of the spies as their false teaching was exposed. . . . Hoping that He might conciliate the enraged officials, they said to Jesus, “Knowest Thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard

this saying?”

He answered, “Every plant, which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.” The customs and traditions so highly valued by the rabbis were of this world, not from heaven. However great their authority with the people, they could not endure the testing of God. Every human invention that has been substituted for the commandments of God will be found worthless.—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 397, 398.

The substitution of the precepts of men for the commandments of God has not ceased. Even among Christians are found institutions and usages that have no better foundation than the traditions of the fathers. Such institutions, resting upon mere human authority, have supplanted those of divine appointment. Men cling to their traditions, and revere their customs, and cherish hatred against those who seek to show them their error. In this day, when we are bidden to call attention to the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, we see the same enmity as was manifested in the days of Christ.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 398.

Sunday, August 4: Human Traditions Versus God’s Commands

Among the observances most strenuously enforced was that of ceremonial purification. A neglect of the forms to be observed before eating was accounted a heinous sin, to be punished both in this world and in the next; and it was regarded as a virtue to destroy the transgressor.

The rules in regard to purification were numberless. The period of a lifetime was scarcely sufficient for one to learn them all. The life of those who tried to observe the rabbinical requirements was one long struggle against ceremonial defilement, an endless round of washings and purifications. While the people were occupied with trifling distinctions, and observances which God had not required, their attention was turned away from the great principles of His law.

Christ and His disciples did not observe these ceremonial washings, and the spies made this neglect the ground of their accusation. They did not, however, make a direct attack on Christ, but came to Him with criticism of His disciples. In the presence of the multitude they said, “Why do Thy

disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 395, 396.

The apparent zeal for God on the part of the priests and rabbis was a pretense to cover their desire for self-aggrandizement. The people were deceived by them. They were bearing heavy burdens which God had not imposed. Even the disciples of Christ were not wholly free from the yoke that had been bound upon them by inherited prejudice and rabbinical authority. Now, by revealing the true spirit of the rabbis, Jesus sought to free from the bondage of tradition all who were really desirous of serving God.

“Ye hypocrites,” He said, addressing the wily spies, “well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoreth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me. But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” The words of Christ were an arraignment of the whole system of Pharisaism. He declared that by placing their requirements above the divine precepts the rabbis were setting themselves above God.

The deputies from Jerusalem were filled with rage. They could not accuse Christ as a violator of the law given from Sinai, for He spoke as its defender against their traditions. The great precepts of the law, which He had presented, appeared in striking contrast to the petty rules that men had devised.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 397.

Let all who accept human authority, the customs of the church, or the traditions of the fathers, take heed to the warning conveyed in the words of Christ, “In vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 398.

Monday, August 5: Clean Hands of Clean Heart?

Christ desires nothing so much as to redeem His heritage from the dominion of Satan. But before we are delivered from Satan’s power without, we must be delivered from his power within. The Lord permits trials in order that we may be cleansed from earthliness, from selfishness, from harsh, unchristlike traits of character. He suffers the deep waters of affliction to go over our souls in order that we may know Him and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, in order that we may have deep heart longings to be cleansed from

defilement, and may come forth from the trial purer, holier, happier. Often we enter the furnace of trial with our souls darkened with selfishness; but if patient under the crucial test, we shall come forth reflecting the divine character. When His purpose in the affliction is accomplished, “He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.” Psalm 37:6.

There is no danger that the Lord will neglect the prayers of His people. The danger is that in temptation and trial they will become discouraged, and fail to persevere in prayer.—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 174, 175.

Our Saviour, who understands our heart struggles, and knows the weakness of our natures, pities our infirmities, forgives our errors, and bestows upon us the graces which we earnestly desire. Joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, faith, and charity are the elements of the Christian character. These precious graces are the fruit of the Spirit, and the Christian’s crown and shield. Where these graces reign in the home, the sons are “as plants grown up in their youth,” and the daughters “as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace.” These heavenly attainments are not dependent upon circumstances, nor the will of imperfect judgment of man. Nothing can give more perfect contentment and satisfaction than the cultivation of a Christian character; the most exalted aspirations can aim at nothing higher.—*Signs of the Times*, September 9, 1886.

Jesus spoke as one having knowledge and authority. The denunciation he uttered against the Jews condemned their formalism and hypocrisy. His scathing rebukes and denunciation of formalism have the same force today as they had in the days of the scribes and Pharisees, and apply to those who have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof. The God of infinite holiness cannot accept external service as spiritual worship. Those who worship God must worship him in spirit and truth, or their service is vain. There must be reality in the religious ceremonies, or they are simply pretensions, hollow abominations. But though Jesus rebuked the priests and religious teachers for their formalism and hypocrisy, yet how forbearing and tender were his lessons to the poor, the oppressed, the afflicted, and discouraged. The priests and rulers, the scribes and Pharisees, destroyed the living pastures, and defiled the well-springs of the water of life. By their false precepts they confused the understanding, and clouded that which was clear.

They misrepresented God by their hardness of heart, by their impurity, pride, and selfishness.—*Sabbath-School Worker*, December 1, 1894, par. 4.

Tuesday, August 6: Crumbs for the Dogs

The [Syrophenician] woman urged her case with increased earnestness, bowing at Christ's feet, and crying, "Lord, help me." Jesus, still apparently rejecting her entreaties, according to the unfeeling prejudice of the Jews, answered, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." This was virtually asserting that it was not just to lavish the blessings brought to the favored people of God upon strangers and aliens from Israel. This answer would have utterly discouraged a less earnest seeker. But the woman saw that her opportunity had come. Beneath the apparent refusal of Jesus, she saw a compassion that He could not hide. . . . So while there were many blessings given to Israel, was there not also a blessing for her? She was looked upon as a dog, and had she not then a dog's claim to a crumb from His bounty? . . .

Here Christ meets one of an unfortunate and despised race, that has not been favored with the light of God's word; yet she yields at once to the divine influence of Christ, and has implicit faith in His ability to grant the favor she asks. She begs for the crumbs that fall from the Master's table. If she may have the privilege of a dog, she is willing to be regarded as a dog. She has no national or religious prejudice or pride to influence her course, and she immediately acknowledges Jesus as the Redeemer, and as being able to do all that she asks of Him.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 401.

The Saviour is satisfied. He has tested her faith in Him. By His dealings with her, He has shown that she who has been regarded as an outcast from Israel is no longer an alien, but a child in God's household. As a child it is her privilege to share in the Father's gifts. Christ now grants her request, and finishes the lesson to the disciples. Turning to her with a look of pity and love, He says, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." From that hour her daughter became whole. The demon troubled her no more. The woman departed, acknowledging her Saviour, and happy in the granting of her prayer.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 401.

The Saviour manifested divine compassion toward the Syrophenician

woman. His heart was touched as He saw her grief. He longed to give her an immediate assurance that her prayer was heard; but He desired to teach His disciples a lesson, and for a time He seemed to neglect the cry of her tortured heart. When her faith had been made manifest, He spoke to her words of commendation and sent her away with the precious boon she had asked. The disciples never forgot this lesson, and it is placed on record to show the result of persevering prayer.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 175.

Wednesday, August 7: Tongue-Tied

It was in the region of Decapolis that the demoniacs of Gergesa had been healed. Here the people, alarmed at the destruction of the swine, had constrained Jesus to depart from among them. But they had listened to the messengers He left behind, and a desire was aroused to see Him. As He came again into that region, a crowd gathered about Him, and a deaf, stammering man was brought to Him. Jesus did not, according to His custom, restore the man by a word only. Taking him apart from the multitude, He put His fingers in his ears, and touched his tongue; looking up to heaven, He sighed at thought of the ears that would not be open to the truth, the tongues that refused to acknowledge the Redeemer. At the word, "Be opened," the man's speech was restored, and, disregarding the command to tell no man, he published abroad the story of his cure.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 404.

In the power of the Spirit the delegated servants of Christ are to bear witness for their Leader. The yearning desire of the Saviour for the salvation of sinners is to mark all their efforts. The gracious invitation, first given by Christ, is to be taken up by human voices and sounded throughout the world: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Revelation 22:17. The church is to say: "Come." Every power in the church is to be actively engaged on the side of Christ. The followers of Christ are to combine in a strong effort to call the attention of the world to the fast-fulfilling prophecies of the word of God. Infidelity and spiritualism are gaining a strong hold in the world. Shall those to whom great light has been given be cold and faithless now?—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 43.

He whose heart is fixed to serve God will find opportunity to witness for Him. Difficulties will be powerless to hinder him who is determined to seek

first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. In the strength gained by prayer and a study of the word, he will seek virtue and forsake vice. Looking to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of the faith, who endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself, the believer will willingly brave contempt and derision. And help and grace sufficient for every circumstance are promised by Him whose word is truth. His everlasting arms encircle the soul that turns to Him for aid. In His care we may rest safely, saying, “What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee.” Psalm 56:3. To all who put their trust in Him, God will fulfill His promise.

By His own example the Saviour has shown that His followers can be in the world and yet not of the world. He came . . . to do His Father’s will, to seek and save the lost. With this object before him the Christian may stand uncontaminated in any surroundings. Whatever his station or circumstances, exalted or humble, he will manifest the power of true religion in the faithful performance of duty.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 467.

Thursday, August 8: Watch Out for Bad Bread

Those who desired a sign from Jesus had so hardened their hearts in unbelief that they did not discern in His character the likeness of God. They would not see that His mission was in fulfillment of the Scriptures. . . . No sign that could be given in heaven or earth would benefit them.

Jesus “sighed deeply in His spirit,” and, turning from the group of cavilers, re-entered the boat with His disciples. In sorrowful silence they again crossed the lake. . . . Upon reaching the farther side, Jesus said, “Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.” . . . Yet the disciples failed to understand Jesus. In their sudden departure from Magdala they had forgotten to take bread, and they had with them only one loaf. To this circumstance they understood Christ to refer, warning them not to buy bread of a Pharisee or a Sadducee. Their lack of faith and spiritual insight had often led them to similar misconception of His words. Now Jesus reproved them for thinking that He who had fed thousands with a few fishes and barley loaves could in that solemn warning have referred merely to temporal food. There was danger that the crafty reasoning of the Pharisees and the Sadducees would leaven His disciples with unbelief, causing them to think lightly of the works of Christ.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 407.

The disciples were inclined to think that their Master should have granted the demand for a sign in the heavens. They believed that He was fully able to do this, and that such a sign would put His enemies to silence. They did not discern the hypocrisy of these cavilers.

Months afterward . . . Jesus repeated the same teaching. “He began to say unto His disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.” Luke 12:1.

The leaven placed in the meal works imperceptibly, changing the whole mass to its own nature. So if hypocrisy is allowed to exist in the heart, it permeates the character and the life. . . . The scribes and Pharisees were insinuating deceptive principles. They concealed the real tendency of their doctrines, and improved every occasion to instill them artfully into the minds of their hearers. These false principles, when once accepted, worked like leaven in the meal, permeating and transforming the character. It was this deceptive teaching that made it so hard for the people to receive the words of Christ.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 408.

When we are able to comprehend the character of God as did Moses, we too shall make haste to bow in adoration and praise. Jesus contemplated nothing less than “that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me” should be in the hearts of His children, that they might impart the knowledge of God to others.

O what an assurance is this, that the love of God may abide in the hearts of all who believe in Him! . . . One who knows, has said, “The Father himself loveth you.” One who has had an experimental knowledge of the length, and breadth, and height, and depth of that love, has declared unto us this amazing fact. This love is ours through faith in the Son of God, therefore a connection with Christ means everything to us. We are to be one with Him as He is one with the Father, and then we are beloved by the infinite God as members of the body of Christ, as branches of the living Vine.—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 177, 178.

Friday, August 9: For Further Reading

Lift Him Up, “God’s Words Created His Works,” p. 66;
The Desire of Ages, “The True Sign,” pp. 404–409.

Lesson 7

Teaching Disciples, Part 1

Sabbath Afternoon, August 10

We are to lift the cross, and follow the steps of Christ. Those who lift the cross will find that as they do this, the cross lifts them, giving them fortitude and courage, and pointing them to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. . . .

The cross lifts you up from the lowlands of earth, and brings you into sweetest communion with God. Through bearing the cross your experience may be such that you can say, “ ‘I know that my Redeemer liveth,’ and because He lives, I shall live also.” What an assurance is this!—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1095.

My heart aches as I am shown how many there are who make self their idol. Christ has paid the redemption price for them. To Him belongs the service of all their powers. But their hearts are filled with self-love, and the desire for self-adorning. They give no thought to the words, “Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mark 8:34). Self-gratification is hiding Christ from their view. They have no desire to walk before God in meekness and lowliness. They are not looking to Jesus. They are not praying that they may be changed into His likeness. . . .

Many who profess to be Christians are such only in name. They are not converted. They keep self prominent. They do not sit at the feet of Jesus, as Mary did, to learn of Him. They are not ready for Christ’s coming.—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 80.

It is difficult for us to understand ourselves, to have a correct knowledge of our own characters. The word of God is plain, but often there is an error in applying it to one’s self. There is liability to self-deception and to think its warnings and reproofs do not mean me. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” . . .

The Bible is full, clear, and explicit; the character of the true disciple of

Christ is marked out with exactness. We must search the Scriptures with humble hearts, trembling at the word of the Lord, if we would not be in any way deceived in regard to our true character. There must be persevering effort to overcome selfishness and self-confidence. Self-examination must be thorough, that there be no danger of self-deception. . . . Deal truly with your own hearts, for you cannot afford to run any risk here. Count the cost of being a wholehearted Christian, and then gird on the armor. Study the Pattern; look to Jesus, and be like Him.—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 332.

Sunday, August 11: Seeing Clearly

Jesus and His disciples . . . were [now] beyond the limits of Galilee, in a region where idolatry prevailed. Here the disciples were withdrawn from the controlling influence of Judaism, and brought into closer contact with the heathen worship. Around them were represented forms of superstition that existed in all parts of the world. Jesus desired that a view of these things might lead them to feel their responsibility to the heathen. During His stay in this region, He endeavored to withdraw from teaching the people, and to devote Himself more fully to His disciples.

He was about to tell them of the suffering that awaited Him. But first He went away alone, and prayed that their hearts might be prepared to receive His words. Upon joining them, He did not at once communicate that which He desired to impart. Before doing this, He gave them an opportunity of confessing their faith in Him that they might be strengthened for the coming trial.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 411.

Jesus [asked the disciples]: “But whom say ye that I am?” Peter answered, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” . . .

Peter had expressed the faith of the twelve. Yet the disciples were still far from understanding Christ’s mission. The opposition and misrepresentation of the priests and rulers, while it could not turn them away from Christ, still caused them great perplexity. They did not see their way clearly. The influence of their early training, the teaching of the rabbis, the power of tradition, still intercepted their view of truth. From time to time precious rays of light from Jesus shone upon them, yet often they were like men groping

among shadows. But on this day, before they were brought face to face with the great trial of their faith, the Holy Spirit rested upon them in power. For a little time their eyes were turned away from “the things which are seen,” to behold “the things which are not seen.” 2 Corinthians 4:18. Beneath the guise of humanity they discerned the glory of the Son of God.—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 411, 412.

The truth which Peter had confessed is the foundation of the believer’s faith. It is that which Christ Himself has declared to be eternal life. But the possession of this knowledge was no ground for self-glorification. Through no wisdom or goodness of his own had it been revealed to Peter. Never can humanity, of itself, attain to a knowledge of the divine. “It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?” Job 11:8. Only the spirit of adoption can reveal to us the deep things of God, which . . . “God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.” 1 Corinthians 2:10. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him;” and the fact that Peter discerned the glory of Christ was an evidence that he had been “taught of God.” Psalm 25:14; John 6:45.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 412.

Monday, August 12: The Cost of Discipleship

Before His crucifixion the Saviour explained to His disciples that He was to be put to death and to rise again from the tomb, and angels were present to impress His words on minds and hearts. But the disciples were looking for temporal deliverance from the Roman yoke, and they could not tolerate the thought that He in whom all their hopes centered should suffer an ignominious death. The words which they needed to remember were banished from their minds; and when the time of trial came, it found them unprepared. The death of Jesus as fully destroyed their hopes as if He had not forewarned them. So in the prophecies the future is opened before us as plainly as it was opened to the disciples by the words of Christ. The events connected with the close of probation and the work of preparation for the time of trouble, are clearly presented. But multitudes have no more understanding of these important truths than if they had never been revealed. Satan watches to catch away every impression that would make them wise

unto salvation, and the time of trouble will find them unready.—*The Great Controversy*, p. 594.

When Christ revealed to Peter the time of trial and suffering that was just before Him, and Peter replied, “Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee,” the Saviour commanded, “Get thee behind me, Satan.” Satan was speaking through Peter, making him act the part of the tempter. Satan’s presence was unsuspected by Peter, but Christ could detect the presence of the deceiver, and in His rebuke to Peter He addressed the real foe. . . .

Satan’s work was to discourage Jesus as He strove to save the depraved race, and Peter’s words were just what he wished to hear. They were opposed to the divine plan; and whatever bore this stamp of character was an offense to God. They were spoken at the instigation of Satan. . . . [He] hoped they would discourage and dishearten Christ; but Christ addressed the author of the thought, saying, “Get thee behind me, Satan.”—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1095.

He who loves God supremely and his neighbor as himself will work with the constant realization that he is a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. Making God’s will his will, he will reveal in his life the transforming power of the grace of Christ. In all the circumstances of life, he will take Christ’s example as his guide.

Every true, self-sacrificing worker for God is willing to spend and be spent for the sake of others. Christ says, “He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal” (John 12:25). By earnest, thoughtful efforts to help where help is needed, the true Christian shows his love for God and for his fellow beings. He may lose his life in service. But when Christ comes to gather His jewels to Himself, he will find it again.—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 86.

Tuesday, August 13: The Mountain and the Multitude

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.

"If Thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us." How many a sin-burdened soul has echoed that prayer. And to all, the pitying Saviour's answer is, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." It is faith that connects us with heaven, and brings us strength for coping with the powers of darkness. In Christ, God has provided means for subduing every sinful trait, and resisting every temptation, however strong. But many feel that they lack faith, and therefore they remain away from Christ. Let these souls, in their helpless unworthiness, cast themselves upon the mercy of their compassionate Saviour. Look not to self, but to Christ. He who healed the sick and cast out demons when He walked among men is the same mighty Redeemer today. Faith comes by the word of God. Then grasp His promise, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." John 6:37. Cast yourself at His feet with the cry, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." You can never perish while you do this—never.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 429.

The power and malice of Satan and his host might justly alarm us were it not that we may find shelter and deliverance in the superior power of our Redeemer. We carefully secure our houses with bolts and locks to protect our property and our lives from evil men; but we seldom think of the evil angels who are constantly seeking access to us, and against whose attacks we have, in our own strength, no method of defense. If permitted, they can distract our minds, disorder and torment our bodies, destroy our possessions and our lives. Their only delight is in misery and destruction. . . . But those who follow Christ are ever safe under His watchcare. Angels that excel in strength are sent from heaven to protect them. The wicked one cannot break through the guard which God has stationed about His people.—*The Great*

Controversy, p. 517.

Wednesday, August 14: Who Is the Greatest?

At one time [the disciples disputed] as to which of their number should be accounted greatest. They did not intend their words to reach the ear of the Master; but Jesus read their hearts, and embraced the opportunity to give His disciples a lesson of humility. It was not only for the little group who listened to His words, but was to be recorded for the benefit of all His followers to the close of time. “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” (Mark 9:35).

Those who possess the spirit of Christ will have no ambition to occupy a position above their brethren. It is those who are small in their own eyes who will be accounted great in the sight of God. “And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me” (verses 36, 37).

What a precious lesson is this for all the followers of Christ! Those who overlook the life duties lying directly in their pathway, who neglect mercy and kindness, courtesy and love, to even a little child, are neglecting Christ.—*The Sanctified Life*, pp. 55, 56.

There is coming in among us a spirit which God will not suffer to rule. Never should Christians feel that they are lords over God’s heritage. . . .

He who yields to this spirit of self-exaltation places himself under the control of the enemy. If ministers of the gospel cannot harmonize with all his ideas and imaginings, he turns from them and speaks against them, pouring out the sarcasm and bitterness in his heart upon ministers and ministry. . . .

Jesus has given us an example in His life of purity and perfect holiness. The most exalted being in heaven, He was the most ready to serve. The most honored, He humbled Himself to minister to those who a short time before had been disputing as to who should be the greatest in His kingdom.—*This Day With God*, p. 192.

God works by whom He will. He sometimes selects the humblest

instrument to do the greatest work, for His power is revealed through the weakness of men. We have our standard, and by it we pronounce one thing great and another small; but God does not estimate according to our rule. We are not to suppose that what is great to us must be great to God, or that what is small to us must be small to Him. It does not rest with us to pass judgment on our talents or to choose our work. We are to take up the burdens that God appoints, bearing them for His sake, and ever going to Him for rest.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 363.

Thursday, August 15: The Healthy Man in Hell

In the epistle to the Hebrews is pointed out the single-hearted purpose that should characterize the Christian's race for eternal life: "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." Hebrews 12:1, 2. Envy, malice, evil thinking, evil-speaking, covetousness—these are weights that the Christian must lay aside if he would run successfully the race for immortality. Every habit or practice that leads into sin and brings dishonor upon Christ must be put away, whatever the sacrifice. . . .

"If thy hand cause thee to stumble," the Saviour said, "Cut it off: it is good for thee to enter into life maimed, rather than having thy two hands to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire. And if thy foot cause thee to stumble, cut it off: it is good for thee to enter into life halt, rather than having thy two feet to be cast into hell." Mark 9:43–45, R.V. If to save the body from death, the foot or the hand should be cut off, or even the eye plucked out, how much more earnest should the Christian be to put away sin, which brings death to the soul!—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 312.

God does not regard all sins as of equal magnitude; there are degrees of guilt in His estimation as well as in that of finite man. But however trifling this or that wrong in their course may seem in the eyes of men, no sin is small in the sight of God. The sins which man is disposed to look upon as small may be the very ones which God accounts as great crimes. The drunkard is despised and is told that his sin will exclude him from heaven, while pride, selfishness, and covetousness go unrebuked. But these are sins that are

especially offensive to God.—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 337.

It is beyond the power of the human mind to estimate the evil which has been wrought by the heresy of eternal torment. The religion of the Bible, full of love and goodness, and abounding in compassion, is darkened by superstition and clothed with terror. When we consider in what false colors Satan has painted the character of God, can we wonder that our merciful Creator is feared, dreaded, and even hated? The appalling views of God which have spread over the world from the teachings of the pulpit have made thousands, yes, millions, of skeptics and infidels.

The theory of eternal torment is one of the false doctrines that constitute the wine of the abominations of Babylon, of which she makes all nations drink. Revelation 14:8; 17:2. That ministers of Christ should have accepted this heresy and proclaimed it from the sacred desk, is indeed a mystery. . . . If we turn from the testimony of God's word, and accept false doctrines because our fathers taught them, we fall under the condemnation pronounced upon Babylon; we are drinking of the wine of her abominations.—*The Great Controversy*, p. 536.

Friday, August 16: For Further Reading

Counsels on Stewardship, "The Task Before Us," p. 44;
The Desire of Ages, "Who Is the Greatest?" pp. 432–442.

Lesson 8

Teaching Disciples, Part 2

Sabbath Afternoon, August 17

What a wonderful reverence for human life Jesus expressed in His life mission! He stood not among the people as a king, demanding attention, reverence, service, but as one who wished to serve, to uplift humanity. He said He had not come to be ministered unto but to minister. . . . Wherever Christ saw a human being, He saw one who needed human sympathy. Many of us are willing to serve particular ones—those whom we honor—but the very ones to whom Christ would make us a blessing if we were not so cold-hearted, so unkind and selfish, we pass by as unworthy of our notice. . . .

“Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.” Ephesians 5:1, 2. This is the height of the love we are required to reach. And the texture of this love is not tainted with selfishness.—*Our High Calling*, p. 176.

Christ gave His disciples a most important lesson in regard to who should be His disciples. “In the kingdom that I am about to set up,” He said, “strife for the supremacy shall have no place. All ye are brethren. All My servants there shall be equal. The only greatness recognized there will be the greatness of humility and devotion to the service of others. He that humbleth himself shall be exalted, and he that exalteth himself shall be abased. He who seeks to serve others by self-denial and self-sacrifice will be given the attributes of character that commend themselves to God, and develop wisdom, true patience, forbearance, kindness, compassion. This gives him the chiefest place in the kingdom of God.”

The Son of man humbled Himself to become the servant of God. He submitted to abasement and self-sacrifice, even to death, to give freedom and life, and a place in His kingdom to those who believe on Him. He gave His life as a ransom for many. This should be enough to make those who are continually seeking to be first and striving for the supremacy, ashamed of their course.—*This Day With God*, p. 356.

Those who believe in Christ and walk humbly with Him, . . . who watch to see what they can do to help and bless and strengthen the souls of others, cooperate with the angels who minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation. Jesus gives them grace and wisdom and righteousness, making them a blessing to all with whom they are brought in contact. The more humble they are in their own estimation, the more blessings they receive from God, because receiving does not exalt them. They make a right use of their blessings, for they receive to impart.

The ministering angels receive instruction from the throne of God to cooperate with human instrumentalities. They receive the grace of Christ, to give it to human beings.—Manuscript 165, December 13, 1898, “Unity a Test of Discipleship.”

Sunday, August 18: God’s Plan for Marriage

When the Pharisees afterward questioned Him concerning the lawfulness of divorce, Jesus pointed His hearers back to the marriage institution as ordained at creation. “Because of the hardness of your hearts,” He said, Moses “suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.” Matthew 19:8. He referred them to the blessed days of Eden, when God pronounced all things “very good.” Then marriage and the Sabbath had their origin, twin institutions for the glory of God in the benefit of humanity. Then, as the Creator joined the hands of the holy pair in wedlock, saying, A man shall “leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one” (Genesis 2:24), He enunciated the law of marriage for all the children of Adam to the close of time. That which the eternal Father Himself had pronounced good was the law of highest blessing and development for man.—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 63.

Jesus came to our world to rectify mistakes and to restore the moral image of God in man. Wrong sentiments in regard to marriage had found a place in the minds of the teachers of Israel. They were making of none effect the sacred institution of marriage. Man was becoming so hardhearted that he would for the most trivial excuse separate from his wife, or, if he chose, he would separate her from the children and send her away. This was considered a great disgrace and was often accompanied by the most acute suffering on

the part of the discarded one.

Christ came to correct these evils, and His first miracle was wrought on the occasion of the marriage. Thus He announced to the world that marriage when kept pure and undefiled is a sacred institution.—*The Adventist Home*, p. 341.

God Himself gave Adam a companion. He provided “an help meet for him”—a helper corresponding to him—one who was fitted to be his companion, and who could be one with him in love and sympathy. Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him. A part of man, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, she was his second self, showing the close union and the affectionate attachment that should exist in this relation. . . .

God celebrated the first marriage. Thus the institution has for its originator the Creator of the universe. “Marriage is honorable” (Hebrews 13:4); it was one of the first gifts of God to man, and it is one of the two institutions that, after the Fall, Adam brought with him beyond the gates of Paradise. When the divine principles are recognized and obeyed in this relation, marriage is a blessing; it guards the purity and happiness of the race, it provides for man’s social needs, it elevates the physical, the intellectual, and the moral nature. —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 46.

Monday, August 19: Jesus and Children

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

As the mothers passed along the dusty road and drew near the Saviour, He saw the unbidden tear and the quivering lip, as they offered a silent prayer in behalf of the children. He heard the words of rebuke from the disciples and promptly countermanded the order. His great heart of love was open to receive the children. One after another, He took them in His arms and blessed them, while one little child lay fast asleep, reclining against His bosom. Jesus

spoke words of encouragement to the mothers in reference to their work, and, oh, what a relief was thus brought to their minds! With what joy they dwelt upon the goodness and mercy of Jesus, as they looked back to that memorable occasion! His gracious words had removed the burden from their hearts and inspired them with fresh hope and courage. All sense of weariness was gone.—*The Adventist Home*, p. 273.

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. . . . 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.—*The Review and Herald*, March 24, 1896.

Let mothers come to Jesus with their perplexities. They will find grace sufficient to aid them in the management of their children. The gates are open for every mother who would lay her burdens at the Saviour’s feet. . . . [He] still invites the mothers to lead up their little ones to be blessed by Him. Even the babe in its mother’s arms may dwell as under the shadow of the Almighty through the faith of the praying mother. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his birth. If we will live in communion with God, we too may expect the divine Spirit to mold our little ones, even from their earliest moments.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 512.

These little ones, by coming to Christ and receiving His advice and benediction, had His image and His gracious words stamped upon their plastic minds, never to be effaced. We should learn a lesson from this act of Christ, that the hearts of the young are most susceptible to the teachings of Christianity, easy to influence toward piety and virtue, and strong to retain the impressions received.—*The Adventist Home*, p. 275.

Tuesday, August 20: The Best Investment

Don’t you know that when the young man came to Christ and asked Him

what he should do that he might have life, Christ told him to keep the commandments. Said he, "I have done it." Now the Lord wanted to bring this lesson right home. "What lack I yet? I am perfectly whole" (Matthew 19:20). He did not see that there was a thing the matter with him or why he should not have eternal life. "I have done it," he said. Now Christ touches the plague spot of his heart. He says, "Come, follow Me, and ye shall have life."

What did he do? He turned away very sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Now he had not kept the commandments at all. He should have accepted Jesus Christ as his Saviour and taken hold of His righteousness. Then, as he had the righteousness of Christ, he could keep the law of God. The young ruler could not trample that law under his feet. He must respect it; he must love it. Then Christ would bring divine power to combine with man's efforts. —*Faith and Works*, p. 70.

The truth of God's free grace had been almost lost sight of by the Jews. The rabbis taught that God's favor must be earned. The reward of the righteous they hoped to gain by their own works. Thus their worship was prompted by a grasping, mercenary spirit. From this spirit even the disciples of Christ were not wholly free, and the Saviour sought every opportunity of showing them their error. . . .

In unmistakable language He presents obedience to [the law] as the condition of eternal life—the same condition that was required of Adam before his fall. The Lord expects no less of the soul now than He expected of man in Paradise, perfect obedience, unblemished righteousness. The requirement under the covenant of grace is just as broad as the requirement made in Eden—harmony with God's law, which is holy, just, and good.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 390, 391.

The lover of self is a transgressor of the law. This Jesus desired to reveal to the young man, and He gave him a test that would make manifest the selfishness of his heart. . . . [But the] young man desired no further enlightenment. He had cherished an idol in the soul; the world was his god. He professed to have kept the commandments, but he was destitute of the principle which is the very spirit and life of them all. He did not possess true love for God or man. This want was the want of everything that would qualify him to enter the kingdom of heaven. In his love of self and worldly

gain he was out of harmony with the principles of heaven.

When this young ruler came to Jesus, his sincerity and earnestness won the Saviour's heart. He "beholding him loved him." In this young man He saw one who might do service as a preacher of righteousness. He would have received this talented and noble youth as readily as He received the poor fishermen who followed Him.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 392.

Wednesday, August 21: Can You Drink My Cup?

In His life and lessons Christ has given a perfect exemplification of the unselfish ministry which has its origin in God. God does not live for Himself. By creating the world, and by upholding all things, He is constantly ministering to others. "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Matthew 5:45. This ideal of ministry the Father committed to His Son. Jesus was given to stand at the head of humanity, by His example to teach what it means to minister. His whole life was under a law of service. He served all, ministered to all.

Again and again Jesus tried to establish his principle among His disciples. When James and John made their request for pre-eminence, He said, "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." Matthew 20:26–28.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 359.

James and John presented by their mother a petition requesting that they might be permitted to occupy the highest positions of honor in Christ's kingdom. The Saviour answered, "Ye know not what ye ask" (Mark 10:38). . . . Jesus knew the infinite sacrifice at which that glory must be purchased, when He, "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame" (Hebrews 12:2). That joy was to see souls saved by His humiliation, His agony, and the shedding of His blood. . . .

Jesus asked them, "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto him, We can" (Mark 10:38, 39).

How little did they comprehend what that baptism signified! "Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the

baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: but to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give” (verses 39, 40).—*The Sanctified Life*, pp. 56, 57.

[The Lord] makes the humble, trustful servant His representative—the one who will not lift himself up and think of himself more highly than he ought to think. The life of such a one will be dedicated to God as a living sacrifice, and that life He will accept and use and sustain. He longs to make men wise with His own wisdom, that that wisdom may be exercised in His own behalf. He manifests Himself through the consecrated humble worker. . . .

Carry every entrusted capability as a sacred treasure, to be used in imparting to others the knowledge and grace received. In this you will answer the purpose for which God gave them. The Lord requires us to sink self in Jesus Christ, and let the glory be all of God.—*That I May Know Him*, p. 88.

Thursday, August 22: “What Do You Want Me to Do for You?”

Blind Bartimeus is waiting by the wayside; he has waited long to meet Christ.

Throngs of people who possess their sight are passing to and fro, but they have no desire to see Jesus. One look of faith would touch His heart of love, and bring them the blessings of His grace; but they know not the sickness and poverty of their souls, and they feel no need of Christ. Not so with the poor blind man. His only hope is in Jesus. As he waits and watches, he hears the tread of many feet, and he eagerly inquires, What means this noise of travel? The by-standers answer that “Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.” With the eagerness of intense desire, he cries, “Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me!” They try to silence him, but he cries the more vehemently, “Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!” This appeal is heard. His persevering faith is rewarded. Not only is physical sight restored, but the eyes of his understanding are opened. In Christ he sees his Redeemer, and the Sun of Righteousness shines into his soul. All who feel their need of Christ as did blind Bartimeus, and who will be as earnest and determined as he was, will, like him, receive the blessing which they crave.—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 126.

As the branch must abide in the vine to obtain the vital sap which causes it to flourish, so those who love God and keep all His sayings must abide in His love. Without Christ we cannot subdue a single sin or overcome the smallest temptation. Many need the Spirit of Christ and His power to enlighten their understanding, as much as blind Bartimaeus needed his natural sight. “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me.” All who are really in Christ will experience the benefit of this union. The Father accepts them in the Beloved, and they become objects of His solicitude and tender, loving care. This connection with Christ will result in the purification of the heart and in a circumspect life and faultless character. The fruit borne upon the Christian tree is “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 355.

It is not enough to perceive the loving-kindness of God, to see the benevolence, the fatherly tenderness, of His character. It is not enough to discern the wisdom and justice of His law, to see that it is founded upon the eternal principle of love. . . . [Paul the apostle] longed for the purity, the righteousness, to which in himself he was powerless to attain, and cried out, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?” Romans 7:24, margin. Such is the cry that has gone up from burdened hearts in all lands and in all ages. To all, there is but one answer, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” John 1:29.—*Steps to Christ*, p. 19.

Friday, August 23: For Further Reading

Lift Him Up, “An Obedient Son to Earthly Parents,” p. 32;
The Desire of Ages, “ ‘One Thing Thou Lackest,’ ” pp. 518–523.

Lesson 9

Jerusalem Controversies

Sabbath Afternoon, August 24

The time of the Passover was drawing near, and again Jesus turned toward Jerusalem. In His heart was the peace of perfect oneness with the Father's will, and with eager steps He pressed on toward the place of sacrifice. But a sense of mystery, of doubt and fear, fell upon the disciples. The Saviour "went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid."

Again Christ called the twelve about Him, and with greater definiteness than ever before, He opened to them His betrayal and sufferings. "Behold," He said, "we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death: and the third day He shall rise again. And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 547.

Jesus did not suppress one word of truth, but He uttered it always in love. He exercised the greatest tact and thoughtful, kind attention in His relationships with the people. He was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, never gave needless pain to a sensitive soul. He did not censure human weakness. He spoke the truth, but always in love. He denounced hypocrisy, unbelief, and iniquity; but tears were in His voice as He uttered His scathing rebukes. He wept over Jerusalem, the city He loved, which refused to receive Him, the way, the truth, and the life. They had rejected Him, the Saviour, but He regarded them with pitying tenderness. His life was one of self-denial and thoughtful care for others. Every soul was precious in His eyes. While He ever bore Himself with divine dignity, He bowed with the tenderest regard to every member of the family of God. In all men He saw

fallen souls whom it was His mission to save.

Such is the character of Christ as revealed in His life. This is the character of God. It is from the Father's heart that the streams of divine compassion, manifest in Christ, flow out to the children of men. Jesus, the tender, pitying Saviour, was God "manifest in the flesh." 1 Timothy 3:16.—*Steps to Christ*, p. 12.

During His ministry [Christ] was continually pursued by crafty and hypocritical men who were seeking His life. Spies were on His track, watching His words, to find some occasion against Him. The keenest and most highly cultured minds of the nation sought to defeat Him in controversy. But never could they gain an advantage. They had to retire from the field, confounded and put to shame by the lowly Teacher from Galilee. Christ's teaching had a freshness and a power such as men had never before known. Even His enemies were forced to confess, "Never man spake like this Man." John 7:46.—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 51.

Sunday, August 25: The Triumphal Entry

It was on the first day of the week that Christ made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Multitudes who had flocked to see Him at Bethany now accompanied Him, eager to witness His reception. Many people were on their way to the city to keep the Passover, and these joined the multitude attending Jesus. All nature seemed to rejoice. The trees were clothed with verdure, and their blossoms shed a delicate fragrance on the air. A new life and joy animated the people. The hope of the new kingdom was again springing up.

Purposing to ride into Jerusalem, Jesus had sent two of His disciples to bring to Him an ass and its colt. . . . Jesus chose for His use the colt on which never man had sat. The disciples, with glad enthusiasm, spread their garments on the beast, and seated their Master upon it. Heretofore Jesus had always traveled on foot, and the disciples had at first wondered that He should now choose to ride. But hope brightened in their hearts with the joyous thought that He was about to enter the capital, proclaim Himself King, and assert His royal power. While on their errand they communicated their glowing expectations to the friends of Jesus, and the excitement spread far and near, raising the expectations of the people to the highest pitch.—*The Desire of*

Ages, p. 569.

Christ was following the Jewish custom for a royal entry. The animal on which He rode was that ridden by the kings of Israel, and prophecy had foretold that thus the Messiah should come to His kingdom. No sooner was He seated upon the colt than a loud shout of triumph rent the air. The multitude hailed Him as Messiah, their King. Jesus now accepted the homage which He had never before permitted, and the disciples received this as proof that their glad hopes were to be realized by seeing Him established on the throne. The multitude were convinced that the hour of their emancipation was at hand. In imagination they saw the Roman armies driven from Jerusalem, and Israel once more an independent nation. All were happy and excited; the people vied with one another in paying Him homage. . . . They were unable to present Him with costly gifts, but they spread their outer garments as a carpet in His path. . . . They could lead the triumphal procession with no royal standards, but they cut down the spreading palm boughs, Nature's emblem of victory, and waved them aloft with loud acclamations and hosannas.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 570.

It was the marvel of all the universe that Christ should humble Himself to save fallen man. That He who had passed from star to star, from world to world, superintending all, by His providence supplying the needs of every order of being in His vast creation—that He should consent to leave His glory and take upon Himself human nature, was a mystery which the sinless intelligences of other worlds desired to understand.—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 69.

Monday, August 26: A Cursed Tree and a Cleansed Temple

At the close of His mission [Christ] came again to the temple, and found it still desecrated as before. . . . The dignitaries of the temple were themselves engaged in buying and selling and the exchange of money. So completely were they controlled by their greed of gain that in the sight of God they were no better than thieves. . . .

Again the piercing look of Jesus swept over the desecrated court of the

temple. All eyes were turned toward Him. Priest and ruler, Pharisee and Gentile, looked with astonishment and awe upon Him who stood before them with the majesty of heaven's King. . . . Christ spoke with a power that swayed the people like a mighty tempest: "It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves." . . .

There were none who dared question His authority. Priests and traders fled from His presence, driving their cattle before them.—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 589–591.

It is the nature of the fig tree that before the leaves open, the growing fruit appears. Therefore this tree in full leaf gave promise of well-developed fruit. But its appearance was deceptive. Upon searching its branches, from the lowest bough to the topmost twig, Jesus found "nothing but leaves." It was a mass of pretentious foliage, nothing more.

Christ uttered against it a withering curse. . . . The next morning, as the Saviour and His disciples were again on their way to the city, the blasted branches and drooping leaves attracted their attention. "Master," said Peter, "behold, the fig tree which Thou cursedst is withered away."

Christ's act in cursing the fig tree had astonished the disciples. It seemed to them unlike His ways and works. Often they had heard Him declare that He came not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. They remembered His words, "The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." Luke 9:56. His wonderful works had been done to restore, never to destroy. The disciples had known Him only as the Restorer, the Healer. This act stood alone. What was its purpose? they questioned.—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 581, 582.

The reason why our people have not more power is that they profess the truth, but do not practice it. They have but little faith and trust in God. . . . If the mind were stayed upon God and the truth exerted a sanctifying influence upon the heart, self would be hid in Christ. . . .

[Many] have the theory of the truth, but do not feel its power in the soul. The barren fig tree flaunted its pretentious branches in the face of heaven; but when the search for fruit was made by the Redeemer, lo, there was nothing but leaves. Unless there is a thorough work wrought for you as individuals and as a church, the curse of God will as surely come upon you as it fell upon that fruitless tree.—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 613, 614.

Tuesday, August 27: Who Said You Could Do That?

The priests saw that they were in a dilemma from which no sophistry could extricate them. . . . If [they] believed John's testimony, how could they deny the Messiahship of Christ? If they declared their real belief, that John's ministry was of men, they would bring upon themselves a storm of indignation; for the people believed John to be a prophet.

With intense interest the multitude awaited the decision. They knew that the priests had professed to accept the ministry of John, and they expected them to acknowledge without a question that he was sent from God. But after conferring secretly together, the priests decided not to commit themselves. Hypocritically professing ignorance, they said, "We cannot tell." "Neither tell I you," said Christ, "by what authority I do these things."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 593, 594.

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

. . .

Many of those who had anxiously awaited the result of the questioning of Jesus were finally to become His disciples, first drawn toward Him by His words on that eventful day. The scene in the temple court was never to fade from their minds. The contrast between Jesus and the high priest as they talked together was marked. The proud dignitary of the temple was clothed in rich and costly garments. . . . Before this august personage stood the Majesty of heaven, without adornment or display. His garments were travel stained; His face was pale, and expressed a patient sadness; yet written there were dignity and benevolence that contrasted strangely with the proud, self-confident, and angry air of the high priest. Many of those who witnessed the words and deeds of Jesus in the temple from that time enshrined Him in their hearts as a prophet of God.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 594.

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

Wednesday, August 28: Earthly Duties and Heavenly Outcomes

Human theories and speculations will never lead to an understanding to God’s word. Those who suppose that they understand philosophy think that their explanations are necessary to unlock the treasures of knowledge and to prevent heresies from coming into the church. But it is these explanations that have brought in false theories and heresies. . . .

The priests and Pharisees thought they were doing great things as teachers by putting their own interpretation upon the word of God, but Christ said of them, “Ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God.” Mark 12:24. He charged them with the guilt of “teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” Mark 7:7. Though they were the teachers of the oracles of God, though they were supposed to understand His word, they were not doers of the word. Satan had blinded their eyes that they should not see its true import.—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 110.

All Christ’s miracles were wrought to bless those whom these leading Jews neglected and despised, and refused to help. And He was beloved [by the common people] because He was the Restorer, the Great Physician. All His graces were light from heaven. In every good work He sought to lead them to accept Him as their personal Saviour. His life was fragrant, a savor of life unto life. He brought sunshine into the heart and home. They came to Him mourning, and left Him with songs of praise and glad rejoicing. He offered Himself to them that they might give Him a home in their hearts.

And yet they [the Jewish leaders] would not receive Him. While they

claimed to keep the law, they denied it by their works. Having eyes they saw not, because of the ignorance that was in them through the hardness of their hearts. The impurity of their hearts, the defiling practices of their lives, their selfishness, their envy, their jealousy, their evil surmising, their transgression of the law of God, while they claimed to keep it, bore continual testimony as to their character. By the fruit the tree was known. Christ laid bare their true character.—*This Day With God*, p. 275.

Nowhere in the Sacred Scriptures is found the statement that the righteous go to their reward or the wicked to their punishment at death. The patriarchs and prophets have left no such assurance. Christ and His apostles have given no hint of it. The Bible clearly teaches that the dead do not go immediately to heaven. They are represented as sleeping until the resurrection. 1 Thessalonians 4:14; Job 14:10–12. In the very day when the silver cord is loosed and the golden bowl broken (Ecclesiastes 12:6), man's thoughts perish. They that go down to the grave are in silence. They know no more of anything that is done under the sun. Job 14:21. Blessed rest for the weary righteous! Time, be it long or short, is but a moment to them. They sleep; they are awakened by the trump of God to a glorious immortality.—*The Great Controversy*, p. 549.

Thursday, August 29: The Greatest Commandment

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

“Well, Master, Thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but He: and to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

The wisdom of Christ's answer had convicted the scribe. He knew that the Jewish religion consisted in outward ceremonies rather than inward piety. He had some sense of the worthlessness of mere ceremonial offerings, and the

faithless shedding of blood for expiation of sin. Love and obedience to God, and unselfish regard for man, appeared to him of more value than all these rites. The readiness of this man to acknowledge the correctness of Christ's reasoning, and his decided and prompt response before the people, manifested a spirit entirely different from that of the priests and rulers. The heart of Jesus went out in pity to the honest scribe who had dared to face the frowns of the priests and the threats of the rulers to speak the convictions of his heart. "And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, He said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 607, 608.

The commandments of God are comprehensive and far reaching; in a few words they unfold the whole duty of man. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. . . . Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Mark 12:30, 31). In these words the length and breadth, the depth and height, of the law of God is comprehended; for Paul declares, "Love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:10). The only definition we find in the Bible for sin is that "sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). . . . Many are deceived concerning the condition of their hearts. They do not realize that the natural heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. They wrap themselves about with their own righteousness, and are satisfied in reaching their own human standard of character; but how fatally they fail when they do not reach the divine standard, and of themselves they cannot meet the requirements of God.

We may measure ourselves by ourselves, we may compare ourselves among ourselves, we may say we do as well as this one or that one, but the question to which the judgment will call for an answer is, Do we meet the claims of high heaven? Do we reach the divine standard? Are our hearts in harmony with the God of heaven?—*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 320, 321.

Friday, August 30: For Further Reading

This Day With God, "Heart Holiness," p. 146;
The Desire of Ages, "Controversy," pp. 601–609.

Lesson 10

The Last Days

Sabbath Afternoon, August 31

[The disciples] also, misled by the teaching of the rabbis, shared the popular expectation of an earthly kingdom. They could not comprehend the movements of Jesus. . . . [T]hey had been perplexed and troubled that He made no effort to strengthen His cause by securing the support of the priests and rabbis, that He did nothing to establish His authority as an earthly king. A great work was yet to be accomplished for these disciples before they would be prepared for the sacred trust that would be theirs when Jesus should ascend to heaven. Yet they had responded to the love of Christ, and, though slow of heart to believe, Jesus saw in them those whom He could train and discipline for His great work. And now that they had been long enough with Him to establish, in a measure, their faith in the divine character of His mission . . . the way was prepared for an avowal of the principles of His kingdom that would help them to comprehend its true nature.—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 3.

Acts of generosity and benevolence were designed by God to keep the hearts of the children of men tender and sympathetic and to encourage in them an interest and affection for one another in imitation of the Master, who for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich. The law of tithing was founded upon an enduring principle and was designed to be a blessing to man.—*Reflecting Christ*, p. 270.

It is the motive that gives character to our acts, stamping them with ignominy or with high moral worth. Not the great things which every eye sees and every tongue praises does God account most precious. The little duties cheerfully done, the little gifts which make no show, and which to human eyes may appear worthless, often stand highest in His sight. A heart of faith and love is dearer to God than the most costly gift. . . . It was this

unselfish spirit and childlike faith that won the Saviour's commendation.
—*Lift Him Up*, p. 88.

Who can question that we are living in perilous times? When Christ portrayed the destruction of Jerusalem, He looked down the ages and included in His description the still more awful destruction of the world. And He declares, "As the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matthew 24:37–39). . . .

In His teaching Christ has given lessons of great value in regard to the last days. O that men and women would learn their danger before it is everlastingly too late!—*The Publishing Ministry*, pp. 280, 281.

Sunday, September 1: Two Little Coins in the Offerings

The poor widow who cast two mites into the treasury of the Lord showed love, faith, and benevolence. She gave all that she had, trusting to God's care for the uncertain future. Her little gift was pronounced by our Saviour the greatest that day cast into the treasury. Its value was measured, not by the worth of the coin, but by the purity of the motive which prompted her.

God's blessing upon that sincere offering has made it the source of great results. The widow's mite has been like a tiny stream flowing down through the ages, widening and deepening in its course, and contributing in a thousand directions to the extension of the truth and the relief of the needy.

The influence of that small gift has acted and reacted upon thousands of hearts in every age and in every country. As the result, unnumbered gifts have flowed into the treasury of the Lord from the liberal, self-denying poor. And again, her example has stimulated to good works thousands of ease-loving, selfish, and doubting ones, and their gifts also have gone to swell the value of her offering.—*Reflecting Christ*, p. 268.

The Saviour called His disciples to Him, and bade them mark the widow's poverty. Then His words of commendation fell upon her ear: "Of a truth I say

unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all.” Tears of joy filled her eyes as she felt that her act was understood and appreciated. Many would have advised her to keep her pittance for her own use; given into the hands of the well-fed priests, it would be lost sight of among the many costly gifts brought to the treasury. But Jesus understood her motive. She believed the service of the Temple to be of God’s appointment, and she was anxious to do her utmost to sustain it. She did what she could, and her act was to be a monument to her memory through all time, and her joy in eternity. Her heart went with her gift; its value was estimated, not by the worth of the coin, but by the love to God and the interest in His work that had prompted the deed.—*Lift Him Up*, p. 88.

God designs that the exercise of benevolence shall be purely voluntary, not having recourse even to eloquent appeals to excite sympathy. “God loveth a cheerful giver.” He is not pleased to have His treasury replenished with forced supplies. The loyal hearts of His people, rejoicing in the saving truth for this time, will, through love and gratitude to Him for this precious light, be earnest and anxious to aid with their means in sending the truth to others. The very best manner in which to give expression to our love for our Redeemer is to make offerings to bring souls to the knowledge of the truth. The plan of redemption was entirely voluntary on the part of our Redeemer, and it is the purpose of Christ that all our benevolence should be freewill offerings.—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 413.

Monday, September 2: Not One Stone on Another

The disciples had been filled with awe and wonder at Christ’s prediction of the overthrow of the temple, and they desired to understand more fully the meaning of His words. Wealth, labor, and architectural skill had for more than forty years been freely expended to enhance its splendors. Herod the Great had lavished upon it both Roman wealth and Jewish treasure, and even the emperor of the world had enriched it with his gifts. Massive blocks of white marble, of almost fabulous size, forwarded from Rome for this purpose, formed a part of its structure; and to these the disciples had called the attention of their Master, saying: “See what manner of stones and what buildings are here!” Mark 13:1.

To these words, Jesus made the solemn and startling reply: “Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.” Matthew 24:2.—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 24, 25.

[As the disciples] were gathered about the Saviour upon the Mount of Olives, they asked: “When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?” [Matthew 24:3].

The future was mercifully veiled from the disciples. Had they at that time fully comprehended the two awful facts—the Redeemer’s sufferings and death, and the destruction of their city and temple—they would have been overwhelmed with horror. Christ presented before them an outline of the prominent events to take place before the close of time. His words were not then fully understood; but their meaning was to be unfolded as His people should need the instruction therein given. The prophecy which He uttered was twofold in its meaning; while foreshadowing the destruction of Jerusalem, it prefigured also the terrors of the last great day.—*The Great Controversy*, p. 25.

[Jesus said,] “Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for My name’s sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.” All this the Christians suffered. Fathers and mothers betrayed their children. Children betrayed their parents. Friends delivered their friends up to the Sanhedrin. The persecutors wrought out their purpose by killing Stephen, James, and other Christians.

Through His servants, God gave the Jewish people a last opportunity to repent. He manifested Himself through His witnesses in their arrest, in their trial, and in their imprisonment. Yet their judges pronounced on them the death sentence. They were men of whom the world was not worthy, and by killing them the Jews crucified afresh the Son of God. So it will be again. The authorities will make laws to restrict religious liberty. They will assume the right that is God’s alone. They will think they can force the conscience, which God alone should control. Even now they are making a beginning; this work they will continue to carry forward till they reach a boundary over which they cannot step. God will interpose in behalf of His loyal, commandment-keeping people.—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 629, 630.

Tuesday, September 3: The Abomination of Desolation

Jesus declared to the listening disciples the judgments that were to fall upon apostate Israel, and especially the retributive vengeance that would come upon them for their rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah. Unmistakable signs would precede the awful climax. The dreaded hour would come suddenly and swiftly. And the Saviour warned His followers: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand;) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains." Matthew 24:15, 16; Luke 21:20, 21. When the idolatrous standards of the Romans should be set up in the holy ground, which extended some furlongs outside the city walls, then the followers of Christ were to find safety in flight. When the warning sign should be seen, those who would escape must make no delay. Throughout the land of Judea, as well as in Jerusalem itself, the signal for flight must be immediately obeyed. He who chanced to be upon the housetop must not go down into his house, even to save his most valued treasures. Those who were working in the fields or vineyards must not take time to return for the outer garment laid aside while they should be toiling in the heat of the day. They must not hesitate a moment, lest they be involved in the general destruction.—*The Great Controversy*, p. 25.

Prophets had wept over the apostasy of Israel and the terrible desolations by which their sins were visited. Jeremiah wished that his eyes were a fountain of tears, that he might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of his people, for the Lord's flock that was carried away captive. Jeremiah 9:1; 13:17. What, then, was the grief of Him whose prophetic glance took in, not years, but ages! He beheld the destroying angel with sword uplifted against the city which had so long been Jehovah's dwelling place. From the ridge of Olivet, the very spot afterward occupied by Titus and his army, He looked across the valley upon the sacred courts and porticoes, and with tear-dimmed eyes He saw, in awful perspective, the walls surrounded by alien hosts. He heard the tread of armies marshaling for war. He heard the voice of mothers and children crying for bread in the besieged city. He saw her holy and beautiful house, her palaces and towers, given to

the flames, and where once they stood, only a heap of smoldering ruins.—*The Great Controversy*, p. 21.

We may know that if our life is hid with Christ in God, when we are brought into trial because of our faith, Jesus will be with us. When we are brought before rulers and dignitaries to answer for our faith, the Spirit of the Lord will illuminate our understanding, and we shall be able to bear a testimony to the glory of God. And if we are called to suffer for Christ's sake, we shall be able to go to prison trusting in Him as a little child trusts in its parents. Now is the time to cultivate faith in God.—*Our High Calling*, p. 357.

Wednesday, September 4: The Great Tribulation

The time of trouble such as never was, is soon to open upon us; and we shall need an experience which we do not now possess, and which many are too indolent to obtain. It is often the case that trouble is greater in anticipation than in reality; but this is not true of the crisis before us. The most vivid presentation cannot reach the magnitude of the ordeal. . . .

The wrath of Satan increases as his time grows short, and his work of deceit and destruction reaches its culmination in the time of trouble. . . . Satan will have power over those who have yielded themselves to his control, and he will plunge the inhabitants of the earth into one great, final trouble. As the angels of God cease to hold in check the fierce winds of human passion, all the elements of strife will be let loose. The whole world will be involved in ruin more terrible than that which came upon Jerusalem of old.

In the midst of the time of trouble—trouble such as has not been since there was a nation—His [God's] chosen ones will stand unmoved. Satan with all the hosts of evil cannot destroy the weakest of God's saints.—*Maranatha*, p. 275.

As the condition of the church and the world was opened before me, and I beheld the fearful scenes that lie just before us, I was alarmed at the outlook; and night after night, while all in the house were sleeping, I wrote out the things given me of God. I was shown the heresies which are to arise, the delusions that will prevail, the miracle-working power of Satan—the false Christs that will appear—that will deceive the greater part even of the religious world, and that would, if it were possible, draw away even the elect.

—*Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 114.

From the destruction of Jerusalem, Christ passed on rapidly to the greater event, the last link in the chain of this earth's history,—the coming of the Son of God in majesty and glory. Between these two events, there lay open to Christ's view long centuries of darkness, centuries for His church marked with blood and tears and agony. Upon these scenes His disciples could not then endure to look, and Jesus passed them by with a brief mention. "Then shall be great tribulation," He said, "such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." For more than a thousand years such persecution as the world had never before known was to come upon Christ's followers. Millions upon millions of His faithful witnesses were to be slain. Had not God's hand been stretched out to preserve His people, all would have perished. "But for the elect's sake," He said, "those days shall be shortened."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 630.

Thursday, September 5: The Coming of the Son of Man

He [Jesus] answered and said unto them [the Pharisees], "I tell you that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." A large portion of those who profess to be looking for Christ would be as forward as the Pharisees were to have the disciples silenced, and they would doubtless raise the cry, "Fanaticism! . . ." And the disciples, spreading their garments and branches of palm trees in the way, would be thought extravagant and wild. But God will have a people on the earth who will not be so cold and dead but that they can praise and glorify Him. He will receive glory from some people, and if those of His choice, those who keep His commandments, should hold their peace, the very stones would cry out.—*Early Writings*, p. 109.

Christ is soon coming in the clouds of heaven, and we must be prepared to meet Him, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. We are now to accept the invitation of Christ. He says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour

and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” . . .

The converting power of God must be upon our hearts. We must study the life of Christ, and imitate the divine Pattern. We must dwell upon the perfection of His character, and be changed into His image. No one will enter the kingdom of God unless his will is brought into captivity to the will of Christ.

Heaven is free from all sin, from all defilement and impurity; and if we would live in its atmosphere, if we would behold the glory of Christ, we must be pure in heart, perfect in character through His grace and righteousness.—*Reflecting Christ*, p. 22.

The exact time of Christ’s second coming is not revealed. Jesus said, No man knoweth the day nor the hour. But He also gave signs of His coming, and said, “When ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.” He bade them, as the signs of His coming should appear, “Look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.” . . . Since we know not the hour of Christ’s coming, we must live soberly and godly in this present world, “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” . . .

His people are to preserve their peculiar character as His representatives. There is work for every one of them to do. The rich should bring their means, the honored their influence, the learned their wisdom, the poor their virtue, if they would be effective workers with God. They are to bring themselves into right relation with God, that they may reflect the light of the glory of God that shines in the face of Jesus Christ.—*The Signs of the Times*, June 24, 1889.

Friday, September 6: For Further Reading

Our High Calling, “Sweetness of Self Denial,” p. 99;

The Great Controversy, “The Destruction of Jerusalem,” pp. 17–38.

Lesson 11

Taken and Tried

Sabbath Afternoon, September 7

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” Here is language that expresses His mind toward a corrupt and idolatrous people: “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? . . . Mine heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together.” Must He give up the people for whom such a provision has been made, even His only-begotten Son, the express image of Himself? God permits His Son to be delivered up for our offenses. He Himself assumes toward the Sin Bearer the character of a judge, divesting Himself of the endearing qualities of a father.

Herein His love commends itself in the most marvelous manner to the rebellious race. What a sight for angels to behold! What a hope for man, “that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”! The just suffered for the unjust; He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”—*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 245, 246.

Jesus did not consider heaven a place to be desired while we were lost. He left the heavenly courts for a life of reproach and insult, and a death of shame. He who was rich in heaven’s priceless treasure became poor, that through His poverty we might be rich. We are to follow in the path He trod.

He who becomes a child of God should henceforth look upon himself as a link in the chain let down to save the world, one with Christ in His plan of mercy, going forth with Him to seek and save the lost.

Many feel that it would be a great privilege to visit the scenes of Christ’s life on earth, to walk where He trod, to look upon the lake beside which He loved to teach, and the hills and valleys on which His eyes so often rested. But we need not go to Nazareth, to Capernaum, or to Bethany, in order to

walk in the steps of Jesus. We shall find His footprints beside the sickbed, in the hovels of poverty, in the crowded alleys of the great cities, and in every place where there are human hearts in need of consolation.—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 105.

The life of Christ is to be carefully meditated upon, and to be constantly studied with a desire to understand the reason why He had to come at all. We can only form our conclusions by searching the Scriptures as Christ has enjoined upon us to do, for He says, “They testify of me.” We may find by searching the Word the virtues of obedience in contrast with the sinfulness of disobedience. “As by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”—*Reflecting Christ*, p. 132.

Sunday, September 8: Unforgettable

She [Mary] had heard Jesus speak of His approaching death, and in her deep love and sorrow she had longed to show Him honor. At great personal sacrifice she had purchased an alabaster box of “ointment of spikenard, very costly,” with which to anoint His body. But now many were declaring that He was about to be crowned king. Her grief was turned to joy, and she was eager to be first in honoring her Lord. Breaking her box of ointment, she poured its contents upon the head and feet of Jesus; then, as she knelt weeping, moistening them with her tears, she wiped His feet with her long, flowing hair.

She had sought to avoid observation, and her movements might have passed unnoticed, but the ointment filled the room with its fragrance, and published her act to all present. . . .

The fragrant gift which Mary had thought to lavish upon the dead body of the Saviour she poured upon His living form. At the burial its sweetness could only have pervaded the tomb; now it gladdened His heart with the assurance of her faith and love. . . . And as He went down into the darkness of His great trial, He carried with Him the memory of that deed, an earnest of the love that would be His from His redeemed ones forever.—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 558–560.

Satan had deceived Judas and led him to think that he was one of Christ’s

true disciples; but his heart had ever been carnal. He had seen the mighty works of Jesus, he had been with Him through His ministry, and had yielded to the overpowering evidence that He was the Messiah; but Judas was close and covetous; he loved money. He complained in anger of the costly ointment poured upon Jesus. . . . Judas, as an excuse for his covetousness, urged that the ointment might have been sold and given to the poor. But it was not because he had any care for the poor; for he was selfish, and often appropriated to his own use that which was entrusted to his care to be given unto the poor. Judas had been inattentive to the comfort and even to the wants of Jesus, and to excuse his covetousness he often referred to the poor. This act of generosity on the part of Mary was a most cutting rebuke of his covetous disposition. The way was prepared for Satan's temptation to find a ready reception in the heart of Judas.—*Early Writings*, p. 165.

Judas knew how anxious they [the priests and rulers] were to obtain Jesus and offered to betray Him to the chief priests and elders for a few pieces of silver. His love of money led him to agree to betray his Lord into the hands of His bitterest enemies. Satan was working directly through Judas, and in the midst of the impressive scene of the last supper, the traitor was devising plans to betray his Master.—*Early Writings*, p. 166.

Monday, September 9: The Last Supper

They [the Israelites] were also directed to keep the feast of the passover for an ordinance, that when their children should inquire what such service meant, they should relate to them their wonderful preservation in Egypt. That when the destroying angel went forth in the night to slay the first-born of man, and the first-born of beast, he passed over their houses, and not one of the Hebrews was slain that had the token of blood upon their door-posts. And the people bowed their heads and worshiped, grateful for this remarkable memorial given to preserve to their children the remembrance of God's care for his people. . . .

The passover pointed backward to the deliverance of the children of Israel, and was also typical, pointing forward to Christ, the Lamb of God, slain for the redemption of fallen man. The blood sprinkled upon the door-posts prefigured the atoning blood of Christ, and also the continual dependence of

sinful man upon the merits of that blood for safety from the power of Satan, and for final redemption. Christ ate the passover supper with his disciples just before his crucifixion, and the same night instituted the ordinance of the Lord's supper, to be observed in commemoration of his death.—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, pp. 223, 225.

When Christ on the eve of His betrayal forewarned His disciples, "All ye shall be offended because of Me this night," Peter confidently declared, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I." Mark 14:27, 29. Peter did not know his own danger. Self-confidence misled him. He thought himself able to withstand temptation; but in a few short hours the test came, and with cursing and swearing he denied his Lord.

When the crowing of the cock reminded him of the words of Christ, surprised and shocked at what he had just done he turned and looked at his Master. At that moment Christ looked at Peter, and beneath that grieved look, in which compassion and love for him were blended, Peter understood himself. He went out and wept bitterly. That look of Christ's broke his heart. Peter had come to the turning point, and bitterly did he repent his sin. He was like the publican in his contrition and repentance, and like the publican he found mercy. The look of Christ assured him of pardon.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 152.

Jesus looks with compassion on His disciples. He cannot save them from the trial, but He does not leave them comfortless. He assures them that He is to break the fetters of the tomb, and that His love for them will not fail. "After I am risen again," He says, "I will go before you into Galilee." Matthew 26:32. Before the denial, they have the assurance of forgiveness. After His death and resurrection, they knew that they were forgiven, and were dear to the heart of Christ.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 674.

Tuesday, September 10: Gethsemane

In company with His disciples, the Saviour slowly made His way to the garden of Gethsemane. The Passover moon, broad and full, shone from a cloudless sky. The city of pilgrims' tents was hushed into silence.

Jesus had been earnestly conversing with His disciples and instructing them; but as He neared Gethsemane, He became strangely silent. He had

often visited this spot for meditation and prayer; but never with a heart so full of sorrow as upon this night of His last agony. Throughout His life on earth He had walked in the light of God's presence. . . . But now He seemed to be shut out from the light of God's sustaining presence. Now He was numbered with the transgressors. . . . Feeling how terrible is the wrath of God against transgression, He exclaims, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 685.

In this awful crisis, when everything was at stake, when the mysterious cup trembled in the hand of the sufferer, the heavens opened, a light shone forth amid the stormy darkness of the crisis hour, and the mighty angel who stands in God's presence, occupying the position from which Satan fell, came to the side of Christ. The angel came not to take the cup from Christ's hand, but to strengthen Him to drink it, with the assurance of the Father's love. He came to give power to the divine-human suppliant. He pointed Him to the open heavens, telling Him of the souls that would be saved as the result of His sufferings. He assured Him that His Father is greater and more powerful than Satan, that His death would result in the utter discomfiture of Satan, and that the kingdom of this world would be given to the saints of the Most High. He told Him that He would see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied, for He would see a multitude of the human race saved, eternally saved.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 693.

We cannot have a weak faith now; we cannot be safe in a listless, indolent, slothful attitude. Every jot of ability is to be used, and sharp, calm, deep thinking is to be done. The wisdom of any human agent is not sufficient for the planning and devising in this time. Spread every plan before God with fasting, [and] with the humbling of the soul before the Lord Jesus, and commit thy ways unto the Lord. The sure promise is, He will direct thy paths. He is infinite in resources. The Holy One of Israel, who calls the host of heaven by name, and holds the stars of heaven in position, has you individually in His keeping. . . .

I would that all could realize what possibilities and probabilities there are for all who make Christ their sufficiency and their trust. The life hid with Christ in God ever has a refuge; he can say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).—*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 364.

Wednesday, September 11: Leaving All to Flee From Jesus

The disciples were terrified as they saw Jesus permit Himself to be taken and bound. They were offended that He should suffer this humiliation to Himself and them. They could not understand His conduct, and they blamed Him for submitting to the mob. In their indignation and fear, Peter proposed that they save themselves. Following this suggestion, “they all forsook Him, and fled.” But Christ had foretold this desertion, “Behold,” He had said, “the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.” John 16:32.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 697.

Jesus was left alone in the hands of the murderous mob. Oh, what a triumph of Satan then! And what sadness and sorrow with the angels of God! Many companies of holy angels, each with a tall commanding angel at their head, were sent to witness the scene. They were to record every insult and cruelty imposed upon the Son of God, and to register every pang of anguish which Jesus should suffer; for the very men who joined in this dreadful scene are to see it all again in living characters.—*Early Writings*, p. 168.

As the high priest sprinkled the warm blood upon the mercy seat, while the fragrant cloud of incense ascended before God, so while we confess our sins and plead the efficacy of Christ’s atoning blood, our prayers are to ascend to heaven, fragrant with the merits of our Saviour’s character. Notwithstanding our unworthiness, we are ever to bear in mind that there is One that can take away sin and save the sinner. Every sin acknowledged before God with a contrite heart, He will remove. This faith is the life of the church. As the serpent was lifted up in the wilderness by Moses, and all that had been bitten by the fiery serpents were bidden to look and live, so also the Son of man must be lifted up, that “whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Unless he makes it his life business to behold the uplifted Saviour, and by faith to accept the merits which it is his privilege to claim, the sinner can no more be saved than Peter could walk upon the water unless he kept his eyes fixed steadily upon Jesus.—*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*,

pp. 92, 93.

Thursday, September 12: Who Are You?

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

Jesus stood meek and humble before the infuriated multitude, while they offered Him the vilest abuse. They spit in His face—that face from which they will one day desire to hide, which will give light to the city of God and shine brighter than the sun. Christ did not cast upon the offenders an angry look. They covered His head with an old garment, blindfolding Him, and then struck Him in the face and cried out, "Prophecy, who is it that smote Thee?" There was commotion among the angels. They would have rescued Him instantly; but their commanding angels restrained them.—*Early Writings*, p. 170.

I am glad indeed that our feelings are no evidence that we are not children of God. The enemy will tempt you to think that you have done things that have separated you from God and that He no longer loves you, but our Lord loves us still, and we may know by the words He has placed on record for just such cases as yours. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1). "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). . . .

God loves you; and the precious Saviour, who gave Himself for you, will not thrust you from Him because you are tempted and in your weakness may have been overcome. He loves you still.

Peter denied his Lord in the hour of trial, but Jesus did not forsake His poor disciple. Although Peter hated himself, the Lord loved him, and after His resurrection He called him by name and sent him a loving message. O what a kind, loving, compassionate Saviour we have! And He loves us though we err.—*That I May Know Him*, p. 285.

Now do not worry yourself out of the arms of the dear Saviour, but rest trustingly in faith. He loves you; He cares for you. He is blessing you and will give you His peace and grace. He is saying to you, “Thy sins be forgiven you.” You may be depressed with bodily infirmities, but that is not evidence that the Lord is not working in your behalf every day. He will pardon you, and that abundantly. Gather to your soul the sweet promises of God. Jesus is our constant, unfailing friend, and He wants you to trust in Him. . . .

Look away from yourself to the perfection of Christ.—Letter 49, 1896.

Friday, September 13: For Further Reading

Our High Calling, “Beware of Self-Confidence,” p. 307;
The Desire of Ages, “Judas,” pp. 716–722.

Lesson 12

Tried and Crucified

Sabbath Afternoon, September 14

As soon as it was day, the Sanhedrin again assembled, and again Jesus was brought into the council room. He had declared Himself the Son of God, and they had construed His words into a charge against Him. But they could not condemn Him on this, for many of them had not been present at the night session, and they had not heard His words. And they knew that the Roman tribunal would find in them nothing worthy of death. But if from His own lips they could all hear those words repeated, their object might be gained. His claim to the Messiahship they might construe into a seditious political claim.

“Art Thou the Christ?” they said, “tell us.” But Christ remained silent. They continued to ply Him with questions. At last in tones of mournful pathos He answered, “If I tell you, ye will not believe; and if I also ask you, ye will not answer Me, nor let Me go.” But that they might be left without excuse He added the solemn warning, “Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 714.

Priests and rulers forgot the dignity of their office, and abused the Son of God with foul epithets. They taunted Him with His parentage. They declared that His presumption in proclaiming Himself the Messiah made Him deserving of the most ignominious death. The most dissolute men engaged in infamous abuse of the Saviour. An old garment was thrown over His head, and His persecutors struck Him in the face, saying, “Prophecy unto us, Thou Christ, Who is he that smote Thee?” When the garment was removed, one poor wretch spat in His face.

The angels of God faithfully recorded every insulting look, word, and act against their beloved Commander. One day the base men who scorned and spat upon the calm, pale face of Christ will look upon it in its glory, shining brighter than the sun.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 715.

As man's substitute and surety, the iniquity of men was laid upon Christ; He was counted a transgressor that He might redeem them from the curse of the law. The guilt of every descendant of Adam of every age was pressing upon His heart; and the wrath of God and the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man.—*The Story of Redemption*, p. 225.

Sunday, September 15: “Are You the King of the Jews?”

Jesus had many sympathizers in the company about Him, and His answering nothing to the many questions put to Him amazed the throng. Under all the mockery and violence of the mob, not a frown, not a troubled expression, rested upon His features. He was dignified and composed. The spectators looked upon Him with wonder. They compared His perfect form and firm, dignified bearing with the appearance of those who sat in judgment against Him, and said to one another that He appeared more like a king than any of the rulers. He bore no marks of being a criminal. His eye was mild, clear, and undaunted, His forehead broad and high. Every feature was strongly marked with benevolence and noble principle. His patience and forbearance were so unlike man that many trembled. Even Herod and Pilate were greatly troubled at His noble, Godlike bearing.—*The Story of Redemption*, p. 216.

From the first, Pilate was convinced that Jesus was no common man. He believed Him to be an excellent character and entirely innocent of the charges brought against Him. The angels who were witnessing the scene marked the convictions of the Roman governor, and to save him from engaging in the awful act of delivering Christ to be crucified, an angel was sent to Pilate's wife, and gave her information through a dream that it was the Son of God in whose trial her husband was engaged, and that He was an innocent sufferer. She immediately sent a message to Pilate, stating that she had suffered many things in a dream on account of Jesus and warning him to have nothing to do with that holy Man. The messenger, pressing hastily through the crowd,

placed the letter in the hands of Pilate. As he read, he trembled and turned pale, and at once determined to have nothing to do with putting Christ to death. If the Jews would have the blood of Jesus, he would not give his influence to it, but would labor to deliver Him.—*The Story of Redemption*, p. 217.

Jesus lived not to please Himself. He gave Himself as a living, consuming sacrifice for the good of others. . . . Those who receive Christ will drop out all that is uncourteous, harsh, and rough, and will reveal the pleasantness, the kindness, that dwelt in Jesus, because Christ abides in the heart by faith. Christ was the light that shineth in darkness, and His followers are also to be the light of the world. . . .

Christ is our model, but unless we behold Him, unless we contemplate His character, we shall not reflect His character in our practical life. He was meek and lowly in heart. He never did a rude action, never spoke a discourteous word. The Lord is not pleased with our blunt, hard, unsympathetic ways toward others. . . . We are to be in the world but not of the world. We are to be a representation of Jesus Christ. As the Lord of life and glory came to our world to represent the Father, so we are to go to the world to represent Jesus.—*That I May Know Him*, p. 306.

Monday, September 16: Hail, King of the Jews!

Satan and his angels were tempting Pilate and trying to lead him on to his own ruin. They suggested to him that if he did not take part in condemning Jesus others would; the multitude were thirsting for His blood; and if he did not deliver Him to be crucified, he would lose his power and worldly honor and would be denounced as a believer on the impostor. Through fear of losing his power and authority, Pilate consented to the death of Jesus. And notwithstanding he placed the blood of Jesus upon His accusers, and the multitude received it, crying, “His blood be on us, and on our children,” yet Pilate was not clear; he was guilty of the blood of Christ. For his own selfish interest, his love of honor from the great men of earth, he delivered an innocent man to die. If Pilate had followed his own convictions, he would have had nothing to do with condemning Jesus.—*Early Writings*, p. 174.

Jesus was taken, faint with weariness and covered with wounds, and

scourged in the sight of the multitude. “And the soldiers led Him away into the hall, called Praetorium, and they call together the whole band. And they clothed Him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about His head, and began to salute Him, Hail, King of the Jews! And they . . . did spit upon Him, and bowing their knees worshiped Him.” Occasionally some wicked hand snatched the reed that had been placed in His hand, and struck the crown upon His brow, forcing the thorns into His temples, and sending the blood trickling down His face and beard. . . .

Satan led the cruel mob in its abuse of the Saviour. It was his purpose to provoke Him to retaliation if possible, or to drive Him to perform a miracle to release Himself, and thus break up the plan of salvation.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 734.

Those who derided His claim to be the Son of God are speechless now [at Christ’s return]. There is the haughty Herod who jeered at His royal title and bade the mocking soldiers crown Him king. There are the very men who with impious hands placed upon His form the purple robe, upon His sacred brow the thorny crown, and in His unresisting hand the mimic scepter, and bowed before Him in blasphemous mockery. The men who smote and spit upon the Prince of life now turn from His piercing gaze and seek to flee from the overpowering glory of His presence. Those who drove the nails through His hands and feet, the soldier who pierced His side, behold these marks with terror and remorse. . . .

And now there rises a cry of mortal agony. Louder than the shout, “Crucify Him, crucify Him,” which rang through the streets of Jerusalem, swells the awful, despairing wail, “He is the Son of God! He is the true Messiah!” They seek to flee from the presence of the King of kings. In the deep caverns of the earth, rent asunder by the warring of the elements, they vainly attempt to hide.—*The Great Controversy*, p. 643.

Tuesday, September 17: The Crucifixion

Upon arriving at the place of execution, the condemned were bound to the instruments of torture. While the two thieves wrestled in the hands of those who stretched them upon the cross, Jesus made no resistance. The mother of Jesus looked on with agonizing suspense, hoping that He would work a

miracle to save Himself. She saw His hands stretched upon the cross—those dear hands that had ever dispensed blessings, and had been reached forth so many times to heal the suffering. And now the hammer and nails were brought, and as the spikes were driven through the tender flesh and fastened to the cross, the heart-stricken disciples bore away from the cruel scene the fainting form of the mother of Christ.

Jesus made no murmur of complaint; His face remained pale and serene, but great drops of sweat stood upon His brow. There was no pitying hand to wipe the death dew from His face, nor words of sympathy and unchanging fidelity to stay His human heart. He was treading the winepress all alone; and of all the people there was none with Him. While the soldiers were doing their fearful work, and He was enduring the most acute agony, Jesus prayed for His enemies—“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” Luke 23:34. That prayer of Christ for His enemies embraced the world, taking in every sinner who should live, until the end of time.—*The Story of Redemption*, pp. 221, 222.

In the sufferings of Christ upon the cross prophecy was fulfilled. Centuries before the crucifixion, the Saviour had foretold the treatment He was to receive. He said, “Dogs have compassed Me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed Me: they pierced My hands and My feet. I may tell all My bones: they look and stare upon Me. They part My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture.” Psalm 22:16–18. The prophecy concerning His garments was carried out without counsel or interference from the friends or the enemies of the Crucified One. To the soldiers who had placed Him upon the cross, His clothing was given. Christ heard the men’s contention as they parted the garments among them. His tunic was woven throughout without seam, and they said, “Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 746.

And when the fullness of time was come. . . . the One appointed in the counsels of heaven came to the earth as an instructor. He was no less a being than the Creator of the world, the Son of the Infinite God. The rich benevolence of God gave Him to our world; and to meet the necessities of humanity, He took on Him human nature. To the astonishment of the heavenly host, He walked this earth as the Eternal Word. Fully prepared, He left the royal courts to come to a world marred and polluted with sin.

Mysteriously He allied Himself to human nature. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” God’s excess of goodness, benevolence, and love was a surprise to the world, of grace which could be realized, but not told. —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 399.

Wednesday, September 18: Forsaken by God

Every pang endured by the Son of God upon the cross, the blood drops that flowed from His head, His hands and feet, the convulsions of agony which racked His frame, and the unutterable anguish that filled His soul at the hiding of His Father’s face from Him, speak to man, saying, It is for love of thee that the Son of God consents to have these heinous crimes laid upon Him; for thee He spoils the domain of death, and opens the gates of Paradise and immortal life. He who stilled the angry waves by His word and walked the foam-capped billows, who made devils tremble and disease flee from His touch, who raised the dead to life and opened the eyes of the blind, offers Himself upon the cross as the last sacrifice for man. He, the sin-bearer, endures judicial punishment for iniquity and becomes sin itself for man. —*The Story of Redemption*, p. 225.

The rending of the veil of the temple showed that the Jewish sacrifices and ordinances would no longer be received. The great Sacrifice had been offered and had been accepted, and the Holy Spirit which descended on the day of Pentecost carried the minds of the disciples from the earthly sanctuary to the heavenly, where Jesus had entered by His own blood, to shed upon His disciples the benefits of His atonement. But the Jews were left in total darkness. They lost all the light which they might have had upon the plan of salvation, and still trusted in their useless sacrifices and offerings. The heavenly sanctuary had taken the place of the earthly, yet they had no knowledge of the change. Therefore they could not be benefited by the mediation of Christ in the holy place.—*Early Writings*, p. 259.

Heavenly agencies have to contend with hindrances before the purpose of God is fulfilled in its time. . . . Good and evil angels are taking a part in the planning of God in His earthly kingdom. It is God’s purpose to carry forward His work in correct lines, in ways that will advance His glory. But Satan is ever trying to counterwork God’s purpose. Only by humbling themselves

before God can God's servants advance His work. Never are they to depend on their own efforts or on outward display for success. . . .

As a people we do not understand as we should the great conflict going on between invisible agencies, the controversy between loyal and disloyal angels. . . . The written Word is our only safety. We must pray as did Daniel, that we may be guarded by heavenly intelligences. As ministering spirits angels are sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation. Pray, my brethren, pray as you have never prayed before. We are not prepared for the Lord's coming. We need to make thorough work for eternity.—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1173.

Thursday, September 19: Laid to Rest

Even in death, Christ's body was very precious to His disciples. They longed to give Him an honored burial, but knew not how to accomplish this.

. . .

In this emergency, Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus came to the help of the disciples. Both these men were members of the Sanhedrin, and were acquainted with Pilate. Both were men of wealth and influence. They were determined that the body of Jesus should have an honorable burial.

Joseph went boldly to Pilate, and begged from him the body of Jesus. For the first time, Pilate learned that Jesus was really dead. Conflicting reports had reached him in regard to the events attending the crucifixion, but the knowledge of Christ's death had been purposely kept from him. Pilate had been warned by the priests and rulers against deception by Christ's disciples in regard to His body. Upon hearing Joseph's request, he therefore sent for the centurion who had charge at the cross, and learned for a certainty of the death of Jesus. He also drew from him an account of the scenes of Calvary, confirming the testimony of Joseph.—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 772, 773.

Gently and reverently they [Joseph, Nicodemus, and John] removed with their own hands the body of Jesus from the cross. Their tears of sympathy fell fast as they looked upon His bruised and lacerated form. Joseph owned a new tomb, hewn in a rock. This he was reserving for himself; but it was near Calvary, and he now prepared it for Jesus. The body, together with the spices

brought by Nicodemus, was carefully wrapped in a linen sheet, and the Redeemer was borne to the tomb. There the three disciples straightened the mangled limbs, and folded the bruised hands upon the pulseless breast. The Galilean women came to see that all had been done that could be done for the lifeless form of their beloved Teacher. Then they saw the heavy stone rolled against the entrance of the tomb, and the Saviour was left at rest. The women were last at the cross, and last at the tomb of Christ. While the evening shades were gathering, Mary Magdalene and the other Marys lingered about the resting place of their Lord, shedding tears of sorrow over the fate of Him whom they loved.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 774.

God does not prevent the plottings of wicked men, but He causes their devices to work for good to those who in trial and conflict maintain their faith and loyalty. . . .

[Biblical] examples of human steadfastness bear witness to the faithfulness of God's promises—of His abiding presence and sustaining grace. They testify to the power of faith to withstand the powers of the world. It is the work of faith to rest in God in the darkest hour, to feel, however sorely tried and tempest-tossed, that our Father is at the helm. The eye of faith alone can look beyond the things of time to estimate aright the worth of the eternal riches.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 574, 575.

Friday, September 20: For Further Reading

Lift Him Up, “Conqueror Over the Power of Darkness,” p. 235;
The Desire of Ages, “‘It Is Finished,’ ” pp. 758–764.

Lesson 13

The Risen Lord

Sabbath Afternoon, September 21

In the garden, Mary had stood weeping, when Jesus was close beside her. Her eyes were so blinded by tears that she did not discern Him. And the hearts of the disciples were so full of grief that they did not believe the angels' message or the words of Christ Himself.

How many are still doing what these disciples did! How many echo Mary's despairing cry, "They have taken away the Lord, . . . and we know not where they have laid Him"! To how many might the Saviour's words be spoken, "Why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?" He is close beside them, but their tear-blinded eyes do not discern Him. He speaks to them, but they do not understand.

Oh that the bowed head might be lifted, that the eyes might be opened to behold Him, that the ears might listen to His voice! "Go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen." Bid them look not to Joseph's new tomb, that was closed with a great stone, and sealed with the Roman seal. Christ is not there. Look not to the empty sepulcher. Mourn not as those who are hopeless and helpless. Jesus lives, and because He lives, we shall live also. From grateful hearts, from lips touched with holy fire, let the glad song ring out, Christ is risen! He lives to make intercession for us. Grasp this hope, and it will hold the soul like a sure, tried anchor. Believe, and thou shalt see the glory of God. —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 794.

We have a living Saviour. He is not in Joseph's new tomb; He is risen from the dead and has ascended on high as a Substitute and Surety for every believing soul. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). The sinner is justified through the merits of Jesus, and this is God's acknowledgment of the perfection of the ransom paid for man. That Christ was obedient even unto the death of the cross is a pledge of the repenting sinner's acceptance with the Father. Then

shall we permit ourselves to have a vacillating experience of doubting and believing, believing and doubting? Jesus is the pledge of our acceptance with God. We stand in favor before God, not because of any merit in ourselves, but because of our faith in “the Lord our righteousness.”—*Faith and Works*, p. 107.

Stormy times are before us. The earth is corrupt, and will increase in corruption. But you may have perfect trust in Christ. Notwithstanding the violence, the crime, the appropriation by men of money to which they have no right, there is a God who is King over the universe. We are His children, not the subjects of capricious fate. We have, yes, you have, as you read the words of encouragement spoken by Christ, the sacred promise that will renew the springs of hope. You may rejoice in a living Saviour. He is our risen Lord. His promises are for all who will receive Him.—*This Day With God*, p. 91.

Sunday, September 22: Rejoicing in the Resurrection

The women who had been Christ’s humble followers while He lived, would not leave Him until they saw Him laid in the tomb and a stone of great weight placed before the door, lest His enemies should seek to obtain His body. But they need not have feared; for I saw that the angelic host watched with untold interest in the resting place of Jesus, earnestly waiting for the command to act their part in liberating the King of glory from His prison house.

Christ’s murderers feared that He might yet come to life and escape them. They therefore asked of Pilate a watch to guard the sepulcher until the third day. This was granted, and the stone at the door was sealed, lest His disciples should steal Him away and say that He had risen from the dead.—*Early Writings*, pp. 180, 181.

As the light of the angels shone around, brighter than the sun, that Roman guard fell as dead men to the ground. One of the angels laid hold of the great stone and rolled it away from the door of the sepulcher and seated himself upon it. The other entered the tomb and unbound the napkin from the head of

Jesus. Then the angel from heaven, with a voice that caused the earth to quake, cried out, “Thou Son of God, Thy Father calls Thee! Come forth.” Death could hold dominion over Him no longer. Jesus arose from the dead, a triumphant conqueror. In solemn awe the angelic host gazed upon the scene. And as Jesus came forth from the sepulcher, those shining angels prostrated themselves to the earth in worship, and hailed Him with songs of victory and triumph.

Satan’s angels had been compelled to flee before the bright, penetrating light of the heavenly angels, and they bitterly complained to their king that their prey had been violently taken from them, and that He whom they so much hated had risen from the dead. . . . As Jesus walked forth from His prison house a majestic conqueror, Satan knew that after a season he must die, and his kingdom pass unto Him whose right it was.—*Early Writings*, p. 182.

The resurrection of Jesus was a sample of the final resurrection of all who sleep in Him. The risen body of the Saviour, His deportment, the accents of His speech, were all familiar to His followers. In like manner will those who sleep in Jesus rise again. We shall know our friends even as the disciples knew Jesus. Though they may have been deformed, diseased, or disfigured in this mortal life, yet in their resurrected and glorified body their individual identity will be perfectly preserved, and we shall recognize, in the face radiant with the light shining from the face of Jesus, the lineaments of those we love. . . .

Until that triumphant hour, when the last trump shall sound and the vast army shall come forth to eternal victory, every sleeping saint will be kept in safety and will be guarded as a precious jewel, who is known to God by name.—*That I May Know Him*, p. 362.

Monday, September 23: The Stone Was Rolled Away

The enemies of the disciples could not but be convinced that Christ had risen from the dead. The evidence was too clear to be doubted. Nevertheless, they hardened their hearts, refusing to repent of the terrible deed they had committed in putting Jesus to death. Abundant evidence that the apostles

were speaking and acting under divine inspiration had been given the Jewish rulers, but they firmly resisted the message of truth. Christ had not come in the manner that they expected, and though at times they had been convinced that He was the Son of God, yet they had stifled conviction, and crucified Him. In mercy God gave them still further evidence, and now another opportunity was granted them to turn to Him. He sent the disciples to tell them that they had killed the Prince of life, and in this terrible charge He gave them another call to repentance. But feeling secure in their own righteousness, the Jewish teachers refused to admit that the men charging them with crucifying Christ were speaking by the direction of the Holy Spirit.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 61.

Some [of the Corinthian believers] had gone so far as to deny the doctrine of the resurrection. Paul met this heresy with a very plain testimony regarding the unmistakable evidence of the resurrection of Christ. He declared that Christ, after His death, “rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,” after which “He was seen of Cephas, then of the Twelve: after that, He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, He was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all He was seen of me also.”

With convincing power the apostle set forth the great truth of the resurrection. “If there be no resurrection of the dead,” he argued, “then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. . . . and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain. . . . But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 319, 320.

On whose side are we? The world cast Christ out; the heavens received Him. Man, finite man, rejected the Prince of life; God, our Sovereign Ruler, received Him into the heavens. God has exalted Him. Man crowned Him with a crown of thorns; God has crowned Him with a crown of royal majesty. We must all think candidly. Will you have this man Christ Jesus to rule over you, or will you have Barabbas? The death of Christ brings to the rejecter of His mercy the wrath and judgments of God, unmixed with mercy. This is the wrath of the Lamb. But the death of Christ is hope and eternal life to all who receive Him and believe in Him.—*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 139.

Tuesday, September 24: The Women at the Tomb

Mary had not [yet] heard the good news. She went to Peter and John with the sorrowful message, “They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher, and we know not where they have laid Him.” The disciples hurried to the tomb, and found it as Mary had said. They saw the shroud and the napkin, but they did not find their Lord. Yet even here was testimony that He had risen. The graveclothes were not thrown heedlessly aside, but carefully folded, each in a place by itself. John “saw, and believed.” He did not yet understand the scripture that Christ must rise from the dead; but he now remembered the Saviour’s words foretelling His resurrection.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 789.

Mary had been looked upon as a great sinner, but Christ knew the circumstances that had shaped her life. He might have extinguished every spark of hope in her soul, but He did not. It was He who had lifted her from despair and ruin. Seven times she had heard His rebuke of the demons that controlled her heart and mind. She had heard His strong cries to the Father in her behalf. She knew how offensive is sin to His unsullied purity, and in His strength she had overcome.

When to human eyes her case appeared hopeless, Christ saw in Mary capabilities for good. He saw the better traits of her character. The plan of redemption has invested humanity with great possibilities, and in Mary these possibilities were to be realized. Through His grace she became a partaker of the divine nature. The one who had fallen, and whose mind had been a habitation of demons, was brought very near to the Saviour in fellowship and ministry. It was Mary who sat at His feet and learned of Him. It was Mary who poured upon His head the precious anointing oil, and bathed His feet with her tears. Mary stood beside the cross, and followed Him to the sepulcher. Mary was first at the tomb after His resurrection. It was Mary who first proclaimed a risen Saviour.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 568.

Christ has given to the church a sacred charge. Every member should be a channel through which God can communicate to the world the treasures of His grace, the unsearchable riches of Christ. There is nothing that the Saviour desires so much as agents who will represent to the world His Spirit and His character. There is nothing that the world needs so much as the manifestation through humanity of the Saviour’s love. All heaven is waiting for men and

women through whom God can reveal the power of Christianity.

The church is God's agency for the proclamation of truth, empowered by Him to do a special work; and if she is loyal to Him, obedient to all His commandments, there will dwell within her the excellency of divine grace. If she will be true to her allegiance, if she will honor the Lord God of Israel, there is no power that can stand against her.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 600.

Wednesday, September 25: Appearing to Mary and Others

A light was shining about the tomb, but the body of Jesus was not there. As they [the women] lingered about the place, suddenly they saw that they were not alone. A young man clothed in shining garments was sitting by the tomb. It was the angel who had rolled away the stone. He had taken the guise of humanity that he might not alarm these friends of Jesus. Yet about him the light of the heavenly glory was still shining, and the women were afraid. They turned to flee, but the angel's words stayed their steps. "Fear not ye," he said; "for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead." . . .

He is risen, He is risen! The women repeat the words again and again. No need now for the anointing spices. The Saviour is living, and not dead. They remember now that when speaking of His death He said that He would rise again. What a day is this to the world! Quickly the women departed from the sepulcher "with fear and great joy; and did run to bring His disciples word."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 788, 789.

Christ's first work on earth after His resurrection was to convince His disciples of His undiminished love and tender regard for them. . . . Go tell My brethren, He said, that they meet Me in Galilee. . . .

But even now they did not rejoice. They could not cast off their doubt and perplexity. Even when the women declared that they had seen the Lord, the disciples would not believe. They thought them under an illusion. . . .

Often they repeated the words, "We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel." . . . They met together in the upper chamber,

and closed and fastened the doors, knowing that the fate of their beloved Teacher might at any time be theirs.

And all the time they might have been rejoicing in the knowledge of a risen Saviour. In the garden, Mary had stood weeping, when Jesus was close beside her. Her eyes were so blinded by tears that she did not discern Him. And the hearts of the disciples were so full of grief that they did not believe the angels' message or the words of Christ Himself.—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 793, 794.

Every expression of doubt strengthens unbelief. Every thought and word of hope, courage, light, and love strengthens faith and fortifies the soul to withstand the moral darkness that exists in the world. Those who talk faith will have faith, and those who talk discouragements will have discouragements. By beholding we become changed.—Letter 16, March 24, 1880, to James White.

Thursday, September 26: Go Into All the World

Jesus had several times attempted to open the future to His disciples, but they had not cared to think about what He said. Because of this His death had come to them as a surprise; and afterward, as they reviewed the past and saw the result of their unbelief, they were filled with sorrow. When Christ was crucified, they did not believe that He would rise. He had stated plainly that He was to rise on the third day, but they were perplexed to know what He meant. This lack of comprehension left them at the time of His death in utter hopelessness. They were bitterly disappointed. . . . If they had believed the Saviour's words, how much sorrow they might have been spared!

Crushed by despondency, grief, and despair, the disciples met together in the upper chamber, and closed and fastened the doors. . . . It was here that the Saviour, after His resurrection, appeared to them.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 25, 26.

Before ascending to heaven, Christ gave His disciples their commission. . . . You have been witnesses of My life of sacrifice in behalf of the world, He said to them. . . . To you, My disciples, I commit this message of mercy. It is to be given to both Jews and Gentiles—to Israel, first, and then to all nations, tongues, and peoples. All who believe are to be gathered into one church.

The gospel commission is the great missionary charter of Christ's kingdom. The disciples were to work earnestly for souls, giving to all the invitation of mercy.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 27, 28.

As the light of the sun is light and life and blessing to all that live, so should Christians, by their good works, by their cheerfulness and courage, be the light of the world. As the light of the sun chases away the shades of night and pours its glories on valleys and hills, so will the Christian reflect the Sun of Righteousness which shines on him.

Before the consistent lives of Christ's true followers, ignorance, superstition, and darkness will pass away, as the sun dispels the gloom of night. In like manner the disciples of Jesus will go into the dark places of the earth, disseminating the light of truth until the pathway of those in darkness shall be illuminated by the light of truth.—*This Day With God*, p. 92.

With such . . . a glorious hope, such a redemption that Christ has purchased for us by His own blood, shall we hold our peace? Shall we not praise God even with a loud voice, as did the disciples when Jesus rode into Jerusalem? Is not our prospect far more glorious than was theirs? Who dare then forbid us glorifying God, even with a loud voice, when we have such a hope, big with immortality, and full of glory? We have tasted of the powers of the world to come, and long for more. My whole being cries out after the living God, and I shall not be satisfied until I am filled with all His fullness.—*Early Writings*, p. 110.

Friday, September 27: For Further Reading

Selected Messages, "Look Beyond the Shadows," book 3, pp. 326, 327;
The Desire of Ages, "Go Teach All Nations," pp. 818–828.