

Adult

Sabbath School Lessons

Call to the Kingdom



January, February, March 1990

Why Did We Go?

Because of our home environment and early years on a mission station, then attendance at an Adventist college where the concept of service was paramount.

Our commitment to missions required sacrifices (one daughter is buried in the Ituri Forest in Zaire and another at Solusi, Zimbabwe), but our nearly forty years of service in Africa has been an expression of our gratitude for what Jesus means to us.



Don and Helen Thomas

Would We Go Again?

Yes, nothing is more rewarding than God's service. God has given us a son and his bride, as well as a daughter and her family who actively support the Church we love. What more could we wish for?

Missionaries Still Needed:

The General Conference Secretariat currently has calls for over one hundred inter-division workers, primarily in health care, teaching and administrative professions. Applicants must have specific academic qualifications, successful experience, and good recommendations. For details, write to Secretariat Information Service, 6840 Eastern Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20012

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How the Sabbath School Lessons Are Produced

Because we often are asked to explain the procedure by which the *Adult Sabbath School Lessons* are prepared, we are including here a brief description of the process.

Authors are selected from around the world field and given specific guidelines in regard to such matters as content, format, length, writing style, etc. When a manuscript is submitted to the Sabbath School lesson editor by a particular author it is presented without alteration to a local General Conference Reading Committee. This committee consists of competent Bible scholars, departmental leaders, and administrators. Committee members read the manuscript, write their reactions and suggestions, and attend a special meeting at which the author's work is discussed in detail. At the meeting a vote is taken as to whether the manuscript should be accepted for publication.

On the basis of the suggestions of the local Reading Committee, the accepted manuscript is edited and sent out to the World Reading Committee. Every division of the world field has representatives on this larger committee. These people read the manuscript and mail their suggested changes to the editor. The editor then edits the manuscript a second time, giving careful attention to the changes requested by the members of the World Reading Committee.

The resulting publication manuscript is sent to Pacific Press for publication and to every division for translation, printing, and distribution. Pacific Press submits to the editor galley proofs, followed by printed pages, and a final print of the corrected copy. At each stage the editors go carefully through the manuscript, correcting errors and ensuring that the content is acceptable.

No one person writes the *Adult Sabbath School Lessons*. The original author is the principal contributor, but the thought of many Adventist leaders around the world is incorporated into the quarterly. The aim is to produce lessons that are thoroughly representative of the spiritual and theological commitments of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. No one person, including the author, has all his ideas included in the quarterly. The material published consists of the consensus of two very competent reading committees.

Every attempt is made to exclude theological and mechanical error from the quarterly. Obviously in a task of this magnitude, involving somewhat detailed interpretations of Scripture, some of our members will have opinions on some Bible passages that vary somewhat from those published in the quarterly. We grow as we study, and in the process we may see some things differently. Even so, the adult Sabbath School quarterly editors and Reading Committee members are committed to presenting as carefully as possible the scriptural understandings of main-line Seventh-day Adventism.

Erwin R. Gane, Ph.D., *Editor*

Introduction to the Gospel of Matthew

Call to the Kingdom

Levi-Matthew was a despised tax collector when Jesus called him from his collector's booth. Matthew often emphasizes the generous, gracious forgiveness of Jesus and His loving acceptance of all who were willing to turn to Him. Another unique characteristic of Matthew's Gospel is that he includes individuals who do not seem to be as important to the other Gospel writers. Matthew also portrays Jesus as standing firmly for truth contrary to popular opinion.

This Gospel establishes Jesus' credibility as a legitimate "son of David" and "son of Abraham." Compared with the other Gospel writers, Matthew quotes the Old Testament most frequently in support of Christ's ministry. At a time when would-be messiahs frequently arose claiming to fulfill the Old Testament prophecies, Matthew took pains to show that Jesus alone adequately met these requirements of messiahship. In doing so, he had to deal with a large number of fallacious assumptions regarding the nature of the promised King.

Matthew begins Christ's genealogy with Abraham. This suggests his orientation toward producing a Gospel intended to help the Jews accept Christ as Messiah and King.

However, Matthew's Gospel appeals to Gentiles, as well as to Jews. Its framework is set in the euphoric hope of the nation for their kingdom to be restored and the Messiah to sit forever on the throne. But the kingdom Jesus brought was not the popular kingdom of force, power, and dogmatic authority that the chosen people expected. Instead, it was and is an inner kingdom that still counts among its subjects those who exhibit a humble, teachable spirit. Christ, the King of the kingdom of grace within us, will return soon to reign as King of the eternal kingdom of glory.

Matthew has organized his Gospel carefully. One way of viewing the structure of what he has written appears below.

OVERVIEW OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

1:1-4:17	4:18-10:42	11:1-16:20	16:21-28:20
THE COMING OF THE KING	THE CAMPAIGN OF THE KING		THE CONQUEST OF THE KING
Introduction of the King	Introduction of the kingdom	Response to the kingdom	Response to the King
CHRIST DECIDES	INDIVIDUALS DECIDE		NATION AND CHURCH DECIDE

Lesson 1

December 31—January 6

“Unto Us a Son Is Given”

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matthew 1 and 2.

SAB **PM** **MEMORY TEXT:** “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

GOD CAME TO DWELL AMONG US IN THE PERSON OF JESUS. His purpose was to provide the healing remedy for sin. His victory over sin and death makes our victory possible. For this reason the Lord established the kingdom of grace on earth.

OUTLINE

- I. The Genealogy of the King (Matt. 1:1-17).
- II. The Birth of the King (Matt. 1:18-25).
- III. The Childhood of the King (Matt. 2:1-23).

THE KING HAS COME. During World War II, in a little village that had suffered a severe air raid, an older woman stood next to the ruins of her bomb-shattered home. With tears streaming down her face, she exclaimed, “If only the king would come, we’d feel much better.”

Although she did not realize it, she was voicing the deep heart longing of innumerable millions in this sin-shattered world. But the good news is that the King *has* come. Those who recognize His presence do feel much better in spite of the fact that they still live on this scarred, ruined battlefield of the great controversy.

The King came nearly 2,000 years ago. Although the political leaders of His day generally ignored Him and refused to accept His claims, He changed the direction of this world’s history by the establishment of a kingdom that soon will rule this world, unchallenged by rebellion and sin.

The significance of four Gospels. Why are there four Gospels instead of only one? The book of Acts is our one record of the early Christian community. Just one Bible book, Genesis, is devoted to the beginnings of humankind. Why, then, do we need four Gospels?

There are a number of reasons why God chose to give us the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; but one stands out. Have you ever visited a large art museum and found yourself studying a complex painting? From each angle it revealed new aspects and ideas. To present Christ’s life and teachings required more than one artist and one perspective, because His life and teachings are so significant to the plan of salvation.

Different themes and emphases. Different authors see different themes and emphasize different aspects of the same event. Because each

one of us is a unique individual, we cannot expect any two individuals to experience or view an event in exactly the same way. Jesus' life can best be understood from varying perspectives. Although the four Gospel writers were dedicated followers of Christ, they experienced and perceived their Lord in differing ways.

While using the sources of the community of believers, as well as some of their own recollections or the remembrances of eyewitnesses, they arranged and edited their material according to their individual perceptions of the events. As disciples, Matthew and John knew Jesus better than did the other Gospel writers. It is thought that Mark reflected Peter's perspective. Luke apparently never met Jesus, but is recognized as a careful historian. Of course, we recognize the inspiration of the Holy Spirit behind what the writers recorded from their differing perspectives.

Unity in diversity. "There is variety in a tree, there are scarcely two leaves just alike. Yet this variety adds to the perfection of the tree as a whole.

"In our Bible, we might ask, Why need Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in the Gospels, why need the Acts of the Apostles, and the variety of writers in the Epistles, go over the same thing?

"The Lord gave His word in just the way He wanted it to come. He gave it through different writers, each having his own individuality, though going over the same history. Their testimonies are brought together in one Book, and are like the testimonies in a social meeting. They do not represent things in just the same style. Each has an experience of his own, and this diversity broadens and deepens the knowledge that is brought out to meet the necessities of varied minds. The thoughts expressed have not a set uniformity, as if cast in an iron mold, making the very hearing monotonous. In such uniformity there would be a loss of grace and distinctive beauty. . . .

"The Creator of all ideas may impress different minds with the same thought, but each may express it in a different way, yet without contradiction."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 21, 22.

Without four Gospels we would have less understanding of Jesus' ministry and accomplishments. We need all four to help us gain the broadest possible picture of the mission and work of Christ. The repetition of some events should reinforce the supreme significance and meaning of the coming of our King to die for our sins in order that He might be one with us for all eternity.

SUN

I. THE GENEALOGY OF THE KING (Matt. 1:1-17).

Genealogies form some of the lesser-appreciated portions of the Bible. Whereas genealogies may not provide the most inspirational devotional material, they serve an important function in enabling us to tie Bible events together and help us understand the background and relationship of these events. To Matthew, as a devout Jewish Christian, the genealogy of Christ was an important factor in introducing Jewish readers to Jesus as a son of David, and thus a son of Abraham.

1. Compare the beginning and ending of Matthew's genealogy of

Jesus with the beginning and ending of Luke's genealogy. Matthew 1:1, 16; Luke 3:23, 38. Why do they differ in their approach?

Matthew begins with _____ and ends with _____

Luke begins with _____ and ends with _____

Matthew wrote with descendants of Abraham in mind. Luke wrote to include Jew and Gentile alike in the plan of salvation. Matthew was aware of the feeling of orthodox Jews that their salvation was assured if they could trace their genealogy to Abraham. In fact, after the Babylonian captivity, members of the tribe of Levi were expelled from the priesthood if they could not trace their lineage back four generations within the priesthood. A Jew who had no Jewish genealogy was perceived as excluded from salvation. Matthew takes pains to ensure that no one could ignore Jesus' claims as the Messiah on the ground that He lacked a Jewish genealogy.

MON 2. Note that not everyone in Jesus' genealogy was a descendant of Abraham. List below the exceptions found in the Matthew 1 genealogy.

- Verse 3 (Genesis 38) _____
- Verse 5 (Josh. 2; 6:25) _____
- Verse 5 (Ruth 4:13, 17-22) _____
- Verse 6 (2 Sam. 12:24) _____

During His ministry Jesus poured His great love and compassion on sinners. They too were "sons and daughters of the kingdom" to which Abraham belonged.

Some of the Jews sneered at Jesus' birth as illegitimate and thus thought He was automatically excluded from any right to kingship. Yet they fully believed that the future messianic King would come from the line of Judah, whose sons were born out of wedlock. Matthew's inclusion of the four women mentioned above prepares the reader for Matthew's story of Joseph's hesitation to wed Mary owing to her apparent unfaithfulness to her betrothal. Christ's birth was misunderstood, and His ancestry was not well known.

Matthew's purpose. Matthew wanted his readers to know that Jesus is indeed rightful Saviour and King of the world. On the shoulders of our wonderful Counsellor, mighty God, everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace was placed the government, not just of this world, but of the entire universe. Those alone who are patient like Tamar, humble like Ruth, teachable like Rahab, and gentle and unobtrusive like Bathsheba fit into the kingdom ruled by such a gracious King.

Differences in the genealogical lists. Luke seems interested in

developing a more specific and complete list, whereas Matthew is involved in a numerological scheme of 14 - 14 - 14 (14 in each of three generations). Matthew did not need to list everyone for his readers in his time. The Jews were familiar with the list of kings, and Matthew seems to trace Christ's *legal descent* through the ruling branch of the family to Joseph. Matthew is concerned to emphasize Christ's right to David's throne. On the other hand, Luke seems to trace Christ's *blood descent* through Mary.

TUE II. THE BIRTH OF THE KING (Matt. 1:18-25).

3. What is revealed concerning Joseph's character in verses 19, 20?

4. What is significant to us today about the name *Jesus*? Matt. 1:21.

No name ever has had such an impact on the world as that of Jesus. We pray in His name. We sing about it. We talk about its power. Too many use it carelessly or in anger. Why is the name so important? Others bore that name between 4 B.C. and A.D. 31. Actually, in Hebrew, Jesus was called by the same name as the one who led the Israelites into Canaan—Joshua.

This is appropriate. In the same way that Joshua led out in the final act of Israel's deliverance from slavery and the wilderness wanderings, Jesus was to deliver His people from sin. The name *Joshua* is a compound word meaning, "Jehovah saves."

5. What other name is Jesus given in Matthew 1:23? What is the significance of that name? See Isa. 7:14; 8:8-10.

Directly after recording the angel's words, "He shall save his people from their sins," Matthew endeavors to show how the incarnation of Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy of a virgin giving birth to a Son whose name would be "God with us."

When the words of Isaiah are recognized as a Messianic prophecy, they focus on the fact that the coming Anointed One was God Himself. The birth of Jesus was supernatural because He was God. No inferior person came from heaven to win us back to love and trust in the Father. Only God could reveal Himself fully, and only God could save us.

WED 6. How does Jesus save us from sin? Compare Matt. 1:21 with 3:11; 20:28.

Several Old and New Testament words for salvation include the concept of healing. Because Jesus is our Creator, as well as our Saviour, He can heal us from the damages of sin. In fact, Jesus spent more time

healing than teaching, in order to illustrate fully the nature of the plan of salvation.

To be healed from sin involves more than a legal process. Jesus did not come merely to pass out legal documents stamped "Pardoned." He came to heal us from sin's damages and to restore the image of God in us.

Christ came to reveal God and to consume sin. "Satan sought to intercept every ray of light from the throne of God. He sought to cast his shadow across the earth, that men might lose the true views of God's character, and that the knowledge of God might become extinct in the earth. . . . God was represented as severe, exacting, revengeful, and arbitrary. . . . Jesus came to teach men of the Father, to correctly represent Him before the fallen children of earth. Angels could not fully portray the character of God, but Christ, who was a living impersonation of God, could not fail to accomplish the work. The only way in which He could set and keep men right was to make Himself visible and familiar to their eyes. . . .

"Those who would behold this glory would be drawn to love Jesus and to love the Father whom He represented."—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, Jan. 20, 1890.

"To sin, wherever found, 'our God is a consuming fire.' Heb. 12:29. In all who submit to His power the Spirit of God will consume sin. But if men cling to sin, they become identified with it. Then the glory of God, which destroys sin, must destroy them. . . . In the time of John the Baptist, Christ was about to appear as the revealer of the character of God. His very presence would make manifest to men their sin. Only as they were willing to be purged from sin could they enter into fellowship with Him. Only the pure in heart could abide in His presence."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 107, 108.

7. **Compare Matthew's account of the events surrounding the birth of Jesus with Luke's account. What details are unique to each account? In the light of what you already have learned about the difference in approach between these two Gospel writers, what do you think accounts for the differences you have noted? Compare Matt. 1:18-25; 2:1-3 with Luke 2:1-18.**

Matthew's account unique. "Matthew sets the birth story in the context of a clash in royal claims, made evident by the opening words of chapter 2: 'Jesus . . . in the days of Herod the king . . . has been born king of the Jews.' Only Matthew records the slaughter of the infants, sacrificed to the cruel jealousy of Herod the Great. Only Matthew likewise includes the visit of the Wise Men from the East. Instead of the adoration of Luke's humble shepherds, Matthew's Jesus receives gifts fit for a king. So His royal dignity is corroborated by genealogy and birth-place, by the fulfillment of Scripture, by Magi, and by a star."—William G. Johnsson, *Religion in Overalls* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Association, 1977), p. 27.

III. THE CHILDHOOD OF THE KING (Matt. 2:1-23).

From the time Satan began telling lies about God's character, the entire universe has been involved in the great controversy. Because Satan knew that Jesus would prove his every lie false in His revelation of the Father and that Jesus had come to gain the victory over him, he tried to destroy the infant Jesus through Herod the Great. Regrettably, he found support in God's chosen people who, through their study of the Old Testament prophecies, should have known that the Messiah had been born.

"Now pride and envy closed the door against the light. If the reports brought by the shepherds and the wise men were credited, they would place the priests and rabbis in a most unenviable position, disproving their claim to be the exponents of the truth of God. . . . They would not even go to Bethlehem to see whether these things were so. And they led the people to regard the interest in Jesus as a fanatical excitement. Here began the rejection of Christ by the priests and rabbis. From this point their pride and stubbornness grew into a settled hatred of the Saviour."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 62, 63.

Ask yourself: Is it enough to be a member of the church and do all the things that are considered to be right? Is there danger in refusal to investigate claims and teachings? Is it possible that any of us could be a tool in Satan's hand, furthering his cause by misrepresenting Christ's truth?

The Jews knew their Scriptures well. They were God-fearing and outwardly commandment-keeping. But they were untrue to God initially by careless indifference to truth and a refusal to investigate with unprejudiced minds the evidence that Jesus was the Messiah. Finally, in open opposition to Jesus' gracious ways, they rejected God in the person of His Son.

Every time we ignore the truth, in whatever way it comes to us, we lose some of our capacity to know God as He really is.

- 8. Where did the wise men find Jesus? How is He described at this time? What does this tell us about the time of the Magi's visit as compared to the time and place when the shepherds came to see Him? Matt. 2:9-11.**

Satan's plans failed. In spite of all that Satan did to oppose God's plan for bringing the Saviour into the world, Matthew assures us that God was and always has been in control. In fact, he goes out of his way to demonstrate how God used those interferences and conflicts to fulfill Old Testament prophecies that, in turn, gave evidence for all to believe that Jesus was the Messiah.

- 9. Why is it difficult for some to recognize the prophecies that Matthew quotes from the Old Testament as applying to the birth and childhood of Jesus?**

- Compare: Matt. 1:23 with Isa. 7:10-14.
 Matt. 2:15 with Hosea 11:1, 2.
 Matt. 2:17, 18 with Jer. 31:15.
 Matt. 2:23 with Isa. 11:1.

In the days of Jesus, this kind of interpretation of the Old Testament was favored by many studious Jews. Some prophecies were straightforward predictions that were understood without question, such as that about the birthplace of the Messiah (Micah 5:2). But some of the well-accepted prophecies had to be understood by analogy. The prophecies listed above need to be understood in the way that a typical Jew of Matthew's time would view them.

Prophecy often was given through symbols or metaphors. Paul notes that prophecy is incomplete because now we see through a glass darkly (1 Cor. 13:9-12). The Holy Spirit was speaking in such a way that the people of Christ's day understood and accepted the intent of these prophecies.

"He shall be called a Nazarene" (Matt. 2:23) may be taken from Isaiah 11:1 if it is understood, in a typological sense, that the word *branch* and the name *Nazareth* come from the same Hebrew root.

HOW DOES THIS LESSON APPLY TO ME?

- What does Matthew 1 and 2 teach me about the kind of person God is?
- If I knew that a person like Jesus were moving in next door as my new neighbor, how would I respond? How would I treat Him? How would He wish me to treat Him?
- Am I willing for Jesus to be king of my life?



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read "The Fullness of Time" and "We Have Seen His Star" in *The Desire of Ages* (chapters 3 and 6) pp. 31-38, 59-67.

SUMMARY: As the Saviour of the world, Jesus Christ is truly God-with-us, the King of the universe. Because Satan brought sin into our world by his lies about God, Jesus came to heal us from sin. This He accomplished by demonstrating what God is like, suffering the penalty for our sin, and bestowing the Holy Spirit upon us. Matthew helps us to understand how God meets us in the person of His Son. How we receive Him depends on the choices we make about Him each day.

The Messiah Comes

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matthew 3 and 4.



MEMORY TEXT: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" (Matthew 3:11).

CHRIST'S MISSION IS OURS. Jesus began to spread the truth about His kingdom on earth after being anointed and tested. Immediately He began preaching and preparing others for service. We should follow His pattern as we seek to do our part in ushering in His kingdom of glory.

OUTLINE

- I. The Preparation for the King (Matt. 3:1-12).
- II. The Anointing of the King (Matt. 3:13-17).
- III. The Testing of the King's Character (Matt 4:1-11).
- IV. The Beginning of the King's Work (Matt. 4:12-25).

AT THE FULNESS OF TIME JESUS' MINISTRY BEGAN. After John had prepared the way, Jesus humbly walked into the midst of the crowds that flocked the section of the Jordan where John was baptizing. The King submitted graciously to the baptism that marked His anointing. Then, after the Dove, came the devil. After His baptism, Jesus retired into the wilderness for more than a month to pray and commune with His Father about His ministry. Tested and tried there by the devil, He returned to the lifestream of His day to begin His ministry. Only then did He begin to preach the kingdom.

The assurance Christ was given is for us. "The word that was spoken to Jesus at the Jordan, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,' embraces humanity. God spoke to Jesus as our representative. With all our sins and weaknesses, we are not cast aside as worthless. . . . The glory that rested upon Christ is a pledge of the love of God for us. It tells us of the power of prayer—how the human voice may reach the ear of God, and our petitions find acceptance in the courts of heaven."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 113.



I. THE PREPARATION FOR THE KING (Matt. 3:1-12).

John's work was to prepare the people to receive Jesus and His kingdom. His message was brief and bold: "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

1. What does it mean to “repent?” Matt. 3:2.

In the Old Testament, the word for repentance means literally “to turn away from” something or even “to defect from” an earlier position. The New Testament word means “to change the mind.” For John to tell the pious, devout Jews of his day to repent was as radical as to tell a patriot that he was showing disloyalty to his country. His listeners probably wondered why any religious Jew who refused to do any work whatsoever on the Sabbath, attended the synagogue regularly, never looked at a woman in the street (let alone spoke to her), and tithed his mint, dill, and cumin needed to repent.

Yet, that is what John told them they needed to do. John did not give this challenge in gentle whispers of peace, either. His words shook the foundations of Judaism.

2. How specific did John get in denouncing the attitudes of the Pharisees and Sadducees? Compare Christ’s approach. Matt. 3:7-10; 23:29-33.

To call people “a brood of vipers” in John’s day was a very serious charge. A snake in ancient times symbolized evil. When John called the Pharisees and Sadducees “a brood of vipers” he essentially was calling them “sons of devils.”

When you stop to think about it, the people John called “sons of devils” were the most pious, law-abiding people among God’s remnant. They were doing everything they could in their own power to be good people. They were recognized as pious religious leaders. What was their problem, and what is the problem of so many good people today? They were not good enough, and could not be in their own strength. It is impossible for the best people to measure up by their own power to the standards set by the character and law of God.

3. How did John illustrate the drastic work that needed to be done in the hearts of his hearers? Matt. 3:10.

Standing determined by character and life. “Not by its name, but by its fruit, is the value of a tree determined. If the fruit is worthless, the name cannot save the tree from destruction. John declared to the Jews that their standing before God was to be decided by their character and life. Profession was worthless. If their life and character were not in harmony with God’s law, they were not His people.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 107.

John pointed to the nearby trees. When a tree bears bad fruit, we cut it down and use it for firewood. It is useless to berate the tree for bearing bad fruit. It bears bad fruit because it is a bad tree. So with all of us—we sin because we are sinners. Sin is not merely something we do. In order to

bear the good fruits of righteousness we must become righteous.

At the heart of repentance—and the crux of John’s message—lies the truth that repentance and genuine faith alone will produce good fruit.

MON

4. How did John illustrate that Jesus was “mightier” than he? Matt. 3:11, 12.

5. In the following references, consider the fulfillment of John’s predictions regarding Jesus’ work:

Luke 24:49 _____

Acts 1:8 _____

Acts 2:4, 38 _____

Rev. 14:14-20 _____

The baptism of fire comes in two forms. We may receive the free gift of the Holy Spirit now, or be relegated to the category of “chaff,” which will burn “with unquenchable fire” (Matt. 4:11, 12). Christ does all that a loving, infinite God can do to deliver us from the dominion of Satan. He forgives, purifies, infills by His Spirit, and provides the means of spiritual growth. Only when these means of grace are rejected does He withdraw from the impenitent heart.

II. THE ANOINTING OF THE KING (Matt. 3:13-17).

As John was preaching and baptizing at the Jordan, Jesus came, requesting baptism.

6. Explain Daniel’s prediction regarding the time when the Messiah would be anointed. Dan. 9:25; compare Luke 3:1, 21, 22; Acts 10:38.

The Hebrew word translated *Messiah* means “the anointed one.” The Greek equivalent, translated “Christ,” also means “the anointed one.”

When did Jesus become the anointed One? When He received the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38) at His baptism (Matt. 3:13-16).

When was Jesus baptized? John was preaching and baptizing in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar (Luke 3:1, 2), and Jesus was baptized in the same year (verses 21, 22). Following the antedating or non-accession-year method of numbering regnal years, we would identify Tiberius’ first year as August-October, A.D. 14. Augustus died at Nola, in Campania, Italy, on August 19, A.D. 14. The next Jewish New Year’s Day was

October 14. Luke would follow the tishri (Sept.-Oct.) to tishri civil year of the Jews. Therefore Tiberius' fifteenth year was autumn to autumn, A.D. 27-28. According to Luke's historical evidence, this was the year during which Jesus was baptized.

Daniel predicted that the Messiah would appear in A.D. 27. "The commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem" went forth in the autumn of 457 B.C. This point was well-established by S. H. Horn and L. H. Wood in their book *The Chronology of Ezra 7* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1953). According to Daniel, at the end of sixty-nine weeks of years (483 years) following the autumn of 457 B.C. the Messiah would appear. And 483 years after the autumn of 457 B.C. bring us to the autumn of A.D. 27. Thus Luke's history validated the accuracy of Daniel's prophecy.



7. Why was Jesus baptized? Matt. 3:15.

8. Why should we be baptized? Rom. 6:3-5; John 3:5.

Jesus our Example. "Jesus did not receive baptism as a confession of guilt on His own account. He identified Himself with sinners, taking the steps that we are to take, and doing the work that we must do."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 111.

Baptism begins a life of witnessing. Often when celebrating a baptism we dwell on its symbolic meaning of confessing faith, burying past sins, and rising to new life in Christ. But often we neglect another significant point. Baptism is not merely the beginning of a new life within the forgiven community; it is the beginning of a new life that will witness to the kind of kingdom Christ came to establish.

Mr. Peng attended evangelistic meetings held by Pastor Milton Lee in Taiwan in the 1950s. He was convinced that the Seventh-day Adventist Church was the true church, but did not join it.

"A few months ago Mr. Peng learned he had cancer. It was felt he would only live about three months. He came to Taiwan Adventist Hospital for medical care. While there he met Mrs. Syau, a Bible worker. With tears streaming down his face, Mr. Peng declared his love for the Lord. 'I should have been baptized years ago. I want God to forgive me. I want to be baptized now,' he said.

"Remembering that Elder Lee was visiting in Taiwan for a few weeks, Mrs. Syau invited him to visit Mr. Peng. Struggling for each breath, Mr. Peng told Elder Lee of his decision to be baptized.

"Elder Lee shared the story of the thief on the cross and how God knew his heart even if he was not baptized. But in spite of his pain Mr. Peng persisted. 'I want to be baptized.'

"Arrangements were made for the baptism. It was a touching service. A special peace now encircled Mr. Peng. His breathing became easier and his pain seemed to subside. His family noticed the difference. He seemed to rest

in the assurance of God's love. The next day he closed his eyes in death.

"At the funeral, Mrs. Peng, a devout Buddhist, said, 'I also want to be baptized before Elder Lee leaves this island.' The son-in-law added, 'Our whole family wants to be baptized.'

"Mr. Peng's example led his family to accept God's love and forgiveness for their sins. Now the entire Peng family is awaiting the return of the Life Giver."—Carolyn Byers, "I Want to Be Baptized," Far Eastern Division *Outlook*, Oct. 1987, p. 14.

WED

III. THE TESTING OF THE KING'S CHARACTER (Matt. 4:1-11).

9. The chart that follows draws parallels between the first temptation in the Garden of Eden, Christ's temptation, and our present temptations. It also demonstrates how temptations fit into three areas of appeal—physical, mental, and spiritual. The last column in the chart suggests ways that we can cooperate with the Lord in overcoming these specific categories of temptation. Study the chart carefully, consulting all references listed in *The Desire of Ages*.

Appeal of Tempter	ADAM AND EVE Gen. 3:1-6	CHRIST Matt. 4	US 1 John 2:1-6	How to Overcome
<i>Physical Appetites, passions (BODY)</i> DA 122	<i>Tree was good for food—Indulgence of appetite</i> DA 117	<i>Appetite—"Command that these stones be made bread"</i> DA 116	<i>Lust of flesh—Involves distrust of God's provisions</i> DA 118	Deny self by relying upon Christ DA 117
<i>Mental—Will must consent, faith must let go (MIND)</i> DA 125	<i>"Pleasant to eyes"—distrust, presumption</i> DA 126	<i>Love of display which leads to presumption</i> DA 116	<i>Lust of eyes—visualization of sin</i> DA 125	By surrender to God's will; guard avenues of soul DA 125
<i>Spiritual—Yielding of soul for worldly profit. (SOUL)</i> DA 130	<i>"To be desired to make one wise"—betrayal of sovereignty</i> DA 129	<i>Love of the world—"Worship me. All shall be thine"</i> DA 129	<i>Pride of life—Material satisfaction</i> DA 130	Seek first the kingdom of God DA 130

“When Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted, He was led by the Spirit of God. He did not invite temptation. He went to the wilderness to be alone, to contemplate His mission and work. By fasting and prayer He was to brace Himself for the bloodstained path He must travel. But Satan knew that the Saviour had gone into the wilderness, and he thought this the best time to approach Him.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 114.

Jesus revealed that faith is based upon our confidence in God’s Word. It does not take presumptuous leaps from temple tops. To doubt God’s goodness and distrust His provisions is the essence of the first temptation. To presume that God will protect us, no matter how foolish our conduct, is the essence of the second temptation. To think that what we want for ourselves is better than what God has in mind for us is the essence of the third temptation. All are equally dangerous.

10. What do the three temptations reveal about the nature of the great controversy?

Contemplate these ideas:

Temptation 1

- Satan accuses God of being selfish and withholding good things from His children.

- God wins the great controversy by making it obvious that He holds nothing back from us that is for our good, including the life of His own Son.

Temptation 2

- Satan tries to get us to presume on God’s promises.

- Satan quoted the promise, “He shall give his angels charge over thee,” but he neglected to add, “to keep thee in all thy ways.” The angels are commissioned to assist us in keeping to the path of obedience.

- Satan’s counterfeit for faith is presumption. Faith asks, believes, and claims God’s promises. Presumption acknowledges God’s promises but uses them as an excuse for transgression.

Temptation 3

- Satan manifested himself to Jesus “in his true character. But he does not appear as a hideous monster, with cloven feet and bat’s wings. He is a mighty angel, though fallen. He avows himself the leader of rebellion and the god of this world. . . . Christ might deliver Himself from the dreadful future by acknowledging the supremacy of Satan. But to do this was to yield victory in the great controversy.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 129.

- Satan often tries to get us to take the easy way out—to compromise. We cannot overcome the tempter in our own strength. We can choose what is right, but cannot put our choice into action without the power of Christ. (See Rom. 7:18.) “Satan trembles and flees before the weakest soul who finds refuge in that mighty name.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 131.

IV. THE BEGINNING OF THE KING'S WORK (Matt. 4:12-25).

The way prepared and the attention of the people obtained, anointed for His task, fully tested and victorious, Jesus emerged from the wilderness to engage in the work He had come to do.

11. Matthew 4:12-25 describes some of the steps that Jesus took in order to spread the gospel of the kingdom. Study the verses given below and complete the outline.

- Verses 12-14—He protected His work from the attacks of His enemies by moving the center of His ministry from Judea to _____ after _____ was imprisoned.
- Verse 17—He began to _____.
- Verses 18-22—He called _____ to assist him.
- Verse 23—He _____ the sick, taught, and _____ throughout Galilee.
- Verse 24, 25—His reputation spread to _____ and _____.
- Verse 25—The crowds from all over _____ followed Him.

Jesus' first step in organizing His church was to call and train twelve men to help Him. The "great light" of the world came in full splendor in the truths that Jesus taught.

AM I PREPARED FOR CHRIST'S SECOND COMING?

In the same way that there had to be a work of preparation before Christ's first advent, there must be a work of preparation that will take place before His return?

- What is the best preparation for me to make to be ready for Christ to come?
- When I became a church member, was it to witness to the truth about God in every way no matter how small?
- When Satan comes, masquerading as Christ, will I know God so well—as Jesus did—that I will be able to determine on which side the truth lies?

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read "The Temptation" and "The Victory" in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 114-131.

SUMMARY: Before Christ could begin His mission, God had to arouse His people's attention through the ministry of John the Baptist. Once this was accomplished, the Messiah laid aside His carpenter's tools and appeared at the Jordan for His anointing. In His victory over Satan and the beginning of His work, Jesus demonstrated that the gentle persuasion of truth is the most powerful weapon in the universe. Even at the beginning of Christ's ministry we see evidence of the ultimate victory of God's kingdom.

Lesson 3

January 14-20

Citizens of the Kingdom

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matthew 5.



MEMORY TEXT: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).

HAPPY ARE THOSE WHO TRULY KNOW GOD. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives us a description of the principles of God's kingdom. These principles not only describe the kind of person the King of the universe is but also describe the kind of people who will belong to His kingdom.

OUTLINE

- I. Introduction to the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:1, 2).
- II. Seven Steps to Becoming Children of God (Matt. 5:3-9).
- III. Sharing Christ's Righteousness (Matt. 5:10-16).
- IV. Two Righteousnesses Contrasted (Matt. 5:17-20).
- V. True Righteousness Illustrated (Matt. 5:21-48).

PITY THE POOR PHARISEES. We can pity the Pharisees for the little-recognized fact that they were very good people compared with some of the people who surrounded them; but not good enough.

This fact was brought to their attention one day by a Galilean peasant garbed in the simplest of robes. His words brought the monumental building blocks of the pharisaical philosophical castle tumbling about the ears of those pridefully pious people.

They were such simple words: "I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20). But from the time those words were spoken, few have taken the Pharisees as seriously as people once did. There they stood, exposed clearly in their pious pretensions as not being good enough.

How cruel and unjust the charge must have seemed to the Pharisees. Had they not added innumerable statutes of their own to the Ten Commandments in order to shore them up? But now in the court of public opinion, Jesus made it obvious that their attempts to keep the law by their own efforts were in vain. They must have felt shattered. Their entire complicated framework of life, the learned haggings of the great rabbis, were exposed forever as *not good enough*.

The thrust of Jesus' teaching that day on the Mount of Blessing was not to reveal the absurdity of the Pharisees' religion, but to show how, by His grace, all can live according to God's will. Jesus pointed to the Pharisees only to illustrate that what even the best of human beings can

do on their own is not good enough. God has something far better for His children.

SUN

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT (Matt. 5:1, 2)

1. What is the background to the Sermon on the Mount? Matt. 5:1, 2.

The multitude was expectant. "Alone upon a mountain near the Sea of Galilee, Jesus had spent all night in prayer for these chosen ones [His disciples]. At the dawn He had called them to Him, and, with words of prayer and instruction, had laid His hands upon their heads in benediction, setting them apart to the gospel work. Then He repaired with them to the seaside, where early in the morning a great multitude had already begun to assemble. . . .

"With a feeling that something more than usual might be expected, the disciples had pressed about their Master. From the events of the morning they gathered assurance that some announcement was about to be made in regard to the kingdom which, as they fondly hoped, He was soon to establish. A feeling of expectancy pervaded the multitude also, and eager faces gave evidence of the deep interest."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 4, 5.

2. What did Isaiah predict regarding the Messiah's attitude to the law of God? Isa. 42:21.

MON

II. SEVEN STEPS TO BECOMING CHILDREN OF GOD (Matt. 5:3-9).

3. How do the Beatitudes fit into the development of Christ's Sermon on the Mount?

"Throughout the Beatitudes there is an advancing line of Christian experience."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 13. How appropriate that Jesus should first present the basic principles of the heavenly kingdom, before correcting some of the specific distortions of truth that have been current in every age! The Beatitudes indicate the kind of character that results when there is total surrender to Christ.

The first several verses of Matthew 5 contain Christ's answer to such pressing problems of life as pride and insecurity, sin and guilt, despair and disillusionment. The Beatitudes offer a line of progression that leads us step by step to the kind of peace and happiness that come only from our realization that we have become sons and daughters of God.

The chart that follows demonstrates the progression in our Christian experience mentioned above and shows how Christ is the answer to human needs.

CHRIST'S ANSWER TO MAN'S NEED
(Based on the Beatitudes in Matthew 5)

Our Problem	Christ's Answer	Results
1. Pride, insecurity, poor self-image	(Blessed are . . .) ● The Poor in Spirit Those who recognize their need and begin to do something about it	● Acceptance of self ● Conquest of false pride ● Meaningful communion with God and man
2. Sin and guilt	● They that mourn Repentance for and turning from sin	● Clear conscience ● Evidence of acceptance by God and man
3. Rebelliousness, anger, lack of confidence	● The meek Submissiveness and dedication to the will of God for us	● Acceptance of authority ● Development of trust and confidence in God and man
4. Unhappiness, fear, frustration, worry	● They which do hunger and thirst after righteousness Filled with the water of life—justification	● Healthy emotions ● Wholistic development ● Right with God and man
5. Bitterness and selfishness	● The merciful Forgiving attitude, willingness to share, spiritual growth	● Improvement of relationships ● Identification, sharing ● Love to God and man
6. Impurity and immorality	● The pure in heart Cleanliness, purity, integrity in life	● Moral freedom ● Law of God in heart ● Rightdoing toward God and man
7. Despair and apathy	● The peacemakers Share peace, happiness, contentment with others	● Peace that passes understanding ● Portrayal of God to man

4. After studying Matthew 5:3-9 and the details outlined in the chart above, define the following. (See also *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 6-28.)

“Poor in spirit” _____

“They that mourn” _____

“The meek” _____

“They which do hunger and thirst after righteousness” _____

“The merciful” _____

“The pure in heart” _____

“The peacemakers” _____

Happiness restored to human hearts. The Greek word translated “blessed” in the King James Version means “fortunate,” “happy.”

“In the opening words of the Sermon on the Mount, Christ addresses Himself to the supreme desire of every heart—happiness. This desire was implanted in man by the Creator Himself.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 324.

TUE

III. SHARING CHRIST’S RIGHTEOUSNESS (Matt. 5:10-16).

Although traditionally included in the Beatitudes, verses 10 through 12 do not deal as directly as the preceding counsel with the steps to becoming children of God. They attest to the results that are bound to follow when we begin to live Christlike lives.

5. In what way does the world show its enmity toward those who choose to become children of God? Matt. 5:10-12.

6. Read John 15:21 and 16:2 to find the reason Jesus gave as to why His followers would face enmity and persecution. Summarize that reason below.

7. Why does Jesus use the two metaphors—salt and light—in His teaching to illustrate our witness for His truth? Matt. 5:13, 14.

Salt is useful for a number of things; chiefly, for preserving and flavor-

ing foods. To be good salt in the Christian sense means to reveal fully the love, power, and righteousness of Christ in our lives. When these are not seen in Christian witness, then the gospel not only loses its savor and appeal but appears to be "good for nothing."

In the Bible, light represents the Divine presence; darkness represents its absence. Christ is the light of the world, but we are to reflect that light in our lives in such a way that its reflection will attract those about us. (Compare John 8:12; Matt. 5:14.)

8. What is the reflected light of Christ in our lives intended to accomplish in the way of witness? Matt. 5:16.
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WED

IV. TWO RIGHTEOUSNESSES CONTRASTED (Matt. 5:17-20).

9. What did Jesus mean when He stated in Matthew 5:17 that He had not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it?
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In the context of Matthew 5, *fulfill* means to live according to the precepts of the law and to put them in their proper perspective. The interpretation that, by fulfilling the law, Jesus abolished it, contradicts the context (verses 18, 19). Such a view also contradicts the overall teaching of the New Testament that the law continues to function for the Christian as the standard of behavior. (See Rom. 3:31; 7:7, 12, 14; 8:3, 4; James 2:10-12; 1 John 2:4; Rev. 12:17; 14:12.)

10. Why was Jesus so concerned about what might happen to the jots and tittles in the law? Matt. 5:18.
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“‘Till heaven and earth pass,’ said Jesus, ‘one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.’ By His own obedience to the law, Christ testified to its immutable character and proved that through His grace it could be perfectly obeyed by every son and daughter of Adam. . . . He does not teach that the law is ever to be abrogated, but He fixes the eye upon the utmost verge of man’s horizon and assures us that until this point is reached the law will retain its authority so that none may suppose it was His mission to abolish the precepts of the law.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 49, 50.

Great Protestant theologians and creeds have testified that the Ten Commandments are an unchangeable standard of righteousness. For example:

“We must not imagine that the coming of Christ has freed us from the authority of the law: for it is the eternal rule of a devout and holy life, and must, therefore, be as unchangeable as the justice of God, which it embraced, is constant and uniform.”—John Calvin, *Commentary on a Har-*

mony of the Evangelists, trans. by William Pringle (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1949), vol. 1, p. 277.

“It is most surprising to me that anyone can claim that I reject the law or the Ten Commandments, since there is available, in more than one edition, my exposition of the Ten Commandments. . . . I know of no manner in which we do not use them, unless it be that we unfortunately do not practice and paint them with our deeds and our life as we should. . . . For who could know what and why Christ suffered for us without knowing what sin or law is? Therefore the law must be preached wherever Christ is to be preached.”—Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), vol. 47, pp. 109, 113.

“No Christian man whatsoever is free from the obedience of the Commandments which are called Moral.”—“The Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England” (English Edition, 1571; American Revision, 1801), Article VII, in Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1877, 1966), vol. 3, p. 492.

11. How did Jesus put the commandments in their proper perspective? Matt. 5:19.

In this verse and in verse 20, Jesus contrasts true righteousness with false righteousness. His great burden is to get His hearers to concentrate on what is involved in true righteousness.



V. TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS ILLUSTRATED (Matt. 5:21-48).

Jesus used six selections from the Books of the Law, as the chart which follows outlines.

Verses	What the Pharisees Taught	What Jesus Taught
21-26	“Thou shalt not kill.”	Do not even get angry.
27-30	“Thou shalt not commit adultery.”	Do not even lust in the heart.
31, 32	Give wife a certificate of divorce	No divorce, except for immorality.
33-37	Do not swear falsely.	Do not swear at all.
38-42	“An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.”	Do not resist evil. Turn the other cheek.
43-47	Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.	“Love your enemies.”

As you study these comparisons, ask yourself, Who was the more strict, Christ or the Pharisees? Which way is more difficult to follow? What kind of loyalty and obedience to the law does Christ expect of us?

12. What high ideal does God make possible for us to achieve in our sphere? Matt. 5:48.

Total dependence upon Christ. "Perfection of character is based upon that which Christ is to us. If we have constant dependence on the merits of our Saviour, and walk in His footsteps, we shall be like Him, pure and undefiled.

"Our Saviour does not require impossibilities of any soul. He expects nothing of His disciples that He is not willing to give them grace and strength to perform. He would not call upon them to be perfect if He had not at His command every perfection of grace to bestow on the ones upon whom He would confer so high and holy a privilege. . . .

"Our work is to strive to attain in our sphere of action the perfection that Christ in His life on the earth attained in every phase of character. . . . In all things we are to strive to honor God in character. . . . We are to be wholly dependent on the power that He has promised to give us."—Ellen G. White, *That I May Know Him*, p. 130. (See also *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 76-78.)

"**The fullness of Christ.**" Perfection in the Bible is defined as "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). As He overcame by virtue of His relationship with His Father, so we may overcome by virtue of our relationship with Him. (See Rev. 3:21.) An imperfect human being performs only imperfect works, but these imperfect works are free from sin when Christ dwells within and lives out His life through the individual. (See Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:18.)

AM I A TRUE LAW-KEEPER?

- Am I merciful and humble in my treatment of others?
- Do I want only to look and act correctly, or am I concerned that I become good through Christ's grace?
- Am I a light that reflects the True Light?
- How can I show my love for those who mistreat me? Do I pray that I may love them as God does?

(FR) **FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, "The Beatitudes" and "The Spirituality of the Law," pp. 16-78.

SUMMARY: God's laws are not an arbitrary list of legal codes designed to force our behavior into a narrow mold, but rather statements of the kind of person He is and the kind of people He gives us power to become.

Our Father in Heaven

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matthew 6 and 7.



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

KINGDOM OF GOD INTRODUCED. The Sermon on the Mount was Christ's formal introduction of the kingdom of God. In chapter 5, we find the ideals that would characterize the citizens of God's kingdom. In chapters 6 and 7, we see how He applies these ideals in a practical way, inviting His listeners to build their lives on the principles He has outlined.

OUTLINE

- I. Piety Prompted by Pure Motives (Matt. 6:1-8).
- II. Prayer and Fasting (Matt. 6:9-18).
- III. Practical Concerns (Matt. 6:19—7:12).
- IV. Invitation (Matt. 7:13-27).
- V. Response to Christ's Invitation (Matt. 7:28, 29).

TRUE WORSHIP CENTERS IN TRUST IN GOD AS FATHER.

What God wants most from His creatures is not outward mechanical compliance to His expressed will, but genuine love and trust that recognizes our heavenly Father's way for us as the happiest and best.

In calling God "our Father in heaven," Jesus sets the framework for His later teachings. While this concept of God was not unknown among the Jewish theologians of His day, the way Jesus talked about "our Father" was different. It revealed a close personal relationship, as well as God's intense interest in and concern for His children on earth. The discussion in Matthew 6 and 7 centers in our understanding of what it means to have this Father in heaven.



I. PIETY PROMPTED BY PURE MOTIVES (Matt. 6:1-8).

In Jesus' time, many of the Pharisees loved to stand where they could be seen most readily as they prayed. When a wealthy person gave a large donation to the poor, he might hire a trumpeter to announce his tremendous sacrifice.

"They have their reward" (verse 2). "The Greek brings out the idea that they have received payment of their wages in full. . . . They practiced charity strictly as a business transaction by means of which they hoped to purchase public admiration; the relief of distress was no concern of theirs.

The reward they desired is the one they will receive, but that is all.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 344.

1. In Matthew five, Jesus tells us to let our light shine before men. Why, then, does He tell us (in 6:3, 4) to give good gifts in secret without being conscious of our actions?

“Jesus did not teach that acts of kindness should always be kept secret. Paul the apostle, writing by the Holy Spirit, did not conceal the generous self-sacrifice of the Macedonian Christians, but told of the grace that Christ had wrought in them, and thus others were imbued with the same spirit. . . .

“By their good works, Christ’s followers are to bring glory, not to themselves, but to Him through whose grace and power they have wrought. It is through the Holy Spirit that every good work is accomplished, and the Spirit is given to glorify, not the receiver but the Giver.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 80.

2. What other practice did the Pharisees use to show off their supposed piety? Matt. 6:5, 6.

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3. What did Jesus mean by “vain repetitions” in prayer? Why did He condemn such a practice? Matt. 6:7, 8.

In many ancient and modern religions, prayers consist of repeating memorized words. But our heavenly Father desires intelligent, meaningful communication. He loves to hear us pray—as long as we pray from the heart and are honest with Him and ourselves. God wants us to lay aside our pretentious piety and come to Him as we are. Prayers that are designed to bring glory to oneself are not in harmony with Christ’s instruction.



II. PRAYER AND FASTING (Matt. 6:9-18).

The magnificence of the Lord’s Prayer can be found in its unaffectedness, its simplicity, its genuineness. There are no insignificant phrases. Yet, when studied more deeply, there is a comprehensiveness and a wealth of meaning that often is overlooked.

4. Study carefully the phrases from the Lord’s Prayer that follow. Before you read the comments, write down your thoughts as to what the phrases mean.

“Hallowed be thy name” _____

This is not just a simple request to be careful about using God’s name

carelessly. In the Bible, a person's name represents his character. Thus when we pray, "Hallowed be thy name," we are praying that God's character be exalted through us. Another way of saying the same thing might be, "May Your character be revealed clearly through us."

"Thy kingdom come" _____

God's kingdom on earth is advanced when His character is seen in us. But the purpose of it all is the establishment of the kingdom of glory.

"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" _____

What is God's will? If we could travel to heaven now, we would find God's will being carried out in every respect and everything being perfect as a result. "In heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality. When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of. In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. Love for God makes their service a joy."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 109.

"Give us this day our daily bread" _____

The first part of the prayer focuses on the Father. Now it shifts to the needs of the petitioner. It is good to follow this pattern in our prayers. Later in Matthew 6, Jesus stresses that we do not need to worry about our physical needs, for our Father knows all about them anyway. Yet He does suggest that we pray that they be supplied.

"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" _____

"He who is unforgiving, cuts off the very channel through which alone He can receive mercy from God. . . .

"The one thing essential for us in order that we may receive and impart the forgiving love of God is to know and believe the love He has to us."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 113-115.

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil"

This is not a request for God to remove all temptation, but asks that God

will keep us from falling when tried and tested. When we pray, "Lead us not into temptation," we are renouncing our tendency to place ourselves in the way of temptation and we are submitting to God's will for us.

"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever"

Our Father exalted. "The last like the first sentence of the Lord's Prayer, points to our Father as above all power and authority and every name that is named."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 120.



5. What is the thrust of Jesus' concern about fasting in Matthew 6:16-18?

"The object of the fast which God calls upon us to keep is not to afflict the body for the sin of the soul, but to aid us in perceiving the grievous character of sin, in humbling the heart before God and receiving His pardoning grace. . . . Let the burdens be left at the foot of the cross, and go on your way rejoicing in His love who first loved you. Men may never know of the work going on secretly between the soul and God, but the result of the Spirit's work upon the heart will be manifest to all."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 87, 88.

III. PRACTICAL CONCERNS (Matt. 6:19—7:12).

Jesus does not say that material things are of no value. Many of the temporal blessings the Lord has given us today can be put to good use in advancing the cause of the kingdom. Food, clothing, and housing are essential. Nevertheless, because they are temporal, they are of secondary importance.

In perspective, materialism is foolish. Someday the material things that we have clung to or longed for will disappear. The gold we value so much today will seem less rare when we walk on golden streets. Perhaps it is not selfishness so much as foolishness to be so concerned with that which is of so little value when compared to the riches of eternity before us.

6. Why did Jesus counsel us in Matthew 6:20 to lay up our treasures in heaven?

Those who will feel richest in heaven will be those who have gained souls for the kingdom. (See Dan. 12:3.) The mansions, clothing, silver, and gold of eternity will be provided us without cost by God. He will lavish His very best upon His children. All we can take with us from this world are our characters and the friends we have made for Him.

7. How can we be sure that our treasures are laid up in heaven?
Matt. 6:22-24.
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- WED**
8. What was Jesus' positive answer to anxiety about the material things of life? Matt. 6:25-34.
-

When we make things or human beings first in our lives we become their slaves. Many of us are addicted to the things we desire most. These addictions lead to all kinds of needless worries and stresses. If Christ is first in our lives we will not be fretful and anxious. Christ has no slaves, only sons and daughters.

9. Why are Christians commanded not to judge others? Matt. 7:1, 2.
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This may seem one of the most difficult biblical commands to obey. To understand that we have a generous heavenly Father may not be so difficult. But human beings tend to compare themselves with others in order to build their sense of self-worth. It is not difficult to see and condemn in others that which we have grown to hate in ourselves.

10. As Christians how should we relate to those in our midst who obviously are letting down church standards and setting a wrong example to others?

While we are to be concerned for our brothers and sisters when they fall into sin, and we should not close our eyes to their spiritual needs, our concern must ever be motivated by love for them. We must not condemn. Judging in the forbidden sense, involves our usurping God's exclusive right to decide issues on which a person's salvation is based. Jesus did not come into the world to condemn the world, but to save it. (See John 3:17.) Our mission is to help others as He did.

11. What can we learn from Matthew 7:7-12 about the gifts God gives His children? Compare Luke 11:13.
-

God could package all the good material things we could ever want and send them to us. But that would not prove His love for us. It might cause us to wonder whether He is simply trying to buy our favor. Rather, He gives us His best, Himself. For when we have the Holy Spirit we have God-with-us as a *Friend*.

12. How does the golden rule of Matthew 7:12 fit into the context of what we have just studied?



IV. INVITATION (Matt. 7:13-27).

Jesus begins the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount with an invitation to enter into His kingdom. But He does not promise that it is the easiest way to go. We do not get into the kingdom by following the path of least resistance. "Yet do not therefore conclude that the upward path is the hard and the downward road the easy way. All along the road that leads to death there are pains and penalties. . . . The soul who follows that path descends into the shadows of unending night. . . . All the way up the steep road leading to eternal life are well-springs of joy to refresh the weary. Those who walk in wisdom's ways are, even in tribulation, exceeding joyful; for He whom their soul loveth, walks, invisible, beside them."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 139, 140.

13. Who and what will attempt to keep us from taking the narrow path that leads to life? How will we be able to identify those who want to distract us? Matt. 7:15-20.

14. Why will Jesus say to some of those who call Him Lord, "Depart from me, you evildoers"?' Matt. 7:21-27.

Those who have done many works in Christ's name but who do not know Him as He is cannot enjoy an eternal relationship with Him, regardless of their claims. If we build on the shifting sands of claims, appearances, and deceptions we will fall when faced with Satan's manipulative devices. But if we build on the solid rock of Christ's sayings—the Word of God—our characters will be founded on the Rock that cannot move.

V. RESPONSE TO CHRIST'S INVITATION (Matt. 7:28, 29).

15. What was it about Jesus' sermon that so astounded His hearers? Matt. 7:28, 29.

"The Pharisees noted the vast difference between their manner of instruction and that of Christ. They saw that the majesty and purity and beauty of the truth, with its deep and gentle influence, was taking firm hold upon many minds. The Saviour's divine love and tenderness drew the hearts of men to Him. The rabbis saw that by His teaching the whole tenor of the instruction they had given to the people was set at nought."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 47.

AM I A FRIEND OF GOD?

- Do I know Him as He really is?
- Can I talk to Him easily and be honest with Him because I trust Him and know He will not condemn, but will help me?

- Do I enjoy talking about Him to others?
- How do I exercise my privilege of defending Him and His ways whenever He is being misrepresented?
- Do I look forward to spending eternity with Him?



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read "The Lord's Prayer" and "Not Judging But Doing" in *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 102-152.

SUMMARY: When Jesus came to earth His favorite way of referring to God was as "our Father" in heaven: He loved to describe the Father, whose life He so accurately revealed in His own, as a Father to whom His followers could speak plainly and simply without fear, a Father who loves to give more than good things—even Himself in His Spirit—to His children.



Lesson 5

January 28—February 3

The Power of the Kingdom

THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Matthew 8 to 10.



MEMORY TEXT: "But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matthew 9:12, 13).

POWER BLENDED WITH MERCY. The powerful yet compassionate way in which Jesus ministered to the people brought trust, repentance, and healing to sinners and led to opposition among those who felt themselves whole. His followers were to receive power to continue His ministry without fear of failure or opposition.

OUTLINE

- I. Power Over Disease (Matt. 8:1-22).
- II. Power Over Fear (Matt. 8:23-34).
- III. Power Over Sin and Sinners (Matt. 9:1-17).
- IV. Power Over Death and Demons (Matt. 9:18-34).
- V. Power Given to the Disciples (Matt. 9:35—10:42).

JESUS' TEACHING AND HEALING MINISTRY. Since the time He created the first beings in the universe, God has been a teacher. Not a lecturer merely, but a true teacher. Lecturers instruct their students with mere words. Good teachers illustrate their words with actions, stories, pictures, and charts. Effective teachers seek to help their students discover the truth for themselves.

Many Bible students divorce Jesus' teaching ministry from His healing ministry as if they had nothing in common. Some suggest that the healings were merely an attention-getting device to obtain listeners. But this is far from the truth. When Jesus came to reveal the character and government of God, He spent more time in healing than in preaching, thus revealing in a practical way what God is like.

Most of the book of Matthew can be divided into periods of activity followed by periods of teaching. One way of charting this follows:

Activity		Teaching	
4:18-25	Calling disciples	5:1—7:29	Sermon on the Mount
8:1—9:34	Power evidenced in miracles	9:35—10:42	Power given to disciples
11:1—12:50	Meeting opposition	13:1-58	Teaching in parables
14:1—16:12	Conflict and compassion	16:13-28	The great confession
17:1-27	Transfiguration and tribute	18:1-35	Who is the greatest?
19:1-22	On the way to Jerusalem	19:23—20:28	Rewards of the kingdom
20:29—21:32	Triumphal entry; controversy in the Temple	21:33—22:14	Parables of the kingdom
22:15-46	Meeting opposition	23:1—25:46	Woes on Pharisees; discourse on Mount of Olives
26:1—28:17	Passion and resurrection	28:18-20	The great commission

SUN

I. POWER OVER DISEASE (Matt. 8:1-22).

- 1. What does Jesus' treatment of the leper teach us about how God heals spiritually? Matt. 8:2, 3.**

Some have suggested that the term *leprosy* in the Bible covers seven different diseases recognized today. The Jews considered it a punishment from God for sin. Like those already dead, lepers were shut out from places where other people lived. Whatever they touched was considered unclean. Whenever they saw a nonleprous person they were to cup their hands over their mouths and chant, "Unclean, unclean."

The horror of the crowd. "He is a loathsome spectacle. The disease has made frightful inroads, and his decaying body is horrible to look upon. At the sight of him the people fall back in terror. They crowd upon one another in their eagerness to escape from contact with him. Some try to prevent him from approaching Jesus, but in vain. . . . He sees only the Son

of God. He hears only the voice that speaks life to the dying. Pressing to Jesus, he casts himself at His feet with the cry, 'Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make *me* clean.' "—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 263.

2. What was so marvelous about the centurion's faith that it moved Jesus to comment on it? Matt. 8:10-12.

At the same time that the centurion recognized Jesus as the Infinite One, He also recognized Him as an approachable God. "His heart had been touched by the grace of Christ. He saw his own unworthiness; yet he feared not to ask help. He trusted not to his own goodness; his argument was his great need. His faith took hold upon Christ in His true character. He did not believe in Him merely as a worker of miracles, but *as the friend and Saviour of mankind.*"—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 317 (italics supplied).

- MON** 3. Who was the "certain scribe" mentioned in Matthew 8:19?

"[Judas Iscariot] now came forward, soliciting a place in this inner circle of disciples. With great earnestness and apparent sincerity he declared, 'Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest.' Jesus neither repulsed nor welcomed him, but uttered only the mournful words: 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.' Matt. 8:19, 20. Judas believed Jesus to be the Messiah; and by joining the apostles, he hoped to secure a high position in the new kingdom. This hope Jesus designed to cut off by the statement of His poverty."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 293, 294.

II. POWER OVER FEAR (Matt. 8:23-34).

Matthew and Luke group the two stories of fear together. In the first story, the disciples encounter the terrors of the sea; in the second, they meet the terrifying madmen. But Luke adds a dimension that Matthew does not. In each situation, *after* the cause of fear has been removed, Luke speaks of the onlookers' (disciples and Gadarenes) still being afraid (see Luke 8:25, 35-37).

4. What type of "fear" was involved in each instance? Compare Luke 8:25 with Matthew 8:27. Analyze Luke 8:35-37.

We can rest from fear as Jesus did. "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. . . . 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. As Jesus rested by faith in the Father's care, so we are to rest in the care of our Saviour."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 336.

5. What kinds of fear did Jesus come to remove? List the answers found in the texts below.

- Matt. 10:28-31 _____
- Rom. 8:15-17 _____
- Heb. 13:6 _____
- 1 John 4:18 _____
- Rev. 2:10 _____

“He shall fight for you.” When the situation on one heavily populated island seemed desperate for its defenders during a war, the chief of the imperial staff of a nation responsible for that island sent the governor a telegram that contained a Bible reference, “Deuteronomy, chapter 3, verse 22.” When the defenders consulted their Bibles, they read the encouraging words, “Ye shall not fear them; for the Lord your God he shall fight for you.” God sends that same message to each beleaguered person being attacked by the forces of evil today.



III. POWER OVER SIN AND SINNERS (Matt. 9:1-17).

The Great Physician not only prescribes remedies but also is caring, concerned, and full of compassion. Through His love and interest while He was here on earth He enabled many to trust Him enough that they could be made whole. His love brings physical, emotional, and spiritual healing.

6. What led Jesus to indicate in Matthew 9:5, 6 (NKJV) that it was as easy for Him to say, “Your sins are forgiven,” as to command, “Arise and walk”?

It would seem easy to say, “Your sins are forgiven,” for there was no means by which the listeners could validate the statement. But to say, “Arise and walk,” was capable of being demonstrated. Jesus said both, and the miracle of the paralytic being able to walk immediately proved beyond doubt that his sins were forgiven. Moreover, the miracle proved that Jesus was God, who had a perfect right to forgive sins.

Sin often the basis of illness. “The paralytic found in Christ healing for both the soul and the body. The spiritual healing was followed by physical restoration. This lesson should not be overlooked. There are today thousands suffering from physical disease, who, like the paralytic, are longing for the message, ‘Thy sins are forgiven.’ The burden of sin, with its unrest and unsatisfied desires, is the foundation of their maladies. They can find no relief until they come to the Healer of the soul. The peace which He alone can give would impart vigor to the mind, and health to the body.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 270.

7. What is the deep significance of Christ's kind of forgiveness?

Jesus showed that forgiveness is far from being merely a legal term. The Pharisees and rabbis had condemned this man to God's wrath and had informed him that he was suffering the curse of God for his sins. Jesus provided healing for both body and spirit.

The outflow of redeeming love. "Forgiveness has a broader meaning than many suppose. When God gives the promise that He 'will abundantly pardon,' He adds, as if the meaning of that promise exceeded all that we could comprehend: 'My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.' Isaiah 55:7-9. God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness *for* sin, but reclaiming *from* sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 114.

8. Which was more difficult for Jesus to heal, physical or spiritual disease? Why?

WED IV. POWER OVER DEATH AND DEMONS (Matt. 9:18-34).

In spite of the tremendous progress of modern medicine, doctors have to admit that there is much about illness and disease that remains unknown. When Jesus was on earth no diseased person who came to Him for healing went away ill.

9. What do the stories of the healing of the woman suffering from a hemorrhage and the raising of Jairus' daughter recorded in Matthew 9 teach us about Christ's healing power?

10. What factor was essential in both the healing and the resurrection? Matt. 9:22; Mark 5:36.

Faith is essential for receiving the gifts of God's love—health, happiness, and heaven. A loss of faith leads to a loss of relationship and an unwillingness to receive all that God has made available. How thankful we can be that we *can* trust God. Such a bond of trust in Someone who has proven to be trustworthy at all times and in all matters is one of the greatest healing agencies for both body and soul.

Think it through: Is there anyone God cannot heal?

11. What miracle particularly impressed the multitudes? To what depth did the Pharisees resort in trying to explain it? Matt. 9:32-34.
-

When Jesus cast out demons, the Pharisees maintained that His power to do so came from the prince of demons. With this blasphemous contradiction of the truth, they deprived themselves of the Spirit of truth.

God will save everyone He possibly can—everyone who is willing. The choice to be lost is made by those who reject Him. The Pharisees could not be healed spiritually as long as they refused to come to the Great Physician, admitting that they were sick and desiring to be made whole.



V. POWER GIVEN TO THE DISCIPLES (Matt. 9:35—10:42).

In spite of all that Jesus did to heal people spiritually and physically, it seemed there was not enough physical energy and time to help all who needed to know God better. In His compassion and pity for the crowds in their helplessness, Jesus informed His disciples that “the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Matt. 9:37, 38, RSV).

12. What did Jesus do to provide laborers for the harvest? Matt. 10:1-5.
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The twelve apostles were, literally, “the ones sent” in response to the need He had pointed out to them. Later He sent out 70 additional workers to prepare the way for His ministry (see Luke 10).

13. Among the specific orders in Matthew 10 that Jesus gave the disciples for carrying on their ministry, list some that you consider to be applicable in a special way to your work.
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-
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14. Why did Jesus instruct the disciples (Matthew 10:14) to shake the dust off their feet if a house or village rejected them? Does this misrepresent God’s character?
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Note how the disciples were to deal with persecution:

- Be wisely cautious but harmless in spreading the truth.
- Do not trust those who have shown they cannot be trusted.

- Rely on the Holy Spirit for the content of your message.
- When they persecute you in one place, flee to another.
- Do not be afraid of your persecutors.
- Do not be a coward or compromise.
- Take up Christ's cross and follow Him.

Stand for principle, but do not invite persecution. Jesus taught and modeled Christian love for our enemies. He wept over those who rejected Him; called His betrayer, "Friend;" and prayed for forgiveness for His murderers. Yet at the same time, He avoided persecution whenever possible until His hour had come when He was to die.

AM I BEING HEALED BY THE GREAT PHYSICIAN?

- Have I found Him to be One whom I can absolutely trust to heal me completely from sin? If not, how can I find Him?
- Do I trust Him because I know Him through His Word?
- Have my hidden fears of God been relieved and replaced with full confidence by learning to know Him as He is?
- Do I admire His compassionate ways with the sin-sick and seek to emulate Him as I minister to others?



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read as much as you can in *The Ministry of Healing* from the chapters entitled "Our Example," "Days of Ministry," "The Touch of Faith," "Healing of the Soul," and "Saved to Serve," pp. 17-50; 59-107.

SUMMARY: God seeks to heal us from sin as a compassionate physician works to help a seriously ill patient recover fully. His greatest joy is to make us whole again. His services are free; His only request is that we reach out in faith to allow Him to restore us to His image. We are to be assistants of the Great Physician in a ministry designed to make sinners whole.

Opposition to the Kingdom

THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Matthew 11 to 13.



MEMORY TEXT: "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8).

JESUS FACED SATAN'S OPPOSITION. Jesus often found Himself engaged in intense struggles with those who claimed to be guardians of the truth but actually had joined Satan in misrepresenting God. In word and deed He did His best to set the record straight. His patience and love toward His opponents provide a model for those who must deal with bigotry today.

OUTLINE

- I. Meeting Misunderstanding (Matt. 11:1-30).
- II. Meeting Legalism (Matt. 12:1-21).
- III. A House Divided (Matt. 12:22-50).
- IV. Parables of the Kingdom (Matt. 13:1-58).

REJECTED BY THE MAJORITY. When Jesus came, most of His people rejected Him, not because He was strong and overpowering, but because He was gentle and peaceful. Instead of using force and violence, He spoke truth, exercised reason, and sought their trust. He did not shout or raise His voice (Matt. 12:19, RSV).

When He dined with prostitutes and tax collectors, the Pharisees complained that He was soft on sin. When He celebrated the Sabbath as God intended it to be celebrated, they condemned Him as a lawbreaker. When He set people free from demons, they claimed that His power came from Satan.

Because of the depth of the opposition by His enemies, Jesus avoided Jerusalem most of the time after His first year of ministry, working in other areas. Because the leaders in Jerusalem sent spies to follow Him, the Lord warned many of those He healed not to reveal to others what He had done, and He often taught in parables.

Jesus revealed God's way of working. Jesus' actions, as well as His parables, tell us much about our God. In His Word He provides the treasure hidden in a field. He allows sinners to stay in the same church as the saints. Our God is unobtrusive and unassuming.

What a way to conquer opposition! It bewildered all who watched, temporarily confusing even John the Baptist. It sometimes discouraged the

twelve disciples. It infuriated the religious leaders. Even now, God's way of working is often misunderstood or escapes our notice.



I. MEETING MISUNDERSTANDING (Matt. 11:1-30).

As John the Baptist sat in prison, he received reports from his disciples about the One whom he understood to be the Messiah. Jesus was healing everyone who came to Him for help. He was casting out demons. He even was raising the dead. Yet His forerunner, who prepared the way for Him to do all this, languished in prison, apparently ignored.

John expected more decisive action by Christ. "Like the Saviour's disciples, John the Baptist did not understand the nature of Christ's kingdom. He expected Jesus to take the throne of David; and as time passed, and the Saviour made no claim to kingly authority, John became perplexed and troubled. He had declared to the people that in order for the way to be prepared before the Lord, . . . the mountains and hills must be brought low, the crooked made straight, and the rough places plain. He had looked for the high places of human pride and power to be cast down. He had pointed to the Messiah as the One whose fan was in His hand, and who would thoroughly purge His floor, who would gather the wheat into His garner, and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Like the prophet Elijah, in whose spirit and power he had come to Israel, he looked for the Lord to reveal Himself as a God that answereth by fire."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 215.

1. Complete the chart that follows as a means of showing why prison was so difficult for John and why he misunderstood Christ's approach to His ministry.

Comparisons	John's Ministry	Jesus' Ministry
Lifestyle	Relative isolation	
Approach to people		Associated with sinners, socialized
Understanding of nature of kingdom	Earthly kingdom, expected Christ to take throne	
Message		Jesus, content to train disciples, avoided conflict

2. How did Jesus respond to John's inquiry? What did He do to increase John's faith? Matt. 11:4-6; Luke 7:20-23.

When John's disciples came asking, "Are You the Messiah?" Jesus did not give them a direct reply. Instead, He seemed to ignore their question while He healed and comforted the sick, cast out demons, and taught the outcasts. Finally, toward the end of the day, He turned toward the disciples and said, "Go and tell John what you have heard and seen."

When the disciples delivered their witness to John, it satisfied him. Weighing what was reported to him against the messages of the Old Testament, John recognized that the works of Christ "declared Him to be the Messiah" and "showed in what manner His kingdom was to be established"—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 217.

3. What did Jesus mean when He said that he who "is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than" John the Baptist (Matt. 11:11)?

John did not witness Christ's ministry. "It was not for him to see the blind restored to sight, the sick healed, and the dead raised to life. He did not behold the light that shone through every word of Christ, shedding glory upon the promises of prophecy. The least disciple who saw Christ's mighty works and heard His words was in this sense more highly privileged than John the Baptist, and therefore is said to have been greater than he."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 220.

As was true of many of the prophets before him, John had spoken strongly about the kingdom. Forceful words and actions characterized both John and Elijah. Both had become the subjects of persecution. The kingdom of heaven had sometimes seemed to come forcibly and often had suffered from force. But now the true Ruler of the kingdom had come. He did not come to set up His kingdom with force and violence. Even then, He suffered worse violence than the prophets before Him. He did not come to be served but to serve. He did not come to "lord it over" others (see Mark 10:42, NIV) and to rule over them. He who was the greatest in the kingdom referred to Himself as a "servant."

Father and Son in complete agreement. "Had God the Father come to our world and dwelt among us, humbling Himself, veiling His glory, that humanity might look upon Him, the history that we have of the life of Christ would not have been changed. . . . In every act of Jesus, in every lesson of His instruction, we are to see and hear and recognize God. In sight, in hearing, in effect, it is the voice and movements of the Father."—*That I May Know Him*, p. 338.

This led Jesus to say, "No one knows the Son except the Father" (Matt. 11:27, NIV). That is, no one understands My mission except the One who is like Me. "No one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him."

4. How do Jesus' words in Matthew 11:28-30 fit into the context of this chapter?

Jesus did not want anyone to feel shut out from His love and care. All who are burdened with the load of sin and feel the need of spiritual rest may come to Jesus and exchange their heavy load for His happy yoke.

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II. MEETING LEGALISM (Matt. 12:1-21).

The Jews added multitudinous restrictions in an attempt to safeguard the fourth commandment, as well as the other precepts of the law. With meticulous exactness, they endeavored to accomplish the impossible by covering every circumstance from eating, to walking, to illness on the Sabbath. For example, a devout Jew could not walk more than 2,000 cubits (approximately 3,000 feet) on the Sabbath day unless on Friday he prepared some food and placed it at that limit. He could then go an additional 2,000 cubits on the Sabbath because the place he left food could be termed his residence.

5. What two events illustrate Jesus' way of turning people's attention to true Sabbath keeping? What do they teach us about Sabbath observance?

Matt. 12:1-8 _____

Matt. 12:9-14 _____

We do not gain the blessing God puts into the Sabbath if our Sabbath keeping does not lead to full enjoyment of mental, spiritual, and physical wholeness.

6. What does Mark 2:27 add to Matthew's account?

What is the significance of the fact that Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath? "The Saviour Himself has the right to determine what is appropriate to that day; consequently, the Pharisees were exceeding their prerogatives. . . . The church has no right to load the Sabbath with oppressive restrictions—as did the Jews—or to attempt the transfer of its sacredness from one day to another. Both are devices of the evil one designed to lure men away from the true spirit of Sabbath observance."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 589.

7. In what masterful way did Jesus turn the questions raised by His hypocritical accusers in the synagogue back on them? Matt. 12:10-12.

8. Read Matthew 12:18-21 carefully. What do we learn about Christ's ministry and about God from these verses?
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WED

III. A HOUSE DIVIDED (Matt. 12:22-50).

As opposition increased, everything Jesus did was criticized and condemned by those seeking to countermand His influence.

9. What contrasting reactions followed Jesus' spectacular miracle of healing a man who was blind, dumb, and devil-possessed? Matt. 12:22-24.

The reaction of the crowd _____

The reaction of the Pharisees _____

In response to the Pharisees, Jesus reduced their argument to an absurdity, pointing out that the devil could not be expected to be so foolish as to work at cross purposes with himself. If it were true, He said, that Satan could cast out Satan, then his kingdom is divided against itself. If Jesus were of Satan's kingdom, then He was not a real threat. But if Jesus were from God, then by their very opposition to Him, they were placing themselves on Satan's side of the great controversy.

10. What is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which cannot "be forgiven" (Matt. 12:31, 32)? How did God's chosen people commit this sin as a nation?
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There are at least two elements involved in the unpardonable sin (the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit): 1. Progressive rejection of the conviction that service is owed to Christ and that His teaching is the truth. "If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left" (Heb. 10:26, NIV). 2. The blasphemy of crediting to Satan the work of the Holy Spirit, and vice versa. (See Num. 16:28-35, 41-49.)

A gradual increase in darkness. "It is not God that blinds the eyes of men or hardens their hearts. He sends them light to correct their errors, and to lead them in safe paths; it is by the rejection of this light that the eyes are blinded and the heart hardened. Often the process is gradual, and almost imperceptible. Light comes to the soul through God's word, through

His servants, or by the direct agency of His Spirit; but when one ray of light is disregarded, there is a partial benumbing of the spiritual perceptions, and the second revealing of light is less clearly discerned. So the darkness increases, until it is night in the soul. Thus it had been with these Jewish leaders. They were convinced that a divine power attended Christ, but in order to resist the truth, they attributed the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan. In doing this they deliberately chose deception; they yielded themselves to Satan, and henceforth they were controlled by his power."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 322, 323.

- 11. How does God decide who will be saved and who will be lost? Matt. 12:33-37.**
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Why are the words we speak so vital a part of our Christian experience? Words are an indication of character. They reveal the state of a person's mind. Words also influence the character of the speaker. Individuals can be deceived by their own evil words. Their characters are molded by their own verbal expressions. (See Ps. 36:1-3; Rom. 3:13-15; James 3:6; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 323.)

- 12. What warning did Jesus give to those who received His words gladly but who did not surrender themselves to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit? Matt. 12:43-45.**
-



IV. PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM (Matt. 13:1-58).

Christ sought to clarify what His kingdom of grace was like by teaching in parables that impress us to this very day. His kingdom of love and grace seems, at times, vulnerable and weak when it is faced by conflict with powers using force, manipulation, and deception. Like the parable of the grain of mustard seed, the truth about God seems to take such gentle, imperceptible root in the minds of people who hear it, that some may doubt its strength.

- 13. List at least three reasons why Jesus used parables. Matt. 13:10-17, 34, 35.**

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

If you have access to it, you will find that the *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 204, lists five reasons why Christ taught in parables.

- 14. In your own words summarize the main lesson of Christ's para-**

ble of the sower recorded in Matthew 13:3-9; 18-23.

15. What do the treasure hidden in the field and the fine pearl of Matthew 13:44-46 represent?

Note the double application that can be given to the figure of the merchantman seeking the pearl of great price. It may refer to humanity seeking the King of heaven. It also may refer to Christ seeking the salvation of the lost. (See *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 118.)

When we see God as Jesus revealed Him, we desire Him in the same way that the man who found the buried treasure desired to have that treasure—no matter what the cost—or the merchant, who sold all he had to purchase the pearl of great price, valued that pearl. Our interest in revealing our gracious Saviour and sharing our treasure with those about us will swallow up every other interest.

WHICH SIDE OF THE GREAT CONTROVERSY HAVE I CHOSEN?

- Do I prefer strong words or gentle ones when disciplining my children?
- Do I long to control others, or do I wish for them to be free?
- Does the way I keep the Sabbath reveal that I enjoy spending time with my heavenly Father, or does it reveal that I am afraid of what He will do to me if I fail to keep it holy?
- Does my life attract others to the Pearl of great price?



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: This lesson did not touch on the following parables in Matthew 13: the wheat and the tares, the mustard seed, the leaven, the net, and truths new and old. Select one of these to study in detail. If you have Ellen White's *Christ's Object Lessons*, use the appropriate sections to supplement your study.

SUMMARY: A true knowledge of God that leads us to trust Him will, in turn, lead to loving service, joyous Sabbath keeping, an eagerness to be with God, and an active desire to make Him known to others. When we yield all to God, we are bound to meet opposition. But we should keep in mind that Satan is a defeated foe. The great controversy is fought daily over truth and error in people's minds; the side chosen and the direction of the focus will determine the outcome of each battle.

Lesson 7

February 11-17

A King Who Provides, Protects, and Saves

THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Matthew 14:1 to 16:12



MEMORY TEXT: "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed" (John 6:27).

A SPIRITUAL KINGDOM. As Jesus moved toward the climax of His ministry, the difference between His concept of kingship and the people's became increasingly clear. His ministry and teaching revealed the spiritual nature of His kingdom. As divine Provider, Protector, and Saviour, He sought to introduce people to the kingdom of grace, as the prelude to their entry into the kingdom of glory.

OUTLINE

- I. A King Who Destroys (Matt. 14:1-13).
- II. The King Who Serves His People (Matt. 14:14-36).
- III. The King Who Rejects Human Tradition (Matt. 15:1-28).
- IV. The King Who Saves by Love (Matt. 15:29—16:12).

A NEW CONCEPT OF KINGSHIP. In ancient times, God's character was often misrepresented by the kings who ruled the chosen nation. People came to view Him, as they did their earthly kings who killed prophets and innocent people and made their sons and daughters slaves. By the time Jesus came, God was viewed by many as a tyrannical ruler whose every whim must be obeyed or punishment would follow.

Jesus did not fit the mold. His methods of running the world were alien to the concepts prevalent at the time. His kingship and laws were of a totally different quality.

A King who provides, protects, and saves. Rather than forcing out the Romans, marching into Jerusalem as crown prince, and feeding the people in the event of a siege, Jesus withdrew from opposition whenever possible. He did not intervene to prevent His cousin from dying a lonely martyr's death. As the divine Provider, He fed the five thousand and the four thousand and healed the sick. As the divine Protector, He sheltered His followers in time of storm. As the Saviour, He rejected traditional human methods of salvation, emphasizing the need of a relationship with the heavenly Father. Only thus could the impure become pure and hypocrites become sincere. Only thus could He be recognized as "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16).

SUN

I. A KING WHO DESTROYS (Matt. 14:1-13).

Herod the tetrarch is known in history as "Herod Antipas." The son of Herod the Great, he was educated in Rome along with his brother Archelaus and his half brother Philip. After the death of his father, he became ruler of Galilee and Perea. His marriage to the daughter of Aretas IV, the king of the Nabataeans, came to an end when, during a visit to Rome, he fell in love with his niece, the wife of his half brother, Herod Philip. Herodias left her husband and lived with Herod Antipas. Because John the Baptist rebuked Antipas for this adulterous relationship, Herodias hated John and conspired to have him imprisoned and put to death.

1. What concern led Herod the tetrarch to identify Jesus as John the Baptist risen from the dead? Matt. 14:1, 2.

"When Herod heard of the works of Christ, he was exceedingly troubled. He thought that God had raised John from the dead, and sent him forth with still greater power to condemn sin. He was in constant fear that John would avenge his death by passing condemnation upon him and his house. Herod was reaping that which God had declared to be the result of a course of sin."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 223.

2. Guilt is the basis of many human fears. List some of the fears, whether rational or irrational, that result from unresolved guilt.

MON

3. What do the contacts of John the Baptist reveal about his work? Matt. 14:3, 4.

Consider the forthright rebukes of sin in John's preaching. (See Matt. 3:7-10; Luke 3:10-14, 19, 20.) Despite his frankness, John won the hearts of the people. Even Herod and his lords respected him. "Herod believed John to be a prophet of God, and he fully intended to set him at liberty. But he delayed his purpose from fear of Herodias."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 220, 221. Herod's officers of state "had traveled long distances in order to hear the preaching of John, and they knew him to be a man without crime, and a servant of God."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 221.

Questions for Christians to consider. Rebuke sometimes drives people away from Christ. But John's rebukes were accepted by multitudes of people who repented of their sins and turned to God. What element in John's preaching won their hearts? What kind of rebuke draws souls to the Lord rather than repulsing them and driving them away? (See 2 Tim. 4:2;

Rev. 3:19.) Since John's rebukes were accepted by so many, why did Herodias respond negatively?

4. What led Herod to give in to Herodias? What does this tell us about some earthly rulers? Matt. 14:5-11.

5. Why is it a privilege to suffer for Christ, as John the Baptist did? Why do Bible writers extol suffering as a special honor? Rom. 8:17; 1 Peter 5:10; Phil. 1:29.

"And of all the gifts that Heaven can bestow upon men, fellowship with Christ in His sufferings is the most weighty trust and the highest honor."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 225.

Why is this? Have your trials brought you nearer to Christ? Why, or why not?

What became of Herod Antipas? "In A.D. 37 Agrippa, Herodias' brother, was made king over the northeastern territories of Palestine that Philip . . . had held. Herodias, dissatisfied that her husband had the title only of tetrarch, induced him to go with her to Rome and to seek a royal crown from Caligula. Agrippa, however, sent letters to Rome accusing his uncle Antipas of treasonable activities. As a result, instead of being made a king, Herod was banished in A.D. 39, to either Gaul or Spain, where Herodias followed him into exile. His territory was added to that of his accuser, Agrippa."—*SDA Bible Dictionary*, p. 481.

II. THE KING WHO SERVES HIS PEOPLE (Matt. 14:14-36).

When Jesus heard of John's death, in sorrow He withdrew to a quiet place. Jesus wished to minimize publicity and thus protect His mission from Herod and His enemies. When the people saw where He was going, they went on foot to the spot where He was. Jesus healed their sick and taught them the principles of His kingdom.

6. What principles of the kingdom did Jesus demonstrate by the following actions?

● His healing (Matt. 14:14) _____

● His refusal to send the people away hungry (Matt. 14:16)

● The miracle of the loaves and fish (Matt. 14:17-19) _____

- The disciples employed as distributors (Matt. 14:19) _____
-

- The collection of the leftovers (Matt. 14:20) _____
-

“The Saviour has not promised His followers the luxuries of the world; their fare may be plain, and even scanty; their lot may be shut in by poverty; but His word is pledged that their need shall be supplied, and He has promised that which is far better than worldly good,—the abiding comfort of His own presence.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 367.

7. Why did Jesus constrain His disciples “to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away” (Matt. 14:22)? Compare John 6:14, 15.
-

Think through the following questions:

- Why were the people who witnessed the feeding of the five thousand impressed by Jesus’ qualifications to be a great national leader?
 - Why would a popular movement to make Him king interfere with the purpose for which Jesus came to earth? Would He have been in a more strategic position to save humanity if He were appointed as a national leader?
 - What was so wrong with the ambitions of the disciples? If people are eager to exalt you, why disappoint them? Is it not possible for spirituality and national greatness to coexist?
8. What did the events that followed reveal about the nature of Jesus’ kingdom? Matt. 14:23-27.
-

Now the divine Provider, who had fed the five thousand, became the divine Protector, consumed by overwhelming concern for the spiritual and physical life of His disciples.

“When left alone, Jesus ‘went up into a mountain apart to pray.’ For hours He continued pleading with God. Not for Himself, but for men were those prayers. He prayed for power to reveal to men the divine character of His mission that Satan might not blind their understanding and pervert their judgment. . . . In travail and conflict of soul He prayed for His disciples.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 379.

9. When Peter, who believed that Jesus should be king, saw Him walking on the water, he believed that, with Jesus’ help, he could do it too. Why did he begin to sink? See John 15:4-7; Heb. 11:6; Prov. 16:18.

As long as he looked to Jesus, Peter was able to walk on the water. Becoming self-confident, he looked away from Christ and began to fall. The lesson applies with equal force to us. Relying upon Christ's grace, we are able to serve Him. Depending on our own resources, we are sure to fail. (See John 15:5-7.)



III. THE KING WHO REJECTS HUMAN TRADITION (Matt. 15:1-28).

10. Why did Jesus reject "the tradition of the elders"? Matt. 15:1-9; compare Col. 2:8.

Jesus cited the common example that, in order to have a pious reason to neglect his parents, a man could simply pronounce the word *corban* over his property and means, thus proclaiming it to be a gift to God and the temple. (See Mark 7:11.) Thus, under hypocritical pretense of devotion to God, a person could avoid the responsibility of financially supporting his parents.

11. What kind of tradition does Christ accept? 2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6.

12. According to Jesus' parable, what is the cause of spiritual defilement? Matt. 15:10-20.

The issue here is not diet or exercise, but the ceremonial washing of hands before a meal. Very careful observers of man-made laws believed that it was necessary to wash the hands clear to the elbows. This was not a matter of hygiene, but rather of so-called ceremonial defilement. To them it was a religious matter, as important as loving one's neighbor—if not, in actual practice, more important.

By refusing to wash His hands in the manner required, Jesus endeavored to demonstrate that true obedience is a matter of the thoughts and attitudes of the heart, rather than of ritualistic outward conformity. Evil thoughts are defiling because they lead to evil deeds. (See *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 396, 397.)

13. How did Jesus demonstrate to His disciples that one of their national traditions was contrary to God's will? Matt. 15:21-28.

"With deliberate design it seems that Jesus chose this area in which He might teach in a real life situation that which He had set forth in words. So He moved from the classroom into life itself. He is still answering the question as to tradition. And in this particular instance He shows how the

tradition of the elders stifled the priest-nation's mission of *evangelism* to the other nations of the world."—Herschel H. Hobbs, *An Exposition of the Four Gospels* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1965), vol. 1, p. 202.

The message applies to us. List three current traditions, or societal conventions, that run counter to God's will as it is taught in His Word. What do you think Christians can do to correct such problems?

IV. THE KING WHO SAVES BY LOVE (Matt. 15:29—16:12).

Jesus' style of kingship and leadership was in striking contrast to that of Herod Antipas and the religious leaders of the nation. He repudiated cruelty, selfishness, and customs that were contradictory to His divine law. The three stories in this section illustrate graphically the character of God and the nature of the Kingdom to which He is calling us.

- 14. What was the primary purpose of Christ's healing miracles? How was this purpose fulfilled in the story recorded in Matthew 15:29-31?**
-

The individual who had faith to believe that Jesus could heal his body also had faith to believe that He would be the Saviour from sin. Jesus illustrated for us that the way to the human heart is often through ministry to the illnesses and sufferings of the flesh.

- 15. Note the similarities and differences between the feeding of the five thousand (Matt. 14:13-21) and the feeding of the four thousand (Matt. 15:32-39). Why does Matthew give the two accounts in such close proximity?**
-

"Some insist that this is a repetition of the account of the feeding of the five thousand. But there is no legitimate reason to do so. Certainly Jesus Himself mentioned both events (cf. Matt. 16:9, 10). If we examine the incident of the four thousand in the light of Matthew's purpose the reason for it is quite clear. He is still recording Jesus' demonstrated reply to the accusation of the Pharisees concerning the tradition of the elders. Jesus healed the Jews. He healed the Gentiles. He fed the Jews. He fed the Gentiles. His ministry to the one is His ministry to the other. So He completely refutes the tradition of the elders."—Hobbs, *An Exposition of the Four Gospels*, vol. 1, p. 206.

“He healed them all; and the people, heathen as they were, glorified the God of Israel. For three days they continued to throng about the Saviour. . . . Moreover, those whom He fed at Bethsaida were Jews; these were Gentiles and heathen.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 404, 405.

16. Consider the following questions regarding the request for a sign by the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt. 16:1-12):

- Why did the religious leaders ask for another miracle?

- What blinded the minds of these leaders to the truthfulness of Jesus' claims?

- What did Jesus mean by the sign of Jonah?

- What aspects of the teaching of the religious leaders can be likened to leaven?

WHAT DOES CHRIST'S CALL TO HIS KINGDOM MEAN TO ME?

- Do I need to change my attitudes toward others, as Herod was asked to do?
- How can I gain stronger faith in Christ as the divine Provider and Protector? How can I share this faith?
- What traditional attitudes and customs should I now discard?

(FR) **FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read “Give Ye Them to Eat,” “The Crisis in Galilee,” “Tradition,” and “The True Sign” in *The Desire of Ages*, chapters 39, 41, 42, and 44, pp. 364-371, 383-398, 404-409.

SUMMARY: While Christ is all-powerful and kingly, He is also a compassionate friend of the weak and sinful. His kingly authority is demonstrated by His constant watchcare for and personal interaction with His children. Christ's kingdom is built upon love, fairness, and gentle service. These are basic principles and virtues of the character of God.

A Kingdom of Glory and Grace

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matt. 16:13 to 18:35.



MEMORY TEXT: "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 16:24, 25).

A KINGDOM NOW AND LATER. The kingdom of Christ is characterized by a series of paradoxes: humility and exaltation, meekness and majesty, freedom from sin and slavery to righteousness, forgiveness for the worst of sinners and purity for delivered saints. The kingdom of grace is now; the kingdom of glory later. The qualifications for the one are the qualifications for the other. The kingdom of glory is pervaded by the principles that govern the kingdom of grace.

OUTLINE

- I. The Church a Kingdom of Grace (Matt. 16:13-28).
- II. Majesty and Meekness (Matt. 17:1-13).
- III. Sons of God Are Free (Matt. 17:14-27).
- IV. Humble Service for Sinners (Matt. 18:1-20).
- V. What Is Forgiveness? (Matt. 18:21-35).

THE ISSUE DISCUSSED IN THIS LESSON. The natural tendency of the human heart is toward personal gratification and aggrandizement. The kingdoms and nations of the world are maintained by human pride and power. In politics, business, education, and sports, individual success is supposed to result from reaching down into the recesses of the mind and calling up one's natural powers and abilities. The concept of dependence is alien to much of human endeavor. The idea that greatness is a matter of humble service, willing forgiveness, and constant reliance upon God for strength and wisdom is foreign to the success philosophy that pervades world societies.

Jesus taught that the cross precedes the crown. In fact, He emphasized that anyone who refuses the cross is unworthy of the crown. The kingdom of grace is designed to prepare the citizens of the kingdom of glory. Conquest against impurity, selfishness, pride, and an unforgiving spirit prepares the soul to "see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (Matt. 16:28).

Jesus' teaching on this issue has great relevance for us today. Salvation is by grace alone (Eph. 2:8-10), yet Christ judges the recipient of grace on

the basis of the resulting attitudes and works (Matt. 16:27). The message of this lesson is that surrender to Christ and dependence upon Him will render the believer a gentle, unobtrusive, forgiving servant of God and humanity.

SUN

I. THE CHURCH A KINGDOM OF GRACE (Matt. 16:13-28).

Jesus thought the time had come for His disciples to make a statement of their faith in Him. First, He asked for the popular opinion as to His identity. Most people did not regard Him as the Messiah. The popular view was that He was one of the prophets raised from the dead. Then came the crucial question for the disciples and for us: "But whom say ye that I am?" (Matt. 16:15).

1. What blessing comes upon those who confess Christ as Peter did? Matt. 16:16, 17; compare Rom. 10:9, 10.

Many of Jesus' followers had left Him when He did not fulfill their expectations. He had allowed John the Baptist to die a martyr's death, and He had refused to take His place on David's throne.

Only the Holy Spirit can reveal the deep things of God. "The truth which Peter had confessed is the foundation of the believer's faith. It is that which Christ Himself has declared to be eternal life. But the possession of this knowledge was no ground for self-glorification. Through no wisdom or goodness of his own had it been revealed to Peter. Never can humanity, of itself, attain to a knowledge of the divine. 'It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?' Job 11:8. Only the spirit of adoption can reveal to us the deep things of God."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 412.

2. What did Jesus mean when He said, "Upon this rock I will build my church"? Matt. 16:18. Compare 1 Cor. 3:11; 1 Peter 2:7, 8.

The name *Peter* is a translation of the masculine Greek word that means "stone," a movable stone. It refers to a stone used by warriors, or a boulder that forms a landmark. By contrast the "rock" upon which Christ built His church translates the feminine Greek word *petra*, which often refers to cliffs, ledges, or ridges. The two Greek words effectively illustrate the characters of Peter and Christ.

The gates of hell temporarily prevailed against Peter. "Peter was not the rock upon which the church was founded. The gates of hell did prevail against him when he denied his Lord with cursing and swearing. The church was built upon One against whom the gates of hell could not prevail."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 413.

The church is maintained by Christ. He constantly imparts His Holy Spirit to His believing people, fosters their spiritual life, and holds the ministry in the hollow of His hand. (See Rev. 1:16-20.) The church is built upon the teachings of Jesus Christ. Only in a secondary sense is it true that the teachings of the apostles and prophets form the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20). Their teachings are foundational only because they come from Jesus Christ.

The church is a kingdom of grace. Although in Scripture the church is also a visible organization, the true church founded by Jesus consists of the spiritual communion of those who, by faith, can affirm Peter's confession. Jesus taught that "the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). The church is a kingdom of grace. Immediately following that pronouncement, Jesus predicted the manner in which the kingdom of glory would be established (Luke 17:24).

MON

3. What power and authority does Jesus give to the church when He imparts the "keys of the kingdom of heaven"? Matt. 16:19. What is involved in the church's binding and loosing? Compare Luke 11:52; Rev. 1:18; 3:7; Matt. 18:18.
-

Jesus tells *all* the disciples [the pronoun is plural in the Greek], "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 16:19).

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

Christ binds and looses. Matthew 16:19 translates literally from the Greek text: "Whatever you bind upon earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose upon earth shall have been loosed in heaven." Guided by the Holy Spirit, the church binds and looses only that which has already been bound and loosed by God. Heaven alone decides who is saved and who lost. (See Matt. 7:21-27; John 3:18.)

4. What principle distinguishes Christ's kingdom of grace from earthly kingdoms and nations? Matt. 16:21-28.
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TUE

II. MAJESTY AND MEEKNESS (Matt. 17:1-13).

5. What problem do you see in Matt. 16:28? How would you solve the problem?

“Jesus had told His disciples that there were some standing with Him who should not taste of death till they should see the kingdom of God come with power. At the transfiguration this promise was fulfilled. . . . Moses was present to represent those who will be raised from the dead at the second appearing of Jesus. And Elijah, who was translated without seeing death, represented those who will be changed to immortality at Christ’s second coming and will be translated to heaven without seeing death.”—*Early Writings*, p. 164.

6. What divine purposes were fulfilled on the mount of transfiguration? Matt. 17:1-8.

Jesus gained strength and encouragement, not only from the brilliant light and His Father’s voice proclaiming His divinity and authority, but from the conversation He enjoyed with two men who had been transported to heaven. Despite their failures, Moses and Elijah, who had been taken to heaven, were given the privilege of preparing Christ for the temptations ahead. The appearance of Moses and Elijah brought Him encouragement in facing these temptations. He was to be victorious where they had failed. Their eternal salvation and that of the entire world depended upon His triumph over the forces of evil. (See 1 John 2:2.) Consider also what the experience on the mountain did for Peter, James, and John.

7. How was Christ’s prediction recorded in Matthew 17:11 to be fulfilled?

As you investigate this question consider:

- Jesus identified John the Baptist as Elijah who “is come already” (verse 12).
- Jesus was not asserting that John was Elijah literally brought back to life. He was referring to the work and teaching of Elijah revived in the work and teaching of John.
- The work and teaching of Elijah are to be repeated before the second coming of Jesus. What message and ministry fulfills that prediction? (See Hosea 4:5, 6; Rev. 14:6-12; Joel 2:28, 29.)

III. SONS OF GOD ARE FREE (Matt. 17:14-27).

Because Christ is the Son of God, He exercised certain privileges while here on earth. He forgave sins and demonstrated His deity by miracles of healing and raising the dead. Because the Son is free, so are His children. (See John 8:34-36.) To belong to Christ’s kingdom of grace is to be free in the only true sense.

8. How did Jesus intend His disciples to work for sick and demon-possessed people? Matt. 10:1, 8.

9. To what extent were the disciples successful in this work of healing and casting out demons? Luke 10:17-20.
-

The Bible does not record that, when Jesus and the disciples cast demons out of an individual, they did an incomplete and imperfect job, leaving some demons behind to be cast out later. It was always possible for an individual like Mary Magdalene, who was released from demon possession by Christ, to give in to sin again and allow demons to take up renewed residence in the life. (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 568.) Nevertheless, in the presence of Christ, demons are forced to withdraw. As we present the gospel and pray for those who are harassed, the Lord drives the demons away from those who believe, and souls are liberated by His mighty power.

10. Why were the disciples not able to cast the demon out of the afflicted boy? Matt. 17:14-21.
-

As we study and meditate on the evidence of God's trustworthiness, and pray, our faith is strengthened—not merely because we are convinced by evidence but because the Holy Spirit brings faith to our hearts. Faith is a gift from Christ. After we have earnestly sought Him in prayer and study, and have carefully examined the evidences of His love, we must exercise faith by consciously trusting Him. As we talk faith and live faith, our faith will grow.

11. Why did Jesus pay the temple tax through Peter, even though as the Son of God He was exempt? What lesson is there in this for us? Matt. 17:24-27.
-

THU IV. HUMBLE SERVICE FOR SINNERS (Matt. 18:1-20).

12. How did Jesus illustrate God's concept of greatness? Matt. 18:1-6; 23:8-11; John 13:4-10, 13-17.
-

Christ chooses the humble. "The strife for the highest place was the outworking of that same spirit which was the beginning of the great controversy in the worlds above, and which had brought Christ from heaven to die. . . . Before honor is humility. To fill a high place before men, Heaven chooses the worker who, like John the Baptist, takes a lowly place before God. The most childlike disciple is the most efficient in labor for God. The heavenly intelligences can co-operate with him who is seeking, not to exalt self, but to save souls."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 435, 436.

13. By what drastic action did Jesus urge His followers to eliminate the sin problem from their lives? Matt. 18:7-9.

Here is an instance in which Jesus uses metaphoric language to illustrate a divine requirement. Mutilation of the body does not save the soul, even though many throughout the history of the church have not understood this. If a habit or practice is contrary to the will of God, the only way to enjoy the blessings of salvation and to remain a member of the kingdom of grace is to be rid of it completely. This can be accomplished by the divine gift of grace alone. (See Phil. 4:13; John 15:5; 1 John 5:4, 5.)

14. List the attitudes and practices we are to adopt toward sinners in general, and in particular toward those who have sinned against us. Matt. 18:10-20; see also *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 440-442.

V. WHAT IS FORGIVENESS? (Matt. 18:21-35).

In popular rabbinic theology, three times was the maximum that an offended party was obliged to forgive another person. When Peter asked whether seven times were adequate, he probably expected Jesus to commend him for his generosity.

15. List the principles that Jesus taught regarding forgiveness (Matt. 18:21-35).

Verses 21, 22 _____

Verse 27 _____

Verses 28-35 _____

When we confess in Christ's name, our guilt is destroyed because it was borne on Calvary. (Compare Micah 7:19; 1 John 2:2; 4:10.) "The heaviest burden that we bear is the burden of sin. If we were left to bear this burden, it would crush us. But the Sinless One has taken our place. 'The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.' Isa. 53:6. He has borne the burden of our guilt. He will take the load from our weary shoulders. He will give us rest. The burden of care and sorrow also He will bear. He invites us to cast all our care upon Him; for He carries us upon His heart."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 328, 329.

DO I REPRESENT OR MISREPRESENT CHRIST TO OTHERS?

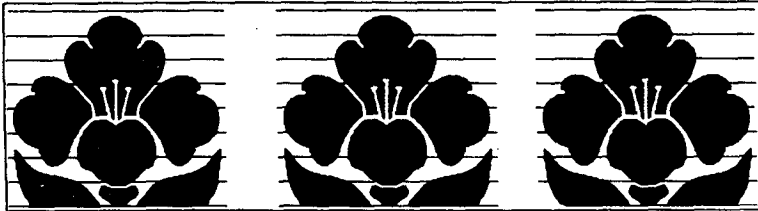
- How do I treat "reckless teenagers" in the church?
- Do I love those who do not live up to my social standards, or do I avoid them because I'm afraid they'll ruin my reputation?
- What do I do for the handicapped or other limited persons in my church? Do I give them a cheering word and help them with their needs?
- When engaged in discussion, do I force my opinions on others, or do I allow others to disagree with me without becoming offended?



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read the chapters "He Was Transfigured," "Ministry," and "Who Is the Greatest?" in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 419-442.

SUMMARY: Because the church is founded on Jesus Christ, the principles of His kingdom are to be manifest in the hearts of His people. The kingdom of grace is governed by principles of love, humility, and service. God is never rude or unkind, but treats all—sinner and saint alike—graciously, whether or not they appreciate such treatment.

Seeds Planted in Mission Lands Will Blossom Here at Home !



"To show a liberal self-denying spirit for the success of foreign missions is a sure way to advance home missionary work ; for the prosperity of the home work depends largely , under GOD , upon the reflex influence of the evangelical work done in countries afar off "

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Lesson 9

February 25—March 3

Service for the King

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matthew 19:1 to 21:17.



MEMORY TEXT: "But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" (Matthew 20:25-27).

GOD'S KINGDOM IS ONE OF SERVICE. In His kingdom the kings are those who serve as Jesus served. Christ's kingdom is filled with those who honor one another and prefer one another. The King is humble and righteous even while possessing His full authority and power.

OUTLINE

- I. Service in the Home (Matt. 19:1-15).
- II. Relationship Motivates Service (Matt. 19:16-30).
- III. Equal Pay for Unequal Work (Matt. 20:1-16).
- IV. Greatness Is Sacrificial Service (Matt. 20:17-34).
- V. The King Comes Humbly (Matt. 21:1-17).

KNOWING CHRIST IS THE BASIS OF TRUE GREATNESS. When kings or queens come to visit their subjects, there is usually much fanfare and excitement. Banners wave, and people throng about, attempting to get as close to the monarch as allowable. Whether the weather is fair or foul, royalty brings eager crowds. And if a loyal subject must miss the event, there is keen disappointment.

Jesus brought no less excitement when He rode into Jerusalem on the Sunday before His crucifixion. Hailing Him the "son of David," the people were prepared for Him to proclaim the fulfillment of the covenant by ascending the throne and taking the kingly scepter.

They had little idea of the kind of king He really was, the nature of His kingdom, or the kind of authority He would exercise. To many of them, God was a forceful dictator who had to be appeased by sacrificial offerings and almsgiving before He would listen to their prayers or bless them. He was like any earthly ruler—only more powerful, wiser, and more fearful.

The theme that recurs throughout this lesson is that greatness does not involve the power of rulership, but the privilege of service. In our home lives, our lives at work, our contacts within the church, and outside the church, happy, meaningful relationships are based on two factors: (1) our personal relationship with Christ; and (2) our willingness to serve unselfishly.

I. SERVICE IN THE HOME (Matt. 19:1-15).

In Jesus' day, a man could divorce his wife for the slightest provocation—such as refusing to do something he asked her to do. Although she could appeal her case, it was doubtful that she would be listened to or that justice would be given.

The question that the Pharisees asked Jesus—"Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" (Matt. 19:3, RSV)—was one often disputed among the rabbis. By asking Jesus' opinion, they sought to trap Him into an expression of heresy that would damage His reputation with the people.

1. Why is divorce and remarriage for any reason other than the adultery of a spouse unacceptable to Christ? Matt. 19:3-9. Compare 1 Cor. 7:10, 11.

"The only change made to accommodate the original marriage law to a fallen world is that violation of the marriage contract by unchastity may constitute a lawful basis for dissolving the union. Otherwise, the union may not lawfully be broken. . . . It should be noted that in the NT the term 'fornication' covers all illicit relationships both before and after marriage. To the modern English reader the word 'unchastity' conveys more exactly the meaning of *porneia* as it is used in the NT. . . . From Jesus' teachings here it may be inferred that the innocent party is free to choose whether the marriage relationship shall be continued. Reconciliation is ever the ideal, especially if children are involved.

"Here and in Jesus' parallel discussion in Matt. 5:32 it seems to be implied, even though not specifically stated, that the innocent party to a divorce is at liberty to marry again. This has been the understanding of the great majority of commentators through the years."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 454.

2. How only can faithfulness to marital vows be effectively maintained? Matt. 19:10-12.

"The Lord has quoted and explained the divine ordinance of marriage. The disciples have replied, 'If such is the case . . . then it is better not to marry.' So Jesus now shows that there is actually no reason for despair. To be sure, not all men can accept his statement . . . with reference to marriage as a divine institution of the highest significance for man, one that must not be violated in any way. For this teaching not all men *have room* in their hearts and lives. To properly fulfill the responsibilities of marriage requires grace. This grace is God's gift. Without this divine help, true, God-glorifying marriage is impossible.

"The disciples have suggested that it might be better not to marry. Rather, Jesus implies, let a man ask for the gift of God's grace so that he will be able, properly motivated, to enter the wedded state. Nevertheless,

apart entirely from this consideration, there still are situations which make it either impossible or inadvisable for a man to marry. There is that much truth in the observation of the disciples.”—William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Matthew*, p. 718.

3. How does Jesus' attitude to children relate to His instruction regarding the sanctity of marriage? Matt. 19:13-15.

How appropriate that Christ's love for children should be illustrated in such close proximity to His instruction regarding marriage! If there were more concern for children in Christian homes, then there would be fewer church members with broken homes. Surely the spiritual and emotional happiness of our children should lead us to explore every avenue to happiness in marriage and home life.



II. RELATIONSHIP MOTIVATES SERVICE (Matt. 19:16-30).

4. Did the rich young ruler keep the commandments? Why did Jesus ask Him to give his wealth to the poor and become one of His disciples? Matt. 19:16-22.

As you seek an answer to the above question, ask yourself:

- How are we saved? Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-10.
-

- How does the experience of salvation affect the life of the one being saved? Matt. 19:17; compare Rom. 3:31; 8:3, 4.
-

- Did the rich young ruler have the experience of salvation? How did he keep the commandments—as God expects, or only as he understood commandment keeping?
-

5. Why is it “hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 19:23, RSV)? Is the means of salvation for a rich person different from that for a poor person?

6. Why did Jesus emphasize the rewards in store for those who make sacrifices in His service? Does He want us to serve because of the reward? Matt. 19:27-30; compare Heb. 11:26; Col. 3:23, 24; 1 Tim. 5:18.

A personal question. What is my primary motive for service? What was the primary motive of the rich young ruler? Is it possible that my primary motive for service is right, even though, as a secondary motive, I look forward to the reward? (See *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 398.)

TUE

III. EQUAL PAY FOR UNEQUAL WORK (Matt. 20:1-16).

7. Study the parable of the laborers in the vineyard (Matt. 20:1-16); then answer the questions that follow:

- What does the parable indicate regarding God's attitude to Christian service?

- How does the parable illustrate Jesus' statement, "But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first"? (Matt. 19:30; compare 20:16).

- How will the parable apply:

at the latter rain? _____

at the close of probation? _____

at the second advent? _____

"The householder's dealing with the workers in his vineyard represents God's dealing with the human family. It is contrary to the customs that prevail among men. . . . Those later hired believed the master's promise, 'Whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.' They showed their confidence in him by asking no question in regard to wages. They trusted to his justice and equity. They were rewarded, not according to the amount of their labor, but according to the generosity of his purpose.

"So God desires us to trust in Him who justifieth the ungodly. His reward is given not according to our merit but according to His own purpose, 'which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.' Eph. 3:11. . . .

"Not the amount of labor performed or its visible results but the spirit in which the work is done makes it of value with God."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 396, 397.

WED

IV. GREATNESS IS SACRIFICIAL SERVICE (Matt. 20:17-34).

8. Why do you think Matthew narrated Jesus' prediction of His death between the parable of the householder and the story of the disciples' ambition? What is the relationship between these three stories? Matt. 20:17-19 (in context).

The parable of the laborers in the vineyard illustrates the kind of service God respects. The story of the sons of Zebedee seeking special honor illustrates the wrong motive for service. What kind of service did Jesus render to lost humanity?

9. What was Jesus' instruction regarding leadership in the church? Matt. 20:20-28.

The favorite pastime of Jesus' twelve disciples was to speculate on who would be first in the new kingdom. As they witnessed His miracles and the display of His power, and as the conflict grew toward greater proportions, they concluded that Jesus would soon be crowned king in Jerusalem and they would all be important. Who among them would be the most important? Who would sit to His left and right as counselors and prime ministers?

Their arguing became so intense and the issue so overriding that two of the most favored ones decided they had better campaign for their positions before it was too late.

Jesus' answer:

● What did He mean by the cup of which both He and His disciples were to drink? Compare Matt. 26:39; John 18:11.

● Who will share Christ's heavenly throne? Matt. 19:28; Rev. 3:21.

● Does Jesus' instruction against rulership imply that the church should not have appointed leaders? Compare Acts 14:23; 15:2; 6:2, 3.

Respect leaders. "Those who are inclined to regard their individual judgment as supreme are in grave peril. It is Satan's studied effort to separate such ones from those who are channels of light, through whom God has wrought to build up and extend His work in the earth. To neglect or despise those whom God has appointed to bear the responsibilities of leadership in connection with the advancement of the truth, is to reject the means that He has ordained for the help, encouragement, and strength of His people. . . . Every agency will be subordinate to the Holy Spirit, and all the believers will be united in an organized and well-directed effort to give to the world the glad tidings of the grace of God."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 164.

10. What can we gain from Jesus' illustration of His teaching regarding leadership and service? Matt. 20:29-34.

THU

V. THE KING COMES HUMBLY (Matt. 21:1-17).

In the ancient Near East, it was customary for a king to celebrate his victory in war by riding into the capital city on the royal means of transportation, followed by a large retinue, and then take his place on the throne. Jesus followed this practice, knowing that it would lead to His death. The day was filled with shouting, singing people who had no thought of doom and no conception of what Jesus really was doing.

11. How did the prophet Zechariah describe this coming event? Zech. 9:9.

The New International Version translates the text: "See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey." Attempts have been made to interpret this as a portrayal of a victorious king—after the pattern of Near Eastern kingship in Zechariah's day. But the real intent of the prophecy is to contrast the *difference* between God's way of ruling and the methods of earthly kings.

When the ancient Near Eastern king came riding into the capital, he nearly always had a certain arrangement of his retinue. First would be soldiers, then dignitaries such as judges and courtiers. Then would come the king, dressed in colorful array. Finally, following along, bound, and with their heads shaven would be his captives. They were his pride and joy because they depicted his awesome power.

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem, there was no such portrayal of His power. He came as the meek and lowly One in heart with "captives of His salvation" following joyfully behind, but freed—because the truth had set them free.

12. How do you reconcile Jesus' forceful cleansing of the temple with the description of Him as "humble, and mounted on an ass" (Matt. 21:5, RSV)? Compare Matt. 21:12.

13. What message is taught by the cleansing of the temple and the events that immediately followed in regard to the kingdom of grace and the kingdom of glory? Matt. 21:13-17.

Believers in Christ are described as temples for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 6:19, 20). As Jesus drove the money changers out of the Jerusalem Temple, so He wants to drive sin out of our lives. "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (2 Cor. 6:16).

Those who are purified temples for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit

will inhabit the temple of God in heaven (Rev. 7:15). Are you allowing the Lord to purify your life?

AM I A CITIZEN OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM?

- Do I try to rule over my family, or is my authority in the home based on truth and love?
- Do I serve others in love continually, or do I try to serve only when it is convenient or easy?
- Do I admire Christ for His generosity, or do I feel that He should reward me more when I do more work?
- Do I enjoy working side by side with God so much that this privilege is my favorite reward for service?
- In leadership-type assignments, do I enjoy having power over those under me, or do I go out of my way to keep them from being afraid of me? Do I treat them as equals, or do I subtly demean them as inferiors?

(FR)

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read "The Law of the New Kingdom," "Thy King Cometh," and "The Temple Cleansed Again" in *The Desire of Ages*, chapters 60, 63, and 65, pp. 547-551, 569-579, 589-600.

SUMMARY: In Jesus, we have a picture of how our infinitely powerful King treats His subjects for eternity. Only those who, like Him, are meek and lowly in heart will find it a delight to be in His kingdom.

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The Rejected King

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matt. 21:18 to 23:39.



MEMORY TEXT: "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:37-40).

THE KING FORSAKEN BY HIS SUBJECTS. When Jesus came, He was too humble for the proud, too kind for the overbearing, too gentle for the power-hungry, and too soft for those who preferred the thunders and terrors of Sinai. They rejected Him, the cornerstone of their faith. They substituted legalism for love. What else could He do, when faced with their hardness of heart and deteriorated spirituality, but give them up sadly to their self-destruction and the designs of their enemies?

OUTLINE

- I. A Barren People (Matt. 21:18-46).
- II. Wearing Christ's Character (Matt. 22:1-14).
- III. Jesus Answers His Critics (Matt. 22:15-46).
- IV. Preachers Who Do Not Practice (Matt. 23:1-39).

PRIDE DESTROYS, LOVE EXALTS. "The evil that led to Peter's fall and that shut out the Pharisee from communion with God is proving the ruin of thousands today. There is nothing so offensive to God or so dangerous to the human soul as pride and self-sufficiency. Of all sins it is the most hopeless, the most incurable."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 154.

Pride comes in many different forms. It may be pride of appearance, professional pride, intellectual pride, or spiritual pride. Whatever its form, it is like a cancer that eats out the spiritual life of the individual, destroys the effectiveness of Christ's work for the soul, alienates both God and humans, and results in emptiness and disillusionment.

The story is told of a young prima donna rehearsing with the orchestra of the famous Italian conductor Arturo Toscanini. At one point Toscanini stopped the orchestra and corrected a mistake the singer had made. Angry and embarrassed, she burst forth vehemently, "Mr. Toscanini I would remind you that I am the star of this evening's performance!" Toscanini answered, "Madam, the only stars that be are up in heaven. On this earth there are good musicians and bad musicians and, so help me, you are a bad one!"

Spiritual pride destroys the individual's relationship with God and humanity. Christ cannot live out His meek and holy life through one who is so sure of his own holiness and religious superiority that he has rendered himself unteachable. Spiritually proud people cannot see themselves as they really are. They are very conscious of the spiritual inferiority and the theological ignorance of the sinners around them, but they cannot discern their own malady.

This was the basic problem of the scribes and Pharisees to whom Jesus directed His stern rebukes. Jesus spoke to them as He did because their situation was desperate. Just as a loving friend would shout to a companion who is about to fall into a deep pit, so Christ speaks forcefully to those who have long resisted His voice. He uses language they can understand and a tone that arrests their attention.

Tragically, most of the spiritually proud to whom Jesus spoke rejected His earnest appeals. They failed to make appropriate application of His teaching. Only as the life is filled with love to God and humanity can self be viewed in true perspective. What is our reaction to Jesus' appeals? Are we willing to allow the Holy Spirit to reveal how Jesus' words apply to us? Will we allow Him to change us, or will we go blindly on in hopeless self-assurance?

SUN

I. A BARREN PEOPLE (Matt. 21:18-46).

Jesus faithfully revealed to Israel's leaders and people the reason for their spiritual destitution. In His messages to His disciples, as well as in dialogue with the priests, elders, scribes, and Pharisees, He pointed out with unmistakable clarity the heart of the problem.

1. What two lessons did Jesus teach by cursing the fig tree? Matt. 21:18-22.

Undoubtedly the disciples were familiar with the Lord's message given through Jeremiah regarding the spiritual fruitlessness of the people. "When I would gather them, says the Lord, there are no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree; even the leaves are withered, and what I gave them has passed away from them" (Jer. 8:13, RSV). The tree that Jesus cursed had all the signs of fruitfulness, but there was no fruit. Likewise, His countrymen appeared pious but were bearing no fruit for the kingdom of God. The externals of religion are not enough. "Faith working through love" (Gal. 5:6, RSV) is not merely a matter of words and appearances. When Christ lives within the believer, His life begets life.

Mark's parallel to this story indicates that the next morning "they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots" (Mark 11:20, RSV). The wonder of the disciples provided an opportunity for Jesus to stress the effectiveness of faith in our work for Him. (Compare Matt. 21:22 with John 15:7, 16; 1 John 5:14.)

2. Why did Jesus refuse to tell the chief priests and elders by what authority He did His works? Matt. 21:23-27.

Jesus *did* answer the question by implication. Putting the answer in question form would compel the priests to admit a truth they did not wish to accept. A positive answer would have been: "My authority comes from a prophet's (John the Baptist's) recognition of me as the Messiah."

The response of the religious leaders revealed their hypocrisy. God reveals light to those who are seeking for it (Matt. 7:7). He bestows righteousness upon those who ask for it (Matt. 5:6; 6:33). The question asked by the priests and elders did not result from a sincere desire for truth. They already had ample evidence of His Messiahship in the cleansing of the temple and in His wonderful works of healing. They were looking for a statement from Jesus which they could use to condemn Him.

MON

3. What was the great sin of Israel's religious leaders? Matt. 21:28-32.

"Self-righteousness is not true righteousness, and those who cling to it will be left to take the consequences of holding a fatal deception. Many today claim to obey the commandments of God, but they have not the love of God in their hearts to flow forth to others. Christ calls them to unite with Him in His work for the saving of the world, but they content themselves with saying, 'I go, sir.' They do not go. They do not co-operate with those who are doing God's service."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 279.

4. Who was responsible for the judgment that came upon ancient Israel? Matt. 21:33-46; compare Isa. 5:1-7.

Notice how the religious leaders condemned themselves (Matt. 21:41). Jesus promptly quoted Psalm 118:22, 23. The identification of the "stone which the builders rejected" (RSV) with the son and heir (Matt. 21:37-39) should have been apparent. The application was devastating to the national pride and personal aspirations of the religious leaders to whom Jesus was speaking. "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it" (Matt. 21:43, RSV).

The Son's life was taken, the gospel went to the Gentiles after the stoning of Stephen (A.D. 34), and the remnants of national independence were lost when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The worldwide Christian church inherited the divine commission of making Christ known. (See Rom. 9:6-8; 10:12, 13; Gal. 3:27-29.)

II. WEARING CHRIST'S CHARACTER (Matt. 22:1-14).

The parable of the marriage feast predicted Israel's final rejection of the Messiah and the results that would follow from the world-wide preaching of the gospel.

5. To what three historic invitations did Jesus refer? Matt. 22:1-10.

(See also *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 308, 309.)

Verses 1-3 _____

Verses 4-7 _____

Verses 8-10 _____



6. To whom is the gospel invitation now extended? Rev. 3:20; 14:6, 7; Isa. 55:1-3; John 3:15.

“And those servants went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good; so the wedding hall was filled with guests” (Matt. 22:10, RSV). The visible Christian church contains both “bad and good.” Not all church members are born-again Christians; not all belong to the spiritual communion of true believers in Jesus Christ. “It was a mixed company. Some of them had no more real regard for the giver of the feast than had the ones who rejected the call.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 309.

In the parable of the wheat and the tares, Jesus instructed, “Let both grow together until the harvest” (Matt. 13:30). Judgment has not been given to individuals. Nevertheless, the church, directed by the Holy Spirit, has the responsibility of making some decisions regarding its members. (See Matt. 18:18; 1 Cor. 5:1-5, 11-13; 6:1-6.)

7. When does the king come in to look at the guests (Matt. 22:11)? Compare Dan. 7:9, 10, 13, 14; Rev. 14:6, 7.

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8. What is given to those who accept Christ's invitation? Matt. 22:11; compare Rev. 19:7, 8.

“Before the final reward is given, it must be decided who are fitted to share the inheritance of the righteous. This decision must be made prior to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven; for when He comes, His reward is with Him, ‘to give every man according as his work shall be.’ Rev. 22:12. . . .

“By the wedding garment in the parable is represented the pure, spotless character which Christ's true followers will possess. . . . It is the righteousness of Christ, His own unblemished character, that through faith is imparted to all who receive Him as their personal Saviour. . . .

“By his perfect obedience He has made it possible for every human being to obey God's commandments. When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment

of His righteousness.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 310, 312.

9. What happens to those who profess to belong to Christ, but who have not accepted His gift? Matt. 22:11-14.

The issue in the pre-advent judgment is precisely this: Who among Christ’s professed followers is wearing the robe of His righteousness? The final answer to this question is determined for each individual by the court of heaven. Those who are filled with the Holy Spirit have the righteousness of Christ in their hearts (Rom. 8:9, 10; Eph. 3:16, 17). These are the ones whose names are retained in the book of life for eternity. (See Dan. 12:1). Those who lack this experience have their names removed from the book of life. (See Rev. 3:5.) Before Jesus comes, the final decision is made in heaven concerning each person who claims to be His follower.

WED

III. JESUS ANSWERS HIS CRITICS (Matt. 22:15-46).

10. What financial responsibilities to the state and to God did Jesus emphasize? Matt. 22:15-22.

The instruction here is thoroughly consistent with all the teaching of Scripture on the issue of loyalty to God and to the secular authorities. (See Mal. 3:8-12; Rom. 13:1-7.) Only when human authority runs counter to God’s authority are Christ’s followers “to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

11. When Jesus said, “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living,” He was referring to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who had long since died (Matt. 22:32). What did He mean?

What is the context? Study verses 28 and 31 in connection with verse 32. Study also Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6, 10; 1 Corinthians 15:17, 18, 51-54.

12. When Jesus answered the lawyer, did He imply that love should replace the Mosaic law? If not, what did He mean? Matt. 22:34-40; compare Deut. 6:4-6; Lev. 19:18.

Would this scribe have agreed with Jesus if He had rejected the Mosaic law as contrary to love? (See Mark 12:32, 33.) Why would Moses emphasize the importance of love so strongly if it were opposed to law? What does the New Testament teach regarding the continued function of the Ten Commandments after the cross? (See Rom. 3:31; 7:7, 12, 14; 8:3, 4.) Why were the ceremonial aspects of the Mosaic law abolished at the cross? (See

Heb. 7:26-28; 8:1-3; 9:11-14.)

13. What was the purpose of Christ's question regarding the son of David? Matt. 22:41-45; compare John 5:18; 8:58, 59.
-



IV. PREACHERS WHO DO NOT PRACTICE (Matt. 23:1-39).

The sternest of all Jesus' words were not directed to the weak, the flagrantly sinful, the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but to the shepherds of the flock. Because of their added responsibility, these religious leaders were in a worse spiritual condition than those who, like Mary and Levi-Matthew, were regarded as gross sinners.

At the heart of the picture were apparently pious but proud people who felt no need, whose pride led to the oppression of others; to twisted, unbiblical reasoning, and, ultimately, to the rejection and murder of God's own Son.

14. Explain how Jesus' counsel to the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 23) applies in principle to professed Christians today:

- Verses 1-4 _____
- Verses 5-7 _____
- Verses 8-12 _____
- Verses 13, 14 _____
- Verse 15 _____
- Verses 16-22 _____
(See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 616.)
- Verses 23, 24 _____
- Verses 25-28 _____
- Verses 29-33 _____

15. What prediction did Jesus make of future suffering for His servants? How will this prediction be fulfilled toward the end of time? Matt. 23:34-36; compare Matt. 24:9, 10; Rev. 13:15-17.
-

16. What did Jesus' lament over Jerusalem imply regarding the status of the chosen nation? What change of status do Christians experience when they lose their relationship with Christ? Matt. 23:37-39; compare Jude 4, 10-19.

Centuries earlier, God had agonized over the northern kingdom of Israel: "How can I give you up, O Ephraim! How can I hand you over, O Israel!" (Hosea 11:8, RSV). Later, through the prophet Ezekiel, He pleaded: "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?" (Eze. 33:11, RSV).

Jesus' last words to Israel, His own special people, were spoken firmly in language they could understand, but the tears in His voice (Luke 19:41) revealed something of the depth of sorrow that only God can know as He separates from those who have rejected Him.

DO I WEAR GOD'S CHARACTER?

- Do I ever wish to use force to get people to do things my way, or even God's way? Or am I willing to allow others to choose for themselves?
- In my daily interactions with others, do I keep in mind the gracious way Jesus treats everyone?
- Do I make it hard for others to be Christians, or are they drawn to Christ because of me?
- When I have to deal with open sin in the lives of others, do I speak in love and compassion as Christ did?



FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read "The Temple Cleansed Again," "Controversy," "Woes on the Pharisees," chapters 65, 66, and 67 in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 589-620.

SUMMARY: A spiritually barren people could never fulfill the prophetic role that God had in mind for them. Because ancient Israelites had substituted their own righteousness for that of Christ, He had no choice but to separate from them. They could argue about minutiae, but, in respect to eternal issues, they were blind guides of the blind.

Signs of the Coming Kingdom

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matthew 24 and 25.



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

GOD GIVES US A CHANCE TO PREPARE. Christ has given us a very clear description of the events that will precede His coming. In the same way that He warned the disciples of what to expect prior to the fall of Jerusalem, He has given us a preview of the events and situations we may expect before He comes again. He offers to enable us to know and trust Him so that, like the five wise maidens and the two men who used their talents carefully, we may welcome Him eagerly when He comes.

OUTLINE

- I. The Most Important Signs (Matt. 24:1-28).
- II. Ready for His Coming (Matt. 24:29-51).
- III. The Bridegroom Comes (Matt. 25:1-13).
- IV. Fear Does Not Save (Matt. 25:14-30).
- V. Inheritors of the Kingdom (Matt. 25:31-46).

DO YOU LOOK FORWARD TO MEETING HIM? To a business man on his way home after a long trip, a sign can be very comforting, telling him that he is close to his destination. To a newly arrested prisoner the sight of the sign identifying a prison can be a very distressing experience. To a loved child in a secure, happy home, the news that his father is returning from a trip is exciting information. To an abused child, such news is most alarming and terrifying.

In Matthew 24 and 25 Jesus discusses the signs, or indicators, of His coming. Depending on how we view eternity, particularly the God with whom we are to spend it, we will find the signs rewarding and glorious or frightening. The four sons of a harsh father used to hide under the house when they saw him coming home from work each evening because they feared his wrath. If we see God as vindictive or arbitrary, we will wish to hide from His coming. But if we have learned the truth about Him—that He loves us as He loves His Son—and if we love Him supremely in return, we will welcome Him in triumphant joy.



I. THE MOST IMPORTANT SIGNS (Matt. 24:1-28).

Jesus drew some parallels between the events leading up to the destruc-

tion of Jerusalem and the events that would occur immediately before His second coming. "Jesus did not answer His disciples by taking up separately the destruction of Jerusalem and the great day of His coming. He mingled the description of these two events. Had He opened to His disciples future events as He beheld them, they would have been unable to endure the sight. In mercy to them He blended the description of the two great crises, leaving the disciples to study out the meaning for themselves."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 628.

- 1. Study Matthew 24:4-25, indicating below how Jesus used each sign of the coming destruction of Jerusalem as a type of a similar event immediately prior to His second advent.**

- 2. What event of worldwide significance will occur before Jesus' coming? Matt. 24:14.**

Matthew 24:14 applies to the time of the end. At a time when nations are in the greatest turmoil, when oppression has become immeasurable, the good news of the kingdom is that God does not run His universe as earthly tyrants run their governments, nor is He the cruel dictator that Satan represents Him to be.

The message of the atoning sacrifice of Christ is to be proclaimed to sinners everywhere. The message that He "bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness" (1 Peter 2:24, RSV) is to be carried to every corner of the globe. Jesus is God's great gift to sinners needing salvation and longing for eternal life.

- 3. Study Revelation 14:6-12 and note that four major features characterize the "everlasting gospel" that will be preached throughout the world before Jesus comes:**
 - The pre-advent judgment message.
 - The Sabbath message.
 - The fall of antitypical Babylon.
 - A warning of the beast, its image, and its mark.
- 4. Why is endurance to the end necessary for salvation (Matt. 24:13)? Are we not saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-10)?**

No one likes the word *endurance* today. Most people prefer words like *instant*, *ready-made*, *prompt*, and *assured*. Many Christians regard endurance as a contradiction of their Christian freedom. Why endure?

An increasing number of false christs and false prophets will attempt to lead astray the very elect through deception. Second Thessalonians 2:9 and 2 Corinthians 11:14 suggest that Satan will attempt to deceive the entire world. (Compare Revelation 13:3, 13-14.) In the same way that he deceived one third of the angels, Satan will attempt to ensnare all of mankind.

The fact that we enjoy the blessings of present salvation in Christ does not render us immune from temptation and possible deception in the future. Only as we maintain our faith-grace relationship with Jesus on a daily, hourly basis can we be kept from falling. The people whose names are taken out of the book of life before Jesus' return (Rev. 3:5) are those who have been genuine believers but who have failed to maintain their saving relationship with Him.

There are conditions to salvation. One is that we respond by faith to Christ's invitation (Acts 16:31). Another is that we abide in Him constantly. (See Matt. 10:22; James 1:12; 5:11; John 15:9; Gal. 6:9; Heb. 12:1; 1 Peter 1:13; Rev. 3:11.)

MON

5. What did Jesus mean by "the desolating sacrilege spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place" (Matt. 24:15, RSV)?

The "abomination of desolation" or "desolating sacrilege" (RSV) is a phrase taken from Daniel 8:13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11. The phrase has three applications:

a. **Before the destruction of Jerusalem.** "When the idolatrous standards of the Romans should be set up in the holy ground, which extended some furlongs outside the city walls, then the followers of Christ were to find safety in flight. When the warning sign should be seen, those who would escape must make no delay. Throughout the land of Judea, as well as in Jerusalem itself, the signal for flight must be immediately obeyed."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 26.

b. **The work of the Papacy in the Middle Ages.** Daniel referred to long centuries during which the "transgression of desolation" would subjugate God's truth and His people (Dan. 8:13, 14). Jesus was referring to the work of the little horn power of Daniel chapter 8. (See *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 630, 631.)

c. **The final great apostasy that will oppose God's truth and people at the end of time.** The little horn power of Daniel 8 that is responsible for the "abomination of desolation" is not destroyed until the return of Christ. (See Dan. 8:25; compare Rev. 17:4, 5; 21:27.)

"It is no time now for God's people to be fixing their affections or laying up their treasure in the world. The time is not far distant, when, like the early disciples, we shall be forced to seek a refuge in desolate and solitary places. As the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman armies was the signal for flight to the Judean Christians, so the assumption of power on the part of our nation in the decree enforcing the papal sabbath will be a warning to

us. It will then be time to leave the large cities, preparatory to leaving the smaller ones for retired homes in secluded places among the mountains. And now, instead of seeking expensive dwellings here, we should be preparing to move to a better country, even a heavenly.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 464, 465.

6. In view of the triple application of Matthew 24:15, 16 noted above, what interpretations can be given to the following verses (Matthew 24:17-22)?
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II. READY FOR HIS COMING (Matt. 24:29-51).

Most of the signs spoken of in Matthew 24 have been fulfilled. Since the time of Christ nations have risen against nations, false messiahs have arisen, God's people have suffered persecution, and people have been absorbed in temporal pursuits as if these were the only true values. And still Jesus has not come. Why?

7. What does the parable of the faithful servant suggest about a delay in Christ's coming? Matt. 24:45-51; compare 2 Peter 3:9.
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This parable and those that follow may be termed “parables of preparedness.” They demonstrate in practical terms what it means to “watch” and be ready for Christ's return.

Christ's people to be settled in the truth. Revelation 7:1-3 indicates that He is waiting for His people to become so settled into the truth that they cannot be moved.

“Just as soon as the people of God are sealed in their foreheads—it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved—just as soon as God's people are sealed and prepared for the shaking, it will come. Indeed, it has begun already; the judgments of God are now upon the land, to give us warning, that we may know what is coming.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1161.

8. What kind of character does the Lord desire each of His children to possess before His coming? Rev. 3:1-5, 18, 19.
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“We are to strive to enter in at the strait gate. But this gate does not swing loosely on its hinges. It will not admit doubtful characters. We must now strive for eternal life with an intensity that is proportionate to the value of the prize before us. It is not money or lands or position, but the possession of a Christlike character, that will open to us the gates of Paradise. It is not dignity, it is not intellectual attainments, that will win for us

the crown of immortality. Only the meek and lowly ones, who have made God their efficiency, will receive this gift.”—*Christian Service*, p. 247.

III. THE BRIDEGROOM COMES (Matt. 25:1-13).

To those who enjoy a trusting relationship with Christ, knowing that their sins are forgiven, and that their lives are “hid with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3), the thought of Christ’s coming brings a deep longing to meet Him and an intense fervor to win souls. While those who are afraid of God may work as hard as those who are not, their toil is difficult and unsavory and, in the end, is unproductive of good.

9. According to the parable of the virgins, what will qualify us to meet Christ? Matt. 25:3, 4; compare Zech. 4:6.

The oil in the lamps is a reminder of the oil in the seven-branched candlestick of the sanctuary. Zechariah chapter 4 depicts the oil flowing from two olive trees into the candlesticks. The candlesticks themselves represent God’s people who, because of their connection with heaven, are reflectors of His character. The oil is the central symbol of the vision, because it is the source of the light. Zechariah 4:6 applies the message. Thus the oil is a symbol of the Spirit, who enlightens and empowers God’s people. As we allow the Holy Spirit to fill our lives, He is the means by which Christ “the light of the world” is made known through us. (See John 8:12; Matt. 5:14-16.)

Significantly, the “two olive trees” mentioned in Revelation 11:4-12 represent the Word of God, the Old and New Testaments. The oil used in ancient lamps was olive oil. It symbolizes how the Holy Spirit explains the Word to the earnest, prayerful student (John 16:13), who is thereby built up in the faith and made ready to meet His Lord. These two elements, prayerful Bible study and daily reception of the presence of the Holy Spirit into the life, are essential to constant preparedness for the coming of Jesus.

10. What are we to gain from reading and studying the Bible? Ps. 119:11, 105.

“Why is it that our youth, and even those of more mature years, are so easily led into temptation and sin? It is because the Bible is not studied and meditated upon as it should be. If it were made the daily study, there would be an inward rectitude, a strength of spirit, that would resist the temptations of the enemy.”—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 442.

“There is nothing more calculated to energize the mind and strengthen the intellect than the study of the word of God. . . . If God’s word were studied as it should be, men would have a breadth of mind, a nobility of character, and a stability of purpose that are rarely seen in

these times.”—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 460.

11. What is symbolized by the shut door? Matt. 25:10; compare Rev. 7:3; 8:5; 22:11.

IV. FEAR DOES NOT SAVE (Matt. 25:14-30).

In the parable of the talents, Jesus presented a contrast. An overseer gave three men money according to their ability to use it, and then left. Two of the men loved and trusted their master and joyfully went out to do what they could for Him. As a result of their labors, they doubled the original amount of money they were given. Unlike the first two, the third individual was afraid of his master, for he thought of him as hard, exacting, and dishonest. The same master was joyfully served by the other two servants. The difference was in the misconceptions of the third man about his master.

12. What did the third man do as a result of his fears? What does this suggest about the way Christians sometimes behave? Matt. 25:25.

Although they would never admit it even to themselves, many Christians are afraid of God. They are especially afraid of His coming. Sometimes it is because they have not lived good lives. The parable shows that often these fears are the result of misinterpretations of God's character.

Sin began in the world when Satan convinced our first parents to fear God as a hard, difficult taskmaster, creating human beings for His own selfish pleasure and then demanding worship and service of which He was unworthy.

Love destroys fear. There is a psychological factor in the story. Fear destroys perseverance, trust, the force of the will, and all the ingredients that enable individuals to use their gifts effectively.

We can serve God well only when we recognize Him to be what He is, a trustworthy, lovable friend. Those who are faithful servants work the hardest—not merely for the reward they will receive in heaven, but for the joy of being with their Master and serving Him eternally.

“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love. We love, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:18, 19, RSV).

V. INHERITORS OF THE KINGDOM (Matt. 25:31-46).

Picture an ancient Near Eastern shepherd who is preparing his sheep for the night. With staff in hand, a small goatskin of oil at his side, and careful, watchful eyes, he guides the sheep into one section, and the goats into another as they come to the feeding and drinking troughs.

13. When does the judgment in the parable take place? Rev. 20:11-15.

In one sense God does not decide—nor do the angels—who will be saved or who will be lost. Individuals decide for themselves either for or against eternal life. (See John 3:36; 1 John 5:11-14.) Right now, many are still making those decisions. Our gracious God does not want any to be lost. He wants all to come to repentance. He postpones His coming until the saving love of Christ and the truth about the consequences of sin have been made clear to all. (See 2 Peter 3:9.)

14. Why is there such an emphasis on behavior and good works in the parable of the sheep and the goats? Why are people judged by their works (Rev. 22:12) when salvation is achieved by grace through faith (Rom. 3:21, 22)? Compare Rom. 2:13; Eph. 2:10; James 2:17, 18.

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15. What hope will there be in the final judgment for those who have not had the Bible and Christian teachers? Rom. 2:14-16. (See also *The Desire of Ages*, p. 638, and *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 385.)

AM I EAGER FOR JESUS TO COME?

- If I am afraid of God, how can I overcome my fear?
- How can I gain a deeper knowledge of God and a closer walk with Christ?
- How can my works be made acceptable to Christ?
- What can I do to help others prepare for Jesus' coming?

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read "On the Mount of Olives" and "The Least of These My Brethren," chapters 69 and 70 in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 627-641; and "Talents" in *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 325-365.

SUMMARY: Depending upon which side of the great controversy we choose to be in relation to our God, we will either welcome Him eagerly when He comes or run from Him in terror. That is why the important thing in preparation for the final day is to watch. We are not merely to watch for the signs, as important as they are, but to study His Word, pray, and witness, allowing His Spirit to pervade our lives and shine through to others.

The King Condemned

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matthew 26.



MEMORY TEXT: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" (Isa. 53:4).

GOD LOVES HIS ENEMIES. This fact was demonstrated by the gentle, forgiving manner in which Jesus treated His enemies during the last few hours of His life. His winsomeness at Simon's feast, His suffering in the garden, His treatment of His betrayer, and His submission to the mob revealed a God who is willing to sacrifice Himself for the salvation of a lost world.

OUTLINE

- I. Kindness Wins One and Loses Another (Matt. 26:1-16).
- II. Sharing the Cup (Matt. 26:17-35).
- III. The Crisis Hour (Matt. 26:36-46).
- IV. Victory Without a Sword (Matt. 26:47-56).
- V. Silence Is Eloquence (Matt. 26:57-75).

PEACE IN THE MIDST OF TRIAL. What should be our attitude when we are treated unjustly for believing in Christ? The Bible predicts that trial and persecution will come to those who are endeavoring to live wholly for the Lord. The apostles taught "that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). Paul wrote to the Thesalonians: "For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation" (1 Thess. 3:4). The beloved apostle John was given a vision of the saved who have come "out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:14).

Suffering, trial, and persecution are inevitable; not because God wants His people to be unhappy, but because the devil and his followers are doing all they can to turn people away from Christ. Jesus said, "The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20).

Jesus our example. Jesus constantly is held up to us as the great example of the way we should act when made to suffer for our faith. "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: . . . Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter 2:21, 23).

In this lesson we will take a closer look at how Jesus responded during the terribly stressful experience of His arrest and trial.

I. KINDNESS WINS ONE AND LOSES ANOTHER (Matt. 26:1-16).

The stage was set in a wealthy home around a banquet table at which reclined the honored guest, the Messiah and future King. Around Him were His twelve future princes, each of whom coveted the highest place in the kingdom. His host was a familiar personage to those in Jerusalem—wealthy, prestigious, competent in legal matters, but recently a changed man, the product of one of the King's miracles. And there were others, but they were supposed to remain in the kitchen, out of sight.

Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha, seemingly oblivious to the "pious" judgments of the assembled guests, crept into the dining room where the guests were reclining at the table, broke an expensive flask of extravagant perfume, and poured it on Jesus' feet, wiping them with her long hair and washing them with her tears of love.

Though she did not intend anyone but Jesus to notice, the strong scent soon betrayed her presence. Immediately, the disciples and the host, Simon, began to list their legal judgments. Surely, if Jesus knew her past, He would have nothing to do with such a woman.

Judas' objection seemed very much to the point: "'Why this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for a large sum, and given to the poor'" (Matt. 26:8, 9, RSV; compare John 12:4-6).

1. How did Jesus answer these criticisms? Matt. 26:10-13.

Those who have suffered group criticism for some act of social kindness or religious devotion can fully appreciate Jesus' words. There is nothing so heartless and cruel as condemnation of those whom Christ has forgiven and redeemed. Since Christ no longer condemns believers (Rom. 8:1), what right do we have to remember their sins against them?

2. What was the result of Jesus' commendation of Mary? Matt. 26:14-16.

Judas's motives. "Judas was treasurer for the disciples, and from their little store he had secretly drawn for his own use, thus narrowing down their resources to a meager pittance. . . . But had Christ unmasked Judas, this would have been urged as a reason for the betrayal. And though charged with being a thief, Judas would have gained sympathy, even among the disciples. The Saviour reproached him not, and thus avoided giving him an excuse for his treachery.

"But the look which Jesus cast upon Judas convinced him that the Saviour penetrated his hypocrisy, and read his base, contemptible character. And in commending Mary's action, which had been so severely condemned, Christ had rebuked Judas. Prior to this, the Saviour had never given him a direct rebuke. Now the reproof rankled in his heart. He determined to be revenged. From the supper he went directly to the palace of the high priest, where he found the council assembled,

and he offered to betray Jesus into their hands.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 559-564.

How do you react when you are reminded of sins for which you know Christ has forgiven you? Do you quietly turn to the Lord for reassurance, or do you hotly defend yourself against the criticism?



II. SHARING THE CUP (Matt. 26:17-35).

3. What is the significance of the fact that Jesus knew beforehand who would betray Him to the Jewish authorities? Matt. 26:21-25; compare John 13:21-30.

The fact that Jesus knew of the betrayal plot should have been a deterrent to Judas, but he was so far gone in pride and greed that he was unwilling to repent and right his wrong.

4. In what symbolic way did the disciples share in Jesus' suffering? Matt. 26:26-29.

The bread and grape juice do little for us in and of themselves. They represent the death of Christ and remind us of His willingness to suffer for our guilt. (See Isa. 53:6; 1 Peter 2:24; 2 Cor 5:21.) It is only as we contemplate the significance of the atonement that we can truly understand forgiveness, righteousness, and trust. Only then do we benefit from the Communion service.

There is sorrow in the Communion service as we remember Jesus' suffering. But there is joy, too, as we rejoice at the salvation He has provided and look forward to His return.

5. Why did the disciples refuse to share in Jesus' sufferings, deserting Him at the time of His greatest need? Compare Matt. 26:30-35 with verse 56.

III. THE CRISIS HOUR (Matt. 26:36-46).

Jesus' sufferings began in Gethsemane. What He endured there was of utmost significance to the onlooking universe in light of the great controversy.

6. Why was Jesus' soul "very sorrowful, even to death" (Matt. 26:38, RSV)? What was the cup of which Jesus prayed that, if possible, He would be relieved (Matt. 26:39)?

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Christ “tasted the sufferings of death for every man”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 694.

Human guilt separated Him from His Father. “But now He seemed to be shut out from the light of God’s sustaining presence. Now He was numbered with the transgressors. The guilt of fallen humanity He must bear. Upon Him who knew no sin must be laid the iniquity of us all. So dreadful does sin appear to Him, so great is the weight of guilt which He must bear, that He is tempted to fear it will shut Him out forever from His Father’s love. . . .

“He felt that by sin He was being separated from His Father. The gulf was so broad, so black, so deep, that His spirit shuddered before it. This agony He must not exert His divine power to escape. As man He must suffer the consequences of man’s sin. As man He must endure the wrath of God against transgression. . . .

“As Christ felt His unity with the Father broken up, He feared that in His human nature He would be unable to endure the coming conflict with the powers of darkness. . . . Satan told Him that if He became the surety for a sinful world, the separation would be eternal. He would be identified with Satan’s kingdom, and would nevermore be one with God.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 685-687.

Would you have slept while Jesus agonized? Do you sometimes sleep when you should be watching unto prayer? How can the habit of neglecting prayer be overcome? (See the chapter in *Steps to Christ* entitled “The Privilege of Prayer.”)

IV. VICTORY WITHOUT A SWORD (Matt. 26:47-56).

7. What did Jesus call Judas in the Garden of Gethsemane? What does this reveal about God and the way He treats His enemies? Matt. 26:50.

Jesus demonstrated His own teaching. In Jesus’ treatment of Judas, the angels must have seen how God treats His enemies. To call one’s betrayer “friend” is the greatest exemplification of “turning the other cheek.” How the loyal angels must have marveled as they heard Jesus give this title to Judas!

8. What did Jesus mean by the words, “All who take the sword will perish by the sword” (Matt. 26:52, RSV)?

According to John’s Gospel, it was Peter who cut off the ear of the high priest’s servant Malchus (John 18:10). According to Luke’s record, a short time before this, the disciples had interpreted literally Jesus’ figurative language about needing a sword in the days of persecution. “And they said, ‘Look, Lord, here are two swords’ ” (Luke 22:38, RSV). They still pic-

tured Jesus as a messiah who would forcefully defend himself and set up the kingdom.

Peter was determined to demonstrate that Jesus' warning of his denial was wrong. He would defend His Lord to the death!

WED

V. SILENCE IS ELOQUENCE (Matt. 26:57-75).

In verbal conflict, the first to be silenced is usually the loser. Yet when on trial before the high priest and the Sanhedrin, Jesus had very little to say. Mere words do not convince people to believe what they are determined not to believe. When men are possessed by demons, their minds are not changed by defense or argument. Jesus' reticence was the best defense against the Satanic legions that were trying to provoke Him to anger or bitterness.

If Peter had emulated Jesus' quiet reliance upon His Father, He would never have allowed himself to be trapped into denying His Lord.

9. To whom was Jesus first led for questioning? What is the significance of the events that occurred? John 18:12-14, 19-23.

According to ancient Hebrew law, the preliminary trials conducted before Annas and Caiaphas were illegal. It was illegal to try a capital charge at night. It was illegal for the prisoner to be questioned. It was the business of the witnesses to arrest the accused, bring him to the court, and to present the evidence to the court. An accused person could not be condemned on the basis of his own testimony.

Jesus' answer to Annas that he should question the witnesses regarding His work and teaching was a plea that He be given His legal rights as a Jewish citizen. The officer's act of striking Jesus was an act of brutality that was not tolerated by Hebrew law. Despite that, in this instance it was permitted and unpunished.

10. In the trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, how did Jesus respond to the conflicting testimony that was given against Him? Matt. 26:59-63.

An ancient principle. A Hebrew capital trial followed the principle stated by Moses: "On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses he that is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness" (Deut. 17:6, RSV). The two major witnesses against Jesus presented conflicting testimony. Assuming that Mark and Matthew present these two different pieces of testimony, it is easy to see why they were rejected. Mark records that the testimony was, "We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple'" (Mark 14:58, NKJV). Matthew records that the testimony was, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God'" (Matt. 26:61). The first statement could be interpreted as a direct threat to the Temple; the second could hardly be regarded as anything but an idle boast. Because the two

reports were so variant, the testimony was rejected by the court.

Jesus was misunderstood. What Jesus' persecutors did not understand was that His statement, which had been distorted by the witnesses, was a reference to the temple of His body, which He would allow to be destroyed, but which would be raised on the third day. (See John 2:18-22.)



- 11. Why did Jesus finally speak in answer to one of Caiaphas's questions? Matt. 26:63, 64.**

“In order to emphasize the ominous gravity of the question and the impossibility of refusing an answer, the high priest places Jesus ‘under oath,’ the weightiest oath of all, namely, ‘by the living God.’ ”—William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Matthew*, p. 931.

Although it was illegal to condemn an accused person to death on the basis of his own testimony, Caiaphas had no alternative now that the witness against Jesus had been brought into disrepute.

Jesus could not remain silent to this demand because His relationship with His Father was called into question. To remain silent would have implied a doubt as to His deity and messianic mission. Mark records that Jesus answered, “I am” (Mark 14:62). The answers recorded by Matthew (26:64) and Luke (22:70) were simply polite ways of saying the same thing. “Thou hast said” meant “Yes.” Traditionally a cultivated Jew would respond to a serious question in this idiomatic way. Courtesy forbade a direct “Yes” or “No.”

- 12. What did Jesus' answer imply in regard to a special resurrection of some people immediately before His second coming? Matt. 26:64; compare Rev. 1:7; Dan. 12:2.**

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- 13. Should Peter have remained silent when questioned about his relationship with Jesus? Why did Peter lie? Why did he not despair when he fell? Matt. 26:69-75; compare Luke 22:61, 62.**

“If he had been called to fight for his Master, he would have been a courageous soldier; but when the finger of scorn was pointed at him, he proved himself a coward. . . . At the same time Peter's eyes were drawn to his Master. In that gentle countenance he read deep pity and sorrow, but there was no anger there.

“The sight of that pale, suffering face, those quivering lips, that look of compassion and forgiveness, pierced his heart like an arrow.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 712, 713.

AM I READY TO SHARE THE CUP?

- Do I admire the way Jesus reacted to His enemies? How can I

develop a character that will stand the test of opposition without being crushed and defeated?

- Am I polite and gracious to those who misrepresent Him? What is the secret of such graciousness in times of stress and rejection?
- Do I seek the healing of others whenever possible? How can I contribute to their healing?
- Am I willing to acknowledge my relationship with Jesus under any circumstances?

(FR) **FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read "Gethsemane," and "Before Annas and the Court of Caiaphas," chapters 74 and 75 in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 685-715.

SUMMARY: It is humbling to human self-righteousness and pride to realize how very meek and lowly of heart the King of the universe is. Christ's attitudes and reactions during His arrest and trial demonstrate infinite love for His persecutors and for humanity in general.

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March 31 , 1990**

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for your regular
support
for world missions

Victory in Defeat

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matthew 27 and 28.



MEMORY TEXT: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:18-20).

JESUS' DEATH BROUGHT VICTORY. To His discouraged followers, Jesus' death was an ironic, bewildering anticlimax to His mission. Only after His resurrection did they grasp the eternal significance of His accomplishment. Jesus bore the guilt of all humanity on the cross, and rose to set believers free. Satan's kingdom is doomed irrevocably. This exciting news is to go to earth's remotest bounds, and in the hereafter it will forever be the science and song of the redeemed.

OUTLINE

- I. Remorse Not Repentance (Matt. 27:1-10).
- II. Meekness in Mistreatment (Matt. 27:11-31).
- III. It Is Finished! (Matt. 27:32-56).
- IV. Raised to Set Us Right (Matt. 27:57—28:10).
- V. In His Name (Matt. 28:11-20).

WHY DID JESUS DIE? What did Jesus Christ accomplish for us when He died on Calvary's cross? That is a question that has been discussed for centuries by students of the Bible. Some have concluded that Jesus showed us how to die as He had shown us how to live. They have emphasized the moral influence that Jesus' life and death have upon us. When we study His life and death we want to copy Him.

Undoubtedly Jesus' moral influence on humanity was enormous, and His death on the cross was a major aspect of that influence. But His death has a much deeper meaning than that.

Christ suffered our punishment. Since eternal death is the result of sin (Rom. 6:23), no one could ever have eternal life unless someone should step in and suffer in the sinner's place. That is exactly what Jesus did. Only God Himself could pay the penalty for the sin of the entire world. Only He was capable of enduring such infinite suffering. "Only He who created man had power to redeem him."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 65. God alone had life in Himself and could rise from the dead to continue His work of redemption.

The law that humanity had broken is the expression of the character of God; hence it was God's role to demonstrate that it could be obeyed perfectly. He also chose for Himself the role of bearing the world's punishment for breaking the law. Jesus Christ tasted "death for every man" (Heb. 2:9). "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28).

SUN

I. REMORSE NOT REPENTANCE (Matt. 27:1-10).

1. What was the purpose of the early morning session of the Sanhedrin? Matt. 27:1, 2; Luke 22:66-71.
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Not all members of the Sanhedrin had been present at the night session which had condemned Jesus on the basis of His testimony that He is the Son of God. Luke filled in some of the details that Matthew omitted. At this morning session Jesus again admitted that He was the Messiah and repeated His prediction that ultimately they would see Him coming in glory. Now the crafty priests and elders believed they had sufficient evidence to have Pilate convict Jesus of sedition.

2. At this morning session of the council, what kind of sorrow for sin did Judas manifest? Matt. 27:3-5; compare 2 Cor. 7:9, 10.
-

Judas admitted that he had sinned and that Jesus was innocent. His confession exposed the wickedness of the priests who had used him illegally in the arrest of Jesus. Yet he was spiritually no more secure than they were. Genuine confession and repentance is not sorrow for consequences. It is sorrow for sin for the right reasons, and includes a desire to stop sinning.

A sense of condemnation and judgment. "Judas now cast himself at the feet of Jesus, acknowledging Him to be the Son of God, and entreating Him to deliver Himself. The Saviour did not reproach His betrayer. He knew that Judas did not repent; his confession was forced from his guilty soul by an awful sense of condemnation and a looking for of judgment, but he felt no deep, heartbreaking grief that he had betrayed the spotless Son of God, and denied the Holy One of Israel. Yet Jesus spoke no word of condemnation. He looked pityingly upon Judas, and said, For this hour came I into the world."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 722.

3. How did the priests display their legalism and hypocrisy? Matt. 27:6-10.
-

How remarkably inconsistent were these so-called religious leaders. They considered what might be legal for them to do with Judas' money, but they had no concern for the illegal manner in which they had used Judas, or for the illegality of the arrest and trial of Jesus. Even while they were earning for themselves an enormous degree of guilt, they were careful to follow a legal nicety in regard to the disposal of a relatively small amount of money.

Are there inconsistencies in our religious lives? Do we cherish sin while meticulously obeying certain rules and regulations? What remedy would Jesus suggest?

MON

II. MEEKNESS IN MISTREATMENT (Matt. 27:11-31).

“As a lamb [that is led] to the slaughter, . . . so He opened not his mouth” (Isa. 53:7, NKJV). It is easy for many to see divine Kingship in Jesus when He changed water to wine, healed the sick, cast out demons with a word, and raised the dead. But when, beaten and tortured, He turned the other cheek, and was stricken again, we tend to call Him the “Suffering Servant” or the “Sacrificial Lamb,” forgetting that at that moment, more than ever, He was “King of kings and Lord of lords.”

4. In the light of the evidence presented in the verses listed below, consider Pilate's character:

Luke 23:13-16 _____

Matt. 27:18, 19 _____

Matt. 27:24, 26 _____

Matt. 27:27-31 _____

Acts 3:13 _____

“Pilate longed to deliver Jesus. But he saw that he could not do this, and yet retain his own position and honor. Rather than lose his worldly power, he chose to sacrifice an innocent life. How many, to escape loss or suffering, in like manner sacrifice principle. Conscience and duty point one way, and self-interest points another. The current sets strongly in the wrong direction, and he who compromises with evil is swept away into the thick darkness of guilt.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 738.

What became of Pilate? “Later Pilate massacred many Samaritans. . . . The Samaritans complained about his needless cruelty to [Pilate's] superior, Vitellius, the legate of Syria, who ordered Pilate to go to Rome and justify his conduct before the emperor. At the same time Vitellius appointed a new procurator over Judea. Before Pilate arrived in Rome, Tiberius died, but it is said that Pilate was nevertheless banished to Vienne on the Rhone, in the south of Gaul (now France), and that he died a suicide.”—*SDA Bible Dictionary*, pp. 885, 886.

III. IT IS FINISHED! (Matt. 27:32-56).

Since the death of Christ the cross has symbolized His victory to Christians. But on that tragic Passover Friday in A.D. 31, the cross seemed to the disciples and other followers of Jesus to be a token of utter defeat. Their King and Deliverer of Israel was dying. He who had delivered others from the power of death would not now deliver Himself. How could this be? Had they been able to see beyond this tiny planet, they might have heard the shouts of victory that came from a universe that recognized the true significance of the events that were transpiring.



5. What do Jesus' statements from the cross reveal concerning His character and work?

Luke 23:34 _____

John 19:26, 27 _____

Luke 23:43 _____

Matt. 27:45, 46 _____

John 19:28 _____

John 19:30 _____

Luke 23:46 _____

The Father's approval withdrawn. "God and His holy angels were beside the cross. The Father was with His Son. Yet His presence was not revealed. Had His glory flashed forth from the cloud, every human beholder would have been destroyed. And in that dreadful hour Christ was not to be comforted with the Father's presence. He trod the wine press alone, and of the people there was none with Him."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 753, 754.

"God suffered with His Son. In the agony of Gethsemane, the death of Calvary, the heart of Infinite Love paid the price of our redemption."—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 13, 14.

6. What was the significance of the events that occurred when Jesus died? Matt. 27:51-53.

The fact that the veil of the sanctuary was torn "from the top to the bottom" indicates that it was the act of a divine hand. For the purpose of the veil within the temple or sanctuary see Exodus 26:33; compare 25:21, 22. On the significance of the rending of the veil at the death of Jesus see Hebrews 6:19, 20; 10:19-22; compare 8:1, 2; 9:11-14.

The fact that many of the sleeping saints were raised with Jesus provides an explanation of how the "twenty-four elders" came to be before

the throne of God, as seen in John's symbolic vision (Rev. 4:4). There are redeemed human beings in heaven who were raised with Jesus as the first fruits of His sacrifice. They were able to testify to His divine mission before the ascension, and now they are assisting in His high priestly ministry.

WED

7. What do the following passages indicate that Jesus accomplished by His death?

1 Peter 2:21 _____

1 Peter 2:24 _____

1 John 2:1, 2 _____

Rev. 12:10 _____

Jesus' accomplishments on the cross were in view of His successfully bearing the guilt of humanity. The separation of the members of the Godhead because of human guilt involved infinite suffering that humanity never can fully understand.

Christ's suffering explained. "Although full of suffering, while bearing the sins of the world, He was not indifferent to the expression of grief. . . .

"God suffered His wrath against transgression to fall on His beloved Son. . . .

"Jesus was earning the right to become the advocate of men in the Father's presence. . . .

"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 descendant 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*, pp. 743-753.

IV. RAISED TO SET US RIGHT (Matt. 27:57—28:10).

8. What do we know of the two men who took part in the burial of Jesus? Matt. 27:57-61; John 19:38, 39.

9. What is the significance of the manner in which Jesus' tomb was secured? Matt. 27:62-66.

10. How can we be sure that Jesus was crucified on a Friday, spent the weekly Sabbath resting in the tomb, and rose early Sunday morning? Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 23:54—24:1, 21, 46; 1 Cor. 15:4.

 11. What is the significance for the world of Jesus' resurrection from the dead? Matt. 28:2-10; Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor. 15:16-23.

Both Christ's death and resurrection are essential for our salvation. According to Romans 5:9, we are put right "by his blood." In Romans 3:28 we are put right "by faith." In verse 24, "by his grace." According to 1 Cor. 6:11, we are put right by "the name of the Lord Jesus" Christ. The dying Saviour bore our guilt; the living Saviour delivers us from sin. Jesus "was raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25). Because He intercedes for us in the heavenly sanctuary, applying for us the merits of His sacrifice, our sins can be forgiven, and we can be delivered from the dominion of darkness. (See Heb. 7:25; Rom. 6:9-11.)

The resurrection of the righteous was made possible by Christ's resurrection. (See 2 Cor. 4:14; 1 Thess. 4:14.)

V. IN HIS NAME (Matt. 28:11-20).

12. Compare the two kinds of witnesses Matthew describes. Matt. 28:11-15, 19.

How inconceivable was the story that the disciples stole Jesus' body from the tomb while the Roman guards slept!

- If the story had been true the Jewish authorities would have been the first to demand the punishment of the guards.
- It is extremely unlikely that all the guards would be asleep at the same time.
- If the story were true the disciples and all those who preached the resurrection of Christ were liars. How unlikely it is that liars could

proclaim the resurrection with such confidence, power, and effectiveness! If they had known the story to be a lie, why would so many of them have been willing to lay down their lives for their faith?

13. Why can we witness for Christ with confidence and courage, whatever our circumstances? Matt. 28:18, 20; compare Acts 4:31.

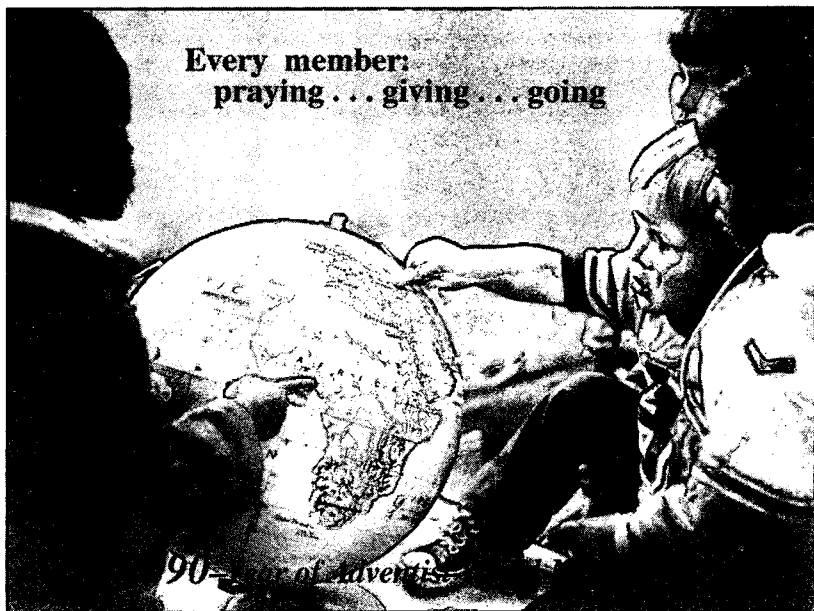
AM I REJOICING IN CHRIST'S DEATH AND RESURRECTION?

- What has happened in my life as I have accepted the truth of Christ's death and resurrection?
- Am I eager to share my knowledge of Christ with others? What positive experiences have I had as I have shared my faith in His death and resurrection?

(FR)

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read "In Pilate's Judgment Hall," "It Is Finished," "The Lord Is Risen," and "Go Teach All Nations," chapters 77, 79, 81, and 86 in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 723-740, 758-768, 779-787, and 818-828.

SUMMARY: The mistreatment, death, and resurrection of Christ reveal as nothing else can how much God cares for sinners. No earthly king would ever act as Jesus did while possessing the power to break the bonds of death. When Jesus died Satan's kingdom was defeated. The penalty for the sins of humanity was paid, and our redemption was assured. Jesus rose as recognized King of the universe and returned to heaven to apply for us the blessings of His sacrifice.



Lessons For Second Quarter, 1990

Sabbath School members who have not received a copy of the Adult Lessons for the second quarter of 1990 will be helped by the following outline in studying the first two lessons. The title of this quarterly covering the book of Galatians is "Christ the Only Way."

First Lesson: "Jewish and Gentile Christianity In Conflict"

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Passages from Acts chapters 1, 8—11, 13—15.

MEMORY TEXT: Acts 1:8

WHY THIS LESSON IS IMPORTANT TO YOU: Under divine guidance and the wise administration of its leaders the church can remain true to the gospel of Christ, maintaining unity among its members despite their differing cultural and religious backgrounds.

OUTLINE:

- I. Into All the World (Acts 1:8)
- II. The Gospel Beyond Judea (Acts 8:4-40)
- III. The Gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 9—11)
- IV. Paul's First Missionary Journey (Acts 11:19-21; 13; 14)
- V. The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15)

Second Lesson: "Called By God"

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Galatians 1

MEMORY TEXT: Galatians 1:3, 4

A MESSAGE FROM GOD. Paul's message of salvation by grace did not come from any human source. God gave him special revelations, which not only invested upon him apostolic authority but also clarified for the church in every age the relationship between grace and works. To accept Paul's gospel is to accept the Lord Jesus Christ who gave it to him.

OUTLINE:

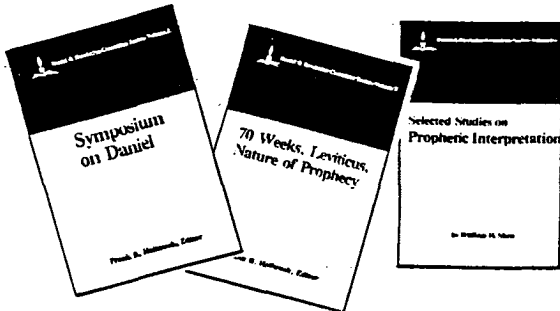
- I. Paul's Divine Call (Gal. 1:1-5)
- II. A False Gospel (Gal. 1:6-10)
- III. The True Gospel (Gal. 1:11, 12)
- IV. Paul's Life in Judaisms (Gal. 1:13, 14)
- V. Paul's First Years as a Christian (Gal. 1:15-24)

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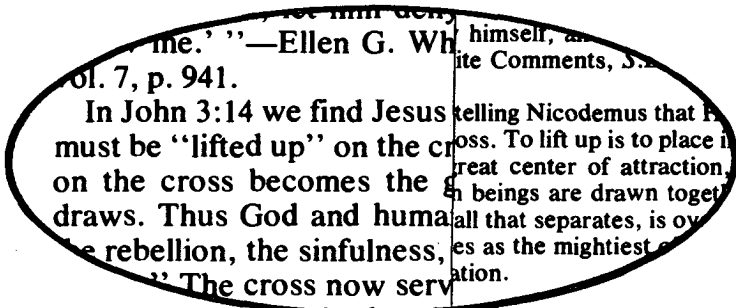


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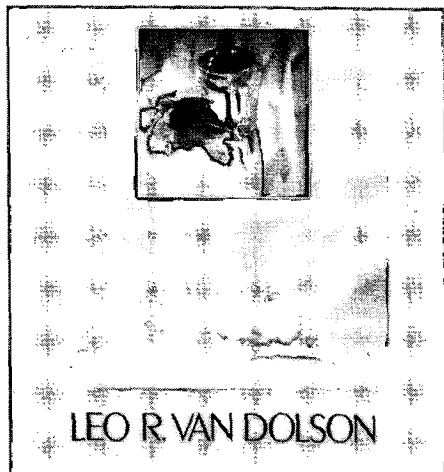
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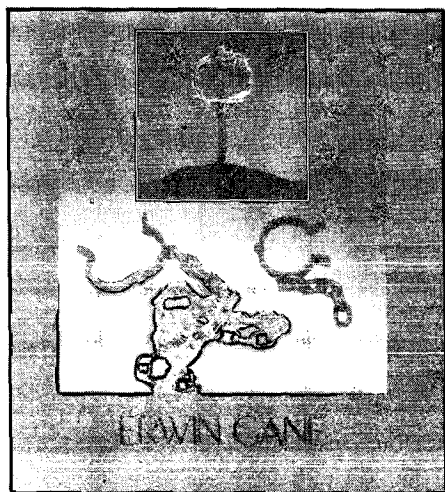
MATTHEW

THE KING HAS COME



GALATIANS

THE BATTLE FOR FREEDOM



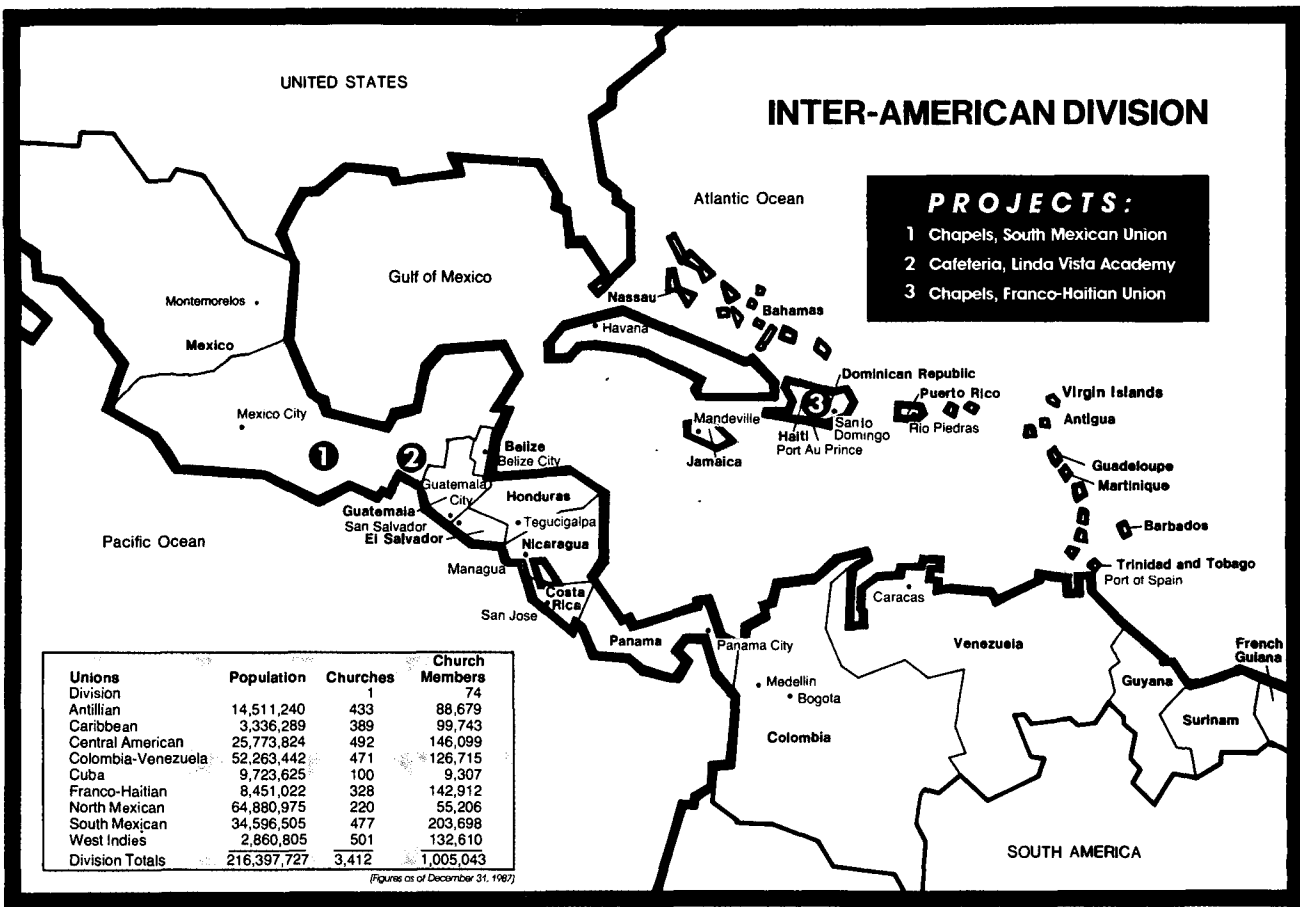
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UNITED STATES

INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION

PROJECTS:

- 1 Chapels, South Mexican Union
- 2 Cafeteria, Linda Vista Academy
- 3 Chapels, Franco-Haitian Union



Unions	Population	Churches	Church Members
Division		1	74
Antillian	14,511,240	433	88,679
Caribbean	3,336,289	389	99,743
Central American	25,773,824	492	146,099
Colombia-Venezuela	52,263,442	471	126,715
Cuba	9,723,625	100	9,307
Franco-Haitian	8,451,022	328	142,912
North Mexican	64,880,975	220	55,206
South Mexican	34,596,505	477	203,698
West Indies	2,860,805	501	132,610
Division Totals	216,397,727	3,412	1,005,043

(Figures as of December 31, 1987)