

Adult

Sabbath School Lessons

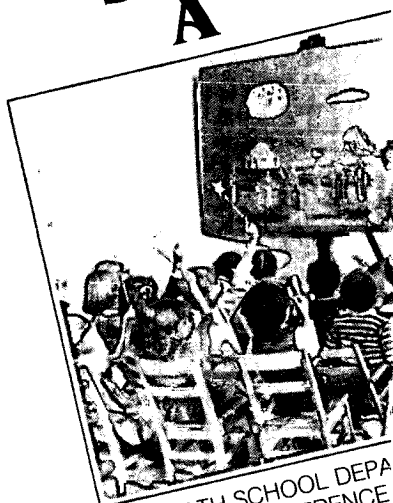
"Heaven Came Down"



JULY, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER 1986

COMBINED
PROGRAM HELPS
FOR THE SMALL CHURCH

CRADLE ROLL, KINDERGARTEN, AND PRIMARY Series A



SABBATH SCHOOL DEPT.
GENERAL CONFERENCE

COMBINED PROGRAM HELPS FOR THE SMALL CHURCH

If your church is small and must combine cradle roll, kindergarten, and primary Sabbath School divisions, you'll be glad to know that now there's a special edition of *Program Helps* designed just for this situation.

Covering one full year of the three-year cycle, *Combined Program Helps for the Small Church* offers more than just programs. You'll find information on how to work with cradle roll, kindergarten, and primary age groups in the same Sabbath School. There's a Materials List for each quarter, sections on do-it-yourself visual aids, offering devices and illustrations, a Nature Facts section, mission stories, and more.

Order now through your Sabbath School secretary or from your Adventist Book Center. *Combined Program Helps for the Small Church*, Series A (for 1985) \$3.95.



Contents

1. All Heaven in One Gift
2. Why the Devils Tremble
3. The Gospel According to You
4. Lord of the Impossible
5. A Congregation of One
6. Extravagant Love
7. The Door to Forever
8. The Bush Still Burns
9. The Revelation Room
10. Like Father, Like Son
11. Pentecost Now
12. The Day He Wore My Crown
13. He Lives!

**Editorial Offices: 6840 Eastern Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20012**

Lesson Author: W. Kenneth McFarland

Editor: Leo R. Van Dolson

Marketing: Bob Kyte

Sales Office: Shirley Sayers

Art and Design: Pacific Press

The Adult Sabbath School Lessons are prepared by the Sabbath School Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The preparation of the lessons is under the general direction of a worldwide Sabbath School Lesson Committee, the members of which serve as consulting editors. The published lesson quarterly reflects the input of the committee and thus does not solely or necessarily represent the intent of the author.

Scripture references other than from the King James Version quoted by permission in this quarterly are as follows:

NIV. From *The New International Version*, copyright © 1978 by New York International Bible Society. Used by permission.

NEB. From *The New English Bible*, copyright © by the Delegates of the Oxford University Press and the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press, New York City.

Adult Sabbath School Lessons (standard edition). (USPS 702-480). Published quarterly by Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1350 North Kings Road, Nampa, ID 83687, U.S.A. One year subscription in U.S.A., \$3.75; single copy, 95 cents. One year subscription to countries outside U.S.A., \$5.25; single copy, \$1.55. All prices at U.S.A. exchange. Second-class postage paid at Nampa, ID. When a change of address is desired, please send both old and new addresses.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Adult Sabbath School Lessons (standard edition), P. O. Box 7000, Boise, ID 83707.

Editions in Braille available. See page 99.

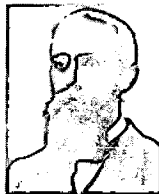
Copyright © 1985 by Pacific Press Publishing Association

Adult Sabbath School Lessons (USPS 702-480) / No. 365 / July-September 1986



J. N. Andrews,
pioneer
missionary

Abram La Rue,
pioneer to
Hong Kong



W. C. Grainger,
pioneer
to Japan

D. A. Robins,
pioneer to
South Africa
and India



Stop Puzzling

Andrews, La Rue, Grainger, Robinson, Stahl, Hare, the Halliwells, Miller—what excitement these names carry in Adventist circles! Adventist mission history echoes with the names of hundreds of pioneers—men and women who dared and did for the Lord.

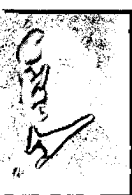
And as their exploits filtered back to what was once the home bases for Adventist missions, purse strings were loosed. Mission giving peaked in the 1950's with mission funds accounting for more than twenty percent of total tithes and offerings. Sadly, however, mission funds in 1984 accounted for less than five percent of total S.D.A. giving. Our mission pioneers who gave their all would have a hard time understanding these statistics.

Today the glamour seems to have worn thin. But in reality the mission outreach of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has become wildly successful—perhaps too successful for its own good, when we consider the current state of (or lack of) support. More than one million members in Africa, another million in Inter-America, and nearly another million in South America attest to the continued success of our mission programs.

True, the pioneers for the most part would have a difficult time recognizing the kind of mission outreach that warms the hearts of those who visit the world field today. Radio, television, stop-smoking programs, English and other language schools touch people where they live, work, and play.

Actually our mission challenge is greater and there are more opportunities than ever before. True, the day of the pioneer missionaries has for the most part slipped into history, although a few hardy and courageous people still meet what need there is for pioneers.

An opportunity for expanded giving—



F. A. Stahl,
pioneer
in the Andes

Eric B. Hare,
pioneer
among the Karens
in Burma



The Leo B. Halliwells,
pioneers
on the Amazon

H. W. Miller,
China doctor



The Pioneers

But when we think of missions today we think of teams, and many such teams include volunteers—student missionaries, Adventist Volunteer Service Corps, S.O.S. (retired workers), and hundreds of local lay workers. The number of volunteer workers is increasing year by year.

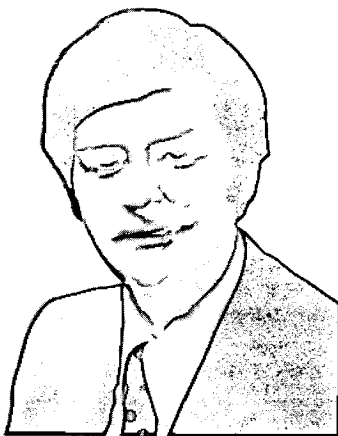
Whereas the traditional missionary home bases—Australia, Europe, New Zealand, and North America—still send a large share of missionaries outside their borders, most of the other divisions now contribute workers as well.

In the light of this world-wide contribution, are mission offerings still essential? If you could see the thousands upon thousands of children in Africa attending Sabbath School who do not receive lesson papers, or their Sabbath Schools being conducted without the visual aids so many in other countries take for granted, there would be a tug on your purse strings as well as on your heart strings.

Three out of every five members in the Far Eastern Division are Filipino people. What evangelistic excitement pervades that fast-growing field! But many new members there are dropping away because they have no place to worship. How can Sabbath School members resist sacrificing to take advantage of this day of opportunity in the Philippines?

If only the world church could catch the enthusiasm and commitment that characterizes our mission program in the Philippines, in Korea, in Africa, in Latin America, our mission offerings would rise dramatically. The challenge and opportunities are greater than ever. Let's match the excitement of fast-expanding mission programs with the thrill of ever-expanding mission giving.

Thirteenth Sabbath offering, September 27



Meet the Writer of This Quarter's Lessons

W. Kenneth McFarland is assistant vice president for English editorial at Pacific Press Publishing Association. Born in Hood River, Oregon, he received his degrees from Pacific Union College and Andrews University Theological Seminary. Elder McFarland pastored in the West and Southwest for nearly 10 years before joining Pacific Press as associate book editor and associate editor of *Signs* in 1979. He has authored three books, including *The Christian Atheist*, and has written articles for most major Adventist publications. His hobbies include writing, hiking, traveling, and home computers. He and his wife, Carolyn, have four children.

Supplemental Book: *Bridge to Space Island* by Ken McFarland is published by Pacific Press Publishing Association and is available at your Adventist Book Center.

The Gospel of John describes that dramatic time in the history of the universe when God built a bridge, in the person of His Son Jesus, between heaven and earth—an island of sin adrift in the sea of space.

Chapters in the supplemental book parallel the lessons in this quarterly and bear such titles as "You Can't Drive to Alcatraz," "Gridlock," "When the Horse Won't Drink," and "Third Person, Singular."

Bridge to Space Island explores such major themes of John's Gospel as belief, eternal life, God's love, and Christ's relationship to His Father and to the Holy Spirit. The book is composed of all-new material not found in the quarterly—and will add greatly to your understanding and enjoyment of the lessons.

Introduction to the Gospel of John

Heaven Came Down

Among those who accepted Jesus when heaven came down to this earth, John was one of the most receptive. Of all Christ's disciples, John came to know Him most intimately. It was through John that Christ's deepest spiritual teaching was communicated.

John's Gospel is not a story-teller's narrative, like that of Mark. Neither is it a closely reasoned treatise, like the epistles of Paul. Instead the Gospel of John is the personal testimony of a friend who knew the strong heart and mind of Christ as perhaps no other person ever has known it.

Structurally, this Gospel is a book of recurring ideas—of interwoven themes—and as such we will approach it for our study this quarter. If one suggestion might be made to enrich your study of these lessons, it would be to study parallel chapters in *The Desire of Ages* by Ellen White.

As we study, let us behold Jesus in all His magnificence through the eyes of the man who knew Him best.

OVERVIEW OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

| | |
|--|-------------------------|
| I. Prologue | John 1:1-18 |
| II. Christ's Public Ministry to the Jews | John 1:19 through 12:50 |
| III. Christ's Private Ministry to "His own" | John 13 through 17 |
| IV. The Passover Climax: Tragedy and Triumph | John 18 through 21:23 |
| V. Epilogue | John 21:24, 25 |

All Heaven in One Gift

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: John 1:1-18



MEMORY TEXT: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: To save us and to share with us the truth about God, Jesus Christ—the Word—left heaven and came down to this world of death and darkness, bringing life and light and taking our humanity.

| John 1:1-18—the Prologue to John's Gospel | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|----------------------|
| John 1:1-5 | John 1:6-13 | John 1:14-18 |
| The Word of life and light. | The Word rejected, the Word accepted. | The Word made flesh. |

INTRODUCTION: A teenager who has "borrowed" the family car without permission, only to wreck it while racing with a friend, has to be a little nervous about what his father is going to say.

If you come from a broken home, and you grew up being told that your father abandoned his family while you were still learning to crawl, how does that make you feel about him?

If you had been Adam or Eve, and just had your first taste of forbidden fruit, how would you have felt when you heard God calling your name? Would you be glad to see Him?

From the time that sin cut heaven off from earth, Satan has worked overtime trying to convince human beings that God is angry with them, that they should be angry with God, or that sin has alienated them so completely from God that they cannot expect salvation.

Satan approaches some who are like the teenager who wrecked the family car. "God is really upset with you," he tells them. "If I were you, I would stay as far away from Him as possible."

Others he approaches like the now-grown child of divorce. "God has abandoned you," he tells them. "He does not care about you. He never has and He never will."

God could not let Satan's lies go unanswered. For our sakes the truth had to be told. He had to say something. So it was that the Word came down from heaven. The Word was Jesus Christ—"God's thought made audible."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 19.

Were God's thoughts, as Satan had claimed, thoughts of anger and stern justice? Or were they "thoughts of peace" (Jer. 29:11)? Did He really care about His children, or did He not? Through Jesus, God would do far better than simply *tell* us how He felt. He would *show* us. Love professed is good. Love revealed is better.

In this first lesson of a new quarter we focus on the prologue to John's Gospel. Like the overture to a great symphony, it sets forth many of the major themes to be developed later: word, light, life, witness, belief, world, power, Father. John builds his record of Christ's life around several key words and recurring ideas—a number of which are anticipated here in the prologue.

Undoubtedly the key verse of this prologue is verse 14: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." That Jesus should leave heaven and come down to live with us in our humanity is a startling but thrilling thought. Yet, as Ellen White wrote, "In the gift of Jesus, God gave all heaven."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 565.

Heaven came down—and what glory has filled our souls because of it! We were alienated from our Father—angry at Him—fearful of Him—misinformed about Him. Heaven came down as the Word and declared the truth about our God.

We were stumbling in the darkness of Satan's lies and our own sin. Heaven came down as the Light, and the darkness fled. We were doomed and dying. Heaven came down as Life and offered us eternity.

This week we begin another full quarter of study about that magnificent time when heaven, in Jesus, came down to this earth. But for our study to be more than mere mental exercise or theological exploration, we will need continually to personalize the message John so eloquently shares with us. We will need to apply, appropriate, and act on what we learn.



I. THE WORD OF LIFE AND LIGHT (John 1:1-5).

Both the Old Testament and the Gospel of John begin with the same words: "In the beginning."

The "beginning" in Genesis refers to the time when "God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). But the "beginning" in John refers to the eternity of time that preceded the "beginning" of Genesis.

In beginning his Gospel, John chose words that convey the truth that the Word *always has been*. Theologians call this truth *the pre-existence of Christ*. To attempt to understand how we may someday live forever without ever dying is difficult indeed. Even more difficult to grasp is the idea of Someone who always has been—Someone with no beginning. Yet the amazing truth of John's first phrase is that Jesus, the Word, has endless, limitless existence.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Which member of the Godhead is the Creator-God of Genesis 1 and 2? See John 1:1-3 and 14. Compare Col. 1:13-17.

"The Word was with God." What does that mean? Certainly it means

more than just physical proximity. We sense that John means to tell us something of the intimacy of the shared existence the Father and the Son enjoyed together. In the last verse of the prologue (verse 18), John says that the Word "is at the Father's side" (NIV). No one else has ever been or is so well qualified to tell us what the Father is like, as is Jesus.

Finally, John says that the Word *was* God. John phrased this in such a way, in the Greek in which he wrote, as to make clear that Jesus is neither a god—one among many, nor that He is *the* God—the only Person who can be so called. Rather, John's phrase conveys the idea that Jesus is of the very essence and quality of God—that He is divine.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Jesus has existed forever with the Father and is just as fully God as is the Father. Yet the titles *Father* and *Son* seem to imply that in some way Jesus occupies a position subordinate to the Father. Study John 17:5, Philippians 2:6-11, and Hebrews 1:2-5, 6, 13 to discover whether this is so? Has it always been so? What is Christ's position today?

Verse 3. In this verse John tells us that all things were made through the Word. Because of the heresy known as Gnosticism that had arisen during his lifetime, it was vital for John to connect Jesus definitely with the work of creation.

The promoters of Gnosticism believed themselves to possess advanced and secret knowledge. They taught that in the beginning only two things existed—God and matter. God, they said, was pure spirit, while matter was flawed and evil. To a Gnostic it was inconceivable that a pure and holy God should ever touch polluted matter. Therefore God could not possibly have carried out the work of creation Himself.

In eternity past, they said, He put out from Himself a series of what are called "emanations." Each emanation (a kind of radiation) was farther and farther away from Him. As time passed, the emanations knew less and less about Him. About halfway down the series of emanations one came along that finally knew nothing at all about God. After that the emanations began to be not only ignorant of God, but hostile to Him.

At last there came an emanation that was so distant from God that it was both totally ignorant of Him and totally hostile to the very idea of Him. This emanation (known as the demiurge), the Gnostics taught, was the power that created the world, because it was so distant from Him that it could touch flawed and evil matter.

Against both the Gnosticism of John's day and the evolutionary theories of our time stands John's bold claim that this world was created by God the Word—Jesus Christ Himself.

A child who had known only the streets and walls of a large city was taken to the countryside for an outing. Seeing the bluebells in the woods, she asked, "Do you think God would mind if I picked some of His flowers?"

This is the Creator's world. He is not detached from it. He is not disinterested in it. And He is not an absentee landlord. Even though His perfect world has been marred by sin, He still loves and cares for His creation.

FOR LATER STUDY: Having credited the Word with Creation, John next introduces the Word to us in verses 4 and 5 by two new titles: the Life, and the Light. We will focus on these themes in more detail than we can in this lesson when we reach the point in our study of John where they become prominent.

MON

II. THE WORD REJECTED, THE WORD ACCEPTED (John 1:6-13).

Having introduced us to Jesus as the Word, as the Life, and as the Light, John introduces us in verse 6 to another man named John. This John—John the Baptist—had been “sent from God” to bear witness to the Light.

Some who heard John the Baptist’s plain and eloquent preaching apparently were so captivated by him that they were in danger of giving more importance to John than to Jesus. Because of this, John the Gospel writer is careful to point out in his Gospel that, although the Baptist’s place in the scheme of things is important, it still is subordinate to that of Jesus.

John the Baptist, the apostle writes, is *not* the Light. He is a *witness* to the Light. (This important key word in John’s Gospel, *witness*, will be the subject of Lesson 3.) John the Baptist witnesses that all may *believe* in Jesus—another key word, which we will consider in our next lesson.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Study the story of John’s ministry as presented in John 1:19-37. Then answer the following questions:

- Who was “that prophet” referred to by the priests and Levites in verses 21 and 25? (See Deut. 18:15.)
-

- Because John the Baptist had no direct acquaintance with Christ (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 109) he did not recognize Jesus at first. But God gave John a sign by which to identify the Messiah. What was it? John 1:32, 33.
-

- As a witness to Jesus, John “bare record” of Him. In a sentence or two, write down your witness—go on record—as to what Jesus means to you personally.
-
-

TUE

The True Light. Jesus is the real, genuine Light. Even though others have arisen through history who have attempted to enlighten humanity, Jesus is the original. He is the Source of all true light.

Just as the dim beam of a flashlight is lost in the sudden, brilliant flash of a lightning bolt, just as the stars are lost in the light of a noonday sun, so all other lights are lost in the true Light—Jesus Christ.

THINK IT THROUGH: In verse 9 John says that Jesus is “the true light that gives light to every man” (NIV). Every person? Does Jesus enlighten the unlearned and uncivilized? The mentally impaired? The follower of a heathen religion who has never heard His name?

“There is a general illumination of mankind. It is the common teaching of the New Testament writers that God has revealed something of Himself to all men (Rom. 1:20), sufficient at least for them to be blameworthy when they take the wrong way instead of the right way. John attributes this general illumination to the activity of the Word.”—Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1979, p. 95.

Yet it is true also that, even though it shines on all, the Light can be received or rejected. And this truth is the main focus of this second section of John’s prologue. Verses 10 and 11 are full of incredible irony. The Creator of the earth comes to the world He has made, and the world does not even know Him. He comes to His own people, and they will not receive Him.

But “as many as received him”—a group that can include any of us living today—“to them gave he power [the right, authority, or privilege] to become the sons of God” (verse 12). Those who receive Jesus, John writes, are born of God. We are not born again, John makes clear, by means of heredity or human willpower, but “of God.”

REACT: Read verses 11 and 12 again. What do you think it means to “receive” Jesus? Be as specific as you can in your answer.



III. THE WORD MADE FLESH (John 1:14-18).

When “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (verse 14), Heaven came down. We have arrived at the sentence that introduces the major purpose behind the writing of John’s Gospel. He has talked about the Word—a term familiar both to his Jewish and Greek readers. And now he says the most incredibly startling thing he possibly could have said. This Word (Greek *logos*) which created the world, he says, has become a human being, and we have seen Him with our own eyes.

The story of the four Gospels is the story of that brief time when God stepped out of eternity into time, out of heaven onto earth, out of His divine form into a human body. It is the story of the incarnation.

Incarnation is a word from the Latin meaning to be “in flesh.” The incarnation—the embodiment of God Himself in human flesh—is absolutely unique and profoundly mysterious. Yet the fact that it is a mystery should not discourage us from exploring it.

ILLUMINATION: “When we want a deep problem to study, let us fix our minds on the most marvelous thing that ever took place in earth or heaven—the incarnation of the Son of God.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 904.

Such study will be fascinating and richly rewarding if we bring to it a humble, teachable, and reverent spirit. "When we approach the subject of Christ's divinity clothed with the garb of humanity, we may appropriately heed the words spoken by Christ to Moses at the burning bush, 'Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.' We must come to the study of this subject with the humility of a learner, with a contrite heart. And the study of the incarnation of Christ is a fruitful field, and will repay the searcher who digs deep for hidden truth."—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 904, 905.

SEARCH AND LEARN: In verse 14, John says of Jesus that "we beheld his glory." Compare Exodus 33:18, 19; 34:6, 7 with this verse. What do you think Christ's "glory" is?



The Humility of Jesus. To those steeped in Gnosticism, the idea of a God taking a human body was an impossible thought. To them, the body was an evil prison holding the soul captive.

Some of the Gnostic heretics who lived during the early church period are known as Docetists. This term comes from the Greek word meaning "to seem to be." They held that Jesus was a phantom, that His body was not a real, physical body. He was, they said, a disembodied spirit in the form of a human being. Therefore, He could not feel hunger, weariness, or pain.

But John emphatically disagrees with the Docetists. In verse 1 he unequivocally affirms the *divinity* of Jesus. Then, in verse 14, he gloriously proclaims the *humanity* of Jesus.

ILLUMINATION: "When Jesus took human nature, and became in fashion as a man, He possessed all the human organism. His necessities were the necessities of a man. He had bodily wants to be supplied, bodily weariness to be relieved." —Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1130.

SEARCH AND LEARN: How does John, in another of his writings, describe those who deny the full humanity of Jesus? (See 2 John 7.)

As important as it may be to understand all we can about the nature of the incarnation—about the mysterious blending of the divine and the human—it is far more important for us to understand its purpose.

Why did the Word become flesh? Why did Jesus take human nature? Why did Heaven come down?

To save us from sin's penalty? Surely. But also to save us from sin's power—to set us free from its deadly hold over us. Jesus came to reveal to us a mighty, liberating secret. He came to show us where the power

is—the power to obey, the power to overcome, the power to resist, the power to love as God loves.

Jesus knew that He must do more than simply tell us this great secret. So that we might not miss it, He took our nature with all its liabilities, limited Himself only to such advantages as are available to us, and demonstrated how to live by faith in a power totally outside of ourselves.

ILLUMINATION: “As one of us He was to give an example of obedience. For this He took upon Himself our nature, and passed through our experiences. ‘In all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren.’ Heb. 2:17. If we had to bear anything which Jesus did not endure, then upon this point Satan would represent the power of God as insufficient for us. . . . His life testifies that it is possible for us also to obey the law of God.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 24.

Jesus came to save us from sin’s penalty. He came to save us from sin’s power. He came to show us what the Father really is like.

God knew that the only way to win back His rebel children was to show them fully His character of love. This love, He knew, was the only thing in the universe powerful enough to pull them away from the magnetic attraction of sin and selfishness.

To show us this great love, God sent Jesus, “the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father” (John 1:18). And Jesus “declared him”—He told us and showed us what the Father truly is like.



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read chapter 1 in *The Desire of Ages* entitled “God With Us.” Also restudy Hebrews 1.

SUMMARY: As John begins to write the greatest story ever told, he shares with us in his prologue the amazing truth that Jesus voluntarily came down from heaven to this earth to display the Father’s love in human flesh for all to see, and to reveal to us the secret of victory over sin.

APPLICATION:

- As Jesus the Light shines into my life, is there any light—any truth—of His that I am rejecting? Is there anything He desires to which I am saying “No” to Him? Is there any place where I am holding out on Him?
- Has Jesus succeeded in personally convincing me that He and the Father are exactly alike in how they feel about me? Or do I still sometimes feel that God the Father is not quite as much my Friend as Jesus is?
- Jesus has made it possible for all of us to become God’s children. As a child of God, what are my privileges? What are my responsibilities?

NOTES:

Why the Devils Tremble

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: The word *believe* in John's Gospel, as found in such verses as John 14:1; 6:47; and 6:29.



MEMORY TEXT: "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:31).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: When Jesus came down to show us the Father's love, His great hope and purpose was that the people of the world would be drawn by that love into a relationship of trust, depending fully on God's mercy and goodness for eternal life.

OUTLINE:

- I. Believing is trusting (John 14:1).
- II. Eternal life through believing (John 6:47).
- III. The work of believing (John 6:29).

INTRODUCTION: Towering a mile above Albuquerque, New Mexico, in the United States is a mountain ridge called Sandia Crest. The west face of the mountain plunges sharply to the valley floor below. Atop the mountain are launching areas where, on most clear days, daring people may be seen racing to the edge of the precipice, from which they leap out into space.

Normally, we would assume that anyone who would jump off a cliff had either taken leave of his senses or had tired of living. But those who leap from Sandia Crest are apparently sane and seem to enjoy life.

Then why do they vault from the summit into thin air? Because they are firmly connected to a glider mechanism that supports them as they ride the columns of air that rise high into the sky. These human eagles exercise implicit trust in their equipment, trusting their very lives to their fragile gliders. Sometimes that in which they trust fails them, resulting in serious, even fatal accidents. But John points to a God we can trust fully. He never fails us.

Ninety-eight times in his Gospel, John uses a Greek verb that is translated in English as "believe." The noun form of this same Greek word can be translated as "belief," "faith," or "trust." Significantly, John does not use the noun form of the word even once. Why? Two possible reasons may be suggested. First, by using the verb exclusively, John stresses that he sees believing as something active and dynamic. Believing is something one *does*. Believing is not a thing—it is an action.

Second, even in John's time there were some who, unfortunately, had come to attach an inadequate, if not inaccurate, meaning to the noun. These saw "belief" as *primarily* intellectual assent—mental acceptance.

Today both our English noun *belief* and our verb *believe* are too often

understood in this limited way. To believe something, it is maintained, is to accept it as true and factual. To believe someone is to accept what that person says as correct.

Even the devils are not atheists. "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble" (James 2:19). The devils believe in God's existence and in His power. They even believe in His Word more readily than many Christians do—yet they tremble.

This belief brings them no peace. Instead it leaves them trembling in fear. Why do the devils tremble? This week we will discover that the devils tremble because their belief is not the true belief that John describes in his Gospel.



I. BELIEVING IS TRUSTING (John 14:1).

A toddler was placed on a high ledge by her father. He assured her that he would catch her, then told her to jump. Without hesitating, she pushed off from the ledge and plummeted into his arms. Far from being afraid, she insisted that they do it again, and again, and again.

The father was amazed and more than a little gratified by her total confidence that he would catch her. Had he stepped aside as she leaped from the ledge, she surely would have been injured—perhaps seriously. But she seemed not even to have considered that possibility. She trusted her father implicitly.

As we reflect on the basis for such trust, we must conclude that it probably was founded on two things. First, the daughter knew that her father was *able* to catch her. He was strong enough to intercept her small body easily as it hurtled toward the floor. Had she not, after all, seen him lift heavy items of furniture? Had he not lifted her over his head so that she could touch the ceiling? Was it not true that her daddy could do just about anything?

Second, she knew that her father loved her. She knew him well enough to know that he would not fail her. She knew that he cared about her too much to permit her to be harmed if he could prevent it. She *believed* in him. Her belief extended far beyond a simple conviction that he basically was truthful and benevolent; her trust was so thoroughly without reservation that she could leap from a high place with no fear whatever.

THINK IT THROUGH: What does John help us understand about the deeper meaning of *believe*?

It means far more than just accepting the facts about Jesus. It means more than agreeing that He is altogether powerful and full of love. To believe in Jesus Christ is to trust His power and love so completely that we are willing to let go of every other possible support and cast ourselves totally upon Him. It is to abandon ourselves utterly to His goodness. It is to depend on Him absolutely and rely on Him perfectly.

Belief does include acceptance of certain facts; but *saving* faith or belief must go beyond intellectual assent and include an active, dependent trust in a person. Real belief is not just intellectual. It is personal.

The devils believe that God is real. They believe what He says, but they do not *rely* on Him. They do not *depend* on Him to do for them what they cannot do for themselves. Well might devils—or angels or human beings—tremble who do not trust the saving all-sufficiency of God's love.

What is a saving faith?

"Saving faith comes only through the faith relationship with Christ. Perhaps the best single definition for faith is trust. 'Faith is trusting God.'—*Education*, p. 253. And if faith is trusting, then the moment you have faith, you have at least two parties. There's no such thing as faith and only one person. Faith has a subjective element—one depending on another."—Morris L. Venden, *Faith That Works* (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980), p. 134.

"Faith," said Martin Luther, "is a living, daring confidence in God's grace, so sure and certain that a man would stake his life on it a thousand times."—Martin Luther, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1954), p. xv (Introduction).

If the word *believe* in John's Gospel means "trusting a person," then how is this kind of saving faith developed? Rom. 10:17.

"Saving faith is always the result of something else. It is the result of a relationship with the One who is trustworthy.

"So, how do you develop a relationship? By becoming acquainted through communication. That's the way to have a relationship with anyone. How do you communicate with God, with Jesus? Through the Bible—that's how God talks to us. And through prayer—that's how we talk to Him. And through going places and doing things together—that's Christian service. Through these simple means that God has given, relationship can exist. When we get to know Him we will trust Him spontaneously, and when we trust Him we have faith."—Morris L. Venden, *Faith That Works*, p. 134.



II. ETERNAL LIFE THROUGH BELIEVING (John 6:47).

This week's memory text (John 20:31) gives us the reason why John wrote his Gospel: "that ye might believe." But believing was not to be an end in itself. He wanted all who read his words to believe for a purpose: "that believing ye might have life."

SEARCH AND LEARN: Study the verses listed below and identify a theme that runs throughout John's Gospel:

John 3:15

John 5:24

John 3:16

John 6:47

John 3:36

John 11:26

Theme: _____

Although we are saved through believing, we must realize that eternal life is not a reward for believing—for having enough faith. Faith, Ellen White wrote, “is the means, not the end.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1073.

Believing has no merit in itself. That which does have merit and upon which our eternal life is based is the goodness, love, mercy, and grace of God.

“Faith is the condition that makes salvation possible. Faith is not the cause—grace is. Although faith does not possess merit in itself, the absence of faith frustrates grace. Though grace is the source of salvation, we can have no salvation without faith.”—Herbert E. Douglass, *Faith: Saying Yes to God* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Association, 1978), p. 52.

Eternal life is the gift of God’s grace. Faith is the hand that reaches out to take it.

THINK IT THROUGH: Following are four phrases. Place a number “1” beside the one that you think should come first. The first phrase should lead naturally to what? The second phrase to what? The third phrase to what? Number the four phrases so that they will be in their proper order:

- _____ Trusting Christ
- _____ Regular communion with Christ
- _____ Receiving eternal life
- _____ Knowing Christ



III. THE WORK OF BELIEVING (John 6:29).

Trusting in Jesus, we *have* eternal life because eternal life is in Jesus (1 John 5:11). If we receive Jesus, if we form a relationship of trust in Him, all the gifts that are *in* Him become ours.

And while eternal life may be one of the greatest of all His gifts, it is certainly not His only gift to us. Another of His greatest gifts is power—power to obey, power to keep from sinning, power to become like Him, power to witness for Him.

How do we obey God? How do we keep from sinning? How do we become like Christ? Psalm 40:8; John 14:23; Gal. 2:20.

Many Christians find that trying to live the Christian life is an exhausting battle, a joyless duty, and an enormous effort. And many, even of those who give it their best, become increasingly discouraged by their apparent lack of success as Christians.

There are in essence only two basic approaches to religion.

1. The first approach emphasizes the word *behavior*. Those who take this approach believe that they should work hard to be good. They do not see how God can be happy with them if they do not behave as He has asked them to behave.

They usually give priority to the “dos” and “don’ts”—Christianity to them consists of doing all the things God says to do and avoiding all the

things He says not to do. To them the Christian life is perceived falsely, not as a pleasure, but as a duty.

“There are those who profess to serve God, while they rely upon their own efforts to obey His law, to form a right character, and secure salvation. Their hearts are not moved by any deep sense of the love of Christ, but they seek to perform the duties of the Christian life as that which God requires of them in order to gain heaven. Such religion is worth nothing.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 44.

THINK IT THROUGH: Why does Ellen White make the strong statement that such religion is worth nothing?

One reason she does is that, because their security rests on their behavior, those whose religion is behavior-oriented will likely be constantly monitoring their spiritual behavior to see how they are doing. If their spiritual checklist reveals consistent failure, these Christians become deeply discouraged—perhaps even to the point of giving up entirely.

If, on the other hand, through sheer human willpower they have succeeded in achieving outwardly correct behavior they may become even more self-dependent as well as judgmental of those less successful.

Another risk of behavior-based religion is that it is possible to succeed in behaving properly without forming any real relationship of trust with Jesus Christ. The Pharisees were meticulous in many aspects of their outward behavior, but they did not trust in God.

2. Another approach to religion emphasizes the word *relationship*.

Those who take this approach believe that they should give priority to knowing God. They do not attempt to make God love them, because they know that He loves them already. They do not obey because they *have* to but because they *want* to.

These relationship-oriented Christians know that their battle is not the battle to be good—instead it is “the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12). They know that their work is not the work of trying hard to be good. Rather, “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent” (John 6:29).

In the light of Jesus’ statement found in John 14:15, what caution needs to be raised about not carrying the point made above to an extreme?

We must not go to the extreme of thinking that it does not matter what we do as long as we are right with God. Those who relate properly to Jesus will want to do what He wants them to do.

THINK IT THROUGH: Is God more interested in what we do or in why we do it? Give your reasons for the answer you choose.

Clearly, the Bible is talking about effort that is directed not toward behavior but toward building a relationship of trust in Jesus. But if we emphasize relationship over behavior, will not this lead to license and lowered standards? Not if our commitment is total.

ILLUMINATION: “Those who feel the constraining love of God, do not ask how little may be given to meet the requirements of God; they do not ask for the lowest standard, but aim at perfect conformity to the will of their Redeemer.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 45.

Another concern often expressed is that if we tell people not to work hard to be good, they will just relax and expect Christ to do all the work for them. To say that we should not work hard to do God’s will and to be good is not to say that the Christian life is effortless. Indeed, the work of believing involves enormous effort. Those who practice a passive, effortless religion are sadly deceived.



What obstacles are there to believing? Matt. 7:14; 13:19-22.

“First of all, it takes effort for me to come to Christ—to seek His presence and power in my life. The devil doesn’t worry about me as long as he sees me struggling along on my own, making great efforts against sin and toward righteousness. But when he sees me making efforts to connect with the only real Source of power, he does everything he can to discourage or divert me. So it takes real effort on my part—because of this determined opposition—to seek God on a continuing basis.”—Morris L. Venden, *The Return of Elijah* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1982), p. 52.

ILLUMINATION: “It is Satan’s constant effort to keep the attention diverted from the Saviour and thus prevent the union and communion of the soul with Christ. . . .

“Satan will constantly present allurements to induce us to break this tie—to choose to separate ourselves from Christ. Here is where we need to watch, to strive, to pray, that nothing may entice us to choose another master.”—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 71, 72.

NOTES:

Once we have worked hard to form a connection with Christ, we must let *Him* obey through us, behave correctly through us, resist temptation through us. Do not misunderstand. God does not work or will or do *outside* of us. He never bypasses our faculties while we passively take our ease in our rocking chairs. He works *in* and *through* us.


After we put much effort into developing a relationship with Jesus, we come to know Him. The better we know Him, the more we trust and love Him. And, motivated by our love for Him, we expend great energy and effort to serve and obey Him. Our faculties are active. But this effort is

not forced and reluctant compliance with duty. Instead, it is the natural and spontaneous response of love to the will of God. Taking our eyes off our behavior and focusing them on our relationship to Christ does not result in spiritual inactivity. "Faith is not an opiate, but a stimulant."—E. G. White, *The Faith I Live By*, p. 93.

The work of trying to be good is discouraging because it results in failure. No one enjoys working hard only to fail. But the work of believing is exhilarating because it results in success. Both kinds of work have the same objective—obedience. But when I try on my own, I fail. When I trust, He succeeds.

THINK IT THROUGH: Place a check mark beside the statement below that you believe is most correct:

- _____ After I have done all I can, Christ steps in and does what I could not do.
- _____ As I work hard, Christ adds His power to my effort.
- _____ As I put my trust in Christ, He works in and through me to choose and to do His will.

 **FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read *Steps to Christ*, the chapter entitled "The Test of Discipleship." Also study Romans 8:1-16.

SUMMARY: Both in how and in the number of times he uses it, John wants the word *believe* to describe to us a relationship of total trust in Jesus. He wants us to realize that as we make believing our work, God makes it His work to bring us eternal life, victory over sin, and every other gift of heaven.

APPLICATION:

- *Belief, trust, and faith* come from the same Greek word. Which of these English words is most meaningful to me in describing my relationship to Christ?
- One of the endearing qualities of children is their unquestioning, unhesitating trust. What happens to diminish this quality in most people by the time they reach adulthood? If this is true for me, how can I once again become childlike in trusting God?
- If I were totally sure of Christ's love and His power, would it ever be possible to worry? If I find myself worrying about things quite often, what can I do to increase my trust in Jesus?

NOTES:

The Gospel According to You

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: The word *witness* in John's Gospel as it relates to such references as John 1:7, 8; 43-46; and 3:32.



MEMORY TEXT: "Verily, verily, I say to thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness" (John 3:11).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus came down to this earth to bear witness to what He knew of the Father. It is our privilege to reveal Jesus as it was His privilege to reveal the Father. We can bear witness to what we have come to know about Him through our study of what He has revealed about Himself and through our personal experience with Him. From studying John's use of the word *witness* we may gain valuable insights into what witnessing is, and how to witness.

OUTLINE:

- I. The witness Jesus bore (John 3:32).
- II. The message to which we witness (John 1:7, 8).
- III. The method of witnessing (John 1:43-46).

INTRODUCTION: "Do you solemnly swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth—so help you God?"

"I do."

"The witness will please take the stand."

A few days ago two cars collided in an intersection near your home. Now you have been called to testify.

"Will you please tell the court if the stop light at the intersection was working?" the attorney begins.

"It is possible that it was," you reply.

"What do you mean, 'It is possible'—don't you know?"

"Well, I have it on good authority that the light was probably working."

"On good authority? What are you saying? Weren't you there?"

"Well, not exactly. But I know someone who was, and he told me he was pretty sure the light was working."

Say good-bye to your brief career as a witness.

A witness tells what he has seen, what he has heard, and what he knows. Courts of law are not interested in hearsay testimony.

"This emphasis on testimony [in John's Gospel]," writes Leon Morris, "should not be overlooked. There is a legal air about it. Testimony is a

serious matter, and it is required to substantiate the truth of a matter. . . . Witness establishes the truth.”—*The Gospel According to John*, (Eerdmans, 1971), p. 90.

There is much more to witnessing than trying to persuade others of the correctness of our beliefs. In a courtroom, persuading others to see things a certain way is the function of an attorney, not a witness. A witness simply shares what he has observed and experienced firsthand.

Witnessing does more than establish the truth. “It commits a man. If I take my stand in the witness box and testify that such-and-such is the truth of the matter I am no longer neutral. I have committed myself.”—Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 90.

One evidence of how witnessing involves commitment is that the word *witness* in the New Testament is translated from the Greek word from which we get our English word *martyr*. The ultimate witness is to give one’s life for the cause to which the martyr is committed.

John uses the Greek word that often is translated “witness” 47 times in his Gospel—far more than any other New Testament writer uses it. He uses the noun form 14 times and the verb 33 times.

When you think of witnessing for Christ, do you get clammy hands, a dry throat, and a feeling of butterflies in the stomach? Do you associate witnessing with questions for which you do not have the answers? Does it seem to you that witnessing primarily becomes a matter of knocking on the doors of strangers, passing out literature, and giving Bible studies?

If your basic response to the idea of witnessing is fear, and your motivation is guilt or duty, then perhaps this week’s lesson will help you discover that witnessing can be a joy and a pleasure. If you think of witnessing as being confined to just a limited number of church-sponsored activities, perhaps this lesson will introduce you to a broader idea of what witnessing includes.

Whatever witnessing is, it involves sharing the gospel—the Good News. And your greatest effectiveness in witnessing will be in sharing your own experience with Christ—the gospel according to you.



I. THE WITNESS JESUS BORE (John 3:32).

“What he hath seen and heard,” John the Baptist said concerning Jesus, “that he testifieth.”

Just what had Jesus seen and heard? Having enjoyed a closer relationship to the Father than anyone on earth had enjoyed since sin began, Jesus could testify of Him. He could tell the truth about God, for He had “seen and heard” Him. (See Matt. 11:27.)

“Only He who was in the bosom of the Father could declare Him. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it manifest.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 14.

ILLUSTRATION: Imagine that all the children of a kind and wealthy gentleman have been kidnapped except for the oldest son. The children are taken far away to a blighted place where they are forced into hard labor and fed barely enough to sustain life. Their villainous captor constantly harangues them about how utterly evil their father is. At first they do not believe their kidnapper. They know better. But days, months, and years

pass. They are growing up now, and they cannot remember their father very well anymore. The constant brainwashing is having its effect.

"Your father does not care," their kidnapper tells them. "You are miserable? You have pain and grief? It is his fault. If he really cared, he would not ignore you. But he has abandoned you.

"But one of these days when you least expect it he will show up. And when he does, he will haul every one of you into court on trumped-up charges. He will be both judge and jury, and he will see to it that all of you are sentenced to death and executed.

"He says he is your father. But I say he has nothing in his heart for you but hatred and punishment."

Then, unexpectedly, one day the oldest son in the family knocks at the door of the house where his brothers and sisters—now fully grown—are being kept. He tells them who he is, but they do not recognize him. It has been too long. And they are suspicious of him because he says he has lived with their father all these years.

Slowly, gently, he begins to tell them the truth about their father—that he loves each of them more than life itself. The brothers and sisters see how benevolent and affectionate their older brother is, and wonder how he could be so kind if their father is so wicked.

Soon some of them realize that they have been deceived by a steady diet of lies about their father. As the truth of his love fully dawns upon them, their joy is overwhelming, and they begin to live for the day when they can be reunited with him. But sadly, some of the children choose to believe their captor rather than their older brother, and thus the story has a bittersweet ending.

ILLUMINATION: "The enemy of good blinded the minds of men, so that they looked upon God with fear; they thought of Him as severe and unforgiving. Satan led men to conceive of God as a being whose chief attribute is stern justice,—one who is a severe judge, a harsh, exacting creditor. He pictured the Creator as a being who is watching with jealous eye to discern the errors and mistakes of men, that He may visit judgments upon them. It was to remove this dark shadow, by revealing to the world the infinite love of God, that Jesus came to live among men."—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 10, 11.

THINK IT THROUGH: Jesus came to tell the truth about God—to vindicate His Father's character which had been smeared by Satan's lies. Do you think that we, too, may help to vindicate God's character before the universe by telling the truth about Him with our lips and our lives?

NOTES:

MON

II. THE MESSAGE TO WHICH WE WITNESS (John 1:7, 8).

SEARCH AND LEARN: John brings to his witness stand a steady parade of witnesses to the deity, authority, and mission of Jesus. Using the Scriptures provided, fill in the correct alphabetic designation in each blank in the exercise below:

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| 1. John 1:6-8—the witness of _____ | A. The Holy Spirit |
| 2. John 4:39; 6:14; 12:17—the witness of _____ | B. The disciples |
| 3. John 5:36—the witness of _____ | C. Christ's works |
| 4. John 5:37—the witness of _____ | D. The Scriptures |
| 5. John 5:39—the witness of _____ | E. The Father |
| 6. John 8:14, 18—the witness of _____ | F. John the Baptist |
| 7. John 15:26—the witness of _____ | G. Those about Him |
| 8. John 15:27—the witness of _____ | H. Christ Himself |

To John's list of witnesses we would add others—ourselves. "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord" (Isa. 43:10). "Ye shall be witnesses unto me" (Acts 1:8).

"As Christ is the channel for the revelation of the Father, so we are to be the channel for the revelation of Christ."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 40.

The subject, the content, the message of our witnessing is Jesus Christ. We sometimes become confused as to what we should witness about. Often it is assumed that witnessing is limited to sharing with others our doctrinal beliefs. We should never depreciate the importance of correct doctrines. The Bible speaks of being "nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine" (1 Tim. 4:6). But we should keep in mind that all true doctrines come from Christ, should be centered on Christ, and should lead to Christ. Merely sharing doctrinal information—the theory of our religion—with others is not in the fullest sense witnessing. We may call it teaching or indoctrinating, but should not call it witnessing. There is a difference between sharing "the truth" and sharing "the Truth."

"A belief in the theory of the truth is not enough. To present this theory to unbelievers does not constitute you a witness for Christ."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 370, 371.

TUE

What does make us witnesses for Christ? John 3:11; 1 John 4:12-14.

"All who would enter the city of God must during their earthly life set forth Christ in their dealings. It is this that constitutes them the messengers of Christ, His witnesses."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 23.

Witnessing sets forth Christ. Jesus did not say, theory, information, facts—if they be lifted up, they will draw all men unto Me. He said, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32).

THINK IT THROUGH: Is it possible for me to share the factual information of my religion with someone without knowing Christ? Is it possible for me to introduce someone to Jesus if I do not know Him?

Witnessing sometimes is assumed to be sharing with others our doctrinal beliefs. It also is sometimes assumed to be sharing with others the plan of salvation. But again, there is a difference between telling about how Jesus saves us, and letting others see what Jesus has done in us and for us. We come back again to the fact that a witness is someone who testifies about what he knows by personal observation and experience. In his first epistle, John wrote: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life. . . . That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you" (1 John 1:1, 3).

ILLUMINATION: "As witnesses for Christ, we are to tell what we know, what we ourselves have seen and heard and felt. If we have been following Jesus step by step, we shall have something right to the point to tell concerning the way in which He has led us. We can tell how we have tested His promise, and found the promise true. We can bear witness to what we have known of the grace of Christ. This is the witness for which our Lord calls, and for want of which the world is perishing."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 340.

"So everyone . . . can bear witness to that which he himself has seen and heard and felt of the power of Christ. He can testify:

"I needed help, and I found it in Jesus. Every want was supplied, the hunger of my soul was satisfied; the Bible is to me the revelation of Christ. I believe in Jesus because He is to me a divine Saviour. I believe in the Bible because I have found it to be the voice of God to my soul."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 461.



III. THE METHOD OF WITNESSING (John 1:43-46).

"If we have tasted and seen that the Lord is good we shall have something to tell. Like Philip when he found the Saviour, we shall invite others into His presence."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 78.

THINK IT THROUGH: In order to really enjoy witnessing, we need to know not only *what* to share, but *how* to share it. What methods should we use in witnessing for Christ?

Many of us have attended witnessing classes or seminars to learn the "how" of witnessing. Such classes sometimes are heavy on technique and preparation. We learn how to be ready for tough questions in a Bible study. We learn how to overcome objections. We role-play knocking on doors. We memorize key texts and prophetic charts. Giving Bible studies, going house-to-house, distributing literature—all of these things are important, needed, and vital. They are effective avenues of Christian service. But no matter how beautiful, needed, and truthful the theory of our faith is, the most effective way of witnessing is to share what we have found in our personal experience with Jesus and have discovered for ourselves in His Word. Many Christians are afraid to witness, fearing that they do not know enough to answer all the questions people might ask. But if we talk of witnessing in terms of what Jesus has done for us, we are the experts on that subject.

You do not have to be able to diagram the 2300-day prophecy and know 200 key texts by memory and read Hebrew and Greek in order to be able to tell someone else what Jesus means to you and what He has done for you. You do not have to have the gift of teaching or be a thoroughgoing extrovert or be able to speak with persuasive eloquence in order to share the simple story of Christ's love and how you are responding to His love. When people have fallen in love with Jesus, they will be ready and eager to learn the last-day truths God has given us to share with them.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Many people fear witnessing to total strangers. Read John 1:40, 41 and Mark 5:19. What conclusions do you draw from these verses?

Some people say that they are afraid to witness. Perhaps even more common is the excuse that we do not have the time. But "this objection is often based on the misconception that witnessing is a major addition to our daily schedule, of going out to spend perhaps hours talking to strangers or passing out tracts. But for one who is in relationship with Jesus and has something to tell, witnessing becomes a way of life. It does not necessarily involve an extra amount of time to speak of Jesus to family and friends in our daily contact with them."—Morris Venden, *To Know God*, (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1983), p. 69.



A Way of Life. When we begin to see witnessing as not just certain narrowly defined activities but as a way of life, we will begin to discover the genuine pleasure that can be ours in witnessing. Our success in witnessing lies not so much in what we *say* as on what we *are*.

Two primary methods of witnessing are available to us. We can witness by what we say and by how we live.

What can we learn from the effective way that Philip witnessed to Nathanael? John 1:46.

"Philip said to Nathanael, 'Come and see.' He did not ask him to accept another's testimony, but to behold Christ for himself. Now that Jesus has ascended to heaven, His disciples are His representatives among men, and one of the most effective ways of winning souls to Him is in exemplifying His character in our daily life. Our influence upon others depends not so much upon what we say as upon what we are. Men may combat and defy our logic, they may resist our appeals; but a life of disinterested love is an argument they cannot gainsay. A consistent life, characterized by the meekness of Christ, is a power in the world."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 141, 142.

If we have a growing, personal relationship with Jesus, we too will want to speak to others about Him.

ILLUMINATION: "No sooner is one converted than there is born within him a desire to make known to others what a precious friend he has found in Jesus."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 141.

Those of us who truly know and love Jesus will be unable to keep silent about Him. We somehow will find words to express how we feel about our closest Friend and why we love and want to serve Him.

ILLUMINATION: We witness not only with our lips but with our lives. "The revelation of Christ in your own character will have a transforming power upon all with whom you come in contact."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 129.

"There is an eloquence far more powerful than the eloquence of words in the quiet, consistent life of a pure, true Christian. What a man is has more influence than what he says."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 469.

Just as Jesus came to reveal in His life the Father's love, it is our privilege to reveal Christ's love in our lives. This does not mean that we will not visit people in their homes, distribute missionary literature, or hold Bible classes. It does mean that all that we do in these essential missionary activities will have greater effect because we add to our words winsome, Christlike lives.



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read Luke 10:1-24.

"When the matchless love of Christ is dwelt upon, His grace impresses the heart."—*Colporteur Ministry*, p. 42.

"There is nothing that Christ desires so much as agents who will represent to the world His Spirit and character. There is nothing that the world needs so much as the manifestation through humanity of the Saviour's love."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 419.

SUMMARY: When Jesus came to earth, He witnessed to His Father's love in both word and deed. Now it is our privilege to be witnesses to the Word and to the love and goodness of Christ. We share the message of Christ's love through our words, our missionary activities, and through the silent, powerful witness of our lives.

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

- What is the gospel according to me? What are people likely to learn about God by watching me and listening to me?
- In witnessing, is the influence of my life enough at the place where I work, or should I say something about Christ and my experience with Him?
- Try writing a letter to a few friends in which you tell them specifically what Jesus has done for you or share your personal testimony with a neighbor or friend this week.

NOTES:

Lord of the Impossible

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: The signs, or miracles, of Jesus in John's Gospel as described in such passages as John 2:1-11; 5:1-16; and 11:1-44.



MEMORY TEXT: "Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world" (John 6:14).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: When Jesus walked this earth, He gave witness to His Sonship by demonstrating that He was the undisputed Master over the impossible. Devils, disease, and even death retreated before Him. Food multiplied in His hands. The sea became a firm path beneath His feet. Today, Jesus still is the Lord who can make possible what we think of as impossible. Our frustration, hopelessness, and impotence vanish as we learn to trust Christ to do in and through us what we cannot do.

OVERVIEW—Jesus as Lord

| John 2:1-11 | John 5:1-6 | John 11:1-44 |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Over NATURE at the wedding at Cana | Over DISEASE at the pool of Bethesda | Over DEATH at the tomb of Lazarus |

INTRODUCTION: How many of us have decided at some time or other that certain people, problems, or circumstances might as well be written off as impossible? How many of us have decided that all we can do about an apparently hopeless situation is to give up on it?

It is as if we are saying that God can handle the big things—creating a universe, cutting a highway through the sea, resurrecting the dead—but that *our* problems are beyond His scope of interest.

The miracles Jesus performed during His ministry on earth were designed to stimulate faith in Him—and this they did in those who were open to the Spirit. But they served as well to drive home a special lesson. In his Gospel, John brings to view a large number of human needs and shows how Christ met them. He places side by side human inadequacy and God's all-sufficiency.

John's record of Christ's miracles awakens and nourishes our faith today just as the miracles did for his contemporaries. We, too, may learn, as we study these miraculous deeds of Jesus, that His ability is available to meet our inability—that where our resources end, His have only begun.

This fact was underscored by John's fellow writers of the gospel story. "With God," Matthew wrote, "all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26). Stating the same idea in the negative, Luke declared that "with God nothing shall be impossible" (Luke 1:37).

All things possible—nothing impossible. Do we really believe it? And if so, why should we ever consider writing off anything or anyone as hopeless?

“Take to Him everything that perplexes the mind. Nothing is too great for Him to bear, for He holds up worlds, He rules over all the affairs of the universe. Nothing that in any way concerns our peace is too small for Him to notice. There is no chapter in our experience too dark for Him to read; there is no perplexity too difficult for Him to unravel.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 100.

Do you face problems or circumstances in your life right now that seem impossible? Jesus is the Lord of the impossible. Wisely, however, He does not always intervene miraculously when we ask Him. But when He knows it is best, He will.

This week we will study three of the miracles of Christ recorded only by John. In each of these miracles Jesus does for people what they could not possibly do for themselves. Each of them demonstrates His lordship over powers or problems beyond human ability to change. We begin by looking at Christ's first recorded miracle which took place at a wedding reception in the small city of Cana.



I. LORD OVER NATURE—THE WEDDING AT CANA (John 2:1-11).

In studying this first of Christ's recorded miracles, let us begin at the end—with the last verse of John's account of it (2:11).

SEARCH AND LEARN: List the two results of Jesus' first miracle as recorded in verse 11:

1. _____
2. _____

As with all His miracles, Jesus intended that this miracle should reveal His glory. We could understand the word *glory* here to refer to Christ's power—and it is true that His miracles demonstrated supernatural, superhuman power. But quite likely the primary meaning of “glory” here is that which Ellen White so often attached to it as she equated *glory* with *character*. (See, for example, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 31; and *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 414.)

Jesus intended that each of His miracles should be a revelation of His character of love. Everything He ever did was for *us*. And since Jesus came to reveal in His own life the character of the Father, one purpose of each miracle was to reveal also the Father's love for His children. The basic message implicit in each miracle was, “We care about your needs and problems. We care about your happiness.”

Another purpose of this first miracle was to build faith in Christ's disciples. He knew that a fire storm of opposition would descend upon Him. He knew that the rabbis and priests would heap doubt upon His ministry because of their hatred for Him. The disciples would need strength to stand firm under all this.

Why was Jesus present at this particular wedding?

According to Ellen White, the bride and groom at the wedding in Cana were relatives of Joseph and Mary. (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 144.) As such, Mary was involved in the arrangements for the reception, which, as was customary, would last several days.

Jesus and His disciples also had been invited. Christ's baptism in the Jordan and His conflict with Satan in the wilderness immediately preceded the wedding and Jesus was now the object of no little curiosity, as attested by quiet whispers and sidelong glances.

Much to the consternation of those putting on the reception, the wine supply ran out before the feast was over. Then "the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine" (verse 3). This was not just a statement of fact on Mary's part. She was hinting that Jesus might do something to supply the need.

But "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come" (verse 4).



REACT: Does Christ's reply to His mother in John 2:4 seem rather abrupt and impersonal to you?

Actually, Christ's reply to His mother was respectful and courteous. "The phrase, 'What have I to do with thee?' was a common conversational phrase. . . . It means: 'Don't worry; you don't quite understand what is going on; leave things to me, and I will settle them in my own way.' Jesus was simply telling Mary to leave things to him, that he would have his own way of dealing with the situation."—William Barclay, *The Gospel of John*, vol. 1, (Phila.: The Westminster Press, 1975), pp. 97, 98.

Concerning the second part of Jesus' reply to Mary, Ellen White explains that, "In saying to Mary that His hour had not yet come, Jesus was replying to her unspoken thought,—to the expectation she cherished in common with her people. She hoped that He would reveal Himself as the Messiah, and take the throne of Israel."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 147.

Jesus proceeded to ask that six large stone waterpots be filled with water. Commentators disagree on the exact measure of the "firkin" mentioned in verse 6, but most put it at around eight or nine gallons. At "two or three firkins apiece" each waterpot must have held in the neighborhood of 20 to 30 gallons, making a total of about 120 to 180 gallons. This would indicate a large attendance at the reception.

"He saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast" (verse 8).

Having tasted the water made wine, the governor called the bridegroom aside and said, "Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now" (verse 10).

Was the wine Jesus made fermented or unfermented?

"The wine which Christ provided for the feast, and that which he gave the disciples as a symbol of His own blood, was the pure juice of the

grape. . . . It was Christ who in the Old Testament gave the warning to Israel, 'Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.' Prov. 20:1. And He Himself provided no such beverage."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 149.

This first miracle revealed Jesus as Lord over nature. From a human standpoint, turning water into wine is impossible. It is contrary to nature. But Jesus is Lord of the impossible—Lord over nature itself.

The miracle at Cana teaches us something else. "The gifts of Jesus are ever fresh and new. The feast that He provides for the soul never fails to give satisfaction and joy. . . . There can be no failure of supply. If you abide in Him, the fact that you receive a rich gift today insures the reception of a richer gift tomorrow."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 148.

Our supplies, our resources, may fail, but Christ's are inexhaustible.



II. LORD OVER DISEASE—THE POOL OF BETHESDA (John 5:1-16).

All of us need healing. Some of us need healing of body, mind, or emotions. All of us need healing of the soul.

In considering this dramatic story, we will focus on the miracle itself and not on the controversy that followed it. As can be said about all of Christ's miracles, the healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda illustrates what can happen when the supreme power of Jesus meets the utter helplessness of humanity.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Read John 5:4. Do you think this verse is stated as fact or as a reflection of a commonly believed legend of the time? (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 201.)

When Jesus arrived at the pool of Bethesda one Sabbath morning, He saw it surrounded with sufferers hoping to be cured. According to Ellen White, He longed to heal every one of them, but "He knew that such an act of healing would so excite the prejudice of the Jews as to cut short His work."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 202.

What one case of supreme wretchedness was Jesus unable to pass by? How long had the man been suffering? John 5:5, 6.

Jesus was moved to action even though the man's "disease was in a great degree the result of his own sin."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 202.

"Wilt thou be made whole?" Jesus asked (verse 6).

The man protested that whenever the waters of the pool moved, he had no one to help him in. Others less afflicted than he always stepped in first.

"Rise," Jesus commanded, "take up thy bed, and walk" (verse 8).

THINK IT THROUGH: Try to place yourself in the situation of the man beside the pool. Could you, would you, have responded to Jesus' command as he did?

“Immediately,” the Gospel says (verse 9), “the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked.” “Without question he sets his will to obey the command of Christ, and all his muscles respond to his will.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 203.

This thrilling miracle confirms Christ’s lordship over disease. It proves that with Jesus, there are *no* hopeless cases.

Today, Jesus is no less able and no less willing to heal us of our physical diseases. We are invited often in His Word to come to Him with our requests for healing—requests, not demands. We must always ask for healing subject to His will, realizing that He knows what is best for us.

Leslie Weatherhead, in his book, *The Will of God* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1944), discusses what he calls the three wills of God: His intentional, or original, will; His circumstantial will; and His ultimate will. God’s original will (before sin) and His ultimate will (after sin is no more) are the same—for instance, that no one ever suffer from disease. But in His circumstantial will (during the reign of sin)—as difficult as it may sometimes be for us to understand it—He may not always be able to do the best for all concerned by healing us. But we may rest assured that, if it can best glorify God, if it is the most wise and loving thing He can do for us, and if we are willing to obey His laws (including the laws of health), God will heal us.

Of even greater concern to Jesus than our physical healing is our spiritual healing. Every request for spiritual healing is granted immediately. To understand more clearly what Jesus wants to do in bringing us spiritual healing, read the quotation from *The Desire of Ages*, page 203 in the “Further Study and Meditation” section of this week’s lesson.

WED

III. LORD OVER DEATH: THE TOMB OF LAZARUS (John 11:1-44).

In our last section we observed that sometimes it is possible for God to be best glorified by our patient endurance of illness rather than by our healing. The experience of Job presents one of the chief examples of this principle in Scripture.

What has been said concerning Job also was true of Lazarus of Bethany. When Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus that Lazarus was sick, He responded, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby” (John 11:4).

Not unto death? Did not Lazarus die? He did, but the death Lazarus died as a result of his illness was neither the eternal oblivion of the second death nor the long night of rest in the tomb while awaiting the resurrection day at Christ’s second coming. It was instead a brief four-day rest deliberately permitted by Jesus in order that He might dramatically demonstrate His glory.

SEARCH AND LEARN: This study in John 11 is full of interesting verses. Locate the following and list the correct verses in the blanks:

- The shortest verse in the English Bible _____.
- One of Christ’s great “I AM” statements _____.
- Martha’s first words to Jesus after the death of Lazarus _____.
- Mary’s first words to Jesus after the death of Lazarus _____.

As this crowning miracle of Jesus is so well known, we will not follow the narrative here. Instead, let us focus on some of the significant thoughts that arise from a study of this passage.

As you have discovered already in the “Search and Learn” exercise above, the first words of both Mary and Martha to Jesus when they met Him after their brother’s death were identical: “Lord, if You had been here, Lazarus would not have died.”

This is confirmed by Ellen White: “Had Christ been in the sickroom, Lazarus would not have died; for Satan would have had no power over him. Death could not have aimed his dart at Lazarus in the presence of the Life-giver.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 528.



What is the meaning of these words in John 11:26: “Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” (Emphasis supplied.)

Seventh-day Adventists do not accept the teaching that human beings are immortal by nature—that at death the soul survives the body and remains conscious and aware. On the other hand, we need to make a distinction between eternal life and immortality as we consider the significance of Christ’s teaching that those who live and believe in Him “shall never die.”

There is indeed a sense in which those who are *in* Jesus never die. “Christ became one flesh with us, in order that we might become one spirit with Him. It is by virtue of this union that we are to come forth from the grave,—not merely as a manifestation of the power of Christ, but because, through faith, His life *has become ours*. Those who see Christ in His true character, and receive Him into the heart, *have* everlasting life. It is through the Spirit that Christ dwells in us; and the Spirit of God, received into the heart by faith, is the *beginning of the life eternal*.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 388. (Emphasis supplied.)

The life that Christ imparts to believers is eternal life. Paul said, “I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Gal. 2:20). So, in some mysterious way that we may not fully understand, but must nonetheless accept as true, our life is replaced at conversion by a new life—the eternal life of Jesus, the life that He lives in and through us. “For ye are dead, and your life [the eternal life of Jesus] is hid with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3). Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life” (John 6:47). (See also 1 John 5:11, 12.)

When we die, the eternal life of Jesus which has become ours remains hidden with Him in God until the day of the resurrection. As long as we live in Christ and His Spirit dwells within us, we *have* His kind of life—eternal life. But we do not yet have immortality. We still are subject to the first death that Jesus called a “sleep.” Immortality is given to Christ’s people at the second coming. (See 1 Cor. 15:52-55.)

INTERPRET: In your own words, describe what you think Jesus meant to convey by describing death as “sleep.” (See verses 11-14.)

We also learn from this miracle that death is a defeated enemy. In the resurrection of Lazarus, and later in the resurrection of Jesus Himself, we read the promise of our own resurrection should we sleep in the grave awhile before He returns.

No tomb can be built that will keep its captive when Jesus shouts, "Come forth!" He is Lord even of the greatest impossibility of them all—that a human being, having died, should rise to live again. What love! What power! What a God!

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: "By sin we have been severed from the life of God. Our souls are palsied. Of ourselves we are no more capable of living a holy life than was the impotent man capable of walking. There are many who realize their helplessness, and who long for that spiritual life which will bring them into harmony with God; they are vainly striving to obtain it. . . . Let these desponding, struggling ones look up. The Saviour is bending over the purchase of His blood, saying with inexpressible tenderness and pity, 'Wilt thou be made whole?' He bids you arise in health and peace. Do not wait to feel that you are made whole. Believe His word, and it will be fulfilled. Put your will on the side of Christ. Will to serve Him, and in acting upon His word you will receive strength. Whatever may be the evil practice, the master passion which through long indulgence binds both soul and body, Christ is able and longs to deliver."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 203.

SUMMARY: The miracles of Jesus generated faith in His divinity. They provided strong evidence that He was exactly who He claimed to be. But to us today, who may not need so much to be convinced of His divinity, Christ's miracles have an added significance. They tell us that He is the One who can do for us that which we cannot do for ourselves. They tell us that as long as we trust to His awesome power, nothing is ever hopeless or impossible. They tell us that Jesus delights to show His love for us by exercising His power on our behalf.

APPLICATION:

- Will Jesus refuse to heal us if our illness is the result of our own sin? Will He refuse to help us with our problems if they are our own fault? What does the miracle at the pool of Bethesda say to you about this?
- When the supply of wine ran out at the wedding reception in Cana, Jesus replenished it. Have you run out of something lately—courage, health, money, peace in your home? Can you trust Jesus to renew your supply according to your needs?
- Have you ever prayed for healing—for yourself or someone else—and your prayer seemed not to be answered? How did that make you feel about God? How have you learned to accept His will?
- As Lord of the impossible, Jesus has power to solve any problem. Do you believe that in some cases He may not solve your problem or take it away, but instead, give you something just as valuable—courage and grace to live with the problem?

A Congregation of One

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: The personal conversation of Jesus with individual people, as recorded in such passages as John 3:1-21; 4:5-42; and 21:15-23.



MEMORY TEXT: "Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:13, 14).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus always has been and still is tremendously interested in people. He enjoys relating to people on a one-to-one basis as well as in groups. He likes to get to know us individually. While ministering here on earth, He often shared truth with just one person or with a small group. Some of His most profound thoughts were communicated to one-person audiences. Some of His greatest sermons were delivered to a congregation of one.

| OVERVIEW—Three Personal Conversations | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| John 3:1-21 | John 4:5-42 | John 21:15-23 |
| The night visit of Nicodemus | The woman of Samaria | Peter changes careers |

INTRODUCTION: Fifteen-year-old Charles trudged along in the falling snow on his way to church. After visiting a different church every weekend, trying to find one where he could learn how to be a Christian, he was almost in despair.

When he saw that the storm was growing fierce, he realized that he would never make it to the church he had chosen; so he turned aside into an obscure chapel. Stepping in, he sat down and waited. Presently a tall, thin man shuffled to the pulpit.

"Looks as if our minister has been held up by the weather," he began. "Reckon you'll have to put up with me. Now I'll take a text like all preachers do," the homely man continued. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" (Isa. 45:22).

"Why, he can't even pronounce his words properly," young Charles thought to himself as he shivered in his pew. Looking around, he noticed that only a handful of worshipers were scattered throughout the sanctuary.

The substitute preacher apparently knew nothing about how to preach. Stumbling for something to say, he began to repeat the words of his text in various ways.

"The text says 'Look,' " he droned. "Now, lookin' don't take a great deal of pains. It ain't liftin' your foot or finger. It's just 'Look'."

He repeated the same thought several more times in different ways, and the bored audience shifted uncomfortably in their pews. As the speaker collected his thoughts, he spotted Charles.

"Young man, you look miserable," he shouted. "Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look!"

Charles looked, with his mind's eye, and suddenly he saw. As he would describe it later, "I saw at once the way of salvation. I looked until I could have almost looked my eyes away. The darkness rolled away, and I saw the sun."

So it was that a nervous, awkward, fill-in preacher brought life in Christ to Charles H. Spurgeon, who became known as the prince of preachers.

With millions to be reached for Christ, it may sometimes seem to us that communicating the gospel to only a small group—or even to one person at a time—is an appallingly inefficient waste of time. But Jesus, too, had the entire world to reach. Yet He spent large amounts of His time ministering to small groups and in one-to-one encounters. Most of His time and effort, in fact, went not to mass outreach but to pouring His knowledge and values into just twelve men.

Personal labor was Christ's method. "His work was largely made up of personal interviews. He had a faithful regard for the one-soul audience. Through that one soul the message was often extended to thousands."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 229.

Jesus did not save His most important messages for His largest crowds. In fact, many of His deepest insights were shared with just a few—or with one person alone.

This week we will review three of Christ's one-person encounters as recorded by John, focusing especially on the truths that He shared with each of them.



I. THE NIGHT VISIT OF NICODEMUS (John 3:1-21).

Nicodemus the Pharisee, a member of the ruling body, the Sanhedrin, was intensely curious about this Jesus of Nazareth whose words and deeds were so full of power.

Having heard Jesus speak, Nicodemus studied again the prophecies of the coming Messiah and became convinced that Jesus was indeed the Anointed One. He wanted very much to have a talk with Christ but knew that if he went to see Jesus openly he would be ridiculed and denounced by his fellow Jewish rulers.

So Nicodemus sought out Jesus at night. "Rabbi," he began, "we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him" (verse 2).

Trying not to let Jesus know about his convictions, Nicodemus referred to Him simply as a "teacher come from God."

What did Jesus do for Nicodemus that was far better than simply satisfying his curiosity and his desire for a religious dialogue? John 3:3.

Understanding the conviction resting upon Nicodemus and his true purpose for coming, Jesus came directly to the point. "What you need," He told Nicodemus, "is to be born again."

ILLUMINATION: "He said to Nicodemus, It is not theoretical knowledge you need so much as spiritual regeneration. You need not to have your curiosity satisfied, but to have a new heart."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 171.

THINK IT THROUGH: Is it possible to avoid becoming personally involved with Christ by exploring and discussing the theory of religion? Is it possible to hold Jesus off at arm's length by talking *about* Him rather than to Him?



What kind of reasoning prompted Nicodemus to ask the questions recorded in John 3:4?

Nicodemus knew that Christ's reference to being born again was not to be taken literally. He knew that Jesus was talking about a complete transformation of his inner being. Stung and irritated at the implication that his Jewish blood and his good works as a Pharisee were not enough to guarantee him a place in God's kingdom, Nicodemus tried to argue that the kind of change Jesus speaks of is impossible.

It is as if Nicodemus in verse 4 is saying, "It would be terrific to be able to be radically changed in the way You are suggesting—to start all over again. There is nothing I would like more. But let's face it—that is a sheer impossibility. Can physical birth be repeated? Of course not. So you might as well tell me to go back and be born from my mother's womb as to tell me to be spiritually reborn." Instead of trying to meet his argument, Jesus simply pressed home His point with greater force, as we read in verses five through eight. Finally, in verse nine, Nicodemus' question no longer was, "Is the new birth possible?" but rather, "How is it possible?"

The heart of Christ's answer on how to be born again can be found in verses 14-17. He told Nicodemus that the Son of man must be lifted up so that His love could be clearly seen and experienced.

ILLUMINATION: "How, then, are we to be saved? . . . The light shining from the cross reveals the love of God. His love is drawing us to Himself. If we do not resist this drawing, we shall be led to the foot of the cross in repentance for the sins that have crucified the Saviour. Then the Spirit of God through faith produces a new life in the soul."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 175, 176.

THINK IT THROUGH: The new birth is the result of beholding Jesus and His love lifted up before us. What can we do to be sure that Christ is lifted up in our lives?

One of the most vital subjects any human mind can contemplate is that of the new birth. Yet Jesus first revealed it to just one man. "In the interview with Nicodemus, Jesus unfolded the plan of salvation and His mission to the world. In none of His subsequent discourses did He explain so fully, step by step, the work necessary to be done in the hearts of all who would inherit the kingdom of heaven."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 176.

TUE

II. THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA AT JACOB'S WELL (John 4:5-42).

The conversation of Jesus with the Samaritan woman follows the same pattern as did His conversation with Nicodemus:

1. The conversation is initiated.
2. Jesus makes a statement.
3. The statement is taken in the wrong sense.
4. Jesus remakes the statement even more vividly.
5. It is still misunderstood.
6. Then Jesus compels His hearer to discover and face the truth.

SEARCH AND LEARN: See if you can locate the verses or passages in John 4 that correspond to numbers two through six above:

1. Verses 7-9.

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

Again, we will not follow verse-by-verse this familiar narrative. Instead, let us notice a few interesting lessons that emerge from this story.

Notice the reality of Christ's humanity. "Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well" (verse 6). "He became flesh, even as we are. He was hungry and thirsty and weary. He was sustained by food and refreshed by sleep. He shared the lot of man; yet He was the blameless Son of God."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 311.

WED

How did Jesus initiate His conversation with the Samaritan woman? Why do you think He chose this particular approach? John 4:7.

A 400-year-old feud between the Jews and the Samaritans still smoldered, as the woman would make clear in verse 9: "The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." Because of this, Jesus knew that it was unlikely that the woman would strike up a conversation with Him; in fact, she went about filling her waterpot as if He were not even there. And Jesus knew that the woman would neither offer nor ask of Him any favors. So He asked a favor instead of offering one.

THINK IT THROUGH: Jesus “was searching to find the key” to the Samaritan woman’s heart. (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 184). Do we follow His example—carefully studying, observing, and listening to the people we would win to Christ in order to find the key to their hearts?

Another thing we learn from this story is that Jesus constantly worked to tear down barriers. His love broke through the wall of hostility that separated the Jews and the Samaritans. Small wonder that the Samaritan woman was astonished that Christ should speak to her. Yet Jesus spoke not only to a Samaritan woman but to a Samaritan woman of questionable character. All barriers that divide humanity—race, sex, nationality, social or economic standing—come crashing down before the omnipotent love of Jesus Christ.

What significance do you see in what Jesus said to the woman about the water of life? John 4:10-15.

Jesus indeed is the “living water”; and when He lives in us He is like a well of water within us, constantly satisfying our spiritual thirst.

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



III. PETER CHANGES CAREERS (John 21:15-23).

As a result of his conversation with Jesus on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, Peter changed his career from fisherman to shepherd. True, he would continue to fish for souls (see Matt. 4:18, 19), but now Jesus placed upon him the special ministry of caring for His sheep.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Fill in the remainder of the chart below, comparing the three exchanges between Peter and Jesus in John 21:15-17.

| Verse | Christ’s Question | Peter’s Response | Christ’s Commission |
|-------|-----------------------------------|--|---------------------|
| 15 | “Lovest thou me more than these?” | | |
| 16 | | “Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee” | |
| 17 | | | “Feed my sheep” |

“Three times Peter had openly denied his Lord, and three times Jesus drew from him the assurance of his love and loyalty, pressing home that pointed question, like a barbed arrow to his wounded heart. Before the assembled disciples Jesus revealed the depth of Peter’s repentance, and showed how thoroughly humbled was the once boasting disciple.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 812.

In their first exchange, Jesus asked Peter if he loved his Lord more than did the other disciples. Not long before Peter had declared, “Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended” (Matt. 26:33). In his answer to Christ’s question, Peter gave evidence that he was a changed man. There was no boasting that time—just a calm and sincere statement of his love for his Lord. And Jesus replied, “Feed my lambs” (verse 15).

“The first work that Christ entrusted to Peter on restoring him to the ministry was to feed the lambs. . . . It called him to minister to those who were young in the faith.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 812.

Again, Jesus questioned Peter—this time without asking him whether he loved his Lord more than did the other disciples. Again Peter’s response was genuine and free of pride. Christ’s commission to Peter then became, “Feed my sheep” (verse 16).

One last time Jesus put His question to Peter. Fearing now that Jesus doubted his love, and well aware that Jesus certainly had good reason to distrust him, Peter earnestly replied, “Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee” (verse 17). As before, Jesus told Peter to feed His sheep.

ILLUMINATION: “The Saviour’s manner of dealing with Peter had a lesson for him and for his brethren. It taught them to meet the transgressor with patience, sympathy, and forgiving love. Although Peter had denied his Lord, the love which Jesus bore him never faltered. Just such love should the undershepherd feel for the sheep and lambs committed to his care. Remembering his own weakness and failure, Peter was to deal with his flock as tenderly as Christ had dealt with him.

“The question that Christ had put to Peter was significant. He mentioned only one condition of discipleship and service. ‘Lovest thou Me?’ He said. This is the essential qualification. Though Peter might possess every other, yet without the love of Christ he could not be a faithful shepherd over the Lord’s flock. Knowledge, benevolence, eloquence, gratitude, and zeal are all aids in the good work; but without the love of Jesus in the heart, the work of the Christian minister is a failure.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 815.

Later in Peter’s life, what name would he use in referring to Jesus? (See 1 Peter 5:2-4.)

Having revealed Peter’s humility and repentance to the other disciples, Jesus “walked alone” with Peter, according to Ellen White. (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 815.) In John 21:18, 19 Jesus gently revealed to Peter how he would eventually die. And “when at last brought to the cross, he was, at his own request, crucified with his head downward. He thought it

too great an honor to suffer in the same way as his Master did.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 816.

What a change we see in impetuous, independent Peter! In the years to come the effectiveness of this personal conversation with Jesus would be witnessed by those to whom he ministered.



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:

1. After his nighttime interview with Jesus, Nicodemus made two later appearances in John's Gospel—John 7:50, 51; and 19:38-42. Read these two passages to see if you can find evidence that he *was* born again.

2. Consider again the value Jesus attached to working with individuals or small groups:

“The Saviour did not wait for congregations to assemble. Often He began His lessons with only a few gathered about Him, but one by one the passers-by paused to listen, until a multitude heard with wonder and awe the words of God through the heaven-sent Teacher. The worker for Christ should not feel that he cannot speak with the same earnestness to a few hearers as to a larger company. There may be only one to hear the message; but who can tell how far-reaching will be its influence? It seemed a small matter, even to His disciples, for the Saviour to spend His time upon a woman of Samaria. But He reasoned more earnestly and eloquently with her than with kings, councilors, or high priests. The lessons He gave to that woman have been repeated to the earth's remotest bounds.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 194, 195.

SUMMARY: John makes clear that Jesus enjoyed one-to-one encounters with people. He still does. Through His Word and through prayer, we too may enjoy private two-way communication with Christ today just as truly as did Nicodemus, the woman of Samaria, and Peter. The fact that Jesus placed such great value on personal encounters should certainly weigh heavily with us as we consider how to go about our own soul-winning efforts.

APPLICATION:

- You cannot live if you have never been born. And you cannot live the Christian life if you have never been born again. Yet many people try. If you have been born again, contrast your efforts to live the Christian life before and after your new birth.
- What can you do to help ensure that new members who come into your church are definitely born again, not just indoctrinated?
- You may be afraid to talk to a large crowd about spiritual things, but do you think you could comfortably share Jesus with just one other person? Do you believe that if you asked Jesus to bring you together with just one seeking person a week, He would do so?
- Can you think of ways to make other people thirsty for the water of life?
- Even though Jesus knew the sordid details of the Samaritan woman's life He still loved and accepted her. In spite of whatever you may have done, do you believe that Jesus loves and accepts you fully?

Extravagant Love

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: The love of God in John's Gospel as expressed in such verses as John 3:16; 13:34, 35; 15:13.



MEMORY TEXT: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: In expressing His love to us, God has been extravagant, lavish, profuse. Attempting to discover the bounds of His love is futile, for it is limitless. But something of its vastness can be seen in the gift of His Son. After demonstrating this love in action, Jesus said that His followers could be identified by how they loved one another.

OUTLINE:

- I. Extravagant love (John 3:16).
- II. No greater love (John 15:13).
- III. Channels of love (John 13:34, 35).

INTRODUCTION: Businessmen are keenly interested in "the bottom line." After balancing earnings against expenses, is the figure at the bottom of the column black or red? A profit or a loss?

The bottom line on God's record always is red. Outgo always exceeds income. When it comes to love God is a most generous spender. As God's gift, Jesus gave Himself away, almost recklessly investing His life for us.

Jesus did not give only as He received. He did not love only those who loved Him. He did not parcel out His affection only to those who could return it.

Those about Him could neglect, reject, and ignore Him. They could taunt, abuse, and betray Him. They could scourge, wound, and crucify Him. But to all of this, His only response was more love. The worst that people could do to Him could never exceed His best. Where hatred abounded, His love abounded even more.

Our world today is filled with people hungry and searching for love. Love is the major theme of most popular songs and of many books, films, and other forms of entertainment. But what often passes for love merely is a faint reflection or even a perversion of real love. Human love is tainted with selfishness. It gives in order to get. Love often is confused with physical attraction or emotional excitement. The ardor of human love cools easily when frustrating obstacles are encountered—and dies out if not reciprocated.

The love of God is superior to human love in every way. Through the prophets God has tried to tell the human race what His love is like.

Through the sanctuary and its services God's love has been illustrated. Through His repeated and miraculous intervention on their behalf He has tried to tell His people that He cares for them.

But not until Jesus came did human beings see with their own eyes what God's love is like when lived out before them. To some God's law of love may have seemed as cold and rigid as the tables of stone upon which it was written until the law was lived out in human flesh. God knew that love in action would be more convincing than love in word.

Written now for each of us to read is the record of that brief time when Heaven came down and demonstrated to us what love really is like. Now all that is called love here on this earth may be measured and tested against that demonstration of the genuine article.

Most gratifying to each of us should be the realization that we need not settle for the deficiencies and inadequacies of human love. Just as Jesus was a voluntary channel through whom the Father poured out His love to His children, we can be channels today for the communication of Christ's love to those around us.

This week we are attempting a virtual impossibility. John himself found human language hopelessly inadequate to describe fully God's love and could only call upon his readers to behold it for themselves as it was exhibited in Christ's life and death. (See 1 John 3:1.)

In our study this week, let us not attempt so much to describe or analyze God's love as to simply behold it as it is revealed to us in John's Gospel. As you study, contemplate the crimson drops at the foot of the cross as they are found in the incomparable words of a text you may have memorized years ago.

NOTES:



I. EXTRAVAGANT LOVE (John 3:16).

THINK IT THROUGH: For many, this text is the best-loved verse in the Bible. On the line below, write down what it means to you:

The words of John 3:16 form part of Jesus' answer to the question Nicodemus asked about how the new birth could take place. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness," Christ explained, "even so must the Son of man be lifted up" (verse 14).

Then in verses 15 and 16 Jesus said that whoever saw Him lifted up and believed in Him would be saved. Jesus knew that the only thing powerful enough to turn anyone from self to Christ would be a clear view of God's love. The clearest demonstration of God's love this world has ever seen was the gift of God's only-begotten Son.

SEARCH AND LEARN: This magnificent verse is built around ten great words. These ten words can be divided into five significant pairs. Choose pairs of words from the list on the right which best correspond to the five ideas stated below and write them in the blanks provided:

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 1. The supreme Giver and the supreme Gift. _____ | God Loved World |
| 2. The two expressions of divine benevolence. _____ | Gave Son Whosoever |
| 3. The objects of God's love and giving. _____ | Believeth Perish Have |
| 4. What all are invited to do in response. _____ | Life |
| 5. The two extremes of human destiny. _____ | |

Distilled in the words of John 3:16 is the very essence of the gospel. Although it doubtless is the most familiar verse in God's Word, it also is one of the most instructive.

What are some of the lessons available for us in John 3:16?



1. We are told that the initiative in our salvation lies with God. Sometimes the idea gains support that God is rather impatient with the rebels here on earth and that only through Christ's intercession is He reluctantly persuaded to forgive. A common idea is that Jesus succeeded in doing something to change God's attitude toward humanity from that of condemnation to that of forgiveness. But John 3:16 clearly states that "God loved . . . so much that *he* gave" (NEB, emphasis added).

2. We learn that God's love is extravagant. It embraced "the world"—every member of the human race. No one has been left out of His saving provision. And God's love also is extravagant in that He gave away "his only begotten Son"—the greatest gift He could possibly give.

3. We notice that the words that Jesus used here are all-inclusive: "the world" and "whosoever." Everlasting life, then, is available for all of us. John 3:16 is a verse not only to be appreciated but to be *appropriated*. We are privileged to personalize this verse. As the children often sing in Sabbath School, "'Whosoever' surely meaneth me."

4. We notice in John 3:16 the simplicity of the gospel. God does not ask us to master the complexities of theological thought and terminology in order for salvation to be ours. Neither does He ask us to travel a path of ritual and involved religious duty to arrive at heaven's doors. In the stark simplicity of John 3:16, everlasting life is the result of believing in Jesus—trusting fully in Him. If all that we had of the Bible were this one verse, it would be enough for even a child to find the path to life.

5. Others: _____



THINK IT THROUGH: The words “only begotten” in John 3:16 are translated from a word meaning “unique”—the only one of its kind. In what ways do you see Jesus as being unique?

II. NO GREATER LOVE (John 15:13).

January 13, 1982—Air Florida’s flight 90 roared off the runway of Washington’s National Airport, straining skyward. But the extra weight of ice on wings and fuselage was too much. The airplane shuddered, then began losing altitude. Seconds later it slammed into the Fourteenth Street Bridge and plunged into the icy Potomac River.

Although several years now have passed, those who watched the television coverage of that disaster will retain one scene in their memory.

As a rescue helicopter lowered a line to survivors in the water, one man grasped the line and passed it to someone else nearby in the freezing river. Soon the helicopter returned and again lowered the line to him. Again he passed the line to a struggling fellow passenger.

Five times the line was brought within his reach—and five times he passed it to someone else. When the helicopter returned the sixth time, the man was gone.

Such a singular display of selflessness, that a man should willingly give his own life that others might live, brought forth an outpouring of admiration and wonder for the anonymous “man in the water.”

Later, he would be positively identified by the U. S. Coast Guard as 46-year-old Arland D. Williams, Jr., a bank examiner from Atlanta, Georgia. On June 6, 1983, American President Ronald Reagan posthumously awarded him the Coast Guard Gold Lifesaving Medal. Arland Williams died for those who were strangers to him.

If it takes great love for a person to die for his friends (John 15:13)—or even for total strangers—what kind of love will lead a person to die for his enemies? Rom. 5:7, 8.

While we were yet sinners—while we were rebels and fugitives from the heart of love—Christ died for us. Such love is beyond comprehension. It is unparalleled. This universe will never see greater love than that displayed when Jesus willingly laid down His life that we might live.

What is the greatest evidence of God’s love for us? 1 John 4:9, 10.

The devil has done and will continue to do all that he can to keep sinners from beholding the love of God exhibited in the gift of His Son on Calvary. He has deceived some into believing that the death of Jesus was

the unnecessary fate of a not-so-skillful political activist. He has deluded others by suggesting that Christ's death was simply the martyrdom of an exceptional human teacher at the hands of jealous religious leaders.

Satan tempts even those who believe that Jesus died for sinners to think that Jesus has somehow lost interest in them—that He no longer cares.

How does the cross answer once and for all Satan's charges that God no longer cares for His people? Rom. 8:32.

The love that drove Jesus to the cross—the love that drove the Father to give up His only Son—that love has not abated in the least. Were it necessary, God would not hesitate a moment to give His Son again for even one sinner.

III. CHANNELS OF LOVE (John 13:34, 35).

Speaking in the upper room to His disciples for the last time, what special commandment did Jesus give them? Verse 34.

Jesus' commandment was not given just to the disciples. He intended it for His followers throughout the history of the church. But have you ever known a fellow Christian who was difficult—yes, nearly impossible—to love? Has someone in the church darkened your reputation behind your back? Has someone—either through malice or lack of tact—dealt a heavy blow to your already fragile sense of self-worth? Has someone treated you with such contempt as to ignore you totally?

Jesus says we must love even the unlovable. But how? The natural tendency of the human heart when faced with a command of God is to respond as did Israel at Sinai: "All the words which the Lord hath said will we do" (Ex. 24:3). Ten Commandments, Lord? No problem. Just say the word, and it is as good as done. But their firm resolve soon melted. They forsook their allegiance to the Lamb of God for a calf of gold.

Before we can obey any of God's commands, we must *choose* to obey. But choosing to obey is not enough to make obedience possible. "To will [choose] is present with me;" Paul wrote, "but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Rom. 7:18).

Some have said that "love is a decision." To the extent that this thought attempts to define love as far more than mere feeling or emotion, it is valuable. But love also is more than a decision or a choice to love.

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



Jesus called this commandment to love one another a “new” commandment. What was new about the new commandment? Compare John 13:34 with Lev. 19:18.

By His revelation of His Father’s character Jesus had opened before the world a new concept of love. Genuine, unselfish love has one Source alone in the universe. God is the *only* Source. “Love,” John wrote in his first epistle, “is of [from] God” (1 John 4:7). If God is the Source of all love, then none of us can originate it or call it into being by a simple decision of the will.

Neither can we love by trying to love. “We need not begin by *trying* to love one another. The love of Christ in the heart is what is needed. When self is submerged in Christ, true love springs forth spontaneously.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 266.

We do not love by *deciding* to love. We do not love by *trying* to love. We love by tapping into the Source of love and becoming channels of love. However, we must not wait until we feel like doing good to act. Actions often harness our feelings and direct them properly.

ILLUMINATION: “It is the privilege of every soul to be a living channel through which God can communicate to the world the treasures of His grace, the unsearchable riches of Christ. There is nothing that Christ desires so much as agents who will represent to the world His Spirit and 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 channels through which can be poured the holy oil to be a joy and blessing to human hearts.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 419.

In one sense we can never love one another. All we can do is to offer ourselves to God as channels through which *He* can do the loving. But when we do so, we must allow His love to go to work and must cooperate with Him in God-directed loving service for others.

THINK IT THROUGH: Jesus no longer is present physically here on earth. The only hands He has on this earth are our hands. The only feet He has are our feet. The only lips He has are our lips. His only arms are our arms. His only smiles are our smiles. If we will make ourselves daily available to Him, He will use our hands, feet, lips, arms, and smiles to bring love to a love-starved world. We will become channels through which His love can flow to those who need it most.



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:

1. In the first two sections of our lesson this week we considered the limitless infinity of God’s love. Ellen White captures something of the vastness of God’s love in the following comment:

“All the paternal love which has come down from generation to generation through the channel of human hearts, all the springs of tenderness which have opened in the souls of men, are but as a tiny rill to the boundless ocean when compared with the infinite, exhaustless love of God.

Tongue cannot utter it; pen cannot portray it. You may meditate upon it every day of your life; you may search the Scriptures diligently in order to understand it; you may summon every power and capability that God has given you, in the endeavor to comprehend the love and compassion of the heavenly Father; and yet there is an infinity beyond. You may study that love for ages; yet you can never fully comprehend the length and the breadth, the depth and the height, of the love of God in giving His Son to die for the world.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 740.

2. The third section of this week’s lesson focused on our great privilege of becoming channels of God’s love to others. Notice these additional comments from Ellen White on that privilege:

“Christ’s favorite theme was the paternal character and abundant love of God. This knowledge of God was Christ’s own gift to men, and this gift He has committed to His people to be communicated by them to the world.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 55.

“The church is the depository of the wealth of the riches of the grace of Christ, and through the church eventually will be made manifest the final and full display of the love of God to the world that is to be lightened with its glory.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 50.

“From the anointed ones that stand in God’s presence the fullness of divine light and love and power is imparted to His people, that they may impart to others light and joy and refreshing. They are to become channels through which divine instrumentalities communicate to the world the tide of God’s love.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 12.

SUMMARY: According to John 3:16, God gave because He loved. The very essence of God’s love is that it gives. It sacrifices. It hastens to meet the needs of others, ignoring the cost. Although we may be unable fully to understand such love, we surely can experience and appropriate it. And it is our privilege to be more than simply recipients of God’s love. We also may become channels through which that love can flow to others.

APPLICATION:

- When trouble strikes with the sudden fury of a hurricane, the temptation often follows to doubt God’s love. What can I do now to help me avoid questioning God’s love for me when tragedy or trial arrives?
- As I review my relationship with God, what two or three specific evidences can I recall that most clearly indicate His personal love for me?
- Have I ever asked God to love a seemingly unlovable person through me? If so, what was the result? If not, what am I waiting for?
- Is God more interested in how well I perform, or in how well I love? What is the relationship between the two?
- When I work to win souls, am I as eager for people to know God’s love as I am for them to know His truth? Is it possible that with some thought and effort, I could present each Bible truth in such a way that the predominant impression left upon the minds of my students would be the greatness of God’s love?
- If I were to spend an hour a day contemplating the love of God as seen in the life of Christ, what specific changes might I anticipate in my lifestyle, my priorities, and my outlook on life?

The Door to Forever

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: The theme of eternal life found in such verses as John 14:6; 17:3; and 6:47.



MEMORY TEXT: "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: When we receive Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, we receive the gift of eternal life. As long as we continue to let Him live out His life in us, eternal life is assured us.

OUTLINE:

- I. Eternal life in Jesus (John 14:6).
- II. Eternal life in knowing Jesus (John 17:3).
- III. Eternal life now (John 6:47).

INTRODUCTION: When a schoolboy asked his father to explain eternity, the father drew a short line and a circle on a piece of paper. The line, he said, represents an average human lifespan. It has a beginning, moves through time a short distance, then ends. The circle, on the other hand, has no beginning or end.

Later, in his academy mathematics course, the youth grappled with the concept of infinity. Then in college science classes he was fascinated when he studied about the many unsuccessful attempts that have been made to create a perpetual motion machine.

Eternity—infinity—forever—perpetual—is it even possible for the human mind to understand such concepts? To us, everything seemingly must have a beginning and an end. This week we will study another of John's key ideas—the theme of eternal life.

These days, if a person lives to be 100 years old, we think that he or she has lived a long time. But Methuselah lived nearly 1000 years. Yet 1000 years is only a moment compared to eternity.

Trying to imagine what it will be like to live forever is not easy. After a thousand, a million, a billion, a trillion years of life we still shall have eternity stretching out before us.

In our first lesson we discussed how Jesus always has been, with no beginning. Scientists now claim to be able to "see" billions of years back in time (through the measurement of certain light wave-lengths). Quasars (galaxy-like objects of exceptional brilliance which some scientists estimate are 15 billion light-years distant) have been photographed.

Jesus was alive when you were born. He was there hundreds of years before that. He was there when the earth began. Jesus, the Creator, was alive when the light we see today left those above-mentioned quasars 15

billion years ago. He was there 20 billion years ago. He was there 20 billion years before that. He always has been. Eternity cannot be measured in years or in time of any kind.

The theme of eternal life permeates the Gospel of John. When we studied John 1, we learned that this Jesus, who has no beginning, brings each of us the gift of life. Last week's study of John 3:16 reminded us again that the life He brings is everlasting or eternal life. Even though our limited minds may be unable to comprehend fully how long "eternity" is, the Lord still wants us to appreciate as much as we can how exceedingly valuable the gift of eternal life is.

We also need to appreciate the difference between the idea of eternal life and mere eternal existence. To exist forever would be no blessing at all if that eternity were one of boredom, loneliness, unsatisfied yearnings, and constant battles with sin and self.

But the eternal life that Jesus offers us is unlimited, not only in quantity but in quality. Far more than being merely prolonged existence, eternal life is invigorating, stimulating, and free of anything that would mar the quest for personal peace and fulfillment. Best of all, the greatest reward of eternal life is the privilege of intimate companionship with the three Persons of the Godhead.

Some of the best news that John shares with us is that eternal life is not something we must wait until the return of Jesus to experience. For us, eternal life can begin here and now.

So come—let us walk together through the door to forever.



I. ETERNAL LIFE IN JESUS (John 14:6).

Some years ago a familiar breakfast cereal box carried this message: "A prize in every package." It did not make for domestic peace when children in a large family had only one box of cereal. There was enough cereal, all right—but only one prize. And you could not purchase just the prize by itself. You had to buy the box of cereal to get it.

In much the same way, eternal life is not a free gift that you can receive just by itself. "This is the record," John says in his first epistle, "that God hath given to us eternal life, that this life is *in his Son*" (1 John 5:11). (Emphasis supplied.)

Because eternal life is *in* Jesus, the only way we can have it is to accept Jesus. We cannot have salvation without the Saviour. We cannot obtain the gift without the Giver. This is totally reasonable when we realize that eternal life is not a gift to us *from* Jesus. *He* is the gift. As our text for this section (John 14:6) says, Jesus *is* life—eternal life. (See also John 11:25.)

THINK IT THROUGH: "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life," Jesus said (John 6:54). What does this mean?

"To eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ is to receive Him as a personal Saviour, believing that He forgives our sins, and that we are complete in Him."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 389.

When we receive Jesus, we must receive Him totally. Today there are

some who would accept Jesus as their Saviour, but not as their Lord. They desire the gift of salvation He has made possible, but they do not want to submit to His lordship in their lives.

Many would accept Jesus hanging on the cross 2000 years ago as their Saviour without accepting Him here and now as their Master. But Jesus is not to be divided so conveniently. If He is to be accepted at all, He must be accepted as Saviour *and* Lord of all. He must be accepted not only in the past but in the present. He must be accepted not only for what He already has done *for* us but also for what He wants to do now *in* us.

Jesus will not be our Saviour if we remain our own masters. He must be all that He wants to be to us, or He will be nothing at all to us. If we have not accepted Him entirely, then we do not have the gift that is in Him—eternal life.

THINK IT THROUGH: Some think that salvation comes solely from accepting what Jesus already has done *for* us—*outside* of us, not what He wants to do now *in* us. Is it possible for us to accept Jesus as our Justifier without also accepting Him as our Sanctifier?

Jesus is indivisible. We cannot accept Him to *declare* us righteous without also accepting Him to *make* us righteous.

If Christ's work as Justifier is stressed to the near exclusion of His work as Sanctifier, the result will be that we will rejoice in Christ's pardon but experience little of His power. And if Jesus desires not only to make payment for our sins but to give us victory over them, what a tragedy it would be if we should feel content to settle for only part of what He has to give us!

On the other hand, if the work of Jesus as Sanctifier is given great emphasis while His work as Justifier receives little attention, the danger is that Christians may conclude erroneously that their salvation is somehow based on *their* behavior. Consequently, they will experience uncertainty and lack of assurance regarding their eternal life.

If we are to be complete in Him, He must be both Justifier and Sanctifier in our lives.



II. ETERNAL LIFE IN KNOWING JESUS (John 17:3).

Eternal life is not based on what we *do*. It is not based on what we *know*. It is based on *Whom* we know and what we do about that knowledge.

How does John substantiate this fact? John 17:3.

To know Jesus means far more than knowing *about* Him. We can learn enough about the life and teachings of Jesus to fill a library and still not know *Him*. We can become experts in Christology and not know Him. We may be able to discuss and debate and philosophize about Him without knowing Him. To really know Jesus means far more than just a casual acquaintance. For many, a friendship with Jesus lies not at the center but at the periphery of their lives. Their communication with Him is superfi-

cial, spasmodic, and sometimes quite formal. But to truly know Him is to have a growing relationship with Him and to allow Him to live out His life within us.

Knowing Jesus not only provides us with eternal life but is meant to be our greatest privilege and our highest joy. Knowing Him is not to be one goal among many others in our lives—it is to be the primary and driving pursuit of our existence. “Yea doubtless,” Paul testified, “and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord” (Phil. 3:8). Ellen White urged that “all our capacities are to be used in the work of becoming acquainted with Him.”—*Signs of the Times*, August 2, 1899.

SEARCH AND LEARN: In Psalm 139:1-6, you may discover how well God knows you. List in your own words at least five specific things that David says God knows about you:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



What was Paul's great desire in life? Phil. 3:10.

Perhaps few of us realize just how well we may get to know Jesus. The relationship He desires to have with us is doubtless far beyond anything we normally envision. Jesus desires a relationship based on unbroken communication, continual sharing, total openness, and constant togetherness. Jesus is preoccupied with us. We are never out of His thoughts. He will never be satisfied with anything less than the most profound intimacy between Himself and His followers. He constantly lavishes attention, love, care, and interest upon us.

And what does He hope to receive from us in return? He wants us to open up our lives totally to Him. He wants us to invite Him to share every experience and detail of our lives with Him. He wants us to let Him have access to all there is of us. He wants us to cultivate an awareness of His immediate presence with us throughout each day. He wants us to reflect fully His character of love to the world around us.

When Jesus comes, why will He say to some who have apparently worked quite diligently for Him: “I never knew you”? Matt. 7:21-23.

To know Jesus we must make and take time to spend with Him. The way we come to know Him is the same way that we get to know anyone else. We must communicate with Him.

When we talk about communicating with Christ, we usually think of prayer and Bible study. But too often these become merely routine religious exercises. In order to really know Jesus, we must have a specific purpose for prayer and Bible study. The purpose of our Bible study must not be so much to obtain information as to build a relationship. We build this relationship by opening our hearts fully to the influence of the Holy Spirit. Then as we study the Bible and pray, the Holy Spirit will help us apply the teachings of the Scriptures to our lives and to our needs.

What is the most significant purpose of prayer?

Our prayers must not be designed so much to place our requests before the Lord as to build our personal relationship with Him.

In communicating with God we need to spend more time listening than talking. We listen to God as He speaks to us through His servants—preachers, teachers, and other Christians—and by reading good Christian literature in addition to the Bible. We also come to know God better by working for Him. As He ministers to others through us, we come to learn what He truly is like.

Eternal life is found within a close, personal relationship with Jesus. To seek eternal life apart from this relationship is futile. To seek this relationship with Christ should be the all-consuming object of our lives.



III. ETERNAL LIFE IS NOW (John 6:47).

In his Gospel, John assures us repeatedly that those who believe in Jesus *have* (present tense) eternal life. If Jesus is eternal life, then when we invite Him into our hearts to begin living His life in us, the life He lives in us is the beginning of our eternal life. (Review the discussion on the distinction made between immortality and eternal life in section III of Lesson 4.)

ILLUMINATION: “As through Jesus we enter into rest, heaven begins here. We respond to His invitation, Come, learn of Me, and in thus coming we begin the life eternal.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 331.

“When Christ, *who is our life*, shall appear,” Paul wrote, “then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (Col. 3:4). (Emphasis supplied.)

THINK IT THROUGH: If we have the assurance of eternal life now, why are we cautioned against saying “I am saved”? (See the quotation from *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 314 that is included in the “Further Study” section.)

A careful study of the Spirit of Prophecy reveals that Ellen White’s primary concern in statements such as that quoted above is to counter the doctrine of eternal security—“Once saved, always saved.” She cautions us against claiming that we are beyond the devil’s reach—beyond the possibility of falling away from Christ. But she wants us to have the assurance of salvation. She states: “It is essential to have faith in Jesus, and

to believe you are saved through Him; but there is danger in taking the position that many do take in saying, 'I am saved.'"—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 373.

Remember again that eternal life is *in* Jesus. If we have Him—if we have a growing relationship of utter trust in Him—we *have* eternal life. As long as we are “in relationship” to Christ, we have eternal life. As long as we are connected to Him vitally, we have all the gifts, joy, and assurance that are in Him.

No one who presently lives apart from Jesus can claim honestly to have eternal life—even if he or she did trust in Christ at some point in the past. And no one who presently is connected to Christ should claim to have ultimate salvation while it still is possible that he or she could yet disconnect from Christ.



Although we cannot now claim to be saved beyond the possibility of falling away, can we have the assurance that we presently are in a saving relationship with Christ? 1 John 5:11, 12.

The fact that we should not presumptuously and prematurely claim salvation should not prevent us from rejoicing in the assurance of present salvation if we *now* trust fully in Jesus.

The warnings of Ellen White against presumptuous assurance were certainly not meant to deprive us of the right to enjoy a present and legitimate assurance of salvation. She wrote: “the perishing sinner may say: . . . ‘I am a sinner, and He died upon Calvary’s cross to save me. I need not remain a moment longer unsaved. He died and rose again for my justification, and He will save me *now*.’”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 392. (Emphasis supplied.)

God wants us to know that as long as we are looking daily to Jesus in faith, we can and should rejoice in the absolute assurance that—should our lives suddenly end—we would be among the saved. Nonetheless, because of the unfortunate inferences that accompany the phrase, “I am saved,” we would doubtless do well to seek other words with which to express our assurance.

REACT: John says that he wrote his first epistle “that ye may know that ye have eternal life” (1 John 5:13). If we can *know* that we have eternal life, it would surely seem that we ought to be able to say so. Suggest some alternative ways to say so other than using the words “I am saved.”

ILLUMINATION: The opposite of the second death is eternal life . . . which is represented in the Scriptures as being granted to the believer at the moment he accepts his Lord. . . . This gift the overcomer never loses. Physical dissolution at death and the state of unconsciousness between death and the resurrection do not deprive him of the gift. His life continues to be “hid with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3) to be translated into glorious immortality on the resurrection morn.



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:

1. In Section I this week, we noticed that when we accept Jesus as our eternal life, we accept Him also as our Justifier and Sanctifier. In the following statement, which paragraph describes Christ's work as our Justifier and which one His work as Sanctifier?

"We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God. But Christ has made a way of escape for us. He lived on earth amid trials and temptations such as we have to meet. He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned.

"More than this, Christ changes the heart. He abides in your heart by faith. You are to maintain this connection with Christ by faith and the continual surrender of your will to Him; and so long as you do this, He will work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure."—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 62, 63.

2. Meditate on the following comments relating to Section II of the lesson:

"The value of man is estimated in heaven according to the capacity of the heart to know God. This knowledge is the spring from which flows all power."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 354, 355.

"The knowledge of God as revealed in Christ is the knowledge that all who are saved must have. It is the knowledge that works transformation of character. This knowledge, received, will re-create the soul in the image of God. It will impart to the whole being a spiritual power that is divine."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 425.

3. Consider the following statement in the light of Section III:

"We are never to rest in a satisfied condition, and cease to make advancement, saying, 'I am saved.' When this idea is entertained, the motives for watchfulness, for prayer, for earnest endeavor to press onward to higher attainments, cease to exist. No sanctified tongue will be found uttering these words till Christ shall come, and we enter in through the gates into the city of God. . . . As long as man is full of weakness—for of himself he cannot save his soul—he should never dare to say, 'I am saved.'"—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 314.

SUMMARY: Eternal life is not an isolated gift that we receive apart from Jesus. John clearly teaches that eternal life is to be possessed only as we maintain a vital, personal relationship with Jesus. As long as we remain connected to Christ through the Holy Spirit, we possess the eternal life that is His and may enjoy the happy assurance of salvation.

APPLICATION:

- What is it that attracts me most about living forever?
- Is it possible for prayer and Bible study to become just another religious duty for me rather than a means of getting to know Jesus?
- Would I say that I *know* Jesus as well as I *know about* Him?

The Bush Still Burns

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: The "I AM" statements of Jesus as set forth in John 6:35; 10:11; and 15:1.



MEMORY TEXT: "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus, who identified Himself to Moses as the "I AM," reappears as the great "I AM" of John's Gospel. To His followers, He is the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, the Good Shepherd, the True Vine, and much more. Through these word pictures, Jesus offers Himself to us as the answer to our every question, the solution to our every problem, and the satisfaction of our every need.

OUTLINE:

- I. "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35).
- II. "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11).
- III. "I am the true vine" (John 15:1).

INTRODUCTION: Moses was certain that he was seeing things. A lone desert bush stood enveloped in flames. In all his years of herding sheep he had never seen anything like that. He moved closer, fascinated by the blazing display before him. Something was strange about this—something he could not quite explain. Suddenly he gasped involuntarily as there, through the fiery mantle, he saw leaves, twigs, branches—all totally untouched by the searing heat of what appeared to be a billowing inferno.

The bush was on fire—but it was not burning up!

As Moses stood transfixed, the Lord called to him from within the bush, instructing him to remove his shoes. Getting right to the point, God told Moses that he was to lead God's people out of Egypt.

"But why," Moses asked, "should they listen to me? What if I go to the children of Israel and tell them that You have sent me to deliver them, and they ask me Your name? What do I say then?"

"And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you" (Ex. 3:14).

The Hebrew word for the English translation "I AM" is the name *Yahweh*, which means "The self-existing One." He is the God who always was, is, and always will be. Do you need a God who will always be present in your life? Do you wrestle with discouragement, disappointment, or depression—with failure, fear, or frustration—with sin, sickness, or sadness? For all of our aching needs, for all of our struggles, for all of our burdens, Jesus is the Great "I AM," the God who is with us, the

eternal God who cared for us even before we were created. He is willing to unleash His unlimited power to perform miracles for us. He is willing to marshal all the resources of heaven and earth to solve our problems and meet our needs.

The bush that burned before the astonished eyes of Moses still was “burning” when John wrote his Gospel. Repeatedly, John introduces us to the Lord of the burning bush—the great I AM—who still communicates with us, saying:

“I AM the Bread of Life”—6:35

“Before Abraham was, I AM”—8:58

“I AM the Light of the World”—9:5

“I AM the Door of the Sheep”—10:7

“I AM the Good Shepherd”—10:11

“I AM the Resurrection and the Life”—11:25

“I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life”—14:6

“I AM the True Vine”—15:1

The great I AM still speaks to us, offering to meet our every need. This week we will not be able to study all of Christ’s “I AM” statements in detail, but will focus on three of them.



I. “I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE” (John 6:35).

The day after Christ multiplied the loaves and fishes to feed five thousand—the day after He walked on the sea—the curious crowd caught up with Him in the synagogue at Capernaum. “Rabbi,” they asked, “when camest thou hither?” (John 6:25).

How did Jesus get down to the heart of their problem in His reply? Verse 26.

Jesus did not answer their question. Instead, He told them why they had come. Ignoring their curiosity, He confronted them with their real motive in seeking Him.

The crowd had received a free meal from Jesus. Now they clung to the desperate hope that He might become their long-term provider. Incredibly, the spiritual significance of the previous day’s miracle had completely escaped them. The spiritual had been eclipsed totally by the material. Probably most of the people who had spent the entire day listening to Him were poor and, as a result, chronically hungry. Their lives consisted of a grueling effort to survive. They spent most of their time worrying about how they were going to get enough for their next meal.

THINK IT THROUGH: Do I ever seek Jesus for selfish reasons? If my motives for seeking Him are selfish, will He receive me anyway? How can I make sure that I am seeking Him for the right reasons?

How did Jesus attempt to convey a vision of deeper needs and higher priorities to the crowd whose horizon was filled with the continuing scramble for life’s necessities? John 6:27.

Jesus told them not to spend their lives in working just for food and their physical needs. Instead they were to work for something far better that brings eternal life. Although only dimly comprehending what He was saying, the crowd did at least understand such words as “labour” and “everlasting life.” “Then they said unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?” (Verse 28).

“They had been performing many and burdensome works in order to recommend themselves to God; and they were ready to hear of any new observance by which they could secure greater merit. Their question meant, What shall we do that we may deserve heaven? What is the price we are required to pay in order to obtain the life to come?”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 385.

To people whose continued existence depended on sheer hard work, it was inconceivable that eternal life should depend on anything other than a lifetime of good works.

What great principle did Jesus outline in His reply? John 6:29.

Jesus explained that their work was not the work of trying, but the work of trusting. Instead of choosing to accept the spiritual truth that Christ was attempting to teach them, the people changed the subject.

NOTICE in John 4:18-20 another instance of someone changing the subject when Jesus brought truth too close for comfort—in this case, the woman of Samaria at Jacob’s well.

Changing the subject, “They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?” (John 6:30). Let us not talk about our work anymore, they seemed to say. Let’s talk instead about Yours. Perform a miracle so that we can see and believe.

Is it really true, as is so often stated, that “seeing is believing”? Hardly. Believing is being sure even without seeing.



What did the people have in mind when they referred to the manna in John 6:31?

Just one day after witnessing a miraculous demonstration of the supernatural, the people now demanded that Jesus demonstrate the truth of His claims by performing a miracle—as if they did not still carry the evidence of just such a miracle in their own bodies.

“True,” they seemed to be saying, “You did feed us bread yesterday, but You fed us only once. Moses fed Israel for 40 years! You fed 5000. Moses fed a whole nation. You gave us plain, everyday bread. Moses gave Israel bread from heaven. Can you do anything as big as that?”

How did Jesus respond? What was the significance of His response? John 6:32, 33.

“First,” Jesus replied, “Moses did not give your ancestors bread—God did. Second, the manna, while it came from the sky, was not the true bread of God from heaven. The real bread of God from heaven itself is the Person who has come down to you from heaven.”

Still thinking that Jesus referred to temporal food—some of Christ’s hearers exclaimed, “Lord, evermore give us this bread” (verse 34). Pathetic blindness! Mysterious incomprehension!

Then, as indicated in the key verse of this section of our study, Jesus stripped the scales from their eyes. In words of thrilling magnificence, Jesus plainly declared, “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst” (verse 35).

SEARCH AND LEARN: Read John 6:48-71, then answer the following questions:

1. From verses 60, 61, and 66 it is clear that some of Christ’s followers were offended by what He said, even to the point of walking no more with Him. In verses 48 through 58, what was it that Jesus said that offended them so much, and why?

2. When the rabbis asked in verse 52, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” do you think they honestly understood Jesus to be speaking in literal terms, or were they just pretending to understand Him in that way? (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 389.)

NOTE

II. “I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD” (John 10:11).

Perhaps none of the figures by which Jesus represents Himself to us conveys the intimacy and tenderness of the relationship that He desires shall exist between Himself and His followers as fully as the metaphor of the Good Shepherd.

As we study this illustration we learn that we are the objects of unbounded care, constant protection, and total commitment to our welfare. And we discover just how much Jesus cares for the individual members of His flock.

What else may we learn as we consider this great “I AM” passage in John 10:1-18?

Immediately obvious in the first few verses of this chapter is how well the shepherd and the sheep know each other. The shepherd “callesth his own sheep by name” (verse 3).

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

“Every soul is as fully known to Jesus as if he were the only one for whom the Saviour died.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 479, 480.

Just as the shepherd knows his sheep, the sheep, too, know the shepherd. (See verses 4, 5.) Ellen White beautifully describes the reason that Christ’s sheep follow Him: “It is not the fear of punishment, or the hope of everlasting reward, that leads the disciples of Christ to follow Him. They behold the Saviour’s matchless love, revealed throughout His pilgrimage on earth, from the manger of Bethlehem to Calvary’s cross, and the sight of Him attracts, it softens and subdues the soul. Love awakens in the heart of the beholders. They hear His voice, and they follow Him.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 480.

THINK IT THROUGH: As followers of the Good Shepherd, how can we learn to distinguish between His voice and the voice of a stranger? (See John 10:4, 5.)



In John 10:7, Jesus says, “I am the door of the sheep.” Yet in verse 11, He says, “I am the good shepherd.” How can He be both the Shepherd and the Door of the sheepfold?

Sir George Adam Smith, who traveled extensively in the Middle East, once came across an Arab shepherd leading his sheep and fell into conversation with him. The shepherd showed him the fold into which the sheep were led each night. It consisted of four walls with an open space for an entrance.

“That is where the sheep go at night?” Sir George asked.

“Yes,” replied the shepherd, “and when they are inside, they are perfectly safe.”

“But there is no door,” observed Sir George.

“I am the door,” the shepherd answered.

This shepherd was not a Christian. He was not employing the language of the New Testament.

“What do you mean—you are the door?” Sir George persisted.

“When the light has gone,” the shepherd explained, “and the sheep all are inside, I lie down in that open space, and no sheep ever goes out but across my body, and no wolf ever comes in unless he crosses my body. I am the door.”—Adapted from G. Campbell Morgan, *The Gospel According to John* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, n.d.), p. 177.

INTERPRET: In John 10:10 Jesus said that thieves tried to enter the sheepfold only to steal, kill, and destroy. But He had come that His sheep might have life, “and that they might have it more abundantly.” Put into your own words what it means to have life more abundantly.

Jesus calls Himself the *Good* Shepherd, in contrast to the hireling shepherds who seek only wages and do not care much for the sheep. (See John

10:11-15.) Seeing a wolf coming, the hireling thinks only of saving his own skin; so he flees. But a true shepherd forgets his own safety in his concern for the defenseless sheep. If necessary, he will give his life to protect the flock.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Study John 10:11-15 and then list at least three differences between the Good Shepherd and the hireling:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



III. "I AM THE TRUE VINE" (John 15:1).

It is true of many parables, metaphors, and symbols that the figurative language correlates imperfectly with reality—that all details of the symbolism may not necessarily possess significance. But of the parable of the vine and the branches Ellen White wrote, "The figure of the vine is a perfect symbol."—*Signs of the Times*, March 10, 1887.

"Christ's connection with his believing people," she added later, "is illustrated by this parable as by no other."—*Review and Herald*, September 18, 1900.

As an emblem of Christ's relation to His believers, she said, this parable is a "most striking and appropriate symbol."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 230.

This great "I AM" statement of Jesus is so full of fascinating ideas and parallels that all we can do here is to briefly touch on two or three of the points that beg to be considered.

REFLECT on the word *abide*, which occurs seven times in the first eight verses of John 15.

When Jesus says, "abide in me" (verse 4), what does He mean?

A branch that "abides" in the vine is a branch that *stays connected* to the vine. To abide in Jesus, then, is to stay vitally, constantly connected to Him. "This is no casual touch, no off-and-on connection. The branch becomes a part of the living vine. The communication of life, strength, and fruitfulness from the root to the branches is unobstructed and constant. . . .

"The channel of communication must be open continually between man and his God."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 676.

THINK IT THROUGH: To abide in Christ is to keep the channel of communication with Him open continually. What are the chief hindrances that you have discovered that disrupt free and continuous communication between you and Christ?

Another central theme in this parable is that of fruit bearing. The natural result when a branch remains connected to a vine is that the branch bears fruit. Some maintain that the fruit mentioned in John 15 refers to souls won through our witnessing efforts. And while true fruitfulness in soul-winning can be ours only as we abide in Christ, the primary application of the fruit in this parable is to the fruit of the Spirit.

"The branch can maintain its connection with the living vine only on condition that it bear fruit. And the fruit borne on the Christian tree is 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.'"—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, March 10, 1887.

"The object of the Christian life is fruit bearing—the reproduction of Christ's character in the believer, that it may be reproduced in others."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 67.



What does this parable teach about the theme of utter dependence on Christ? Verse 5.

Please note that this verse does not say that *we are* nothing—or that we are *worth* nothing. It says that we can *do* nothing—that we are utterly powerless. Powerless to do what? "You are just as dependent upon Christ, in order to live a holy life, as is the branch upon the parent stock for growth and fruitfulness. Apart from Him you have no life. You have no power to resist temptation or to grow in grace and holiness."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 69.

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read *The Desire of Ages*, pages 383-394; 476-484; 674-677.

SUMMARY: Jesus is our great "I AM"—the One who makes things happen in our lives at each point of our need. As the Bread of Life, He is the daily sustenance of our spiritual lives. As the Good Shepherd, He is our deeply caring provider and protector. As the true Vine, He is the source of our power and fruitfulness.

APPLICATION:

- Jesus said that all who come to Him as the Bread of Life will never hunger. Have I ever tried to fill the "God-shaped void" inside me with something other than a relationship with Christ?
- In John 10:16, Jesus says that as the Good Shepherd, He has "other sheep . . . not of this fold" whom He desires to bring into the fold. Do I know of any such sheep? What is the best way I can help Christ in bringing these "other sheep" into His fold?
- As a branch, should my primary effort be to bear fruit—or to stay connected to the Vine?

The Revelation Room

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: John 13 through 17.



MEMORY TEXT: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14: 1-3).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: On the eve of His crucifixion, Jesus revealed some of His most important thoughts to the disciples gathered in the upper room. Fully aware of the tensions among them, He spoke to them of humility, brotherly love, and unity. He directed their attention to the other members of the divine family—the Father and the Holy Spirit. Through the parable of the vine and the branches He illustrated their need for a vital connection to Him. He lavished upon them His love and His promises and closed with a mighty prayer for unity that included not only them, but every one of us.

| OVERVIEW—John 13-17 | | |
|---------------------|--------------|------------|
| John 13 | John 14-16 | John 17 |
| The Passover | The Promises | The Prayer |

INTRODUCTION: The upper room could rightly be called the revelation room. The book of Revelation, of course, was written on Patmos, not in the upper room (although its future author was present that Thursday evening). But the five chapters of John's Gospel that record the words and deeds of Jesus on His last night with the disciples before the cross are filled with striking revelations—revelations of the mind and heart of Jesus just hours away from His crucifixion.

Jesus that evening revealed the secret of His spiritual power—constant dependence on His Father. He revealed to His disciples what would ever be the secret of *their* spiritual power—a constant connection with and dependence on Him, as exemplified in the parable of the vine and branches. He revealed their greatest need—brotherly love and unity. He revealed the imminent arrival of His successor—the Holy Spirit. And through a variety of magnificent promises, He revealed His deep love for His followers.

The alert and careful Bible student will notice that at the end of chapter 14 Jesus says, "Arise, let us go hence" (verse 31). Matthew's record of

the upper room Passover celebration notes that “when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives” (Matt. 26:30). The hymn was no doubt the Passover Hallel, the words of which are found in Psalms 113 to 118. Therefore Christ’s farewell counsel and His prayer recorded in John 15 through 17 must have taken place on the way *from* the upper room to Gethsemane rather than *in* the upper room. (See *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 672, 673.) Nonetheless, the instruction He gave His disciples as they walked was an extension of that which had begun in the upper room—a continuation of one connected discourse. For this reason, many commentators and scholars refer to the entire teaching of Jesus in John 13 through 17 as the upper room discourse. In this week’s lesson we will do the same.

We also should observe that in this discourse Jesus was not attempting to deal with His subject matter as if He were writing a formal treatise. Rather than dealing with each topic in turn as a self-contained unit, He wove His themes together, and their strands recurringly appear and disappear.

Finally, we should notice that some of the significant themes and passages of the upper room discourse have been or will be studied in other lessons. The parable of the vine and the branches in chapter 15 was examined in the last lesson. Christ’s relationship with His Father will be given particular attention in Lesson 10.



I. THE PASSOVER (John 13).

Of the Gospel writers, John alone records the washing of the disciples’ feet. It remains for the other Gospel writers to supply details of the Last Supper itself.

The disciples arrived in the upper room filled with pride and preoccupied with politics. Convinced that Jesus was on the verge of stepping forward to deliver the Jews from Roman oppression, they were each jockeying for the highest possible positions in His new government. Their self-serving ambitions and hostile rivalry filled the room with tension. Any one of them would have stepped gladly over the other eleven to land a choice assignment in the new administration of power. Power—that was the great prize for which they struggled—power, prestige, and position.

Jesus knew that their clashing egos and swelling self-importance left them frighteningly unprepared for the celebration of the ordinance He was about to institute, much less for the stunning reversal of their expectations that the next few hours would bring. Jesus also knew that, with one exception, all of them were destined for positions in His kingdom. But they would be positions of service, not of self-promotion. The disciples would need humility rather than pride.

So great was the tension in the room that the clipped conversation soon gave way to silence—a silence that grew increasingly uncomfortable as everyone in the room realized that *someone* should assume the customary role of washing the others’ feet. Pitcher, basin, and towel were in plain view, but each man’s pride made it inconceivable that he should be the one to serve the others. They waited. Jesus waited.

What astonishing event finally relieved the tension? John 13:14, 15.

Too stunned to break the silence, the disciples watched as Jesus knelt first to wash the feet of Judas, who was soon to betray Him. (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 645.) Christ's unspoken rebuke filled them with bitter shame, and His condescension washed away their pride as the water washed away the dust from their feet.

THINK IT THROUGH: Try to place yourself in the upper room as Jesus moved from one disciple to the next, washing the feet of each one. Picture the scene as vividly as possible. What would be your thoughts and feelings as He washed your feet?

ILLUMINATION: "When Jesus girded Himself with a towel to wash the dust from their feet, He desired by that very act to wash the alienation, jealousy, and pride from their hearts. This was of far more consequence than the washing of their dusty feet. . . . Their hearts must be cleansed. Pride and self-seeking create dissension and hatred, but all this Jesus washed away in washing their feet."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 646.



What lesson was Jesus teaching Peter through the dialogue recorded in John 13:6-10?

"Like Peter and his brethren, we too have been washed in the blood of Christ, yet often through contact with evil the heart's purity is soiled. We must come to Christ for His cleansing grace. Peter shrank from bringing his soiled feet in contact with the hands of his Lord and Master; but how often we bring our sinful, polluted heart in contact with the heart of Christ! How grievous to Him is our evil temper, our vanity and pride! Yet all our infirmity and defilement we must bring to Him. He alone can wash us clean."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 646, 649.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Seventh-day Adventists are among the few Christians who practice foot-washing in connection with the communion service. Read John 13:14-17, then list three reasons John gives for us to follow Jesus' example in deed as well as in spirit:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

John then turned his attention from the footwashing to what happened next. At Christ's words, "One of you shall betray me" (verse 21), the disciples were seized with amazement. John quickly sketches for us the drama of betrayal—the disbelieving questions, the sob, the hasty exit of Judas from the room. An accumulation of earlier choices against cons-

science had led to one final, fateful choice that placed him forever beyond love's reach. Jesus forces His love on no one determined to reject it.

Chapter 13 closes with the first part of Christ's upper room discourse. "I am going," He said, "where you cannot come." (See verse 33.) "Peter, characteristically, wanted to know where Jesus was going. He could not believe that the one who raised Lazarus from the grave should be speaking of his own death. Apparently he began to understand, however, for he swore he would lay down his life for Jesus. It was a case of the sheep's being willing to die for the shepherd.

"But only the Shepherd's will was as good as his word. Peter would deny his relationship to Jesus three times before morning, and Jesus would give his life for the sheep on the following day."—John Killinger, *A Devotional Guide to John* (Waco, Texas: Word, Inc., 1981), p. 99.

II. THE PROMISES (John 14 through 16).

Scattered through the upper room discourse are many superlative promises. These promises were for Christ's disciples and for His followers today as well. In Lesson 11 we will study the greatest of these promises—the gift of the Holy Spirit. In this lesson we will consider briefly some of the other promises that Jesus made that night. One wonderful fact about the promises of Jesus is that at any hour of the day or night we may present our requests and receive of God's resources up to the limit of our need. The gifts God promises always are available.

The first promise we will notice in this section is the much-beloved promise of John 14:1-3, our memory text this week.

SEARCH AND LEARN: By consulting as many Bible translations and versions of John 14:1-3 as you have available, and by referring to any commentaries, concordances, or other study aids to which you may have access, seek to discover answers to the following questions:

- What is the "Father's house"? Is it heaven, or is it the entire universe?
-

- What and where are the "many mansions"? How is the word *mansions* translated in versions other than the King James?
-

- What do you suppose Christ is doing in preparing "a place" for us?
-



As Christians on this earth it seems as if we never really fit in. We always seem to be out of place. This world does not need us or want us. It has no place for us. But the Father has many places in His house—places where we can fit right in and know that we belong. We can count on that as a fact because Jesus promised it.

We have waited a long time to go home. And Jesus has waited a long time to come and get us. But do not become impatient. Do not become

discouraged. Jesus promises, "I will come again." We can count on that because Jesus promised it.

When we get to heaven we will not be concerned about whether the streets are paved with gold or with asphalt, as long as we can walk them together with Jesus. We will not care if the twelve gates are made of pearl or wrought iron, as long as we can get through one of them to be with Jesus. Heaven is not just a place; it also is a Person. And someday Jesus will come again to take us to be with Him. We can count on it because Jesus promised it.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Read John 14:13, 14; 15:7, 16; and 16:23, 24. Which of these verses contains a condition upon which the promises will be fulfilled? On the line below, write down one personal request which you have not yet asked of God, and for which you can claim one of the above promises.

"It is a part of God's plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 525.

Ask "any thing." Ask "whatever." Ask "what ye will." The sheer unrestricted magnitude of the invitation is staggering. In his first epistle, John echoes these all-inclusive promises of Christ, adding that we must ask "according to his will" (1 John 5:14, 15). But the conditions met, the promise is unequivocal.

One final promise from the "revelation room" begs at least to be acknowledged before we leave this section. Jesus said in John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you."

We are invited to take our stresses and sorrows, our pressures and problems, our doubts and discouragements to Christ in exchange for His peace. No storm that rages against us or within us is too great to be calmed by this promise of the Prince of Peace.



III. THE PRAYER (John 17).

As John Knox lay dying, he whispered to his wife, "Go, read where I first cast my anchor." Without hesitation, she turned to John 17. Christ's high-priestly prayer in this chapter has been called the New Testament's noblest and purest pearl of devotion.

| John 17: Christ Prays— | |
|---|---|
| For Himself (verses 1-5) For His disciples (verses 6-19) For His future followers (verses 20-26) | That He might be glorified That they might be sanctified That they might be unified |

1. The Prayer for Himself (verses 1-5). Take time to notice three things in this first section of Christ's prayer. First, consider His request that He be glorified. "To glorify someone means to manifest or display their hidden virtue or wisdom or power or beauty, to bring out that which is hidden away in them. And here our Lord is asking that he be glorified, that is, that things hidden in him—resources and wisdom and beauty which are rightfully his—might now be made manifest, in order that he in turn might manifest the beauty and the glory and the order and the wisdom of the Father. In reading this you can see that the major work of all three Persons in the Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—is to display the mutual glory of one another."—Ray C. Stedman, *Secrets of the Spirit*, p. 126.

Next, notice that it is in this part of Christ's prayer that we find the great definition of eternal life—which is to know God (verse 3). Reflect again on the absolute necessity of a personal, vital relationship with God.

Finally, notice that Jesus claimed preexistence.

In verse 5 find a clear and unmistakable reference by Jesus to His preexistence.



2. The Prayer for His disciples (verses 6-19). Again in this second section of Christ's prayer we find such a wealth of truth that all we can do is to sample it briefly.

Even quickly scanning this section brings immediately to view the contrast that Jesus draws between His disciples and "the world." The disciples, Jesus says, were given to Him by the Father "out of the world" (verse 6), but they are no longer "of the world" (verse 16). While Jesus is soon to be "no more in the world," they still are "in the world" (verse 11). Jesus does not pray that they be taken "out of the world" (verse 15), but simply that they be kept from evil as they are sent "into the world" (verses 15, 18). In the world, but not of it—thus it should be for those who follow Christ.

What is Christ's prayer for His remaining eleven disciples? Verse 17.

"Sanctified" as it is used here is not so much asking that they be made holy as that they be set apart for a holy use. What that use, that task, is becomes clear in verse 18. They are to be sent into the world as Christ's witnesses.

3. The Prayer for His future followers (verses 20-26). We cannot read this section of Christ's prayer without being deeply moved that Jesus prayed for us. Each of us is included specifically in verse 20.

What does Jesus ask for us as He prays?

First, Jesus asks that we all may be one. Second, that we may be with Jesus where He is. Why does Jesus pray for our unity? He wants the

world to recognize that the Father sent Jesus into this world. He indicates that the best way to convince them of the fact that Jesus has been here is for the world to see us united by love. The world will recognize that His being here has made a dramatic difference for and in us.

When Christ's prayer for us is answered fully (as it most certainly will be), the resulting unity based on love will draw multitudes to our church doors seeking to join us.

THINK IT THROUGH: If not now, when? If not us, who?



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read *The Desire of Ages*, pages 677-680.

“For the pardon of sin, for the Holy Spirit, for a Christlike temper, for wisdom and strength to do His work, for any gift He has promised, we may ask; then we are to believe that we receive, and return thanks to God that we have received.

“We need look for no outward evidence of the blessing. The gift is in the promise, and we may go about our work assured that what God has promised He is able to perform, and that the gift, which we already possess, will be realized when we need it most.”—*Education*, p. 258.

SUMMARY: Hours from the cross, Jesus bared His soul to His disciples. In the upper room and later on the walk to Gethsemane, the things He said and did revealed once again how deeply He cared for His own. By a silent act of humble service He destroyed their pride and jealousy. Through an abundance of promises He opened heaven's storehouse. And in His moving prayer, He figuratively swept up in His arms His followers of all ages and committed them to the Father's love and care.

APPLICATION:

- How do I feel about the footwashing service? Am I ever uncomfortable or embarrassed? If so, why?
- Jesus promised that He would come again. Am I waiting for Him? Or is He waiting for me?
- Jesus promised to answer my prayers. When my prayers seem to go unanswered, I may be tempted to doubt His promises. How can I maintain my faith in His Word when this happens?
- As I carefully examine my own motives, do I find that I ever seek a church or Sabbath School office for honor rather than for service?

NOTES:

Like Father, Like Son

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: The relationship of Jesus to His heavenly Father as brought to view in such texts as John 1:18; 14:10; and 15:4.



MEMORY TEXT: "Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?" (John 14:8, 9).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Two of the primary reasons Jesus came down to this earth were (1) to reveal to the human race the Father's character of love, and (2) to reveal that the secret of spiritual victory and growth is to be found in constant dependence on a source of power outside of ourselves. If carefully studied, these twin revelations can give us a distinct advantage in living the Christian life.

OUTLINE:

- I. Jesus came to reveal the Father (John 1:18).
- II. The mutual indwelling of Jesus and the Father (John 14:10).
- III. The mutual indwelling of Jesus and His followers (John 15:4).

INTRODUCTION: "Like father, like son," the saying goes. Never was this more true than of God the Father and Jesus the Son. "If you have seen Me," Jesus told Philip, "you have seen the Father." And speaking to the Jews in Solomon's porch, He said, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30).

Of all the key words in John's Gospel, the one repeated most often is the word *Father* (120 times). Obviously, this fact alone should suggest to us the importance that Jesus attached to knowing His Father.

Concerning Philip's question Ellen White writes that "Philip's doubt was answered with words of reproof. He wished Christ to reveal the Father in bodily form; but in Christ God had already revealed Himself. . . .

"Christ emphatically impressed upon them the fact that they could see the Father by faith alone. God cannot be seen in external form by any human being. Christ alone can represent the Father to humanity. This representation the disciples had been privileged to behold for over three years."—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 1141, 1142.

Because of sin not only was it impossible for the disciples to see the Father's external form, but Jesus also implied clearly that to do so was not important. What was important was that they see His character.

"Man looketh on the outward appearance" (1 Sam. 16:7), and a human tendency is to assess and evaluate others based in some measure on that

outward physical appearance. But Jesus wanted His followers to know and appreciate the Father's character, to know and love the Father as a Person, irrespective of His form or appearance. Indeed, had they been able to see the Father's outward form it might well have proven a hindrance to them in getting to know Him, as His glory and majesty might have caused them to view Him as unapproachable.

Some may ask how is it possible to get to know—much less love—someone you cannot see? Yet, does this not happen every day all around us? People fall in love through correspondence, over the telephone, even over ham radio. Such relationships often flourish and endure whether or not the parties involved are ever privileged to meet in person.

In human relationships, in fact, it is precisely the "love" based primarily on physical attraction that has the least hope of survival. Relationships built on an ever-growing appreciation of inner personality and character are those most likely to succeed.

When Jesus said, "If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father," it is clear that He meant His followers to seek to discover what the Father is like by observing the character and personality, the words and the deeds, of the Son.

This week we will consider why it was so vital a part of Christ's mission to this planet to reveal clearly to humanity what the Father was like. We also will seek to learn more of the intimacy and constancy of the relationship between Father and Son that prevailed throughout Christ's sojourn here on earth. Finally, we will reflect on the implications of that close Father-Son relationship for our own walk with Christ.



I. JESUS CAME TO REVEAL THE FATHER (John 1:18).

Slowly turning the pages of the photo album, a minister lingered over each of the children's faces there—remembering. While on vacation at his parents' home on the Oregon coast, he held in his hands an album filled with pictures of the 100 or more foster children that his mother had taken into her home over the years. Some he remembered in a special way—they had shared the home while he and his sister still were children. Others had come along after the two of them had left home.

Turning yet another page, he suddenly froze, riveted to a page of photographs that immediately aroused a spectrum of strong and deep emotions.

Standing there in a little blue dress was four-year-old Tammy with her blackened eyes and battered face. Her entire body gave evidence of a severe beating. Her tiny fists were clenched tightly, and she stood at an awkward angle.

Born with a defect (malformed hip joints), she had endured surgery for cirrhosis of the liver while yet a toddler—the legacy of a drinking mother. Perhaps in part because of her physical handicaps, she had been routinely and severely abused by her parents for all of her short life.

After knowing nothing but hell on earth, her stay in her new home must have seemed like heaven. At the bottom of the album page the minister noticed a photo taken after Tammy had been in her new home for just a few weeks. Nearly all of the swelling and bruises were gone, and her

smile was noticeably brighter. She was the kind of little girl you would like to scoop up in your arms and hold tightly for a good long while.

Later Tammy found a permanent home with a young couple who totally adored her, so what began in horror turned to real happiness.

One of the great tragedies of child abuse is the countless number of children in whom the words *father* or *mother* arouse nothing but fear and hatred. Yet the plain fact is that the entire human race continually is being misinformed that the greatest abuser of His children in all the universe is the One who has invited us to call Him *Father*. Satan would have us believe that our Father in heaven is a cruel and heartless parent, determined to fill the lives of His children with misery and pain.

ILLUMINATION: "Satan has ascribed to God all the evils to which flesh is heir. He has represented Him as a God who delights in the sufferings of His creatures, who is revengeful and implacable."—*Counsels to Teachers*, p. 27.

REACT: John 1:18 tells us that Jesus has revealed the Father to us. The evidence given us by Christ's life on earth is that the Father is merciful, patient, and full of love. How have you personally related to the question of why God permits suffering and tragedy?



Why is Satan so intent in his efforts to misrepresent the character of God?

"From the beginning it has been Satan's studied plan to cause men to forget God, that he might secure them to himself. Hence he has sought to misrepresent the character of God, to lead men to cherish a false conception of Him. The Creator has been presented to their minds as clothed with the attributes of the prince of evil himself,—as arbitrary, severe, and unforgiving,—that He might be feared, shunned, and even hated by men."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 738.

In every possible way, Satan has attempted to make God look bad. When people suffer and grieve, he lets no opportunity pass to suggest that God is responsible. How, he asks, can a Father of love stand by and do nothing as He watches His children suffer?

Satan also has persuaded much of humanity to accept his diabolical doctrine of the eternal torment of the wicked. No feat of mental gymnastics is possible that can harmonize this horrendous idea with the teaching that God is a Father of love.

How does Satan work today to press his original charges against the government and character of God?

"Satan represents God's law of love as a law of selfishness. He declares that it is impossible for us to obey its precepts. The fall of our first parents, with all the woe that has resulted, he charges upon the Creator, leading men to look upon God as the author of sin, and suffering, and death."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 24.

For thousands of years before the incarnation of Christ, the public relations firm of "Satan and Associates" devoted their prodigious talents to making God look bad. Unfortunately their efforts met with spectacular success. By the time Christ came to this earth, even God's own people nearly had lost sight of His true character. It was urgently necessary that the human race be told the truth about God—that concentrated efforts be put forth to show that God is good.

Thus one of the primary goals of Jesus in His mission to this planet was to reveal the Father clearly to His children on earth. "Christ came to reveal God to the world as a God of love, full of mercy, tenderness, and compassion. The thick darkness with which Satan had endeavored to enshroud the throne of Deity was swept away by the world's Redeemer, and the Father was again manifest to men as the light of life."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 738, 739.

SEARCH AND LEARN: As noted in this week's introduction, the word **Father** is the most frequently used of the key words in John's Gospel. Because it is capitalized wherever it refers to God, it is relatively easy to pick out while scanning through the Bible text. Why not take time to underline with a colored pencil each occurrence of the word throughout the Gospel of John?



II. THE MUTUAL INDWELLING OF JESUS AND THE FATHER (John 14:10).

COMPARE: "I am in the Father," Jesus said, "and the Father in me." What can this mean? Compare our verse for this section with John 17:21 and note below any insights you may have.

Mutual indwelling. The Father in the Son; the Son in the Father. Certainly, as suggested by John 17:21, these phrases are meant to be descriptive of oneness—of unity. While a degree of mystery always must attend our understanding of this special relationship between Christ and His Father, we are privileged and challenged to explore it to the limits of our finite comprehension.

Whatever else Jesus meant by the words, "I am in the Father," it is clear that He meant that He was *in dependence on* the Father. "I can of mine own self do nothing," He had said in John 5:30. In saying that the Father was in Him, He must at least have meant that the Father was in the Son providing *power to do* the works He was doing: "The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works" (John 14:10).

What was another primary goal that Jesus had in coming to this earth?
1 John 2:6.

Jesus provided a clear example to human beings as to how to obey God and to resist temptation successfully.

Some Christians today believe that the idea of trying to follow the example that Jesus set while here on earth is absurd. The reason for His

perfect obedience and resistance to temptation, they say, was that He was not just like us. The rest of us are not even in His league. After all, how can anyone who is human be expected to do what God can do? But, "the Lord Jesus came to our world, not to reveal what a God could do, but what a man could do, through faith in God's power to help in every emergency."—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 929.

THINK IT THROUGH: What does John 14:10 suggest to you concerning the question of whether or not Jesus had an advantage over us because He was God?



Although Jesus, without question, was fully divine as well as fully human while on this earth, what does He say about whether He ever relied on His own divine power? John 5:30.

Ellen White describes the night that Jesus and His disciples were caught in a violent storm on the Sea of Galilee: "When Jesus was awakened to meet the storm, He was in perfect peace. There was no trace of fear in word or look, for no fear was in His heart. But He rested not in the possession of almighty power. It was not as the 'Master of earth and sea and sky' that He reposed in quiet. That power He had laid down, and He says, 'I can of Mine own self do nothing.' John 5:30. He trusted in the Father's might. It was in faith—faith in God's love and care—that Jesus rested, and the power of that word which stilled the storm was the power of God."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 336.

Jesus laid aside the use of His divine power when He came to earth. He voluntarily chose not to use any resources in His struggles with evil that would not be available to us. When He said, "I can of mine own self do nothing" (John 5:30), He was not saying that He *could* not act on His own but that He *would* not—that He had chosen to deny Himself the exercise of His divine power in His battles with evil. If this were not so, then the devil's temptations in the wilderness would have been meaningless—for they were attempts to press Christ into using his divinity.

How do we find the power that Jesus did to overcome temptation and sin?
2 Peter 1:2-4.

"The power of the Saviour's Godhead was hidden. He overcame in human nature, relying upon God for power. This is the privilege of all."—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1108.

The secret of Christ's power against temptation and sin while on this earth is not to be found in the power of His divinity. It is found in His constant dependence upon the power of His Father. Those who learn, accept, and constantly act upon this now-open secret cannot be defeated by the enemy.



III. THE MUTUAL INDWELLING OF JESUS AND HIS FOLLOWERS (John 15:4).

What significant concept did Jesus illustrate by the connection between the vine and the branches? John 15:1-5.

“Abide in me, and I in you.” The mutual indwelling of Father and Son brought power and victory to Jesus in His earthly life. Now He invites us to enter into the same relationship of mutual indwelling with Himself.

“The Saviour was deeply anxious for His disciples to understand for what purpose His divinity was united to humanity. . . . God was manifested in Him that He might be manifested in them. Jesus revealed no qualities, and exercised no powers, that men may not have through faith in Him. His perfect humanity is that which all His followers may possess, if they will be in subjection to God as He was.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 664.

COMPARE: In John 5:30 Jesus implied that, because He chose to be continually dependent upon the Father, He could (by His own choice) do nothing. Notice the similar wording in John 15:5. What exactly is it that Jesus could not do? (See John 6:38.) What is it that we cannot do?

ILLUMINATION: “The life that Christ lived in this world, men and women can live through His power and under His instruction. In their conflict with Satan they may have all the help that He had. They may be more than conquerors through Him who loved them and gave Himself for them.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 22.



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Look up and carefully reflect on the following verses in the light of this week’s lesson: Gal. 2:20; Phil. 2:12, 13; Phil. 4:13; Col. 1:27.

SUMMARY: In His ministry, Jesus drew special attention to His relationship to His Father. He knew that the human race needed more than anything else to see the Father’s love and power. They needed to see His love because Satan had for so long slandered His character. They needed to see His power that they might learn to rely on it for victory.

APPLICATION:

- As Jesus came to reveal the Father, it is my privilege to reveal Jesus and, indirectly, the Father in my life. In what specific ways and to what person or persons can I reveal God’s love this week?
- In relying upon Christ for power to live the Christian life, what is my part? What is His?
- Through the Father’s power, Jesus overcame every temptation, and inspired evidence suggests that I may do the same. With that possibility before me, should I concentrate primarily on improving my behavior or on improving my relationship with Christ?

Pentecost Now

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: John's account of Christ's teaching relative to the Holy Spirit, as recorded in chapters 14 through 16.



MEMORY TEXT: "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever" (John 14:16).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Heaven came down to this earth in the person of Jesus and stayed for a little over 30 years. But thanks to Christ's successor and representative, the Holy Spirit, Heaven in one sense has been even closer to earth since the departure of Christ than it could be while He was here. In the upper room discourse, Jesus three times previewed the work of the Spirit for His disciples then and for His disciples now. What that work was and is we will discover in this week's study.

OUTLINE:

- I. The Holy Spirit testifies of Jesus (John 15:26; 16:14).
- II. The Holy Spirit reproves the world (John 16:8-11).
- III. The Holy Spirit guides into all truth (John 16:13).

INTRODUCTION: The Third Person of the Godhead is known as the Holy Spirit. Even though the "dispensation of the Holy Spirit" (see *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 511) began nearly two thousand years ago, and even though significantly greater attention has been directed toward His activities in recent years, the person and work of the Holy Spirit are shrouded in both mystery and misunderstanding for many Christians today. Yet this need not be so, for the Bible is neither silent nor ambiguous on the subject.

As we prepare to invest a week of study on just a part of what the Bible has to say about the Holy Spirit, we would do well to give prayerful consideration to the following appeal—one of the most challenging ever penned:

"The lapse of time has wrought no change in Christ's parting promise to send the Holy Spirit as His representative. It is not because of any restriction on the part of God that the riches of His grace do not flow earthward to men. If the fulfillment of the promise is not seen as it might be, it is because the promise is not appreciated as it should be. If all were willing, all would be filled with the Spirit. Wherever the need of the Holy Spirit is a matter little thought of, there is seen spiritual drought, spiritual darkness, spiritual declension and death. Whenever minor matters occupy the attention, the divine power which is necessary for the growth and prosperity of the church, and which would bring all other blessings in its train, is lacking, though offered in infinite plenitude.

“Since this is the means by which we are to receive power, why do we not hunger and thirst for the gift of the Spirit? Why do we not talk of it, pray for it, and preach concerning it? The Lord is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to those who serve Him than parents are to give good gifts to their children.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 50.

Were a job description for the Holy Spirit available, it would be extensive indeed. There are many aspects to His work here on earth and it is far-reaching. To investigate in detail the personality of the Spirit would be a most rewarding endeavor, but this lies beyond the focus of this week's lesson. Even to attempt a reasonably complete overview of His work is a more ambitious enterprise than we will be able to accomplish.

Therefore, we will confine ourselves to what Jesus said about the Holy Spirit's work in John's Gospel. Three times in His upper room discourse, Jesus said that “when the Holy Spirit comes, he will. . .” Those three glimpses of the Spirit's mission comprise our study this week.



I. THE HOLY SPIRIT TESTIFIES OF JESUS (John 15:26; 16:14).

What special task was given the Holy Spirit after Jesus returned to heaven? John 16:7, 14.

As Jesus came to reveal the Father, the Holy Spirit has come to reveal Jesus. The Holy Spirit has not come in order that attention might be focused on Himself. His great work is to help us see Jesus more clearly.

“As when we look through the telescope, we see not the lens but the object the lens brings near, so through the Holy Spirit we see not Him, but ‘Jesus only.’ ”—LeRoy E. Froom, *The Coming of the Comforter* (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1928), p. 29.

Among many Christians today there is a tendency to build their religion around the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Spirit is not seen so much as the necessary prerequisite for witnessing for Christ, as it is sought as evidence of spiritual maturity. Because He has come to testify of Jesus, the Holy Spirit doubtless is disappointed when He is made the great center of attention.

“Sometimes when you listen to Bible teachers today you get the idea that there is to be a kind of Jesus-oriented Bible teaching with which we begin the Christian life, but that as we grow a bit and mature we are to move on to Spirit-oriented truth, to recognize that the sign of maturity is to be concerned no longer with Jesus but with the Spirit. Nothing could be further from the truth. The work of the Spirit is to glorify Jesus. The Spirit-filled life is the life in which Jesus is central. And the one who matures is the one who grows deeper in his understanding of Jesus.”—Ray C. Stedman, *Secrets of the Spirit*, p. 110.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Some believe that the Holy Spirit is power, influence, or energy, but not a person. What do the following four verses suggest to you concerning this question? Rom. 8:27; 15:30; Eph. 4:30; 1 Cor. 12:11.

Paul said that Christ lived in him (Gal. 2:20). Christ living in us, he also wrote, is our only hope of glory (Col. 1:27). The New Testament abounds with references to the reality of Christ as an indwelling presence in human beings.

But because “Christ has carried His humanity into eternity” (Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 925)—because He is confined to a human body and can no longer be everywhere present as He was before the incarnation—He now dwells in His followers through the Holy Spirit. “It is through the Spirit that Christ dwells in us.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 388.

ILLUMINATION: “The Holy Spirit is Christ’s representative, but divested of the personality of humanity, and independent thereof. Cumbered with humanity, Christ could not be in every place personally. Therefore, it was for their interest that He should go to the Father, and send the Spirit to be His successor on earth.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 669.

“The impartation of the Spirit is the impartation of the life of Christ.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 805.

During His ministry on earth, Christ was *with* human beings. Now, through the Spirit, He is able to be *in* them. The Bible is filled with many mysteries: for example, the mystery of iniquity (2 Thess. 2:7), the mystery of godliness (1 Tim. 3:16), and the mystery of Christ in us (Col. 1:27). Exactly how Christ lives in us through the Holy Spirit is beyond adequate explanation. But to know the indwelling of Christ by experience is as simple as inviting Him in. (See Rev. 3:20.)



SEARCH AND LEARN: Notice in Romans 8:9-11 the repeated references to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Notice, too, how Paul uses “Christ in you” and “the Holy Spirit in you” interchangeably. What significant relationship do you notice between these verses and Romans 7:14-25?

NOTES:

II. THE HOLY SPIRIT REPROVES THE WORLD (John 16:8-11).

The original word for *reprove* (as it is translated by the King James Version) is a word that is difficult to translate precisely into English, but which can perhaps best be translated as *convict* or *convince*.

When the Holy Spirit comes, Jesus said, He will convict “the world.” At times Bible writers use the word *world* to refer primarily or even exclusively to nonbelievers. At other times *world* encompasses all humanity. It would seem likely that John employs the word here in this latter sense.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Fill in the blanks below from John 16:9-11:

The Holy Spirit convicts—

Verse 9: Of _____ because _____

Verse 10: Of _____ because _____

Verse 11: Of _____ because _____

The Holy Spirit, Jesus said, will convict us of sin. "The human heart is 'deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked' (Jer. 17:9), and there is nothing in which the deceitfulness of the human heart comes out more clearly than in the blindness of every one of us to our sinfulness. We are very sharp-sighted as regards the sins and shortcomings of others, but very blind to our own. The world is so blind to its sinfulness that no one but the Holy Spirit can ever convince the world of sin, that is, can ever bring men to see how sinful they are."—R. A. Torrey, *The Holy Spirit: Who He Is and What He Does*, pp. 42, 43.



ILLUSTRATION: Those who crucified Christ were under no great conviction that what they were doing was wrong. Some even felt that they were doing God a favor. But during Peter's sermon at Pentecost the Spirit worked forcefully to convict them of their enormous sin, and "they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Acts 2:37.

Not only is the Holy Spirit a specialist at producing conviction of sin—He is the *only* one who can do so. In our preaching, evangelism, and witnessing we make a great mistake if we try to produce conviction of sin in those for whom we work. But we can assist and cooperate with the Holy Spirit in His work of producing conviction. The best way we can do this is to exalt Jesus. Then, as people see the love and goodness of Christ, the Holy Spirit drives home to their hearts the stark contrast between Christ's purity and their own all-pervading selfishness. Thus they are brought to conviction and repentance.

What conclusions do you reach by comparing John 16:9 with the last phrase of Romans 14:23?

The Holy Spirit convicts human beings of sin "because they believe not on me" Jesus said (John 16:9). Certainly this belief is more than simple mental assent to the reality of who Jesus was and what He did. As discussed in Lesson 2, *faith* and *belief* in John's Gospel imply *trust* in a Person.

Thus the primary, basic sin of which the Holy Spirit convicts us is our lack of trust—our lack of total reliance—on the righteousness of Jesus. All of us need the continuing, daily conviction of the Spirit that we must place no trust in our own works, goodness, behavior, performance, or efforts.

The Holy Spirit also convicts us of righteousness (John 16:10)—which is self-evidently *Christ's* righteousness, since none of us have any of our own. Convicted of our lack of trust in Christ, we are then brought to the conviction by the Holy Spirit that only one object is worthy of that trust—the righteousness of Christ. The righteousness of Christ is available to us both as pardon for sins committed and as power to avoid falling into sin. (See *Education*, p. 36.) Because Jesus no longer is personally present with us for us to be able to *see* His righteousness displayed, it has been given to the Holy Spirit to bring the righteousness of Christ forcefully home to our hearts.

The third thing that we are told the Holy Spirit will convict or convince us of is “of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged” (John 16:11). Depending on how this verse is applied, it can be viewed as a message of fear or a message of hope.

If it applies primarily to the Spirit's work in producing a conviction in sinners of coming judgment, it might well inspire fear—at least in those who have chosen not to trust in Christ's righteousness.



What does the evidence within John 16:11 suggest concerning the primary application of the judgment that Jesus had in mind?

John states that the Holy Spirit convicts us of judgment “because the prince of this world is judged.” In these words Jesus' primary emphasis was on the judgment of “the prince of this world.” (Compare John 12:31 and 14:30.) And “the prince of this world” is clearly none other than Satan himself. All who have followed Satan in rebellion also will be judged.

But if Satan has been judged, found guilty, and sentenced, then we battle a defeated enemy. The victory of Jesus over the empire of evil is our victory. None of us need be intimidated or discouraged in our battles with Satan, for he is a doomed demon. If we find victory in Jesus we will not be intimidated by the thought of judgment but will look forward to it as setting everything right.

III. THE HOLY SPIRIT GUIDES INTO ALL TRUTH (John 16:13).

Have you ever tapped a friend on the shoulder and called his name, only to find yourself gazing blankly at a complete stranger when he turns to face you? Have you ever claimed your luggage at an airport, only to find strange name tags on it when you got home?

Look-alikes, mistaken identity—no harm done. None, that is, if we are not talking about truth. Yet, for every truth, the devil has put together a great array of look-alike errors. For every genuine truth he has produced many counterfeits.

Millions today are engaged in an earnest, urgent search for truth. But they are surrounded by a dissonant chorus of voices beckoning, “We have the truth, follow us!” As a result many stand in bewildered confusion.

THINK IT THROUGH: Taking into account the hundreds of Christian denominations—let alone the many other religions and sects, each of which

claims to have the truth—how is the sincere seeker to know which really does? Or do all roads lead to heaven?

Like the morning sun that drives back the summer fog comes the assurance of Jesus that the Spirit will guide you into all truth. This promise of divine guidance is unequivocal, and once claimed, should eliminate all fearful uncertainty and all second thoughts. If a son asks his father for bread, will he receive a stone? If he asks for a fish, will he receive a serpent? If anyone asks for guidance into truth, will he be led into error? No. Nothing in the universe is more dependable than God's promises.



THINK IT THROUGH: Do you believe that the Holy Spirit is available to guide individual Christians personally into truth? Can you illustrate this from the history of the Seventh-day Adventist church? Recognizing that one way God communicates truth is through His church and its leaders, do you believe that there are times when personal interpretation must give way to what the church as a whole has been led to accept? Where would you draw the line between personal responsibility and the Lord's guidance of His church?

What particularly qualifies the Holy Spirit to be our guide into truth? 2 Peter 1:21.

It would be a tremendous advantage to have the author of any book we read personally available to answer questions—to clarify certain passages in his book. The fact is that with the Word of God, we have such an opportunity. The Holy Spirit is on 24-hour call to guide us in our search for truth in the Word. Indeed, without His guidance, our study of the Word is fruitless, and we run the risk of stumbling into error even as we read the Word.

ILLUMINATION: "Without the Spirit of God a knowledge of His word is of no avail. The theory of truth, unaccompanied by the Holy Spirit, cannot quicken the soul or sanctify the heart. One may be familiar with the commands and promises of the Bible; but unless the Spirit of God sets the truth home, the character will not be transformed. Without the enlightenment of the Spirit, men will not be able to distinguish truth from error, and they will fall under the masterful temptations of Satan."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 408-411.

One of the great benefits of accepting the Holy Spirit as our Guide into truth is that He helps us to recognize it when we find it. No sense of nagging uneasiness plagues our peace of mind when we have found the truth. The discovery of real truth results in a quiet mind and a satisfied heart.

"The Comforter is called 'the Spirit of truth.' His work is to define and maintain the truth. He first dwells in the heart as the Spirit of truth, and thus He becomes the Comforter. There is comfort and peace in the truth, but no real peace or comfort can be found in falsehood."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 671.



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:

1. In Section II the Holy Spirit's work of convicting of judgment was discussed. For a fascinating glimpse of this judgment as a message of hope, read *The Desire of Ages*, page 679, beginning with the first paragraph and carrying over to the top of page 680.

2. In the Introduction we quoted from one of Ellen White's key statements about the Holy Spirit. Another key statement appears on page 672 of *The Desire of Ages*: "Christ has promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to His church, and the promise belongs to us as much as to the first disciples. But like every other promise, it is given on conditions. There are many who believe and profess to claim the Lord's promise; they talk *about* Christ and *about* the Holy Spirit, yet receive no benefit. They do not surrender the soul to be guided and controlled by the divine agencies. We cannot use the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is to use us. Through the Spirit God works in His people 'to will and to do of His good pleasure.' Phil. 2:13. But many will not submit to this. They want to manage themselves. This is why they do not receive the heavenly gift. Only to those who wait humbly upon God, who watch for His guidance and grace, is the Spirit given. The power of God awaits their demand and reception."

SUMMARY: Before the arrival of the Holy Spirit in pentecostal fullness, Jesus previewed the Spirit's work for the disciples. Among His tasks, Jesus said, would be the following: (1) to witness of Jesus; (2) to convict men of sin, righteousness, and judgment; and (3) to guide men into truth. The Holy Spirit's work was not confined to the era of the early Christian church. As we await an imminent Pentecost II, He is available to manifest His power and presence to all who will yield themselves to His full use.

APPLICATION:

- Which is more true—that I need the Holy Spirit or that the Holy Spirit needs me?
- You will receive power, Jesus said, after the Holy Spirit comes upon you. If my efforts to overcome sin, develop a Christlike character, and reach others for Christ seem to be going nowhere, could this be the help I need?
- Do I know exactly what conditions must be met in order for the latter rain of the Holy Spirit to be realized? Do I know what the gifts of the Spirit are and which of those gifts I possess? Can I make time in my busy schedule to study more deeply into these questions?
- How can the masses of people today who have not yet been guided into truth learn about the ministry of the Holy Spirit? How can they realize His superiority over the many counterfeit spirits they encounter?
- Someone once said to Dwight L. Moody that the world had yet to see what God could do with, for, in, and through a person totally surrendered to be used by the Holy Spirit. Moody determined to be such a person. Could I not do the same?

The Day He Wore My Crown

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: John 18 and 19.



MEMORY TEXT: "Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!" (John 19:4, 5).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The cross of Jesus Christ is at once the greatest shame and the greatest glory of the human race. The greatest shame, because we were and are individually and collectively responsible for the death of Jesus. The greatest glory, because as the Representative of our race Jesus decisively defeated sin and death for us and gave us another chance at eternal life.

OVERVIEW—John 18, 19

| John 18:1-12 | John 18:13 - 19:15 | John 19:16-42 |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| The betrayal and arrest in Gethsemane | The trials | The crucifixion and burial |

INTRODUCTION: We are counseled that "It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 83. (Compare *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 374.)

As we spend a few thoughtful hours this week in contemplation and discussion of the moving closing scenes of Christ's life, consider three significant truths about His great sacrifice for us.

First, the cold Roman spikes through His hands and feet did not keep Jesus pinned to the cross—love did. In Gethsemane, Jesus could instantly have deprived those who came to arrest Him of their power or their lives. They came against Him with "lanterns and torches and weapons" (John 18:3). Weapons? Against the Source of all power? Against the Creator of a million suns? Then they bound Him. *They bound Him?* How pathetically impossible! In their ignorance they could not know that Omnipotence cannot be chained—the Creator cannot be captured by His creatures.

Even on the cross, although it may have *appeared* to the onlooking crowd that Jesus was physically at the mercy of His tormenters, such was

not the case for even an instant. The power to deliver Himself and to vaporize His executioners was always His. But He could not use that power, because He was bound by a power far greater than that of ropes or spikes—the power of His love for you and me.

A second important truth of Christ's sacrifice is that we *personally* are responsible for His death. How easy it is to turn an accusing finger upon the Jewish leaders and charge *them* with Christ's death. How simple a matter to recoil in outraged horror at the hardened cruelty of the Romans who crucified our Lord. How quickly we find ourselves rushing to agree with the old king of France, who exclaimed indignantly, "I wish I had been there with ten thousand of my soldiers. I would have cut their throats sooner than they should have touched Him!"

But we could never be more tragically wrong than to place the guilt for Christ's death upon scheming Jewish leaders or unfeeling Roman soldiers. To do so is to join Pilate in attempting to wash our hands of our own guilt. The Jews did not kill Jesus. The Romans did not kill Jesus. Even the cross did not kill Jesus. Jesus already had begun to die in Gethsemane before the Jews and Roman soldiers arrived to arrest Him. His death on the cross came too quickly to be solely the result of crucifixion.

It was not what happened to His body that killed Jesus. It was what happened to His mind—His heart and soul. It was the life-crushing burden of the sins of all of humanity that finally brought His death.

Which brings us to a third truth of Christ's sacrifice—the fact of exactly what Jesus experienced on the cross. Physical pain? To be sure. Crucifixion was ingeniously designed to create intense physical pain and suffering. But a view of the cross in which great sympathy focuses primarily on Christ's physical agony falls short of understanding what He went through for us.

As intense and excruciating as His physical pain must have been, we are astonished to be told that this pain was "hardly felt" because of the presence of another source of pain far more all-consuming. What was the source of pain? What did Jesus experience on the cross? For answers, read the paragraphs from *The Desire of Ages*, page 753 in the "Further Study" section later in this lesson.



I. THE BETRAYAL AND ARREST IN GETHSEMANE (John 18:1-12).

What is the significance of the words "went forth" in verse 4?

From His great prayer struggle in the garden (chronicled by the other Gospel writers), Jesus "went forth" (verse 4) to face His betrayer. Judas led the way to Jesus for what apparently was a large mob. Verse 3 says he had with him "a band" of men. The original word used here refers to a 500 to 600-man detachment of Roman soldiers. The "officers of the Jews" (verses 3, 12) would be the temple police. In addition, the crowd included many of the priests and elders and an unknown number of the common rabble along for the excitement. (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 696.)

From the moment the mob came face to face with Jesus, on through

His trials and crucifixion, and finally up to the moment of His death, those who had arrested Him thought that they were in charge—that Jesus was under their control. They thought that they had Him securely bound. They thought that He was their unwilling prisoner during His trials. They thought that they had Him secured to a cross from which He could not escape. They thought that He had died and would never cause them problems again. But Jesus was in total control of events every step of the way from the moment He made the decision and “went forth.” They could have done nothing to Him that He did not allow them to do.

In reality, who took Christ’s life? John 10:17, 18.

REACT: Jesus chose to die. He could have left the human race to die, and returned in innocence to His Father. (See *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 688, 690.) Legally He had that right, that choice, that option. But His love for us was so enormous that it in fact deprived Him of that choice. Because of love, Jesus chose to die—He really had no other choice. How does it make you feel to be the object of that kind of love?



What is significant about Jesus’ response to the mob in Gethsemane when they said that they were seeking “Jesus of Nazareth”? John 18:4-6.

Notice the “I AM”—the same words He spoke to Moses at the burning bush. Review the study of the “I AM” statements in Lesson 8.

“As these words were spoken, the angel who had lately ministered to Jesus moved between Him and the mob. A divine light illuminated the Saviour’s face, and a dovelike form overshadowed Him. In the presence of this divine glory, the murderous throng could not stand for a moment. They staggered back. Priests, elders, soldiers, and even Judas, fell as dead men to the ground.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 694.

When they had recovered, what did Jesus ask? How did they respond? Verses 7, 8.

Their answer and His reply were the same as before. Then, gesturing toward His remaining eleven disciples, He said, “Let these go their way” (John 18:8).

What part did Judas play in the events that followed? Matt. 26:48-50.

The mob grew bold as they saw Judas touch Christ. The leaders of the mob rushed forward to bind Jesus. Peter could restrain himself no longer. Rushing at the man nearest him, who happened to be Malchus—the high priest’s servant—Peter raised his sword high and brought it down with all the force of his powerful fisherman’s arms, leaving Malchus without his right ear. Peter was prevented from making further use of his sword by

the voice of Jesus saying, "Put your sword back, Peter. What is happening may not seem right to you, but this is supposed to happen."

NOTICE that it is Doctor Luke who tells us that Jesus touched Malchus and healed his ear (Luke 22:51). That was Jesus' last-known miracle of healing while on this earth.



II. THE TRIALS (John 18:13 through 19:15).

What differing realms of authority did Jesus face in His trials?

The political rulers were Roman; the religious rulers were Jewish. Shown below in chronological order are the various trials and hearings to which Jesus was subjected prior to the crucifixion.

The Religious Trials and Hearings:

1. Hearing before Annas (John 18:13, 14, 19-24).
2. Pre-dawn illegal trial before the Sanhedrin (Matt. 26:57-75).
3. Post-dawn formal trial before the Sanhedrin (Luke 22:66-71).

The Political Trials and Hearings:

1. First trial before Pilate (John 18:28-38).
2. Hearing before Herod Antipas (Luke 23:6-12).
3. Second trial before Pilate (John 18:39 through 19:16).

Notice that in his Gospel, John deals with only three of the six proceedings. (He is the only Gospel writer to chronicle Christ's appearance before Annas.) The remaining three trials are recorded by the other Gospel writers. In addition to the six phases of Christ's prolonged night and morning of trial listed above, Ellen White, in *The Desire of Ages*, page 703, adds a seventh which took place after Christ's hearing before Annas and prior to His first appearance before the Sanhedrin. After summoning a select group of the Sanhedrin, Annas and Caiaphas together interrogated Christ in another unsuccessful attempt to obtain incriminating evidence. This section of our lesson will be limited to a brief consideration of the three phases of Christ's trial recorded by John. Let us set the stage for our study by noticing the special challenge the priests faced in attempting to convict Jesus on both religious and political grounds.

BACKGROUND: "Christ was to be tried formally before the Sanhedrin; but before Annas He was subjected to a preliminary trial. Under the Roman rule the Sanhedrin could not execute the sentence of death. They could only examine a prisoner, and pass judgment, to be ratified by the Roman authorities. It was therefore necessary to bring against Christ charges that would be regarded as criminal by the Romans. An accusation must also be found which would condemn Him in the eyes of the Jews. . . . There were two charges which the priests desired to maintain. If Jesus could be proved a blasphemer, He would be condemned by the Jews. If convicted of sedition, it would secure His condemnation by the Romans. The second charge Annas tried first to establish."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 698, 699.

WED

The hearing before Annas (John 18:13, 19-24). Christ's appearance before Annas was a mockery of Jewish justice. Annas hoped to pressure Jesus into saying something that could be interpreted as evidence that He was setting up a secret society to overthrow the government.

How did Jesus respond? John 18:20, 21.

Annas was silenced. One officer, in utter frustration, slapped Jesus full on the face. Although Jesus suffered under the abuse, He would not be provoked nor would he retaliate.

The first trial before Pilate (John 18:28-38). Having been sent by Annas to the court of Caiaphas, Jesus, in successive sessions of the Sanhedrin, was found guilty of blasphemy. He had claimed to be the Son of God. And the Jewish leaders now hoped to construe His claim to the Messiahship into a seditious political claim. With that in mind, they rushed Him to the judgment hall of the Roman governor, Pilate. The governor was in a testy mood, having been awakened long before his customary rising time to deal with this case. He had to go outside the hall to meet Christ's accusers as they refused to come in for fear of becoming ceremonially defiled.

"What is your charge against Him?" Pilate asked the Jews. "Would we bring Him to you if He were not a criminal?" they replied. "In that case, you judge Him," Pilate replied. "We already have, and we already have sentenced Him," they admitted. "But, because our sentence is death, you must ratify it in order for Him to be executed."

SEARCH AND LEARN: Study Pilate's private conversation with Jesus in John 18:33-38. Why did Pilate initiate this conversation? What was Jesus attempting to accomplish through His replies to Pilate? (See *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 726, 727.)

The second trial before Pilate (John 18:39 to 19:16). By comparison with Luke 23, we learn that between what is recorded in verse 38 and verse 39 of John 18, Jesus was sent to Herod.

Shuttled back to an exasperated Pilate, Jesus was scourged. By ordering this Pilate hoped to arouse the pity of the mob. Instead, his weakness at punishing a man he already had declared innocent emboldened them to cry out even more persistently for Christ's death.

After a second private conversation with Jesus, Pilate returned to the mob to press for the release of Jesus. At this, the enraged Jewish leaders openly threatened Pilate with loss of his job. "If you do not crucify Jesus," they said, "we will see to it that Caesar gets word that you were soft on a known enemy of his government." They touched Pilate where he was most sensitive.

A few more feeble pleas for reason, a futile and public washing of hands to absolve himself of responsibility, and Pilate gave in completely. "Take Him away," he said. "Do what you will."



III. THE CRUCIFIXION AND BURIAL (John 19:16-42).

John's account of the crucifixion itself is brief, yet detailed—simple, yet compelling. After his straightforward statement that Jesus bore His cross to Golgotha and was crucified between “two others” (John 19:18, NIV), John reports events in a quick series of six vivid scenes.

SEARCH AND LEARN: For each of John's six written snapshots in 19:19-42, supply the subject of the scene on the line provided. Then choose one of these scenes to study and contemplate in depth:

1. Verses 19-22 _____
2. Verses 23, 24 _____
3. Verses 25-27 _____
4. Verses 28-30 _____
5. Verses 31-37 _____
6. Verses 38-42 _____

An entire week—an entire quarter—could be spent studying the passage used in this one section of our lesson. Whether analyzed by the mind or apprehended by the heart, the events of Calvary are so large with meaning, so heavy with significance, that we merely can ripple the surface of these deep waters. The events of this passage and their significance will form the heart of our ongoing study through eternity.

Rather than follow John's narrative here, we will notice certain features of this passage that emerge as we examine it.

What is the significance of John's repeated assertion that certain things happened “that the scripture might be fulfilled?”

The intent of these words is not to suggest that events took place to confirm Scripture, but to attest that these particular events were the fulfillment of Scripture. Besides that, notice that even as Jesus was physically and mentally brutalized, symbols of His perfect and unblemished character and sacrifice surrounded Him. The seamless coat remained seamless. His bones remained unbroken.

Finally, notice the people in this passage. Pilate, so weak about a matter of supreme importance—the fate of Christ—suddenly became immovable about a relatively minor matter—the wording of a sign over the cross. Three Marys and a fourth woman, probably Christ's Aunt Salome, ignored the real risks to their own safety in being present at the foot of the cross. Perfect love casts out fear. And two men, Joseph and Nicodemus—who had been following Jesus secretly—became more open in their allegiance as they provided Him a decent resting place.

FEB

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: In the Introduction for this week we considered the question of what Jesus really went through for us on the cross. Ponder the following paragraphs:

“Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was laid the iniquity of us all. He was counted a transgressor, that He might redeem us from the condemnation of the law. The guilt of every descendent of Adam was pressing upon His heart. The wrath of God against sin, the terrible manifestation of His displeasure because of iniquity, filled the soul of His Son with consternation. All His life Christ had been publishing to a fallen world the good news of the Father’s mercy and pardoning love. Salvation for the chief of sinners was His theme. But now with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father’s reconciling face. 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. So great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt.

“Satan with his fierce temptations wrung the heart of Jesus. The Saviour could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror, or tell Him of the Father’s acceptance of the sacrifice. He feared that sin was so offensive to God that Their separation was to be eternal. Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race. It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father’s wrath upon Him as man’s substitute, that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 753.

Should you be interested in a more complete discussion and overview of Christ’s trials, study the *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 201, 225, 233, 538, 539, and *The Desire of Ages*, pages 698-715; 723-740.

SUMMARY: Almost too quickly we have passed over the greatest event since the Creation. The Creator Himself suffered and died that we might be re-created in His image and prepared for a place with Him in His soon-coming kingdom. How can we comprehend such a magnificent sacrifice?

APPLICATION:

- Study Peter’s triple denial of his Master, which was not covered in the body of this lesson (John 18:15-18; 25-27). Like Peter, who did not shrink from active warfare for his Lord, am I nonetheless ever in danger of being driven by ridicule to deny Jesus?
- Have I accepted the challenge of spending at least one thoughtful hour a day contemplating the life of Christ? If not, why? If so, what were the results in my life?
- Pilate presented the mob with a choice between Jesus and Barabbas. Satan often presents us with a choice between Jesus and something or someone else. What has been (or is) my “Barabbas”?

He Lives!

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: John 20 and 21.



MEMORY TEXT: "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: As day dawned over Joseph's new tomb, the soldiers stationed there witnessed the most spectacular event in the history of this sinful world—the resurrection of the Son of God. John describes what happened when the vacant tomb was discovered. Writing later, Paul tells us what that empty chamber means for us. Because of what happened that Sunday morning, a journey to the grave is a round-trip for those who are in Jesus.

OVERVIEW—John 20, 21

| John 20:1-18 | John 20:19 to 21:23 | John 21:24, 25 |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|
| Resurrection morning | Post-resurrection appearances | Epilogue |

INTRODUCTION: Have you ever had to crawl through a window or find some other way of gaining entrance after finding yourself locked out of the house without a key? However, being locked *out* probably is not as unpleasant as being locked *in* a room, an elevator, or a prison cell—with no way to get out.

At the end of life, we are taken captive by a great enemy called death—and not one of us has the key needed to set ourselves free. We face the startling fact that if Jesus had not risen from the tomb, as confirmed by John in this week's study, no human being who dies could ever live again. The resurrection of Christ is more than the greatest of His miracles. It is more than an important doctrine of the church. The resurrection of Christ was an absolute necessity if any who have died are to live again.

Paul tells us why in 1 Corinthians 15:22: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." "In Adam"—"in Christ"—what does this mean?

Biologically speaking, we were all "in Adam" in Eden. The life that was in Adam has been passed on through countless generations, in one unbroken stream, to you and to me. If you do not believe that you were in Adam there in Eden, consider where you would be if he had died without having had descendents.

But in a far broader sense than mere biology, in God's reckoning all of

us have been included in Adam. What is true for the father of the race is true for all its members. Our fate, our destiny, is included in his. So Paul tells us that when one man (Adam) sinned and brought death into the world, that death "passed upon all men" (Rom. 5:12).

Sometimes when the first mountain climber on a rope falls, the climber takes the others tied to the rope down with him. When Adam fell, he took us down with him. All of us came under the power of death when Adam did. When he died, he was a prisoner of the grave. He was locked in. And when we die, so are we. Adam had no key to unlock his own grave. Somewhere it holds him still.

We might well abandon hope and embrace despair if it were not for the thrilling news that God shares with us in His Word. Adam *did* sin. He *did* bring us all under the power of death. But God has sent a second Adam to attempt success where the first Adam failed. The second Adam gloriously succeeded!

And now God gives each of us a choice. Will we choose for God to include us "in Adam" or "in Christ"—in Adam I or in Adam II? (See 1 Cor. 15:45.)

If by our choice we elect to be included in Christ, then in God's reckoning Christ becomes the new head of our race. Whatever goes for Him goes for us. Our fate, our destiny, is included in His. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22).

When Jesus stepped forth from His tomb in dazzling glory that long-ago Sunday morning, He did so as the new head of the human race. The first Adam was taken prisoner by death. The second Adam defeated death decisively.

Therefore, if the head of the race has broken the power of death, the grave no longer has power to imprison forever the individual members of that race. Death is reduced to locking up its prisoners for a time until Jesus comes to set them free. Death is a defeated enemy, and how can we fear a beaten foe?

Death, where is your sting? Grave, where is your victory? Against our will you may steal away those we love and lock them up in your prison. But you cannot keep them there. Jesus soon will be here to set them free.



I. RESURRECTION MORNING (John 20:1-18).

Which of the followers of Jesus was the first to discover the empty tomb? John 20:1, 2.

Of those who knew Jesus while He was here on earth, it may well be that no one loved Him more than Mary Magdalene. Because Mary had sinned much and been forgiven much, she loved much.

Ellen White makes it clear that Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, were the same person: "Seven times she [Mary] had heard his rebuke of the demons that controlled her heart and mind. . . . Through His [Jesus'] 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.

Before sunrise Sunday morning, the women who had stood at the foot of Christ’s cross made their way to His tomb, carrying precious spices with which they hoped to anoint His body. Mary Magdalene, approaching the tomb from a different direction than the other women, arrived first. (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 788.)

Suddenly she stopped short in stunned amazement. The stone sealing the tomb had been rolled aside. Adrenalin surging through her system, she ran on winged feet to Jerusalem to tell Peter and John.

“They have taken the Lord away,” she informed them in breathless anguish, “and I do not know where He is.” Perhaps she feared that the Jews had taken Christ’s body away for their own dark purposes. Or perhaps grave robbers had broken into the tomb.

THINK IT THROUGH: John 20:2 says that Mary ran with the news of the unsealed tomb to tell Peter and “the other disciple, whom Jesus loved”—John’s style of humble self-reference throughout his Gospel. If we agree that Jesus displayed no favoritism, how do you explain the special closeness He enjoyed with John? (See *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 539, 544, and 545.)

When Mary had arrived with her distressing announcement, Peter and John flew into action. The three of them raced back to the tomb. Young John arrived first, Peter next, and Mary not long after.

Cautiously John stooped and peered into the tomb. The body was gone! He saw the grave-clothes but the tomb definitely was empty. Peter arrived and, true to his nature, continued on inside. John followed, and they contemplated together the neatly folded grave-clothes. (Based on *The Desire of Ages*, p. 789.)



Why was Mary weeping over the empty tomb? John 20:13.

After Peter and John left in puzzled astonishment to return to the city, Mary lingered near the tomb, grief-stricken that her beloved Master’s body somehow had been removed from the sepulcher. Perhaps, she thought, someone considered this tomb too honorable for Christ. She knew of another vacant grave where Jesus might rest—the one where her brother, Lazarus, had so recently slept in death.

Stooping to gaze once again into the tomb, Mary saw two angels sitting there. She apparently was so distraught that she neither recognized them as angels nor became curious as to their identity.

THINK IT THROUGH: Jesus repeatedly told His followers that He would die and rise again the third day. Why, then, was His resurrection such a total and overwhelming surprise to them that at first they could not even believe the evidence of their own senses?

The next scene in John's narrative is one of the most profoundly moving in all Scripture. Turning from the tomb, her eyes blinded by tears, Mary saw—perhaps off to one side—the form of a man she assumed to be the gardener.

"Woman," a voice asked, "why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?"

"Oh, Sir," she pleaded, "if you have taken Him away, please just tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away."

The sobs continued.

"Mary."

Recognition! A jolt of joy spun Mary around to face her living Lord. She almost lunged for Him, prepared to embrace His feet and wash them once again—this time with tears of pure joy.

But Jesus raised His hand. "Mary," He said, "do not embrace Me just now. Do not delay Me, for I must quickly ascend to My Father. But could you do Me a favor, Mary? Please go tell the disciples that you have seen Me and that I am ascending to the Father."

Immediately Mary complied.

ILLUMINATION: "Jesus refused to receive the homage of His people until He had the assurance that His sacrifice was accepted by the Father. He ascended to the heavenly courts, and from God Himself heard the assurance that His atonement for the sins of men had been ample, that through His blood all might gain eternal life."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 790.

FOR REFLECTION: King David died but did not go to heaven. (See Acts 2:29, 34.) Lazarus died, but, resurrected four days later, he said nothing of having gone to heaven. Now, after a weekend in the tomb, Jesus told Mary that He had *not yet* ascended to His Father. What does this suggest to you regarding the common teaching that at death the saints ascend directly to heaven?



II. POST-RESURRECTION APPEARANCES (John 20:19 through 21:23).

John concludes his Gospel narrative with three appearances of Jesus to His disciples following His resurrection. The first was on the evening of resurrection Sunday, the second eight days later, and the third still later as the disciples fished on the Sea of Galilee.

What was the purpose of Christ's appearances after the resurrection?

"Christ's first work on earth after His resurrection was to convince His disciples of His undiminished love and tender regard for them. To give them proof that He was their living Saviour, that He had broken the fetters of the tomb, and could no longer be held by the enemy death; to reveal that He had the same heart of love as when He was with them as their beloved Teacher, He appeared to them again and again. He would draw the bonds of love still closer around them."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 793.

Mary and the other women (Matt. 28:1-9) had delivered Christ's messages to the disciples, but the men still could not believe that Jesus was risen. Evening found them huddled in fear behind the barred doors of the upper room.

Suddenly Someone else stood with them in the room. They had heard no footsteps—no knock. "Peace be unto you" (John 20:19), Jesus greeted them. He showed them His hands and His side.

"Then," John writes in his calmly understated way, "were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord" (John 20:20). Glad? Might not "delirious with ecstasy" or "beside themselves with joy" be more descriptive?

THINK IT THROUGH: The disciples were so fearful and depressed that they missed even the most obvious evidences of Christ's resurrection. The Sunday they might have spent rejoicing they spent in hopeless despair. Are we sometimes so blinded by our own sorrow or discouragement that we fail to realize the immediate presence of Jesus with us?

Greeting them again with peace, Jesus began sharing His great vision of the future with His overjoyed disciples. "As the Father has sent me," He told them, "I am sending you into the world."

With the launching of His church on earth only days away, what did Jesus do to prepare its charter leaders for their task? John 20:22.

ILLUMINATION: "The Holy Spirit was not yet fully manifested; for Christ had not yet been glorified. The more abundant impartation of the Spirit did not take place till after Christ's ascension. Not until this was received could the disciples fulfill the commission to preach the gospel to the world. But the Spirit was now given for a special purpose. Before the disciples could fulfill their official duties in connection with the church, Christ breathed His Spirit upon them. He was committing to them a most sacred trust, and He desired to impress them with the fact that without the Holy Spirit this work could not be accomplished."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 805.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Read John 20:23. How do you understand this verse? Is Jesus saying that the church can forgive sin? Is He saying that the church is empowered to judge, and that Heaven ratifies all such church judgments? If not, what is the intent of this directive, in your opinion? (See *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 805, 806.)

"Whatever you forbid on earth must be what is already forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth must be what is already permitted in heaven" (Matt. 16:19, *The New Testament, A Private Translation in the Language of the People*, by Charles B. Williams. Chicago: Moody Press, 1958.)

At the first appearance of Christ to the disciples, Thomas was absent. When the others told him that they had seen Jesus, he would not believe them. It wounded his vanity to think that his Master should reveal Himself to all the disciples except him. He was determined not to believe, and for a whole week he brooded over his wretchedness, which seemed all the darker in contrast with the hope and faith of his brethren.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 806, 807.

“Unless I see the nail prints in His hands—no, unless I can put my finger into the nail prints and into His side, I will not believe,” Thomas said. The will is where the power of decision—of choice—is centered. Thomas chose not to believe, even in the face of convincing evidence.

REACT: How do you personally react to the story of “doubting Thomas”? Are you amazed and perhaps irritated at his refusal to believe?

Eight days later: “A number of the disciples now made the familiar upper chamber their temporary home, and at evening all except Thomas gathered here. One evening Thomas determined to meet with the others. Notwithstanding his unbelief, he had a faint hope that the good news was true.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 807.

Again, despite the barred doors, Jesus suddenly appeared before the disciples. A third “Peace be unto you”—and then Jesus turned to a genuinely astonished Thomas. “Reach hither thy finger,” He invited His doubting disciple, “and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing” (John 20:27).

Thomas declined Christ’s invitation. He was convinced and needed no further proof. He cast himself at Jesus’ feet, crying, “My Lord and my God.”

Christ accepted the tardy acknowledgment from Thomas, but in the words of this week’s memory text, He gently reproved his unbelief. Sight is not faith. Hearing is not faith. Neither is feeling faith. But believing when we cannot see, or hear, or feel—that is faith.

The spirit and mental inclination of Thomas lives on—even in the church today. Some still will not believe truth simply on the weight of evidence, but demand absolute proof. But it is precisely this chasm—great or small—between evidence and total proof that faith is called upon to leap.



What reason did John give for writing his Gospel? John 20:30, 31.

Seven of the disciples gathered on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. The pleasant evening and the lure of the sea brought out the fisherman in Peter. He proposed that they launch a boat and try their nets.

They talked and toiled through the night until dawn’s light glowed over the hills that rise from the shore. All the while, a lone watcher on that shore followed their movements.

“Have you anything to eat?” the Stranger on the shore called out.

“No,” they called back.

"Cast your net on the right side of the ship, and you will find some fish," the Stranger replied.

They did, and suddenly the small net was so full of fishes that it became too heavy to draw out of the water. John says (21:11) that the net, when finally wrestled to shore, contained 153 "great fishes." Leave it to fishermen to be sure and count the number of fish, and to remember the count as well as the size of the fish!

Suddenly John recognized Jesus and exclaimed to Peter, "It is the Lord!" In keeping with his impulsive character, Peter instantly jumped overboard and swam for shore.

ILLUMINATION: "Jesus had a purpose in bidding them cast their net on the right side of the ship. On that side He stood upon the shore. That was the side of faith. If they labored in connection with Him,—His divine power combining with their human effort,—they could not fail of success."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 811.

III. EPILOGUE (John 21:24, 25).

In his final sentence, John allows himself an untypical bit of hyperbole or enthusiastic expression. Even the entire world, he says, could not contain the books recording all that Jesus did while on this earth.

"Many other things" that Jesus did, John wrote (compare 20:30), are not contained in his Gospel. Some of these deeds of Jesus the other Gospel writers recorded. But we are left to wonder what those "other things" were—and to wish we might know. Doubtless, as time yields to eternity, we will begin to find out.

Heaven came down, and thanks be to God that at least some of the many words and deeds of Jesus have been preserved for our benefit nearly two thousand years later.

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read the last chapter of *The Desire of Ages* entitled "To My Father, and Your Father."

SUMMARY: The empty tomb was no illusion cleverly engineered by Christ's followers. History has not been whitewashed in order to justify the existence of Christianity. The eyewitness accounts of the Gospel writers are not wishful fabrications. Jesus lived and is alive! And for those skeptics who doubt the evidence of the Word, even fresher evidence is available. For no effort of science or psychology can credibly explain away the radical and miraculous changes that take place in the lives of those in whom Jesus lives even now.

APPLICATION:

- Is Jesus patient with me when I have doubts? What does His dealing with Thomas tell me? How should I relate to those for whom I work who are slow to believe?
- Peter, John, and Mary were quite different from each other in temperament; yet God used each of them. Because I am not as gifted as others, am I ever tempted to believe that I am not of much use to God?

If English Isn't Your Mother Tongue...



Written especially for those whose mother tongue is not English, the Easy English edition of the adult Sabbath School quarterly presents the quarter's topic in clearer, more-easily-understood language.

Since its introduction two years ago, the Easy English quarterly has proven popular, not only with those who have English as a second language, but with people who have a hard time understanding the regular adult lessons. Its larger print makes it easier to read too!

You, too, can begin a journey of satisfying discovery by using the Easy English quarterly.

To order, see your personal ministries secretary or visit your local ABC.

Lessons for Fourth Quarter, 1986

Sabbath School members who have not received a copy of the Adult Lessons for the fourth quarter of 1986 will be helped by the following outline in studying the first two lessons. The title of this series is "Total Commitment Now."

First Lesson:

"WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH YOUR LIFE?"

MEMORY TEXT: John 10:10.

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: A Biblical Overview of Stewardship and Total Commitment.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God gave us life to use and manage for Him. Throughout the Bible He instructs us through precept and example how to manage our lives wisely, without selfishness. A direct connection exists between our relationship with God and the way we manage our lives.

OUTLINE:

- I. The challenge of total commitment (Rom. 12:1, 2; 1 Cor. 4:2; Luke 16:1-12).
- II. Wholistic stewardship (1 Cor. 10:31; 2 Cor. 8:5).
- III. Grace and wholistic stewardship (2 Cor. 8:1-9; Eph. 3:1-21).
- IV. The place of wholistic stewardship in character development (Rom. 8:12-14; Gal. 5:19-23; 2 Cor. 9:6-8; Deut. 16:17).

Second Lesson:

"A BAG FULL OF HOLES"

MEMORY TEXT: Haggai 1:9.

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Haggai 1.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The remnant of the Jewish people who had returned from Babylon responded willingly and with amazing alacrity to God's message of rebuke. They seemed to sense the truth of the prophet's message that both temporal and spiritual prosperity depend upon faithful obedience to God's commandments.

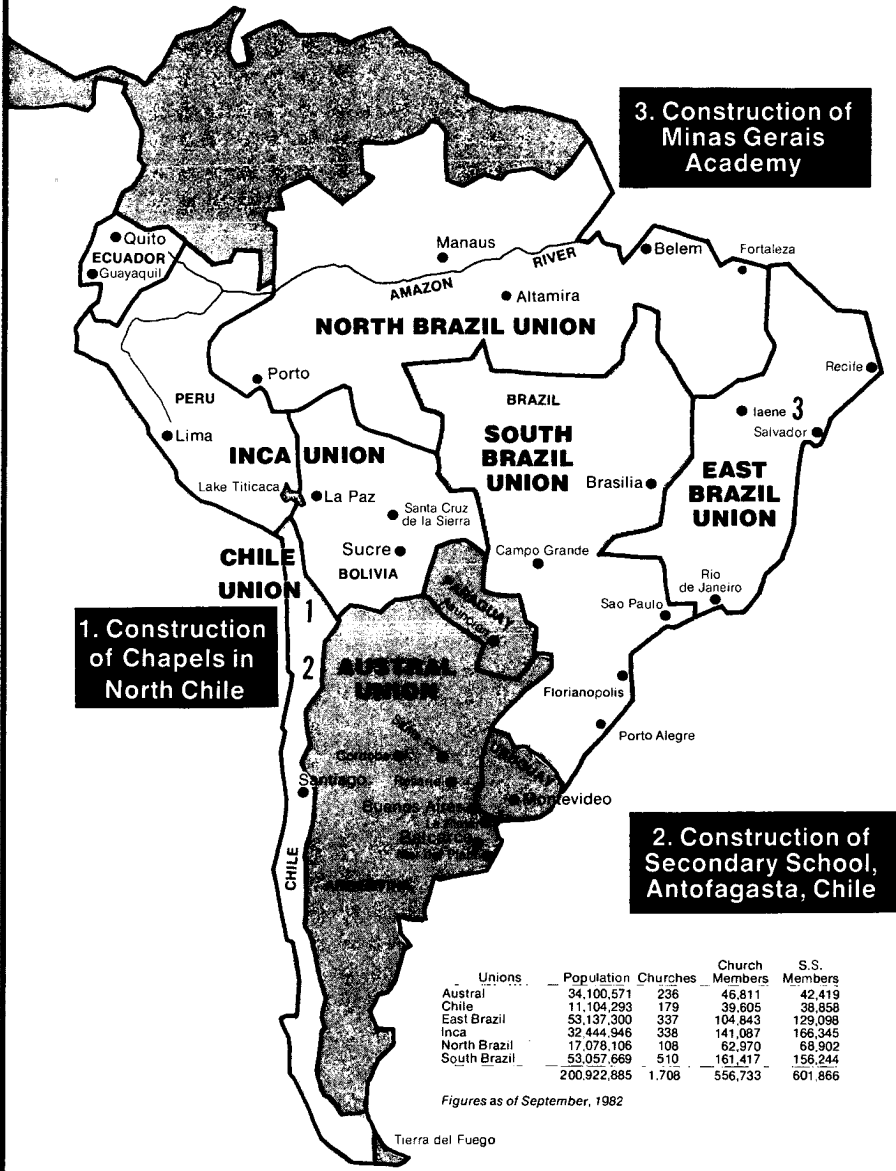
OUTLINE:

- I. First message—a rebuke (Haggai 1:1-12).
- II. Second message—a promise (Haggai 1:13-15).

Lessons in Braille:

The regular Adult Sabbath School Lessons are available free each month in Braille and 16 ⅓ rpm records to blind and physically handicapped persons who cannot read normal ink print. This includes individuals who because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accident, old age, and so forth, cannot hold or focus on normal ink-print publications. Contact the Christian Record Braille Foundation. Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506.

South American Division



1. Construction of Chapels in North Chile

3. Construction of Minas Gerais Academy

2. Construction of Secondary School, Antofagasta, Chile

| Unions | Population | Churches | Church Members | S.S. Members |
|--------------|--------------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|
| Austral | 34,100,571 | 236 | 46,811 | 42,419 |
| Chile | 11,104,293 | 179 | 39,605 | 38,858 |
| East Brazil | 53,137,300 | 337 | 104,843 | 129,098 |
| Inca | 32,444,946 | 338 | 141,087 | 166,345 |
| North Brazil | 17,078,106 | 108 | 62,370 | 68,902 |
| South Brazil | 53,057,669 | 510 | 161,417 | 156,244 |
| Total | 200,922,885 | 1,708 | 556,733 | 601,866 |

Figures as of September, 1982

Tierra del Fuego