

SABBATH BIBLE LESSONS
Senior Division



TREASURES OF TRUTH (I)
*Reasoning With
Our Creator*

Vol. 99, No. 1

January–March 2023

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Sabbath Bible Lessons, a daily study program, is based solely on the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy without additional comments. The quotations are as brief as possible to provide concise, direct thoughts. Brackets [] are supplied in some cases to ensure clarity, proper context, and smooth readability. Further study in the source materials is strongly recommended.

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Foreword

It is indeed an amazingly awesome creation that the Almighty One has fashioned and upheld here on the earth for over 6,000 years. And the crowning pinnacle of His grand creation is the human race made in His own image! This is the race of created beings designed to inhabit this planet and exercise dominion over it. Due to the intelligence and reasoning power bestowed upon humanity, this species—*homo sapiens*—has been entrusted with this privilege—yet above all, it is the only one on earth being offered the opportunity to live forever in the joyous presence of the majestic Creator throughout eternity.

Like any privilege and responsibility, this comes with conditions. The just and merciful Creator of the universe lays these conditions plainly before us and invites us to reason with Him so we can comprehend the provisions of His covenant.

Therefore, for the next three months, Sabbath school students all around the world will be studying the essential topic, “Reasoning With Our Creator.” This is the first part of a year-long series entitled “Treasures of Truth,” providing essential understanding on wonderful gems of truth bearing tremendous value to equip for eternity. All who would be saved must have deep, genuine faith in God and a victorious Christian experience that will endure even the trying ordeals of the final hour in earth’s history.

“A religion that is addressed to intelligent creatures will produce reasonable evidences of its genuineness, for there will be marked results in heart and character. The grace of Christ will be made manifest in their daily conduct. We may safely ask those who profess to be sanctified, Do the fruits of the Spirit appear in your life? Do you manifest the meekness and lowliness of Christ, and reveal the fact that you are learning daily in the school of Christ, shaping your life after the pattern of His unselfish life?

“The best evidence that any of us can have of our connection with the God of heaven is that we keep His commandments. The best proof of faith in Christ is distrust of self and dependence upon God. The only reliable proof of our abiding in Christ is to reflect His image. Just so far as we do this we give evidence that we are sanctified through the truth, for the truth is exemplified in our daily life.”—*Ye Shall Receive Power*, p. 121.

“There are many who, though striving to obey God’s commandments, have little peace or joy. This lack in their experience is the result of a failure to exercise faith. They walk as it were in a salt land, a parched wilderness. They claim little, when they might claim much; for there is no limit to the promises of God.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 563.

It is our prayer that we all may be enriched by the *Sabbath Bible Lessons* this quarter, and our faith abundantly fortified by indeed reasoning with the Omniscient One!

The General Conference Sabbath School Department

First Sabbath Offering for an Educational and Health Center in Adygea, North Caucasus, Russia

The territory of Russia is 17,125,191 square kilometers (6,612,073 square miles) with a population of approximately 146,780,000 people, of which 111 million are Russians. Among the remaining 35 million are representatives of more than 180 nationalities. The main religion is Orthodox (42%), the next is Islam (30%). Other religions include Catholicism (3%), Old Believers (a branch of Eastern Orthodox Christians) and Protestantism (2%), Buddhism, Judaism and Greek Catholicism (1%).



Since 1925, the Reform message has been proclaimed here in very difficult circumstances. Many brethren were imprisoned for the Word of God. Some sacrificed their lives for the sake of the truth. In the 1990's our church had opportunity to preach freely and they actively used this opportunity. In June 2018, the Russian Union was organized. During the last few years, our opportunities for open preaching have become very limited, so we have been looking for a piece of land out in nature to hold camp meetings and for the wellness missionary work. The Lord has allowed us to buy about 5 hectares on a hillside in the Caucasus mountains with views of the amazing mountain landscapes. As it's very difficult to find water in the mountain region, the price of the plot of land was rather low. But the Lord took care of this and helped us to find a spring of water on the plot not only for drinking, but for a pond also. We are thankful to Him for this great blessing of His Providence! In the summer of 2019, we had the first camp meeting on this land, although we could build only summer structures for the meetings, a dining hall, and a small, two-room house. A doctor was invited to hold a wellness seminar there. In accordance with the light from the Spirit of Prophecy and taking into account our circumstances, we see great potential for medical missionary work if the appropriate premises for this purpose would be built.

We believe that by the mercy of God and with assistance of the brethren from the whole world, the Lord will help us accomplish this project that is impossible for our local brethren to pay by themselves. May the Lord bless everyone who wants to support this project with prayers and finances.

Your brothers and sisters from the Russian Union

God's Word to Humanity Today

MEMORY TEXT: “Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord” (Jeremiah 17:5).

“In His mercy and faithfulness God often permits those in whom we place confidence to fail us, in order that we may learn the folly of trusting in man and making flesh our arm.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 486.

Suggested Readings: *Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students*, pp. 460–463; *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 129–137.

Sunday

January 1

1. HOW WAS THE BIBLE GIVEN?

- a. In what manner were the Scriptures given? (Provide specifics.)
2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21; Numbers 12:6.

“It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man's words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words and thoughts receive the impress of the individual mind. The divine mind is diffused. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the word of God.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 21.

- b. When seeking guidance from God, what must we realize about dreams and visions? Deuteronomy 13:1–5; Jeremiah 29:8.

- c. What are some other causes for dreams? Ecclesiastes 5:3, 7.

- d. How are we to test the prophets? 1 Corinthians 14:32; Isaiah 8:19, 20.

2. ARE THE SCRIPTURES INFALLIBLE?

- a. To what extent can we trust the purity of God's Word? Psalm 12:6, 7.
-

"We have a Bible full of the most precious truth. It contains the alpha and the omega of knowledge."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 309.

"In the Bible we have the unerring counsel of God. Its teachings, practically carried out, will fit men for any position of duty. It is the voice of God speaking every day to the soul. How carefully should the young study the word of God and treasure up its sentiments in the heart, that its precepts may be made to govern the whole conduct."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 441.

"In His Word, God has committed to men the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience."—*The Faith I Live By*, p. 13.

"[The youth] need an unerring counselor, an infallible guide. This they will find in the Word of God. Unless they are diligent students of that Word, they will make grave mistakes, which will mar their happiness and that of others, both for the present and the future life."—*Messages to Young People*, p. 443.

- b. How lasting are the principles found in Scripture? Matthew 24:35; Psalm 119:160; Isaiah 40:8.
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"[Christ] taught that the word of God was to be understood by all. He pointed to the Scriptures as of unquestionable authority, and we should do the same. The Bible is to be presented as the word of the infinite God, as the end of all controversy and the foundation of all faith."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 39, 40.

"The Bible, fully received and studied as the voice of God, tells the human family how to reach the abodes of eternal happiness, and secure the treasures of heaven."—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 444.

"Shall not the education given in our schools be of that character which will give a more decided knowledge of God's word, and which will bring the soul into a vital connection with God, keeping God before the mind's eye, and arousing every better feeling of the soul? This is the kind of education which is as enduring as eternity."—*General Conference Daily Bulletin*, March 6, 1899.

3. RECEIVING THE WRITINGS OF DIVINE INSPIRATION

- a. **What must we realize when God speaks through His prophets? Jeremiah 1:4–9; 1 Thessalonians 2:13.**
-

“Christ taught His disciples that they were to open their minds to instruction, and be ready to believe. He pronounced a blessing upon them because they saw and heard with eyes and ears that believed. . . .

“Only he who receives the Scriptures as the voice of God speaking to himself is a true learner. He trembles at the word; for to him it is a living reality.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 59.

“The Bible points to God as its author; yet it was written by human hands; and in the varied style of its different books it presents the characteristics of the several writers. The truths revealed are all ‘given by inspiration of God’ (2 Timothy 3:16); yet they are expressed in the words of men. The Infinite One by His Holy Spirit has shed light into the minds and hearts of His servants. He has given dreams and visions, symbols and figures; and those to whom the truth was thus revealed, have themselves embodied the thought in human language.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 25.

- b. **What does God often reveal through His prophets in order to help us understand the all-knowing and eternal nature of Deity? Amos 3:7; Isaiah 46:9, 10.**
-

“History and prophecy testify that the God of the whole earth revealeth secrets through His chosen light-bearers to the world. A skeptical world, talking and writing of higher education, is prating of things which it does not understand. It does not see that true, higher education comprehends a more perfect knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, whom He has sent. There are few who understand that all true human science is from the God of science, and that God demonstrates to the world that He is King over all.”—*Bible Training School*, December 1, 1912.

“In the annals of human history, the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as if dependent on the will and prowess of man; the shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition, or caprice. But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, above, behind, and through all the play and counterplay of human interest and power and passions, the agencies of the All-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 499, 500.

4. WHAT IS NECESSARY ON OUR PART?

- a. What type of attitude are we to possess when studying the Bible? Isaiah 66:1, 2; John 7:17; Acts 17:10, 11.
-

“When the soul surrenders itself to Christ, a new power takes possession of the new heart. A change is wrought which man can never accomplish for himself. It is a supernatural work, bringing a supernatural element into human nature. The soul that is yielded to Christ becomes His own fortress, which He holds in a revolted world, and He intends that no authority shall be known in it but His own. A soul thus kept in possession by the heavenly agencies is impregnable to the assaults of Satan. But unless we do yield ourselves to the control of Christ, we shall be dominated by the wicked one.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 324.

“To controvert, to question, to criticize, to ridicule, is the education many have received and the fruit they bear. They refuse to admit evidence. The natural heart is in warfare against light, truth, and knowledge. Jesus Christ has been in every sleeping room where you have been entertained. How many prayers went up to heaven from these rooms?”—*The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, p. 140.

“There is no assurance that our doctrine is right and free from all chaff and error unless we are daily doing the will of God. If we do His will, we shall know of the doctrine. We shall see the truth in its sacred beauty. We shall accept it with reverence and godly fear, and then we can present that which we know is truth to others. There should be no feeling of superiority or self-exaltation in this solemn work.”—*Ibid.*, p. 46.

- b. What part of the Bible is more important than the rest? Romans 15:4; Luke 24:27; Isaiah 28:10.
-

“Every part of the Bible is given by inspiration of God and is profitable. The Old Testament, no less than the New, should receive attention. As we study the Old Testament we shall find living springs bubbling up where the careless reader discerns only a desert.

“The Old Testament sheds light upon the New, and the New upon the Old. Each is a revelation of the glory of God in Christ.”—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 462.

5. NOT ENOUGH JUST TO READ AND STUDY

- a. What are we to do with the things that we learn while studying Holy Writ? Proverbs 2:1–5; Psalm 119:11, 16.
-

“The Holy Spirit loves to address the youth, and to discover to them the treasures and beauties of God’s word. The promises spoken by the great Teacher will captivate the senses and animate the soul with spiritual power that is divine. There will grow in the fruitful mind a familiarity with divine things that will be as a barricade against temptation.

“The words of truth will grow in importance, and assume a breadth and fullness of meaning of which we have never dreamed. The beauty and riches of the word have a transforming influence on mind and character. The light of heavenly love will fall upon the heart as an inspiration.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 132.

- b. If we take these things to heart, to what are we compared? Luke 6:46–49.
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“The heart that is stored with the precious truths of God’s Word is fortified against the temptation of Satan, against impure thoughts and unholy actions.”—*My Life Today*, p. 28.

- c. What are we to ask the Lord to do for us—and why? Psalm 119:133.
-

“Divine wisdom will order the steps of those who put their trust in the Lord. Divine love will encircle them, and they will realize the presence of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 324.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How is divine inspiration given to humanity?
2. To what extent can we trust the Bible, and why?
3. What is the purpose of giving prophetic writings, and what authority do all inspired writings bring with them?
4. How does attitude affect Bible study?
5. How do we build our life on a sure foundation?

The Powerful Word of God

MEMORY TEXT: “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10).

“Temptations often appear irresistible because, through neglect of prayer and the study of the Bible, the tempted one cannot readily remember God’s promises and meet Satan with the Scripture weapons.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 600.

Suggested Reading: *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 123–128.

Sunday

January 8

1. SOLDIERS OF THE CROSS

- a. Of what must we constantly be aware in our sojourn on earth? 1 Peter 5:8. How does Paul therefore compare the life of a Christian? 2 Timothy 2:3.

“Nothing can be more helpless, nothing can be more dependent, than the soul that feels its nothingness and relies wholly upon the merits of the blood of a crucified and risen Saviour. The Christian life is a life of warfare, of continual conflict. It is a battle and a march. But every act of obedience to Christ, every act of self-denial for His sake, every trial well endured, every victory gained over temptation, is a step in the march to the glory of final victory.”—*That I May Know Him*, p. 253.

- b. How only can we be victorious at the end? Ephesians 6:11–17.

“Those who will put on the whole armor of God and devote some time every day to meditation and prayer and to the study of the Scriptures will be connected with heaven and will have a saving, transforming influence upon those around them. Great thoughts, noble aspirations, clear perceptions of truth and duty to God, will be theirs. . . . This class will have a sanctified boldness to come into the presence of the Infinite One. They will feel that heaven’s light and glories are for them, and they will become refined, elevated, ennobled by this intimate acquaintance with God. Such is the privilege of true Christians.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 112, 113.

2. POWER IN THE WORD

- a. **How penetrating is the Word when truly received into the soul? Hebrews 4:12.**
-

“The words of inspiration, pondered in the heart, will be as streams flowing from the river of the water of life. Our Saviour prayed that the minds of the disciples might be opened to understand the Scriptures. And whenever we study the Bible with a prayerful heart, the Holy Spirit is near to open to us the meaning of the words we read.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 205.

“Practical truth must be brought into the life, and the Word, like a sharp, two-edged sword, must cut away the surplus of self that there is in our characters.

“The Word makes the proud humble, the perverse meek and contrite, the disobedient obedient. The sinful habits natural to man are interwoven with the daily practice. But the Word cuts away the fleshly lusts. It is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the mind. It divides the joints and marrow, cutting away the lusts of the flesh, making men willing to suffer for their Lord.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 928.

- b. **In the beginning, how quickly did the Word create the heaven and the earth? Genesis 1:1; Psalm 33:6, 9.**
-

- c. **From what material did God create the worlds using His word? Hebrews 11:3. After creating the worlds, did God leave the creation to fend for itself? Hebrews 1:3.**
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“The same creative energy that brought the world into existence is still exerted in upholding the universe and continuing the operations of nature. The hand of God guides the planets in their orderly march through the heavens. It is not because of inherent power that year by year the earth continues her motion round the sun and produces her bounties. The word of God controls the elements. He covers the heavens with clouds and prepares rain for the earth. He makes the valleys fruitful and ‘grass to grow upon the mountains;’ Psalm 147:8. It is through His power that vegetation flourishes, that the leaves appear and the flowers bloom.”—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, pp. 185, 186.

3. RECOGNIZING SIN

- a. What was David's desire after he had committed the sin against God and against Bathsheba? Psalm 51:1–4.
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- b. In reading David's expressions of repentance preserved in the divine record, which were his deepest concerns—the consequences he would face—or restoring his relationship with God? Psalm 51:5–10.
-

“For a whole year after his fall David lived in apparent security; there was no outward evidence of God's displeasure. But the divine sentence was hanging over him. Swiftly and surely a day of judgment and retribution was approaching, which no repentance could avert, agony and shame that would darken his whole earthly life. Those who, by pointing to the example of David, try to lessen the guilt of their own sins, should learn from the Bible record that the way of transgression is hard. Though like David they should turn from their evil course, the results of sin, even in this life, will be found bitter and hard to bear.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 723, 724.

“David's repentance was sincere and deep. There was no effort to palliate his crime. No desire to escape the judgments threatened, inspired his prayer. But he saw the enormity of his transgression against God; he saw the defilement of his soul; he loathed his sin. It was not for pardon only that he prayed, but for purity of heart. David did not in despair give over the struggle. In the promises of God to repentant sinners he saw the evidence of his pardon and acceptance.”—*Ibid.*, p. 725.

“David was pardoned of his transgression because he humbled his heart before God in repentance and contrition of soul, and believed that God's promise to forgive would be fulfilled. He confessed his sin, repented, and was reconverted. In the rapture of the assurance of forgiveness, he exclaimed, ‘Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.’ Psalm 32:1, 2. The blessing comes because of pardon; pardon comes through faith that the sin, confessed and repented of, is borne by the great Sin Bearer. Thus from Christ cometh all our blessings. His death is an atoning sacrifice for our sins. He is the great Medium through whom we receive the mercy and favor of God.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 83.

4. POWER TO CHANGE A HUMAN HEART

- a. **What gives hope of the possibility to transform the filthy, sinful life into one of purity? Job 14:4; Jeremiah 13:23; Ezekiel 36:26, 27.**

“It is true that there may be an outward correctness of deportment without the renewing power of Christ. The love of influence and the desire for the esteem of others may produce a well-ordered life. Self-respect may lead us to avoid the appearance of evil. A selfish heart may perform generous actions. By what means, then, shall we determine whose side we are on?”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 58.

“God has provided abundant means for successful warfare against the evil that is in the world. The Bible is the armory where we may equip for the struggle.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 502.

- b. **What is the only way for the corrupt human heart to be changed into one that delights in righteousness? John 3:3.**

“The things they once hated they now love, and the things they once loved they hate. The proud and self-assertive become meek and lowly in heart. The vain and supercilious become serious and unobtrusive. The drunken become sober, and the profligate pure.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 58.

- c. **What are the evidences of that change? Galatians 5:22, 23.**

“The old nature, born of blood and the will of the flesh, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The old ways, the hereditary tendencies, the former habits, must be given up; for grace is not inherited. The new birth consists in having new motives, new tastes, new tendencies. Those who are begotten unto a new life by the Holy Spirit, have become partakers of the divine nature, and in all their habits and practices they will give evidence of their relationship to Christ. When men who claim to be Christians retain all their natural defects of character and disposition, in what does their position differ from that of the worldling? They do not appreciate the truth as a sanctifier, a refiner. They have not been born again.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1101.

5. BORN BY THE WORD OF GOD

- a. **What has power to make such a radical change in the heart of a corrupt, wicked individual? Romans 1:16; John 1:1; 15:3; 1 Peter 1:23.**
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“The Bible is the most wonderful of all histories, for it is the production of God, not of the finite mind. It carries us back through the centuries to the beginning of all things, presenting the history of times and scenes which would otherwise never have been known. It reveals the glory of God in the working of His providence to save a fallen world. It presents in the simplest language the mighty power of the gospel, which, received, would cut the chains that bind men to Satan’s chariot.”
—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 377.

- b. **What does the Word activate in us, and why is that so necessary for a victorious life? Romans 10:17; 1 John 5:4. How do we maintain that same type of victory for the rest of our lives? Colossians 2:6.**
-

“As faith thus receives and assimilates the principles of truth, they become a part of the being and the motive power of the life. The word of God, received into the soul, molds the thoughts, and enters into the development of character.

“By looking constantly to Jesus with the eye of faith, we shall be strengthened. God will make the most precious revelations to His hungering, thirsting people. They will find that Christ is a personal Saviour. As they feed upon His word, they find that it is spirit and life. The word destroys the natural, earthly nature, and imparts a new life in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit comes to the soul as a Comforter. By the transforming agency of His grace, the image of God is reproduced in the disciple; he becomes a new creature. Love takes the place of hatred, and the heart receives the divine similitude.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 391.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. **How serious is the Christian’s warfare with evil?**
2. **What important place does the Word have in this warfare?**
3. **How is it possible to understand the depth of the destructive nature of sin?**
4. **How does the transformation of the soul take place?**
5. **How do we maintain our relationship with Christ?**

Fiery Serpents

MEMORY TEXT: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28–30).

“The humanity of the Son of God is everything to us. It is the golden chain that binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God. This is to be our study.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 244.

Suggested Reading: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 48, 49, 114–123.

Sunday

January 15

1. ABRAHAM’S SEED

a. Describe a seriously dangerous attitude that affects spiritual life. John 8:33.

b. What makes us slaves to sin? John 8:34, 39–44.

“The Pharisees had declared themselves the children of Abraham. Jesus told them that this claim could be established only by doing the works of Abraham. The true children of Abraham would live, as he did, a life of obedience to God. They would not try to kill One who was speaking the truth that was given Him from God. In plotting against Christ, the rabbis were not doing the works of Abraham. A mere lineal descent from Abraham was of no value. Without a spiritual connection with him, which would be manifested in possessing the same spirit, and doing the same works, they were not his children.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 466, 467.

c. How is it possible to be delivered from this tyranny of a cruel master? John 8:32, 36; Galatians 3:29.

2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO “KNOW”?

- a. **What all-important question did Pilate ask in the judgment hall? John 18:38 (first part). What answer would he have received if he had stopped a moment to listen to the Saviour’s response? John 14:6.**

“Pilate had a desire to know the truth. His mind was confused. He eagerly grasped the words of the Saviour, and his heart was stirred with a great longing to know what it really was, and how he could obtain it. ‘What is truth?’ he inquired. But he did not wait for an answer. The tumult outside recalled him to the interests of the hour; for the priests were clamorous for immediate action. Going out to the Jews, he declared emphatically, ‘I find in Him no fault at all.’ ”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 727.

- b. **Explain what can happen when a person studies the Word yet does not know God. Mark 12:24; 2 Timothy 3:7.**

“The Sadducees had flattered themselves that they of all men adhered most strictly to the Scriptures. But Jesus showed that they had not known their true meaning.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 605.

- c. **How is it possible to be drawn to Someone that our fallen nature does not desire? John 12:32; 8:28; Matthew 11:28–30.**

“Whenever the law is presented before the people, let the teacher of truth point out the throne arched with the rainbow of promise, the righteousness of Christ. The glory of the law is Christ; He came to magnify the law, and make it honorable. Make it distinct that mercy and truth have met together in Christ, and righteousness and peace have embraced each other. It is when you are looking to His throne, offering up your penitence and praise and thanksgiving to God, that you perfect Christian character, and represent Christ to the world. You abide in Christ, and Christ abides in you; you have that peace that passeth all understanding. We need constantly to meditate upon Christ and His attractive loveliness. We must direct minds to Jesus, fasten them upon Him. In every discourse dwell upon the divine attributes.”—*The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, p. 730.

“Study carefully the divine-human character, and constantly inquire, ‘What would Jesus do were He in my place?’ ”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 491.

3. SERPENTS IN THE WILDERNESS

- a. **What remedy did God provide for those stung by poisonous snakes in the desert? What was required for healing to take place? Numbers 21:6–9.**

“Because they had been shielded by divine power [the children of Israel] had not realized the countless dangers by which they were continually surrounded. In their ingratitude and unbelief they had anticipated death, and now the Lord permitted death to come upon them. The poisonous serpents that infested the wilderness were called fiery serpents, on account of the terrible effects produced by their sting, it causing violent inflammation and speedy death. As the protecting hand of God was removed from Israel, great numbers of the people were attacked by these venomous creatures. . . .

“Moses was divinely commanded to make a serpent of brass resembling the living ones, and to elevate it among the people. To this, all who had been bitten were to look, and they would find relief. He did so, and the joyful news was sounded throughout the encampment that all who had been bitten might look upon the brazen serpent and live. Many had already died, and when Moses raised the serpent upon the pole, some would not believe that merely gazing upon that metallic image would heal them; these perished in their unbelief. Yet there were many who had faith in the provision which God had made. . . . If these, though faint and dying, could only once look, they were perfectly restored.

“The people well knew that there was no power in the serpent of brass to cause such a change in those who looked upon it. The healing virtue was from God alone. In His wisdom He chose this way of displaying His power. By this simple means the people were made to realize that this affliction had been brought upon them by their sins. They were also assured that while obeying God they had no reason to fear, for He would preserve them.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 429, 430.

- b. **How does this experience parallel that of those suffering from the sting of that old serpent (Revelation 12:9) and desire healing? John 3:14, 15; 1:29.**

“Let the repenting sinner fix his eyes upon ‘the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world’ (John 1:29); and by beholding, he becomes changed. His fear is turned to joy, his doubts to hope. Gratitude springs up. The stony heart is broken. A tide of love sweeps into the soul. Christ is in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 439.

4. WHO IS JESUS?

- a. **Christ lived a perfect life on earth (1 Peter 2:21, 22), yet instead of being drawn to Him and His faithful followers, what is the response of most people? 2 Timothy 3:12; John 3:19, 20.**

“The early Christians were indeed a peculiar people. Their blameless deportment and unswerving faith were a continual reproof that disturbed the sinner’s peace. Though few in numbers, without wealth, position, or honorary titles, they were a terror to evildoers wherever their character and doctrines were known. Therefore they were hated by the wicked, even as Abel was hated by the ungodly Cain. For the same reason that Cain slew Abel, did those who sought to throw off the restraint of the Holy Spirit, put to death God’s people. It was for the same reason that the Jews rejected and crucified the Saviour—because the purity and holiness of His character was a constant rebuke to their selfishness and corruption. From the days of Christ until now His faithful disciples have excited the hatred and opposition of those who love and follow the ways of sin.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 46.

- b. **What supreme power is manifested in the Saviour of the world that has that capacity to draw humanity? 1 Timothy 3:16; John 1:1–3; Hebrews 1:8.**

“If Christ made all things, He existed before all things. The words spoken in regard to this are so decisive that no one need be left in doubt. Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense. He was with God from all eternity, God over all, blessed forevermore.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 247.

“In the thick darkness, God veiled the last human agony of His Son. All who had seen Christ in His suffering had been convicted of His divinity. That face, once beheld by humanity, was never forgotten. As the face of Cain expressed his guilt as a murderer, so the face of Christ revealed innocence, serenity, benevolence—the image of God. But His accusers would not give heed to the signet of heaven. Through long hours of agony Christ had been gazed upon by the jeering multitude. Now He was mercifully hidden by the mantle of God.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 754.

“Think of Christ’s humiliation. He took upon Himself fallen, suffering human nature, degraded and defiled by sin. He took our sorrows, bearing our grief and shame. He endured all the temptations wherewith man is beset. He united humanity with divinity: a divine spirit dwelt in a temple of flesh.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 4, p. 1147.

5. GOD BECAME FLESH

- a. What did this Divine Being become in order to rescue humanity from its terrible misery and hopeless condition? John 1:14; Hebrews 2:9.

- b. Describe what Jesus took upon His spotless divine nature. Hebrews 2:10, 11, 14, 17.

- c. To what extent did Jesus have to humble Himself so there is drawing power in the cross of Calvary? Hebrews 2:14; Philippians 2:6–8; 2 Timothy 2:8.

“In consideration of this, can men have one particle of exaltation? As they trace down the life and sufferings and humiliation of Christ, can they lift their proud heads as if they were to bear no trials, no shame, no humiliation? I say to the followers of Christ, Look to Calvary, and blush for shame at your self-important ideas. All this humiliation of the Majesty of heaven was for guilty, condemned man. He went lower and lower in His humiliation, until there were no lower depths that He could reach, in order to lift man up from his moral defilement.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 5, pp. 1127, 1128.

“What do we give up, when we give all? A sin-polluted heart, for Jesus to purify, to cleanse by His own blood, and to save by His matchless love. And yet men think it hard to give up all! I am ashamed to hear it spoken of, ashamed to write it.

“God does not require us to give up anything that it is for our best interest to retain. In all that He does, He has the well-being of His children in view. Would that all who have not chosen Christ might realize that He has something vastly better to offer them than they are seeking for themselves.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 46.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What lessons can we learn from the Jews being Abraham’s children?
2. How is it possible to totally miss the point of the Bible while studying it?
3. What lessons can I learn from the deadly serpents in the wilderness?
4. What makes it possible to be drawn to the Man of Calvary?
5. Why did Jesus take on sinful human nature?

Give Me Oil in My Lamp

MEMORY TEXT: “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts” (Zechariah 4:6).

“Our sanctification is the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is the fulfilment of the covenant that God has made with those who bind themselves up with Him, to stand with Him, with His Son, and with His Spirit in holy fellowship. Have you been born again? Have you become a new being in Christ Jesus? Then cooperate with the three great powers of heaven who are working in your behalf. Doing this you will reveal to the world the principles of righteousness.”—*The Signs of the Times*, June 19, 1901.

Suggested Reading: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 47–56.

Sunday

January 22

1. WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

a. How long has the Holy Spirit existed? Genesis 1:2; Psalm 51:11; Hebrews 9:14.

b. Describe and explain the extensive nature of God’s Spirit. Psalm 139:7–12; 1 Corinthians 2:9–12; 2 Peter 1:21.

“During the Jewish economy the influence of God’s Spirit had been seen in a marked manner, but not in full. For ages prayers had been offered for the fulfillment of God’s promise to impart His Spirit, and not one of these earnest supplications had been forgotten.”—*My Life Today*, p. 36.

“Before the entrance of sin, Adam enjoyed open communion with his Maker; but since man separated himself from God by transgression, the human race has been cut off from this high privilege. By the plan of redemption, however, a way has been opened whereby the inhabitants of the earth may still have connection with heaven. God has communicated with men by His Spirit, and divine light has been imparted to the world by revelations to His chosen servants.”—*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 190.

2. IS HE A PERSONAL BEING?

- a. Name some traits of character that show the personality of the Holy Spirit.
- (1) The Spirit knows. 1 Corinthians 2:9–12.
 - (2) Able to love. Romans 15:30.
 - (3) Able to commune. 2 Corinthians 13:14.
 - (4) Because He can commune, He must speak. 1 Timothy 4:1.
 - (5) Thus He is able to teach. 1 Corinthians 2:13.
 - (6) He is able to be a witness. Romans 8:16.

“Christ gave His followers a positive promise that after His ascension He would send them His Spirit. ‘Go ye therefore,’ He said, ‘and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father [a personal God], and of the Son [a personal Prince and Saviour], and of the Holy Ghost [sent from heaven to represent Christ]: 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.’ ”—*The Review and Herald*, October 26, 1897.

“We need to realize that the Holy Spirit, who is as much a person as God is a person, is walking through these grounds.

“The Holy Spirit is a person, for He beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God. When this witness is borne, it carries with it its own evidence. At such times we believe and are sure that we are the children of God. . . .

“The Holy Spirit has a personality, else He could not bear witness to our spirits and with our spirits that we are the children of God. He must also be a divine person, else He could not search out the secrets which lie hidden in the mind of God. ‘For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.’ ”—*Evangelism*, pp. 616, 617.

“Cumbered with humanity, Christ could not be in every place personally; therefore it was altogether for their advantage that He should leave them, go to His father, and send the Holy Spirit to be His successor on earth. The Holy Spirit is Himself divested of the personality of humanity and independent thereof. He would represent Himself as present in all places by His Holy Spirit, as the Omnipresent.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 14, p. 23.

“There are three living persons of the heavenly trio: in the name of these three great powers—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—those who receive Christ by living faith are baptized, and these powers will cooperate with the obedient subjects of heaven in their efforts to live the new life in Christ.”—*Evangelism*, p. 615.

3. IS HE A PERSONAL BEING? (CONTINUED)**a. What are some other traits that show the personality of the Holy Spirit?**

- (1) He intercedes in our behalf when we pray. Romans 8:26, 27.
- (2) He is the distributor of special gifts. 1 Corinthians 12:7–11.
- (3) He also invites the sinner to repentance. Revelation 22:17.
- (4) He not only invites the sinner to repent, He also seals or settles him in the faith. Ephesians 1:13.
- (5) Because He seals or settles us, against what are we warned? Ephesians 4:30.
- (6) Because He is a personal being, Jesus applied the personal pronoun “He” and “Him” to the Holy Spirit 24 times. One such example is John 14:16, 17.

“Christ, our Mediator, and the Holy Spirit are constantly interceding in man’s behalf, but the Spirit pleads not for us as does Christ who presents His blood, shed from the foundation of the world; the Spirit works upon our hearts, drawing out prayers and penitence, praise and thanksgiving. The gratitude which flows from our lips is the result of the Spirit striking the cords of the soul in holy memories, awakening the music of the heart.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, pp. 1077, 1078.

“Happiness is composed of little things and great things. . . . If we would become like Christ and receive His fashion of character, we must in little things train the soul to daily progressive sanctification. We have no time to lose. Would you impress the seal to obtain a clear impression upon the wax, you do not dash it on by a violent action, but you place the seal carefully and firmly and press it down until the wax receives the mold. Just so the Lord is dealing with our souls. . . . Not now and then, but constantly the new life is implanted by the Holy Spirit after Christ’s likeness.”—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 66.

“The Holy Spirit indites all genuine prayer. I have learned to know that in all my intercessions the Spirit intercedes for me and for all saints; but His intercessions are according to the will of God, never contrary to His will. ‘The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities;’ and the Spirit, being God, knoweth the mind of God; therefore in every prayer of ours for the sick, or for other needs, the will of God is to be regarded.”—*The Signs of the Times*, October 3, 1892.

4. WHAT IS HIS WORK?

a. As Jesus went to intercede in our behalf at the right hand of the throne of God, what shows that the Holy Spirit is the personal representative of the Saviour? John 15:26; 16:13, 14.

b. What does the Holy Spirit supply to our lonely heart in the absence of our beloved Friend? John 16:7.

c. How does He lead us to conversion? John 16:8 (margin); Zechariah 4:6.

“The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail. The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world’s Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 671.

“The image of Christ engraved upon the heart is reflected in character, in practical life, day by day, because we represent a personal Saviour. The Holy Spirit is promised to all who will ask for it. When you search the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit is by your side, personating Jesus Christ.”—*General Conference Bulletin*, February 15, 1895.

“The preaching of the word is of no avail without the presence and aid of the Holy Spirit; for this Spirit is the only effectual teacher of divine truth. Only when the truth is accompanied to the heart by the Spirit, will it quicken the conscience or transform the life. A minister may be able to present the letter of the word of God; he may be familiar with all its commands and promises; but his sowing of the gospel seed will not be successful unless this seed is quickened into life by the dew of heaven. Without the co-operation of the Spirit of God, no amount of education, no advantages, however great, can make one a channel of light.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 284.

5. THE HOLY SPIRIT'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE CHURCH

- a. How does a person come to a full knowledge of the truth? John 16:13.

- b. Since this is the work of the Holy Spirit, what is His role in helping us find the true church? 1 Timothy 3:15.

- c. Since the Holy Spirit is so important to have in our lives, what should we be doing in order to have the full power of the Holy Spirit? Luke 11:9–13.

“The prince of the power of evil can only be held in check by the power of God in the third person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit.”—*Evangelism*, p. 617.

“Just as long as the church are satisfied with small things, they are disqualified to receive the great things of God. But why do we not hunger and thirst after the gift of the Holy Spirit, since it is the means whereby the heart may be kept pure? The Lord designs that divine power shall cooperate with human effort. It is all-essential for the Christian to understand the meaning of the promise of the Holy Spirit just prior to the coming of our Lord Jesus the second time. Talk of it, pray of it, preach concerning it; for the Lord is more willing to give the Holy Spirit than parents are to give good gifts to their children.”—*The Review and Herald*, November 15, 1892.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How do we know that the Holy Spirit was an active Agent during Old Testament times?
2. What are the evidences of the personality of the Holy Spirit?
3. What is the difference between the intercessory work of Christ and that of the Holy Spirit?
4. What are some of the most important roles of the Holy Spirit in the plan of salvation?
5. What is the Holy Spirit's involvement in helping people understand the true church?

First Sabbath Offering for World Disaster Relief

Natural disasters are becoming more and more frequent and severe worldwide. These include—but are not limited to—earthquakes, tsunamis, cyclones, tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, and volcanic eruptions. “Out of the south cometh the whirlwind: and cold out of the north. By the breath of God frost is given. . . .

He scattereth his bright cloud: and it is turned round about by his counsels: that they may do whatsoever he commandeth them upon the face of the world in the earth. He causeth it to come, whether for correction, or for his land, or for mercy” (Job 37:9–13).

The Almighty One always has in mind the ultimate best interests of this beautiful planet and the creatures He has made—yet today, many strange and extreme weather occurrences are coming specifically from the arsenal of the archenemy of souls:

“While appearing to the children of men as a great physician who can heal all their maladies, [Satan] will bring disease and disaster, until populous cities are reduced to ruin and desolation. Even now he is at work. In accidents and calamities by sea and by land, in great conflagrations, in fierce tornadoes and terrific hailstorms, in tempests, floods, cyclones, tidal waves, and earthquakes, in every place and in a thousand forms, Satan is exercising his power. He sweeps away the ripening harvest, and famine and distress follow. He imparts to the air a deadly taint, and thousands perish by the pestilence. These visitations are to become more and more frequent and disastrous. Destruction will be upon both man and beast. ‘The earth mourneth and fadeth away,’ ‘the haughty people . . . do languish. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant’ Isaiah 24:4, 5.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 589, 590.

Whatever may happen, how are God’s children called to respond to the tremendous human suffering that results from natural disasters?

The Lord bids us follow His own example on earth by reaching out to relieve suffering wherever found. The basic necessities of life are abruptly lost when a natural disaster occurs, so it is our Christian duty to help however and wherever we can. Your generous donation for World Disaster Relief helps make that possible. Thank you in advance!

Your brethren from the General Conference



The Gospel in the Old Testament

MEMORY TEXT: “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4).

“Jesus came to this world to save His people from their sins. He will not save us in our sins, for He is not the minister of sin. We must respond to the divine drawing of Christ, and repent of our sins, and unite ourselves to Christ as the branch is united to the vine.”—*The Signs of the Times*, February 15, 1892.

Suggested Reading: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 63–70.

Sunday

January 29

1. LESSONS FROM HISTORY

- a. What is the major reason that we need to study history, especially sacred history? Ecclesiastes 3:15.

“The work of God in the earth presents, from age to age, a striking similarity in every great reformation or religious movement. The principles of God’s dealing with men are ever the same. The important movements of the present have their parallel in those of the past, and the experience of the church in former ages has lessons of great value for our own time.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 343.

- b. Since the study of history extends to us the hope of the gospel (Romans 15:4), what does this hope offer to the sin-sick soul? Romans 1:16; Luke 19:10.

“Every part of the Bible is given by inspiration of God and is profitable. The Old Testament no less than the New should receive attention. As we study the Old Testament we shall find living springs bubbling up where the careless reader discerns only a desert.”—*Education*, p. 191.

2. THE PERFECTION OF CREATION

- a. **What type of character did the first man and woman possess when they came fresh from the hands of their Creator? Genesis 1:31; Ecclesiastes 7:29.**
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“Man was to bear God’s image, both in outward resemblance and in character. Christ alone is ‘the express image’ (Hebrews 1:3) of the Father; but man was formed in the likeness of God. His nature was in harmony with the will of God. His mind was capable of comprehending divine things. His affections were pure; his appetites and passions were under the control of reason. He was holy and happy in bearing the image of God and in perfect obedience to His will.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 45.

- b. **What was required in order for the human race to remain in this perfect state and to live forever? Genesis 2:16, 17 (margin).**
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“Christ does not lessen the claims of the law. In unmistakable language He presents obedience to it as the condition of eternal life—the same condition that was required of Adam before his fall. The Lord expects no less of the soul now than He expected of man in Paradise, perfect obedience, unblemished righteousness. The requirement under the covenant of grace is just as broad as the requirement made in Eden—harmony with God’s law, which is holy, just, and good.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 391.

- c. **Since man failed/sinned (Genesis 3), what were the consequences not only for our first parents, but for the entire race? Romans 5:12; 6:23.**
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“In obedience to God’s law, man is surrounded as with a hedge and kept from the evil. He who breaks down this divinely erected barrier at one point has destroyed its power to protect him; for he has opened a way by which the enemy can enter to waste and ruin.

“By venturing to disregard the will of God upon one point, our first parents opened the floodgates of woe upon the world. And every individual who follows their example will reap a similar result. The love of God underlies every precept of His law, and he who departs from the commandment is working his own unhappiness and ruin.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 52.

3. SIN DEFINED

- a. **How do we know that Adam's transgression included violation of the law of God? Romans 7:7; compare Exodus 20:17; 1 John 3:4.**

"Many who teach that the law of God is not binding upon man, urge that it is impossible for him to obey its precepts. But if this were true, why did Adam suffer the penalty of transgression? The sin of our first parents brought guilt and sorrow upon the world, and had it not been for the goodness and mercy of God, would have plunged the race into hopeless despair. Let none deceive themselves. 'The wages of sin is death.' Romans 6:23. The law of God can no more be transgressed with impunity now than when sentence was pronounced upon the father of mankind."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 61.

"Without the law, men have no just conception of the purity and holiness of God or of their own guilt and uncleanness. They have no true conviction of sin and feel no need of repentance. Not seeing their lost condition as violators of God's law, they do not realize their need of the atoning blood of Christ. The hope of salvation is accepted without a radical change of heart or reformation of life. Thus superficial conversions abound, and multitudes are joined to the church who have never been united to Christ."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 468.

- b. **When we read these texts, how does the Bible show that Jesus actually came to save us from the transgression of the law? Matthew 1:21.**

"Jesus died to save His people from their sins, and redemption in Christ means to cease the transgression of the law of God and to be free from every sin; no heart that is stirred with enmity against the law of God is in harmony with Christ, who suffered on Calvary to vindicate and exalt the law before the universe."—*Faith and Works*, p. 95.

"We have a wonderful friend in Jesus, who came to save His people from the transgression of the law. What is sin? The only definition of sin is that it is the transgression of the law. Then here is Jesus Christ, who comes right in and imparts His righteousness to us; we cannot overcome in our own strength, but by faith in Him. If you will believe on Jesus Christ, you will have Him today. You must believe that He is your Saviour now, and that He imputes to you His righteousness because He has died, and because He has been obedient unto every requirement of that transgressed law of God. If you do this, you will have a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Adam and Eve lost Eden because they transgressed that law, but you will lose heaven if you transgress it."—*The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, p. 128.

4. THE FATHER OF THE FAITHFUL

- a. **Why is the Old Testament patriarch Abraham known as the father of the faithful? Galatians 3:6–9.**

“Abraham’s test was the most severe that could come to a human being. Had he failed under it, he would never have been registered as the father of the faithful. Had he deviated from God’s command, the world would have lost an inspiring example of unquestioning faith and obedience. The lesson was given to shine down through the ages, that we may learn that there is nothing too precious to be given to God. It is when we look upon every gift as the Lord’s, to be used in His service, that we secure the heavenly benediction. Give back to God your intrusted possession, and more will be intrusted to you. Keep your possessions to yourself, and you will receive no reward in this life, and will lose the reward of the life to come.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 1, p. 1094.

“The spot on which the temple was built had long been regarded as a consecrated place. It was here that Abraham, the father of the faithful, had revealed his willingness to sacrifice his only son in obedience to the command of Jehovah. Here God had renewed with Abraham the covenant of blessing, which included the glorious Messianic promise to the human race of deliverance through the sacrifice of the Son of the Most High.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 37.

- b. **How does the promise of the seed show the preaching of the gospel even in the time of Abraham? Genesis 22:15–18; Galatians 3:16.**

“This same covenant was renewed to Abraham in the promise, ‘In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.’ Genesis 22:18. This promise pointed to Christ. So Abraham understood it (see Galatians 3:8, 16), and he trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sins. It was this faith that was accounted unto him for righteousness. The covenant with Abraham also maintained the authority of God’s law.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 370.

- c. **Why was Abraham singled out as a recipient of the gospel, and many others in his time were not? Genesis 26:5; James 2:19–24.**

“Abraham believed God. How do we know that he believed? His works testified to the character of his faith, and his faith was accounted to him for righteousness.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 936.

5. THE LAW IN THE REST OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

- a. What other examples do we have that the law existed before God literally spoke it on Mount Sinai (Deuteronomy 5:22–26)? Exodus 15:26; 16:28.

“Every week during their long sojourn in the wilderness the Israelites witnessed a threefold miracle, designed to impress their minds with the sacredness of the Sabbath: a double quantity of manna fell on the sixth day, none on the seventh, and the portion needed for the Sabbath was preserved sweet and pure, when if any were kept over at any other time it became unfit for use.

“In the circumstances connected with the giving of the manna, we have conclusive evidence that the Sabbath was not instituted, as many claim, when the law was given at Sinai. Before the Israelites came to Sinai they understood the Sabbath to be obligatory upon them. In being obliged to gather every Friday a double portion of manna in preparation for the Sabbath, when none would fall, the sacred nature of the day of rest was continually impressed upon them. And when some of the people went out on the Sabbath to gather manna, the Lord asked, ‘How long refuse ye to keep My commandments and My laws?’ ”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 296, 297. [Emphasis by author.]

- b. What did God intend for Israel to do with the spoken and written moral law of Ten Commandments? Deuteronomy 6:1–9.
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- c. How do we know that the Lord maintained this position all the way through the end of the Old Testament? Malachi 4:4; 3:6.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How are the principles of Bible history applicable to our own time?
2. What requirement since Eden shows that God does not change?
3. What is the purpose of Jesus coming to this world in reference to the sin problem?
4. How was the faith of Abraham shown by his deeds?
5. What should our relationship be with the law of God?

The Eternal Law of God

MEMORY TEXT: “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3).

“[Christ] has bidden us love one another even as He has loved us. Religion is founded upon love to God, which also leads us to love one another. It is full of gratitude, humility, long-suffering. It is self-sacrificing, forbearing, merciful, and forgiving. It sanctifies the whole life and extends its influence over others.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 223.

Suggested Reading: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 303–314.

Sunday

February 5

1. THE CHANGELESS CREATOR

- a. **What must we realize about Christ’s relation to God’s moral law while He lived here on this earth as the Son of man? Matthew 5:17, 18.**

- b. **How particular were the Jewish leaders regarding the outward observance of the law? Matthew 23:23; Philippians 3:4.**

“[The Jewish leaders] were zealous to maintain an appearance of holiness, but they neglected holiness of heart. While they were sticklers for the letter of the law, they were constantly violating its spirit. Their great need was that very change which Christ had been explaining to Nicodemus—a new moral birth, a cleansing from sin, and a renewing of knowledge and holiness.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 174.

- c. **What can we observe about Jesus’ trial that reveals that He was not a lawbreaker? Matthew 26:59, 60.**

“Neither the Saviour nor His followers broke the law of the Sabbath. Christ was a living representative of the law. No violation of its holy precepts was found in His life. Looking upon a nation of witnesses who were seeking occasion to condemn Him, He could say unchallenged, ‘Which of you convicteth Me of sin?’ John 8:46, R.V.”—*Ibid.*, p. 287.

2. THE LAW IN THE HEART OF JESUS

- a. What was prepared for Jesus when He came to earth? Hebrews 10:5–10.

“It was not a chance, but a design that the world’s Redeemer should lay off His crown, lay aside His kingly robe, and come to our world as a man. He clothed His divinity with the garb of humanity, that He might stand at the head of the human family, His humanity mingled with the humanity of the race fallen because of Adam’s disobedience.”—*The Southern Work*, p. 85.

- b. When we read the same passage in the Old Testament about Christ, what was prophesied to be in His heart? Psalm 40:6–8.

“It was the transgression of the law that resulted in sin, sorrow, and death. Satan declared that he would prove to the worlds which God has created, and to the heavenly intelligences, that it was an impossibility to keep the law of God. When Adam yielded to the temptation of the enemy, and fell from his high and holy estate, Satan and his angels exulted. But from the throne of God a voice was heard speaking words of mysterious import. [Psalm 40:6–8 quoted.] When man fell, Christ announced His purpose of becoming man’s substitute and surety.”—*The Review and Herald*, September 3, 1901.

- c. When we accept Christ into our heart, what are we accepting inseparably with Him? Psalm 119:70, 72, 77, 174.

“The yoke that binds to service is the law of God. The great law of love revealed in Eden, proclaimed upon Sinai, and in the new covenant written in the heart, is that which binds the human worker to the will of God. If we were left to follow our own inclinations, to go just where our will would lead us, we should fall into Satan’s ranks and become possessors of his attributes. Therefore God confines us to His will, which is high, and noble, and elevating. He desires that we shall patiently and wisely take up the duties of service. The yoke of service Christ Himself has borne in humanity.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 329.

“Righteousness is holiness, likeness to God, and ‘God is love.’ 1 John 4:16. It is conformity to the law of God, for ‘all Thy commandments are righteousness’ (Psalm 119:172), and ‘love is the fulfilling of the law’ (Romans 13:10). Righteousness is love, and love is the light and the life of God. The righteousness of God is embodied in Christ. We receive righteousness by receiving Him.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 18.

3. ACCORDING TO THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS

- a. When Jesus was explaining to the disciples that His life was living proof that He was the Messiah, what texts did He use? Luke 24:27, 44.
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“It was His purpose to enlighten their understanding and to fasten their faith upon the ‘sure word of prophecy.’ He wished the truth to take firm root in their minds, not merely because it was supported by His personal testimony, but because of the unquestionable evidence presented by the symbols and shadows of the typical law, and by the prophecies of the Old Testament. It was needful for the followers of Christ to have an intelligent faith, not only in their own behalf, but that they might carry the knowledge of Christ to the world. And as the very first step in imparting this knowledge, Jesus directed the disciples to ‘Moses and all the prophets.’ Such was the testimony given by the risen Saviour to the value and importance of the Old Testament Scriptures.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 349.

- b. How did the disciples, as they were preaching the gospel message, prove that Jesus was the promised One? Acts 28:23.
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“The Spirit of God accompanied the words that were spoken, and hearts were touched. The apostle’s appeal to Old Testament prophecies, and his declaration that these had been fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, carried conviction to many a soul longing for the advent of the promised Messiah. And the speaker’s words of assurance that the ‘glad tidings’ of salvation were for Jew and Gentile alike, brought hope and joy to those who had not been numbered among the children of Abraham according to the flesh.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 172, 173.

“In preaching to the Thessalonians, Paul appealed to the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah. Christ in His ministry had opened the minds of His disciples to these prophecies; ‘beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.’ Luke 24:27. Peter in preaching Christ had produced his evidence from the Old Testament. Stephen had pursued the same course. And Paul also in his ministry appealed to the scriptures foretelling the birth, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. By the inspired testimony of Moses and the prophets he clearly proved the identity of Jesus of Nazareth with the Messiah and showed that from the days of Adam it was the voice of Christ which had been speaking through patriarchs and prophets.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 221, 222.

4. LAW AND FAITH

- a. Does placing our faith in Jesus as our personal Saviour do away with the law? Why or why not? Romans 3:31.
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- b. What blessing is pronounced upon commandment keepers? Revelation 22:14.
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“By transgressing God’s commandments a curse fell upon Adam and Eve, and they were deprived of all right to the tree of life. Christ died to save man, and yet preserve the honor of God’s law. He says ‘Blessed are they that do His commandments that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the City.’ The Son of God here presents the doing of the commandments of God as the condition of a right to the tree of life. The transgression of God’s commandments deprived man of all right to the tree of life. Christ died, that by virtue of His blood, obedience to God’s law might make man worthy of the heavenly benediction, and grant him a right again to the tree of life.”—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 88.

“Angels were all about us as we marched over the sea of glass to the gate of the city. Jesus raised His mighty, glorious arm, laid hold of the pearly gate, swung it back on its glittering hinges, and said to us, ‘You have washed your robes in My blood, stood stiffly for My truth, enter in.’ We all marched in and felt that we had a perfect right in the city.”—*Early Writings*, p. 17.

- c. How does this show that God never changes? Hebrews 13:8.
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“Jesus will do great things for us, if we will faithfully perform our duty. We must yield our will to the will of God. We must honor the Lord by obeying all His commandments, even in what we term little things. The truth, like its divine Author, is unchangeable in its requirements, the same yesterday, today, and forever. It is not in harmony with the traditions of men, it does not conform to their opinions. The truth has ever brought a separation between God’s people and the world. But if our position in former years, as a peculiar people, was approved of God, how does He regard our present position? Have we gained in spirituality since we departed from our early simplicity?”—*The Signs of the Times*, May 25, 1882.

5. WRITTEN IN THE HEART

- a. **How is it possible to have the law of God in our life in the same way that Jesus had? Hebrews 10:16; 8:10.**

“God has given us His holy precepts, because He loves mankind. To shield us from the results of transgression, He reveals the principles of righteousness. The law is an expression of the thought of God; when received in Christ, it becomes our thought. It lifts us above the power of natural desires and tendencies, above temptations that lead to sin.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 308.

- b. **What does God show us before we can even begin this heavenward journey? 1 John 4:19, 8.**

“The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan’s deceptive power was to be broken. This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God’s government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known.”—*Ibid.*, p. 22.

- c. **What is possible only after this love of God is in our hearts? John 14:15–17.**

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. **How did Jesus maintain the character of God while living in humanity?**
2. **How is the same character of Christ manifested in true believers?**
3. **In order to truly believe that Jesus is the Messiah, with what prophecies must we become thoroughly familiar?**
4. **How is it possible that sinful human beings can have the right to the tree of life from which they were barred by sin?**
5. **What is the only way that we can experience genuine obedience?**

The Mystery of the Gospel

MEMORY TEXT: “To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27).

“We can so far comprehend His dealing with us, and the motives by which He is actuated, that we may discern boundless love and mercy united to infinite power. We can understand as much of His purposes as it is for our good to know; and beyond this we must still trust the might of the Omnipotent, the love and wisdom of the Father and Sovereign of all.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 699.

Suggested Reading: *Education*, pp. 169–172.

Sunday

February 12

1. SCRIPTURES HARD TO BE UNDERSTOOD

- a. What does Peter observe about some of Paul’s writings? 2 Peter 3:14–17. What should we realize about some things in Scripture? Deuteronomy 29:29.

“Men of ability have devoted a lifetime of study and prayer to the searching of the Scriptures, and yet there are many portions of the Bible that have not been fully explored. Some passages of Scripture will never be perfectly comprehended until in the future life Christ shall explain them. There are mysteries to be unraveled, statements that human minds cannot harmonize. And the enemy will seek to arouse argument upon these points, which might better remain undiscussed.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 312.

- b. With what attitude must we approach the Scriptures? John 7:17.

“The spirit in which you come to the investigation of the Scriptures will determine the character of the assistant at your side. Angels from the world of light will be with those who in humility of heart seek for divine guidance. But if the Bible is opened with irreverence, with a feeling of self-sufficiency, if the heart is filled with prejudice, Satan is beside you, and he will set the plain statements of God’s word in a perverted light.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 108.

2. DISCERNING SECRETS

- a. What specific things did God reveal to Paul for the purpose of sharing with the rest of the world? Romans 16:25, 26; Colossians 1:27.
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“To Paul the cross was the one object of supreme interest. Ever since he had been arrested in his career of persecution against the followers of the crucified Nazarene he had never ceased to glory in the cross. At that time there had been given him a revelation of the infinite love of God, as revealed in the death of Christ; and a marvelous transformation had been wrought in his life, bringing all his plans and purposes into harmony with heaven. From that hour he had been a new man in Christ. He knew by personal experience that when a sinner once beholds the love of the Father, as seen in the sacrifice of His Son, and yields to the divine influence, a change of heart takes place, and henceforth Christ is all and in all.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 245.

- b. If something in Scripture is difficult to understand, why should we even attempt researching into the matter? 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.
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“The cross of Christ is all covered with reproach and stigma, yet it is the hope of life and exaltation to man. No one can comprehend the mystery of godliness so long as he is ashamed to bear the cross of Christ. None will be able to discern and appreciate the blessings which Christ has purchased for man at infinite cost to Himself, unless they are willing to joyfully sacrifice earthly treasures that they may become His followers. Every self-denial and sacrifice made for Christ enriches the giver, and every suffering and reproach endured for His dear name increases the final joy and immortal reward in the kingdom of glory.”—*Confrontation*, p. 93.

- c. Explain what we need in order to come to right conclusions. John 16:13.
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“Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit we shall be continually liable to wrest the Scriptures or to misinterpret them. There is much reading of the Bible that is without profit and in many cases is a positive injury. When the word of God is opened without reverence and without prayer; when the thoughts and affections are not fixed upon God or in harmony with His will, the mind is clouded with doubt; and in the very study of the Bible, skepticism strengthens. The enemy takes control of the thoughts, and he suggests interpretations that are not correct.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 704, 705.

3. THE ROYAL MORAL LAW

- a. **Contrary to common belief, how do we know that the law of Ten Commandments were not done away with at the cross? James 2:8, 9.**
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“Many religious teachers assert that Christ by His death abolished the law, and men are henceforth free from its requirements. There are some who represent it as a grievous yoke, and in contrast to the bondage of the law they present the liberty to be enjoyed under the gospel.

“But not so did prophets and apostles regard the holy law of God. Said David: ‘I will walk at liberty: for I seek Thy precepts.’ Psalm 119:45. The apostle James, who wrote after the death of Christ, refers to the Decalogue as ‘the royal law’ and ‘the perfect law of liberty.’ James 2:8; 1:25. And the revelator, half a century after the crucifixion, pronounces a blessing upon them ‘that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.’ Revelation 22:14.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 466.

“When one surrenders to Christ, the mind is brought under the control of the law; but it is the royal law, which proclaims liberty to every captive. By becoming one with Christ, man is made free. Subjection to the will of Christ means restoration to perfect manhood.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 131.

- b. **Which law defines loving our neighbor as ourselves? Romans 13:9; compare Exodus 20:1–17.**
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“The first four of the Ten Commandments are summed up in the one great precept, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.’ The last six are included in the other, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.’ Both these commandments are an expression of the principle of love. The first cannot be kept and the second broken, nor can the second be kept while the first is broken. When God has His rightful place on the throne of the heart, the right place will be given to our neighbor. We shall love him as ourselves. And only as we love God supremely is it possible to love our neighbor impartially. . . .

“Christ taught His hearers that the law of God is not so many separate precepts, some of which are of great importance, while others are of small importance and may with impunity be ignored. Our Lord presents the first four and the last six commandments as a divine whole, and teaches that love to God will be shown by obedience to all His commandments.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 607.

4. JUDGED BY THE LAW

- a. Explain the far-reaching extent of the judgment upon humanity. Ecclesiastes 11:9; Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Hebrews 9:27.**

“All will be judged according to the light that has been given. The Lord sends forth His ambassadors with a message of salvation, and those who hear He will hold responsible for the way in which they treat the words of His servants. Those who are sincerely seeking for truth will make a careful investigation, in the light of God’s word, of the doctrines presented to them.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 232.

- b. What standard will be used in the judgment? James 2:12.**

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- c. Which law is this? James 2:11; compare Exodus 20.**

“In His teachings, Christ showed how far reaching are the principles of the law spoken from Sinai. He made a living application of that law whose principles remain forever the great standard of righteousness—the standard by which all shall be judged in that great day when the judgment shall sit, and the books shall be opened.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 211.

“The law of God is the standard by which the characters and the lives of men will be tested in the judgment. Says the wise man: ‘Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment.’ Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14. The apostle James admonishes his brethren: ‘So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.’ James 2:12.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 482.

“When the judgment shall sit, and the books shall be opened, and every man shall be judged according to the things written in the books, then the tables of stone, hidden by God until that day, will be presented before the world as the standard of righteousness. Then men and women will see that the prerequisite of their salvation is obedience to the perfect law of God. None will find excuse for sin. By the righteous principles of that law, men will receive their sentence of life or of death.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 225.

5. THE LAW AS THE SCHOOLMASTER

- a. What is the purpose of understanding the law or knowing the truth? John 3:18–21; Romans 7:7.

“The first step in reconciliation to God is the conviction of sin. ‘Sin is the transgression of the law.’ ‘By the law is the knowledge of sin.’ 1 John 3:4; Romans 3:20. In order to see his guilt, the sinner must test his character by God’s great standard of righteousness. It is a mirror which shows the perfection of a righteous character and enables him to discern the defects in his own.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 467.

- b. By exposing our real condition, what does the law do with that revelation? Galatians 3:24.

“I am asked concerning the law in Galatians. What law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ? I answer: Both the ceremonial and the moral code of ten commandments.

“Christ was the foundation of the whole Jewish economy. The death of Abel was in consequence of Cain’s refusing to accept God’s plan in the school of obedience, to be saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, typified by the sacrificial offerings pointing to Christ. Cain refused the shedding of blood, which symbolized the blood of Christ to be shed for the world. This whole ceremony was prepared by God, and Christ became the foundation of the whole system. This is the beginning of its work as the schoolmaster to bring sinful human agents to a consideration of Christ.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1109.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How important is personal heart preparation in Bible study?
2. How is it possible to properly understand something as mysterious as the gospel of salvation?
3. What are the reasons for understanding that after the cross, the law of God is still in force?
4. What is the great standard of character as a prerequisite for eternal life?
5. Why is it necessary for the law, our truant officer, to bring us to Christ?

Nailed to His Cross

MEMORY TEXT: “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross” (Colossians 2:14).

“The law of the ten commandments lives and will live through the eternal ages. The need for the service of sacrifices and offerings ceased when type met antitype in the death of Christ. In Him the shadow reached the substance. The Lamb of God was the complete and perfect offering.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1116.

Suggested Reading: *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 229–235.

Sunday

February 19

1. ANOTHER LAW

- a. How does the Bible describe a law that was contrary to us and was nailed to the cross? Colossians 2:14; Ephesians 2:15. Since the principles of the ten commandments existed in the perfection of Eden, how do we know this description cannot be referring to that law? Genesis 1:31.

- b. What are some of the specific things contained in this law of ordinances? Colossians 2:16, 21. Are these sabbaths and other laws connected to the original moral law given at creation—or are they a shadow of an event that was to come in the future after they were given? Colossians 2:17.

“In Eden, God set up the memorial of His work of creation, in placing His blessing upon the seventh day. The Sabbath was committed to Adam, the father and representative of the whole human family. Its observance was to be an act of grateful acknowledgment, on the part of all who should dwell upon the earth, that God was their Creator and their rightful Sovereign; that they were the work of His hands and the subjects of His authority. Thus the institution was wholly commemorative, and given to all mankind. There was nothing in it shadowy or of restricted application to any people.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 48.

2. THE LAW OF ORDINANCES

- a. **Are these things that were a shadow of a later event actually referred to as a law—and if so, what kind of law? Hebrews 10:1.**
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“God’s people, whom He calls His peculiar treasure, were privileged with a two-fold system of law; the moral and the ceremonial. The one, pointing back to creation to keep in remembrance the living God who made the world, whose claims are binding upon all men in every dispensation, and which will exist through all time and eternity. The other, given because of man’s transgression of the moral law, the obedience to which consisted in sacrifices and offerings pointing to the future redemption. Each is clear and distinct from the other.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1094.

- b. **While the sacrificing of animals was taught to the ancient Hebrews to illustrate (foreshadow) the sacrifice of the Lamb of God who was to come, what point needed to be understood? Hebrews 10:2–4, 6.**
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“Christ Himself was the originator of the Jewish system of worship, in which, by types and symbols, were shadowed forth spiritual and heavenly things. Many forgot the true significance of these offerings; and the great truth that through Christ alone there is forgiveness of sin, was lost to them. The multiplying of sacrificial offerings, the blood of bulls and goats, could not take away sin.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 933.

- c. **What only has power to cleanse from the guilt of sin? 1 John 1:7.**
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“A lesson was embodied in every sacrifice, impressed in every ceremony . . . through the blood of Christ alone is there forgiveness of sins.”—*Ibid.*

“The death of Jesus Christ for the redemption of man lifts the veil and reflects a flood of light back hundreds of years, upon the whole institution of the Jewish system of religion. Without the death of Christ all this system was meaningless. The Jews reject Christ, and therefore their whole system of religion is to them indefinite, unexplainable, and uncertain. They attach as much importance to shadowy ceremonies of types which have met their antitype as they do to the law of the ten commandments, which was not a shadow, but a reality as enduring as the throne of Jehovah.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 1097.

3. THE CEREMONIAL SYSTEM

- a. Who was among the first to make the sacrifices of animals in this way? Genesis 3:21, 24; 4:2–4; Hebrews 11:4.
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“The sacrificial offerings were ordained by God to be to man a perpetual reminder and a penitential acknowledgment of his sin and a confession of his faith in the promised Redeemer. They were intended to impress upon the fallen race the solemn truth that it was sin that caused death. To Adam, the offering of the first sacrifice was a most painful ceremony. His hand must be raised to take life, which only God could give. It was the first time he had ever witnessed death, and he knew that had he been obedient to God, there would have been no death of man or beast. As he slew the innocent victim, he trembled at the thought that his sin must shed the blood of the spotless Lamb of God. This scene gave him a deeper and more vivid sense of the greatness of his transgression, which nothing but the death of God’s dear Son could expiate. And he marveled at the infinite goodness that would give such a ransom to save the guilty. A star of hope illumined the dark and terrible future and relieved it of its utter desolation.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 68.

- b. What system was further developed after the people did not understand the plan of salvation at Mount Sinai? Exodus 25:8.
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- c. Why was the shedding of blood necessary? Hebrews 9:22. What did the sacrificial lamb symbolize? 1 Corinthians 5:7; 1 Peter 1:19; John 1:29.
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“He brought his hearers down through the types and shadows of the ceremonial law to Christ—to His crucifixion, His priesthood, and the sanctuary of His ministry—the great object that had cast its shadow backward into the Jewish age. He, as the Messiah, was the Antitype of all the sacrificial offerings. The apostle showed that according to the prophecies and the universal expectation of the Jews, the Messiah would be of the lineage of Abraham and David. He then traced His descent from the great patriarch Abraham, through the royal psalmist. He proved from Scripture what were to have been the character and works of the promised Messiah, and also His reception and treatment on earth, as testified by the holy prophets. He then showed that these predictions also had been fulfilled in the life, ministry, and death of Jesus, and hence that He was indeed the world’s Redeemer.”—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, pp. 103, 104.

4. WHY WAS IT DONE AWAY WITH?

- a. **As long as the ceremonies were continually taking place at the temple, in what did Israel believe as their hope of salvation? Isaiah 1:10–15.**
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“The Son of God is the center of the great plan of redemption which covers all dispensations. He is the ‘Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.’ He is the Redeemer of the fallen sons and daughters of Adam in all ages of human probation. . . . Christ is the substance or body which casts its shadow back into former dispensations. When Christ died, the shadow ceased. At the death of Christ the typical system was done away, but the law of God, whose violation had made the plan of salvation necessary, was magnified and made honorable. The gospel was good tidings of great joy to Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Moses; for it presented to them a coming Saviour.”—*The Signs of the Times*, February 20, 1893.

“Jerusalem was the metropolis of the Jews, and there were found the greatest exclusiveness and bigotry. The Jewish Christians who lived in sight of the temple would naturally allow their minds to revert to the peculiar privileges of the Jews as a nation. As they saw Christianity departing from the ceremonies and traditions of Judaism, and perceived that the peculiar sacredness with which the Jewish customs had been invested would soon be lost sight of in the light of the new faith, many grew indignant against Paul, as one who had, in a great measure, caused this change. . . . Some were zealous for the ceremonial law.”—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, p. 71.

- b. **Instead of all the sacrifices, what was God looking for? Isaiah 1:16–18; Psalm 51:17–19.**
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- c. **What does the plan of salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ bring that the sacrificial system was unable to do? Acts 4:12; Hebrews 7:28, 19.**
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“A more clear and glorious light now shines upon the Christian. Those who lived before the coming of Christ looked forward by faith to His coming, but what had to be grasped by faith by them is assurance to us; for we know that Christ has come, as foretold by the prophets. It is just as essential for us to have faith in our Redeemer, who came to earth and died our sacrifice, as it was for the ancients to believe in a Redeemer to come, represented by their offerings and sacrifices.”—*The Signs of the Times*, February 20, 1893.

5. DO WE NEED THE CEREMONIAL LAW TODAY?

a. Why do we have the ceremonial law on record in the Bible? 2 Timothy 3:16.

b. What is Jesus doing in heaven today? Hebrews 8:1–5; 3:1.

c. What are we to be doing since this new system is actively in force in heaven? Hebrews 4:14–16.

“It was Christ’s desire to leave to His disciples an ordinance that would do for them the very thing they needed—that would serve to disentangle them from the rites and ceremonies which they had hitherto engaged in as essential, and which the reception of the gospel made no longer of any force. To continue these rites would be an insult to Jehovah.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 5, pp. 1139, 1140.

“The messengers of the cross must arm themselves with watchfulness and prayer, and move forward with faith and courage, working always in the name of Jesus. They must exalt Christ as man’s mediator in the heavenly sanctuary, the One in whom all the sacrifices of the Old Testament dispensation centered, and through whose atoning sacrifice the transgressors of God’s law may find peace and pardon.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 230.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How do we know that the seventh-day Sabbath is not included in the shadows of the Old Testament?
2. What are the distinctive features of the two laws—moral and ceremonial?
3. Because of so much death, what attitude have we lost when an animal dies?
4. What made it difficult for the Jews living near the temple to understand that the ceremonial system was over?
5. What benefit do we receive today from studying the sanctuary service?

First Sabbath Offering for a Chapel in Pathankot, North India Union

Pathankot is a city in the Punjab state of India. It borders Pakistan on the west and is a travel hub for the states of Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, and Jammu and Kashmir.

The Reform message arrived here in 2015, and our membership has grown over the years. Through the circulation of our *Sabbath Bible Lessons*, many precious new souls are eagerly seeking the present truth.

As of 2011, the Pathankot urban area had a population of 159,909 with a literacy rate of 88.71%. It is surrounded by both the Shivalik range (part of the foothills of the Himalayas) and the river Chakki. Famous places near Pathankot include Shahpur Kandi with a hanging rest house for tourists and Ranjit Sagar Dam, which is the highest gravity dam in Asia. Industries in the surrounding area include the production of milk, wheat, rice, textiles, sewing machines, sports goods, sugar, starch, fertilizers, bicycles, scientific instruments, electrical goods, machine tools, and pine oil.

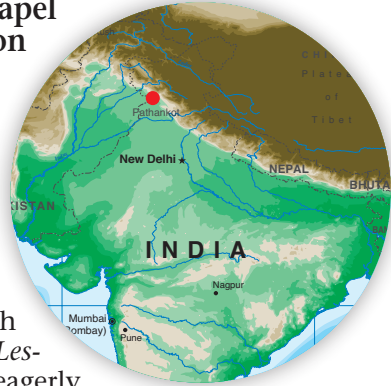
The religions in Pathankot are Hinduism with 88.89%, Sikhism 8.01%, and Christianity 1.73%, followed by Islam and other religions.

Situated in the picturesque foothills of Kangra and Dalhousie, with the river Chakki flowing close by, this city is often used as a rest-stop before heading into the mountains of Jammu and Kashmir, Dalhousie, Chamba, Kangra, Dharamshala, McLeodganj, Jwalaji, Chintpurni and further into the Himalayas. Many rural students of neighboring states come to Pathankot for education.

Pathankot is well connected by rail and road with the rest of India, and is connected by a vast network of private and public-sector bus services to other cities in Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir. Important destinations include Delhi, Manali Chandigarh, Jammu, Dharamshala, Dalhousie and Amritsar.

Therefore, like Capernaum in the time of Jesus, Pathankot serves as a crossroads for travelers—and thus, potentially for evangelism! We have no resources of our own to purchase land and construct a church, so we need the support of our brethren and sisters worldwide to kindly send your generous offerings to build a monument to the Lord in Pathankot, India. “God loveth the cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7), so with this hope we pray to our Lord Jesus to bless each one bountifully.

Your brothers and sisters from the Pathankot Church



If We Confess

MEMORY TEXT: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

“Confess your sins to God, who only can forgive them, and your faults to one another.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 37.

Suggested Readings: *Steps to Christ*, pp. 23–35, 37–41;
Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, pp. 635–650.

Sunday

February 26

1. SAME METHOD IN NEW AND IN OLD

- a. Since God does not change (Malachi 3:6, Hebrews 13:8), what must we realize about His desire regarding the salvation of every soul He has created? Psalm 78:38; Ezekiel 18:32; 2 Peter 3:9.

“[God] does not want any to perish, but longs to see all coming to repentance. . . . The sword of justice fell upon [Christ] that they might go free. He died that they might live.”—*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 326.

- b. At the dedication of the temple built by Solomon, what great Old Testament passage declares God’s willingness to forgive? 2 Chronicles 7:12–14. How is this echoed in the New Testament? 1 John 1:9; 2:1.

“Sin of a private character is to be confessed to Christ, the only mediator between God and man. . . . Every sin is an offense against God, and is to be confessed to Him through Christ. Every open sin should be as openly confessed. Wrong done to a fellow-being should be made right with the one who has been offended. If any who are seeking health have been guilty of evil-speaking, if they have sowed discord in the home, the neighborhood, or the church, and have stirred up alienation and dissension, if by any wrong practice they have led others into sin, these things should be confessed before God and before those who have been offended.”—*Gospel Workers*, pp. 216, 217.

2. THE FIRST STEP IN RECEIVING FORGIVENESS

- a. **As the work of the Holy Spirit is to bring conviction on the heart (John 16:8), what is to be our first response? Psalm 86:5.**
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“Conviction takes hold upon the mind and heart. The sinner has a sense of the righteousness of Jehovah and feels the terror of appearing, in his own guilt and uncleanness, before the Searcher of hearts. He sees the love of God, the beauty of holiness, the joy of purity; he longs to be cleansed and to be restored to communion with Heaven.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 24.

“That repentance which is produced by the influence of divine grace upon the heart will lead to confession and forsaking of sin. Such were the fruits which the apostle declared had been seen in the lives of the Corinthian believers.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 324.

- b. **Looking at the example on the day of Pentecost, what happened as a result of the conscience awakening to conviction of sin? Acts 2:36, 37.**
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“It was by the confession and forsaking of sin, by earnest prayer and consecration of themselves to God, that the early disciples prepared for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. The same work, only in greater degree, must be done now.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 507.

- c. **How can we describe the result of conviction that leads to a change in life? Acts 2:38.**
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“Before [the Israelites] could find true peace they must be led to see and confess the very sin of which they had been guilty.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 614.

“True confession is always of a specific character, and acknowledges particular sins. They may be of such a nature as only to be brought before God, they may be wrongs that should be confessed before individuals who have suffered injury through them, or they may be of a general kind that should be made known in the congregation of the people. But all confession should be definite and to the point, acknowledging the very sins of which you are guilty.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 639.

3. AN EXAMPLE OF FALSE REPENTANCE

- a. Did Judas repent of betraying Christ to the chief priests (Matthew 26:14–16, 47–49)? Why or why not? Matthew 27:3, 4.
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“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, heart-breaking 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.

“When sin has deadened the moral perceptions, the wrongdoer does not discern the defects of his character nor realize the enormity of the evil he has committed; and unless he yields to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit he remains in partial blindness to his sin. His confessions are not sincere and in earnest. To every acknowledgment of his guilt he adds an apology in excuse of his course, declaring that if it had not been for certain circumstances he would not have done this or that for which he is reproved.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 40.

“By faith and prayer all may meet the requirements of the gospel. No man can be forced to transgress. His own consent must be first gained; the soul must purpose the sinful act before passion can dominate over reason or iniquity triumph over conscience. Temptation, however strong, is never an excuse for sin.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 177.

- b. Explain whether or not this was a type of repentance that leads to eternal life. Matthew 27:5; 2 Corinthians 7:8–11.
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“Many are in self-deception, and enter into plans with which the Lord has nothing to do. But the only safe course to be pursued is to obey the word of the Lord. Instead of doing this, many propose to do wonderful things. They find it easier to plan some great thing for the future than to empty themselves of self, surrender to God heart, mind, and will, and submit to be molded by that power that can create and destroy. Let the youth critically examine their motives, by prayer and searching of the Scriptures, and see if their own will and inclinations do not lead away from God’s requirements.”—*The Youth’s Instructor*, March 23, 1893.

4. AN EXAMPLE OF TRUE REPENTANCE (PSALM 51)

- a. **What happens when we do not acknowledge our sins before God and instead keep silent about it? Psalm 32:3, 4.**
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- b. **After Nathan the prophet was direct in revealing the sin of David (2 Samuel 12:1–12), how did the king respond? 2 Samuel 12:13.**
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“The prophet’s rebuke touched the heart of David; conscience was aroused; his guilt appeared in all its enormity. His soul was bowed in penitence before God.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 722.

“David’s repentance was sincere and deep. There was no effort to palliate his crime. No desire to escape the judgments threatened, inspired his prayer. But he saw the enormity of his transgression against God; he saw the defilement of his soul; he loathed his sin. It was not for pardon only that he prayed, but for purity of heart. David did not in despair give over the struggle. In the promises of God to repentant sinners he saw the evidence of his pardon and acceptance.”—*Ibid.*, p. 725.

- c. **How did this occur also in the heart of Simon of Bethany? Luke 7:40–48. What is the only way peace and reconciliation can be obtained? Psalm 32:5; Jeremiah 3:13; 1 John 1:9.**
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“As did Nathan with David, Christ concealed His home thrust under the veil of a parable. He threw upon His host the burden of pronouncing sentence upon himself. Simon had led into sin the woman he now despised. She had been deeply wronged by him. By the two debtors of the parable, Simon and the woman were represented. Jesus did not design to teach that different degrees of obligation should be felt by the two persons, for each owed a debt of gratitude that never could be repaid. But Simon felt himself more righteous than Mary, and Jesus desired him to see how great his guilt really was. He would show him that his sin was greater than hers, as much greater as a debt of five hundred pence exceeds a debt of fifty pence.

“Simon now began to see himself in a new light. . . . Shame seized upon him, and he realized that he was in the presence of One superior to himself. . . .

“Simon was touched by the kindness of Jesus in not openly rebuking him before the guests. . . . Patient admonition convinced him of his error. He saw the magnitude of the debt which he owed his Lord. His pride was humbled, he repented, and the proud Pharisee became a lowly, self-sacrificing disciple.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 566–568.

5. THE GIFT OF FORGIVENESS

- a. If we are deeply involved in transgression, how can we be led to deep, genuine sorrow for our sins? Acts 5:30, 31; Isaiah 55:6, 7; Hebrews 4:16.

“A repentance such as this, is beyond the reach of our own power to accomplish; it is obtained only from Christ, who ascended up on high and has given gifts unto men.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 25.

“If you see your sinfulness, do not wait to make yourself better. How many there are who think they are not good enough to come to Christ. Do you expect to become better through your own efforts? ‘Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.’ Jeremiah 13:23. There is help for us only in God. We must not wait for stronger persuasions, for better opportunities, or for holier tempers. We can do nothing of ourselves. We must come to Christ just as we are.”—*Ibid.*, p. 31.

- b. How thorough can we expect this work of God to be done for us and in us? Hebrews 12:12; Philippians 1:6.

“Repentance, as well as forgiveness, is the gift of God through Christ. It is through the influence of the Holy Spirit that we are convicted of sin, and feel our need of pardon. None but the contrite are forgiven; but it is the grace of God that makes the heart penitent. He is acquainted with all our weaknesses and infirmities, and He will help us.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 353.

- c. What will be the result of this type of genuine confession? Romans 8:1.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What can we personally learn from the prayer of Solomon at the temple dedication?
2. What steps do we need to take seriously if we want to be involved in the finishing of God’s work under the power of the Latter Rain?
3. Why is there such a need to confess our sins to God? How responsible are we really in the act of sinning?
4. How careful do we need to be in showing someone that they are guilty?
5. How is it possible for a sinner to repent?

“Sanctify Them Through Thy Truth”

MEMORY TEXT: “The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Proverbs 4:18).

“When we surrender ourselves wholly to God, and fully believe, the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin. The conscience can be freed from condemnation. Through faith in His blood, all may be made perfect in Christ Jesus. Thank God that we are not dealing with impossibilities. We may claim sanctification. We may enjoy the favor of God. We are not to be anxious about what Christ and God think of us, but about what God thinks of Christ, our Substitute.”— *Selected Messages*, bk. 2, pp. 32, 33.

Suggested Reading: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 557–567.

Sunday

March 5

1. JUSTIFICATION

- a. **When we truly confess our sins and surrender our life to Jesus—whether at the beginning of our Christian experience or at every step of the way—what do we receive from God? Romans 3:24–26.**

“It was possible for Adam, before the fall, to form a righteous character by obedience to God’s law. But he failed to do this, and because of his sin our natures are fallen and we cannot make ourselves righteous. Since we are sinful, unholy, we cannot perfectly obey the holy law. We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God. But Christ has made a way of escape for us. He lived on earth amid trials and temptations such as we have to meet. He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ’s character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 62.

- b. **How long is this journey to last? Proverbs 4:18; Mark 13:13.**
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2. IMPROVING THE CHRISTIAN GRACES

- a. Besides forgiveness/justification, what else does God want to give us? 2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 6:1; Philippians 3:12–14.
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“Such transformation of character as is seen in the life of John is ever the result of communion with Christ. There may be marked defects in the character of an individual, yet when he becomes a true disciple of Christ, the power of divine grace transforms and sanctifies him. Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, he is changed from glory to glory, until he is like Him whom he adores.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 559.

“Without the grace of Christ, the sinner is in a hopeless condition; nothing can be done for him; but through divine grace, supernatural power is imparted to the man, and works in mind and heart and character. It is through the impartation of the grace of Christ that sin is discerned in its hateful nature, and finally driven from the soul temple.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 366.

“Nothing but divine power can regenerate the human heart and imbue souls with the love of Christ, which will ever manifest itself with love for those for whom He died. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. When a man is converted to God, a new moral taste is supplied, a new motive power is given, and he loves the things that God loves; for his life is bound up by the golden chain of the immutable promises to the life of Jesus. Love, joy, peace, and inexpressible gratitude will pervade the soul, and the language of him who is blessed will be, ‘Thy gentleness hath made me great’ (Psalm 18:35).”—*Ibid.*, p. 336.

- b. What are some of the steps in the improvement of the Christian graces we need on the road to the kingdom of heaven? 2 Peter 1:5–11.
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“Christ, who connects earth with heaven, is the ladder. The base is planted firmly on the earth in His humanity; the topmost round reaches to the throne of God in His divinity. The humanity of Christ embraces fallen humanity, while His divinity lays hold upon the throne of God. We are saved by climbing round after round of the ladder, looking to Christ, clinging to Christ, mounting step by step to the height of Christ, so that He is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 147.

3. POWER THROUGH GOD'S WORD

- a. How does God enlighten our minds so that Christian growth may be steadily onward? 2 Corinthians 4:4–6; Psalm 119:105; Leviticus 20:7, 8.
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“As the will of man cooperates with the will of God, it becomes omnipotent. Whatever is to be done at His command may be accomplished in His strength. All His biddings are enablings.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 333.

“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. He has assured us that He is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him than parents are to give good gifts to their children.”—*That I May Know Him*, p. 130.

- b. What do we call this process of Christian growth in the truth through the power of the Word? John 1:14; 17:17.
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“When truth becomes an abiding principle in the life, the soul is ‘born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.’ This new birth is the result of receiving Christ as the Word of God. When by the Holy Spirit divine truths are impressed upon the heart, new conceptions are awakened, and the energies hitherto dormant are aroused to cooperate with God.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 520.

“The sanctification of the church is God’s object in all His dealings with His people. He has chosen them from eternity, that they might be holy. He gave His Son to die for them, that they might be sanctified through obedience to the truth, divested of all the littleness of self. From them He requires a personal work, a personal surrender. God can be honored by those who profess to believe in Him, only as they are conformed to His image and controlled by His Spirit. Then, as witnesses for the Saviour, they may make known what divine grace has done for them.”—*Ibid.*, p. 559.

4. FALSE CLAIMS

- a. **Considering the holy men of God throughout Bible times, what must we understand about claiming final victory? 1 John 1:8, 10; Romans 7:18; Galatians 6:14.**
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“The honors bestowed upon Daniel excited the jealousy of the leading men of the kingdom. The presidents and princes sought to find occasion for complaint against him. ‘But they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him’ (Daniel 6:4).

“What a lesson is here presented for all Christians. The keen eyes of jealousy were fixed upon Daniel day after day; their watchings were sharpened by hatred; yet not a word or act of his life could they make appear wrong. And still he made no claim to sanctification, but he did that which was infinitely better—he lived a life of faithfulness and consecration.”—*The Sanctified Life*, p. 42.

“Spurious sanctification leads directly away from the Bible. Religion is reduced to a fable. Feelings and impressions are made the criterion. While they profess to be sinless and boast of their righteousness, the claimants of sanctification teach that men are at liberty to transgress the law of God and that those who obey its precepts have fallen from grace. A presentation of its claims arouses their opposition and excites anger and contempt. Thus their character is shown, for ‘the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be’ (Romans 8:7).”—*Faith and Works*, p. 53.

- b. **Does the belief in the need for sanctification mean that we are to earn our salvation? John 14:15; 1 John 3:5, 6.**
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“Righteousness has its root in godliness. No human being is righteous any longer than he has faith in God and maintains a vital connection with Him. As a flower of the field has its root in the soil; as it must receive air, dew, showers, and sunshine, so must we receive from God that which ministers to the life of the soul. It is only through becoming partakers of His nature that we receive power to obey His commandments. No man, high or low, experienced or inexperienced, can steadily maintain before his fellowmen a pure, forceful life unless his life is hid with Christ in God. The greater the activity among men, the closer should be the communion of the heart with God.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 194.

5. WHAT ABOUT SANCTIFICATION?

- a. Is sanctification—growth in Christian character—typically noticeable to the individual in whom it is occurring? Mark 4:26–29. What about to others?

“The unstudied, unconscious influence of a holy life is the most convincing sermon that can be given in favor of Christianity. Argument, even when unanswerable, may provoke only opposition; but a godly example has a power that it is impossible wholly to resist.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 511.

- b. What shows that this growth is continual and that we can never rest satisfied with our progress and achievements? 1 Corinthians 15:31; Matthew 10:22; Philippians 3:12–16.

“The Lord would have all His sons and daughters happy, peaceful, and obedient. . . . Through faith, every deficiency of character may be supplied, every defilement cleansed, every fault corrected, every excellence developed.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 564.

“Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, a day, but of a lifetime. It is not gained by a happy flight of feeling, but is the result of constantly dying to sin, and constantly living for Christ. Wrongs cannot be righted nor reformations wrought in the character by feeble, intermittent efforts. It is only by long, persevering effort, sore discipline, and stern conflict, that we shall overcome. We know not one day how strong will be our conflict the next. So long as Satan reigns, we shall have self to subdue, besetting sins to overcome; so long as life shall last, there will be no stopping place, no point which we can reach and say, I have fully attained. Sanctification is the result of lifelong obedience.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 560, 561.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How are we treated by God with regard to every moment of justification?
2. How does God show that His desire for us is more than just forgiveness?
3. What is the secret of transformation?
4. What does false sanctification lead us away from?
5. How do we know sanctification involves an entire life of continual growth?

The Old Covenant

MEMORY TEXT: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah” (Hebrews 8:8).

“God saw what was going on in the camp. He saw that the people, even while the divine glory still rested upon Sinai, had yielded to the temptations of Satan, and were plotting against the rule which they had promised to obey.”—*The Youth’s Instructor*, November 21, 1901.

Suggested Reading: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 370–373.

Sunday

March 12

1. SLAVERY CONFUSES MINDS

- a. **What was the condition of Israel for a number of years—and how did that situation affect their knowledge of God and His laws? Exodus 20:1, 2; Deuteronomy 5:15.**

“In their bondage the people had to a great extent lost the knowledge of God and of the principles of the Abrahamic covenant. In delivering them from Egypt, God sought to reveal to them His power and His mercy, that they might be led to love and trust Him. He brought them down to the Red Sea—where, pursued by the Egyptians, escape seemed impossible—that they might realize their utter helplessness, their need of divine aid; and then He wrought deliverance for them. Thus they were filled with love and gratitude to God and with confidence in His power to help them. He had bound them to Himself as their deliverer from temporal bondage.

“But there was a still greater truth to be impressed upon their minds. Living in the midst of idolatry and corruption, they had no true conception of the holiness of God, of the exceeding sinfulness of their own hearts, their utter inability, in themselves, to render obedience to God’s law, and their need of a Saviour. All this they must be taught.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 371.

- b. **Where did God bring them in order that they might understand the holiness and sacredness of His law? Exodus 19:1, 5, 6.**
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2. THE SINFULNESS OF SIN

- a. **How did the Israelites react to promises of blessings even after they understood the law when spoken by God? Exodus 19:8; 24:3.**
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“The people did not realize the sinfulness of their own hearts, and that without Christ it was impossible for them to keep God’s law; and they readily entered into covenant with God. Feeling that they were able to establish their own righteousness, they declared, ‘All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.’ Exodus 24:7. They had witnessed the proclamation of the law in awful majesty, and had trembled with terror before the mount; and yet only a few weeks passed before they broke their covenant with God, and bowed down to worship a graven image. They could not hope for the favor of God through a covenant which they had broken; and now, seeing their sinfulness and their need of pardon, they were brought to feel their need of the Saviour revealed in the Abrahamic covenant and shadowed forth in the sacrificial offerings. Now by faith and love they were bound to God as their deliverer from the bondage of sin. Now they were prepared to appreciate the blessings of the new covenant.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 371, 372.

- b. **What were the terms of this covenant? Deuteronomy 27:26; Ezekiel 20:11; Leviticus 18:5.**
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- c. **Similar to our natural condition, what were they unable to comprehend? Jeremiah 17:9; Isaiah 1:5, 6; 64:6.**
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“ ‘Ye cannot serve the Lord,’ said Joshua: ‘for He is a holy God; . . . He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.’ Before there could be any permanent reformation the people must be led to feel their utter inability in themselves to render obedience to God. They had broken His law, it condemned them as transgressors, and it provided no way of escape. While they trusted in their own strength and righteousness, it was impossible for them to secure the pardon of their sins; they could not meet the claims of God’s perfect law, and it was in vain that they pledged themselves to serve God. It was only by faith in Christ that they could secure pardon of sin and receive strength to obey God’s law. They must cease to rely upon their own efforts for salvation, they must trust wholly in the merits of the promised Saviour, if they would be accepted of God.”—*Ibid.*, p. 524.

3. RATIFYING THE COVENANT

- a. After Moses read the law with all its conditions of curses and blessings, how did Israel persistently react? Exodus 24:7.
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“The minds of the people, blinded and debased by slavery, were not prepared to appreciate fully the far reaching principles of God’s ten precepts. That the obligations of the decalogue might be more fully understood and enforced, additional precepts were given, illustrating and applying the precepts of the ten commandments. Unlike the decalogue, these were delivered privately to Moses, who was to communicate them to the people.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 506.

“Moses had written, not the ten commandments, but the judgments which God would have them observe, and the promises on condition that they would obey Him. He read this to the people, and they pledged themselves to obey all the words which the Lord had said. Moses then wrote their solemn pledge in a book, and offered sacrifice unto God for the people. ‘And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people; and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words.’ The people repeated their solemn pledge to the Lord to do all that He had said, and to be obedient.”—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 240.

- b. What was immediately done to show the seriousness of such an agreement? Exodus 24:6, 8.
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“Thus the people ratified their solemn pledge to the Lord to do all that He had said, and to be obedient.”—*The Signs of the Times*, May 6, 1880.

“Here the people received the conditions of the covenant. They made a solemn covenant with God, typifying the covenant made between God and every believer in Jesus Christ. The conditions were plainly laid before the people. They were not left to misunderstand them. When they were requested to decide whether they would agree to all the conditions given, they unanimously consented to obey every obligation. They had already consented to obey God’s commandments. The principles of the law were now particularized, that they might know how much was involved in covenanting to obey the law; and they accepted the specifically defined particulars of the law.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 1, p. 114.

4. A LOST GENERATION

- a. **What happened to the vast majority of the nation of Israel because they failed to understand their inability to save themselves and keep the law perfectly without divine aid? Numbers 26:63–65.**
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“Everything that we of ourselves can do is defiled by sin.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 311.

“Nicodemus had heard the preaching of John the Baptist concerning repentance and baptism, and pointing the people to One who should baptize with the Holy Spirit. He himself had felt that there was a lack of spirituality among the Jews, that, to a great degree, they were controlled by bigotry and worldly ambition. He had hoped for a better state of things at the Messiah's coming. Yet the heart-searching message of the Baptist had failed to work in him conviction of sin. He was a strict Pharisee, and prided himself on his good works. He was widely esteemed for his benevolence and his liberality in sustaining the temple service, and he felt secure of the favor of God. He was startled at the thought of a kingdom too pure for him to see in his present state.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 171.

- b. **Was the problem with God or with the people in this “old” covenant? Hebrews 8:8.**
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“ ‘A natural Christian!’ This deceptive idea has served many as a garment of self-righteousness, and has led many to a supposed hope in Christ, who had no experimental knowledge of Him, of His experience, His trials, His life of self-denial and self-sacrifice. Their righteousness which they count upon so much is only as filthy rags. Says Christ, the beloved Teacher: ‘Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.’ Yes, follow Him through evil as well as through good report. Follow Him in befriending the most needy and friendless.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 177, 178.

“What is it that constitutes the wretchedness, the nakedness of those who feel rich and increased with goods?—It is the want of the righteousness of Christ. In their own righteousness they are represented as clothed with filthy rags, and yet in this condition they flatter themselves that they are clothed upon with Christ's righteousness. Could deception be greater? As is represented by the prophet, they may be crying, ‘The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we’ (see Jeremiah 7:4), while their hearts are filled with unholy traffic and unrighteous barter.”—*This Day With God*, p. 228.

5. ANOTHER COVENANT NEEDED

- a. Since the old covenant is so hopeless, what was the only promise that could give hope to those living in the Old Testament period? Jeremiah 31:31–33.
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“Through faith in Christ obedience to every principle of the law is made possible.

“The spirit of bondage is engendered by seeking to live in accordance with legal religion, through striving to fulfill the claims of the law in our own strength. There is hope for us only as we come under the Abrahamic covenant, which is the covenant of grace by faith in Christ Jesus. The gospel preached to Abraham, through which he had hope, was the same gospel that is preached to us today, through which we have hope. Abraham looked unto Jesus, who is also the Author and the Finisher of our faith.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1077.

- b. Name some heroes in Scripture who accepted these promises of divine aid. Hebrews 11:4–32.
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“From age to age the heroes of faith have been marked by their fidelity to God, and they have been brought conspicuously before the world that their light might shine to those in darkness. Daniel and his three companions are illustrious examples of Christian heroism. . . . From their experience in the court of Babylon we may learn what God will do for those who serve Him with full purpose of heart.”—*My Life Today*, p. 68.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How do we follow the same experience of the Hebrews as being unable to comprehend the true significance of the divine moral law?
2. Why did they readily enter into promises that they could not keep?
3. How are we easily led into making similar promises to God today?
4. What kept reoccurring during the remainder of Israel’s history?
5. What examples do we have, revealing that national apostasy is no excuse for our wavering faith?

Come, Let Us Reason Together

MEMORY TEXT: “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18).

“The law of God was the basis of this [*new*] covenant, which was simply an arrangement for bringing men again into harmony with the divine will, placing them where they could obey God’s law.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 371. [Emphasis supplied.]

Suggested Reading: *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 45–77.

Sunday

March 19

1. TWO COVENANTS

- a. In order to be justified with God, what type of agreement is necessary on our part? Psalm 50:5.

- b. In order to make such an agreement, what attitude are we to possess? Isaiah 1:18.

- c. What type of covenant options are given us? Hebrews 8:6–13.

“The terms of the ‘old covenant’ were, Obey and live: ‘If a man do, he shall even live in them’ (Ezekiel 20:11; Leviticus 18:5); but ‘cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them.’ Deuteronomy 27:26. The ‘new covenant’ was established upon ‘better promises’—the promise of forgiveness of sins and of the grace of God to renew the heart and bring it into harmony with the principles of God’s law. ‘This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts. . . . I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.’ Jeremiah 31:33, 34.”— *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 372. [Emphasis by author.]

2. WHY IS A COVENANT NECESSARY?

- a. **What separates us from being in fellowship with our Creator? Isaiah 59:2. What do we deserve? Genesis 2:17; Romans 6:23.**
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“The instant Adam yielded to Satan’s temptation, and did the very thing which God had said he should not do, Christ, the Son of God, stood between the living and the dead, saying: ‘Let the punishment fall on Me. I will stand in man’s place. Give him another trial.’ Transgression placed the whole world under the death sentence. But in heaven there was heard a voice saying, ‘I have found a ransom.’ He who knew no sin was made sin for fallen man. ‘God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ Christ laid off His royal robe and kingly crown, and gave up His command over all heaven. He clothed His divinity with humanity, that He might bear all the infirmities and endure all the temptations of humanity. He was a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. For our sake He became poor, that through His poverty we might be made rich. For us He left the adoration of the angels for the insults and execrations of a mob lashed to madness by the priests and rulers.”—*The Signs of the Times*, June 27, 1900.

- b. **What provision did God make from the very beginning to avert this death sentence? Job 33:24; compare also 1 John 4:19; Revelation 13:8.**
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“The plan for our redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. It was a revelation of ‘the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal.’ Romans 16:25, R.V. It was an unfolding of the principles that from eternal ages have been the foundation of God’s throne. From the beginning, God and Christ knew of the apostasy of Satan, and of the fall of man through the deceptive power of the apostate. God did not ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence, and made provision to meet the terrible emergency. So great was His love for the world, that He covenanted to give His only-begotten Son, ‘that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ John 3:16.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 22.

3. THE SEED OF THE WOMAN

- a. **When that old Serpent, the Devil, deceived our first parents in Eden, what promise did God make that gives hope to the human race? Genesis 3:15.**

“Our natural tendencies, unless corrected by the Holy Spirit of God, have in them the seeds of moral death. Unless we become vitally connected with God, we cannot resist the unhallowed effects of self-love, self-indulgence, and temptation to sin.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, pp. 315, 316.

- b. **Who is this seed of the woman? Genesis 22:18; Galatians 3:8, 16; Hebrews 2:14.**

“Since the first gospel sermon was preached, when in Eden it was declared that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head, Christ had been uplifted as the way, the truth, and the life. He was the way when Adam lived, when Abel presented to God the blood of the slain lamb, representing the blood of the Redeemer. Christ was the way by which patriarchs and prophets were saved. He is the way by which alone we can have access to God.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 663.

- c. **Since Abraham trusted in none other than Christ for the forgiveness of sin (Galatians 3:6–8), what was the result of that type of faith? Genesis 26:5.**

“The death of Christ upon the cross made sure the destruction of him who has the power of death, who was the originator of sin. When Satan is destroyed, there will be none to tempt to evil; the atonement will never need to be repeated; and there will be no danger of another rebellion in the universe of God. That which alone can effectually restrain from sin in this world of darkness, will prevent sin in heaven. The significance of the death of Christ will be seen by saints and angels. Fallen men could not have a home in the paradise of God without the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Shall we not then exalt the cross of Christ? The angels ascribe honor and glory to Christ, for even they are not secure except by looking to the sufferings of the Son of God. It is through the efficacy of the cross that the angels of heaven are guarded from apostasy. Without the cross they would be no more secure against evil than were the angels before the fall of Satan. Angelic perfection failed in heaven. Human perfection failed in Eden, the paradise of bliss. All who wish for security in earth or heaven must look to the Lamb of God.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 5, p. 1132.

4. RATIFICATION OF THE COVENANT

- a. **Although this covenant was made with Adam and renewed to Abraham, when could it be ratified—and hence called the new or second covenant? Hebrews 9:16.**
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“Though this covenant was made with Adam and renewed to Abraham, it could not be ratified until the death of Christ. It had existed by the promise of God since the first intimation of redemption had been given; it had been accepted by faith; yet when ratified by Christ, it is called a *new* covenant.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 370, 371. [Emphasis by author.]

- b. **If it was not ratified till the death of Jesus, how did it apply to those children of the heavenly King before the cross? Hebrews 6:13–18.**
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“The Abrahamic covenant was ratified by the blood of Christ, and it is called the ‘second,’ or ‘new,’ covenant, because the blood by which it was sealed was shed after the blood of the first covenant. That the new covenant was valid in the days of Abraham is evident from the fact that it was then confirmed both by the promise and by the oath of God—the ‘two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie.’ Hebrews 6:18.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 371.

“His word is pledged. The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but His kindness shall not depart from His people, neither shall the covenant of His peace be removed. His voice is heard, ‘I have loved thee with an everlasting love’ (Jeremiah 31:3). ‘With everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee’ (Isaiah 54:8). How amazing is this love, that God condescends to remove all cause for doubt and questioning from human fears and weakness and takes hold of the trembling hand reached up to Him in faith; and He helps us to trust Him by multiplied assurances and securities. He has made us a binding agreement upon condition of our obedience, and He comes to meet us in our own understanding of things. We think that a pledge or promise from our fellow men, if recorded, still needs a guarantee. Jesus has met all these peculiar fears, and He has confirmed His promise with an oath: ‘Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath. . . .’ What more could our Lord do to strengthen our faith in His promises?”—*That I May Know Him*, p. 262.

5. TABLES OF THE HEART

- a. Because of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, what opportunity do we receive? Hebrews 9:15.
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- b. What appeal does God make to each of us personally as we evaluate our responsibility before God? 2 Corinthians 6:2.
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“The same law that was engraved upon the tables of stone is written by the Holy Spirit upon the tables of the heart. Instead of going about to establish our own righteousness we accept the righteousness of Christ. His blood atones for our sins. His obedience is accepted for us. Then the heart renewed by the Holy Spirit will bring forth ‘the fruits of the Spirit.’ Through the grace of Christ we shall live in obedience to the law of God written upon our hearts. Having the Spirit of Christ, we shall walk even as He walked. Through the prophet He declared of Himself, ‘I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart.’ Psalm 40:8. And when among men He said, ‘The Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him.’ John 8:29.

“The apostle Paul clearly presents the relation between faith and the law under the new covenant. He says: ‘Being *justified by faith*, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ ‘Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.’ ‘For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh’—it could not justify man, because in his sinful nature he could not keep the law—‘God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that *the righteousness of the law* might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.’ Romans 5:1; 3:31; 8:3, 4.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 372, 373. [Emphasis by author.]

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What experiences have you had in relation to making covenants with God?
2. Why was God prepared when Adam sinned?
3. What illustrations did God use to continually keep in mind the coming Messiah?
4. How do we know that Abraham was under the new covenant?
5. What kind of a covenant or agreement are you prepared to make with your Creator?

Reasoning for Reformation

“Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are, that He might know how to succor those who should be tempted. His life is our example. He shows by His willing obedience that man may keep the law of God and that transgression of the law, not obedience to it, brings him into bondage. The Saviour was full of compassion and love; He never spurned the truly penitent, however great their guilt; but He severely denounced hypocrisy of every sort. He is acquainted with the sins of men, He knows all their acts and reads their secret motives; yet He does not turn away from them in their iniquity. He pleads and reasons with the sinner, and in one sense—that of having Himself borne the weakness of humanity—He puts Himself on a level with him. ‘Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.’

“Man, who has defaced the image of God in his soul by a corrupt life, cannot, by mere human effort, effect a radical change in himself. He must accept the provisions of the gospel; he must be reconciled to God through obedience to His law and faith in Jesus Christ. His life from thenceforth must be governed by a new principle. Through repentance, faith, and good works he may perfect a righteous character, and claim, through the merits of Christ, the privileges of the sons of God. The principles of divine truth, received and cherished in the heart, will carry us to a height of moral excellence that we had not deemed it possible for us to reach. . . .

“Here is a work for man to do. He must face the mirror, God’s law, discern the defects in his moral character, and put away his sins, washing his robe of character in the blood of the Lamb. Envy, pride, malice, deceit, strife, and crime will be cleansed from the heart that is a recipient of the love of Christ and that cherishes the hope of being made like Him. . . .

“But the influence of a gospel hope will not lead the sinner to look upon the salvation of Christ as a matter of free grace, while he continues to live in transgression of the law of God. When the light of truth dawns upon his mind and he fully understands the requirements of God and realizes the extent of his transgressions, he will reform his ways, become loyal to God through the strength obtained from his Saviour, and lead a new and purer life.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 294, 295.

First Sabbath Offerings



JANUARY 7

for an Educational and Health Center in Adygea, North Caucasus, Russia
(see p. 4.)

FEBRUARY 4

for World Disaster Relief
(see p. 25.)



MARCH 4

for a Chapel in Pathankot, North India Union
(see p. 46.)