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Vol. 101, No. 1
Sabbath Bible Lessons
Senior Division



PART ONE

The Gospel **According to John**

The beloved disciple introduces Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God and divine antidote for the sin of the whole world.

Contents



1. The Gospel According to John	5
2. The Lamb of God	10
3. The Marriage at Cana	15
4. Jesus in the Temple	20
5. Jesus and Nicodemus	26
6. The Holy Spirit's Moving	31
7. Jesus and John the Baptist	36
8. Jesus and the Samaritan Woman	41
9. The Birth of a Missionary	47
10. Jesus and the Nobleman's Son	52
11. Jesus and the Paralytic of Bethesda	57
12. The Authority of the Son	62
13. Jesus Feeds the Multitude	67

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.

Illustrations: Goodsalt on the front cover; Map Resources on pp. 4, 46, 72.

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Foreword

This year, we will be studying four quarterlies on *The Gospel According to John*. Out of modesty, the author of the fourth gospel does not identify himself, nor does he make any reference to himself as one of the two disciples who first followed Jesus (John 1:37). Rather, he alludes to “another disciple,” “that disciple,” “the disciple . . . whom he loved,” “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” and “the disciple which testifieth of these things” (John 18:15; 19:26; 21:20, 23, 24). The fact that other prominent disciples are mentioned by name while the name of John is omitted, seems to indicate that he must have been the author of that gospel.

According to the Spirit of Prophecy, the author of the fourth gospel was John, “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” He was one of the three disciples that witnessed Christ’s glory upon the mount of transfiguration and His agony in the garden immediately before His arrest. His life is an outstanding example showing how the power of God can completely transform a “son of thunder” into a man of loving disposition and deep spiritual insight.

“John clung to Christ as the vine clings to the stately pillar. For his Master’s sake he braved the dangers of the judgment hall and lingered about the cross, and at the tidings that Christ had risen, he hastened to the sepulcher, in his zeal out-stripping even the impetuous Peter.

“The confiding love and unselfish devotion manifested in the life and character of John present lessons of untold value to the Christian church. John did not naturally possess the loveliness of character that his later experience revealed. By nature he had serious defects. He was not only proud, self-assertive, and ambitious for honor, but impetuous, and resentful under injury. He and his brother were called ‘sons of thunder.’ Evil temper, the desire for revenge, the spirit of criticism, were all in the beloved disciple. But beneath all this the divine Teacher discerned the ardent, sincere, loving heart. Jesus rebuked this self-seeking, disappointed his ambitions, tested his faith. But He revealed to him that for which his soul longed—the beauty of holiness, the transforming power of love.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 539, 540.

All ancient authorities say that the gospel of John was written at Ephesus around A.D. 90 or earlier. The disciple had been put into a cauldron of boiling oil and escaped death in a miraculous manner, and was afterward banished to the isle of Patmos (Revelation 1:9). There he wrote the Revelation. The ascension of Nerva to the throne (A.D. 96) made it possible for him to return to Ephesus, where it is believed that he continued to reside until his death during the reign of Trajan (A.D. 98–117).

May the Spirit of Christ guide our studies this quarter, and touch our hearts in response to His love!

The General Conference Sabbath School Department

First Sabbath Offering

Sabbath, January 4, 2025



Multipurpose Center for Health and Education in Paraguay

The Republic of Paraguay is a landlocked country in South America, where it is bordered by Argentina, Bolivia, and Brazil. The population is around 6.1 million inhabitants, 96.1% of whom profess Christianity (88.3% Catholicism and 7.8% other Christian faiths); 2.6% profess no religion, and the remainder are of other religions or did not specify. The national economy is based primarily on agriculture—especially soybeans—and over the last 50 years, Paraguay has also cultivated a vast hydroelectric power industry.

The first SDA Reform Movement members arrived here from Hungary in the 1940's and the work expanded further in the 1950's through the colporteur ministry and later in the 1970's through medical missionary work. We currently have a wonderful group of faithful members in the main cities.

For many years we had a natural health center operating in the capital city of Asunción, enabling us to share the gospel with many souls and to teach the lifestyle of God's remnant people. With the help of God and our interdisciplinary team of professionals, we hope to revive the clinic—but now for it to function as an outreach in the city, with an extension in the countryside to fulfill the divine mandate: " 'Move out of the cities. Establish your sanitariums, your schools, and offices away from the centers of population.' "—*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 357.

With this vision in mind, we acquired a plot of land in an imposing rural area in the department of Paraguari, about 66 km. (41 miles) from the capital. We already have a sanctuary and parsonage on the property, but this is only the beginning. The goal is to establish a multifunctional center with a basic health center, church school, chapel, and a facility for the development of self-supporting health food enterprises.

We appeal to the generosity of our worldwide brethren to help us bring this goal to fruition. Your collaboration will give new impetus to the last phase necessary to complete the project. We rest in the power and wonderful grace of God and are sure that the Lord will bless the efforts of our community around the world to empower and expand evangelism in this part of His vineyard.

Your brethren and sisters from the Paraguayan Field

The Gospel According to John

Memory verse: “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

Suggested Reading: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 44–51, 111–116.

“From all eternity Christ was united with the Father, and when He took upon Himself human nature, He was still one with God.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 228.

1. JESUS, ONE WITH THE FATHER

Sun, Dec 29

a. What does God’s Word say about Jesus before His incarnation? John 1:1, 2.

“From the days of eternity the Lord Jesus Christ was one with the Father; He was ‘the image of God,’ the image of His greatness and majesty, ‘the outshining of His glory.’ It was to manifest this glory that He came to our world. To this sin-darkened earth He came to reveal the light of God’s love—to be ‘God with us.’” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 19.

“Christ, the Word, the only begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father—one in nature, in character, in purpose—the only being that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 34.

b. How was Jesus regarded by the Father and the angels? Psalm 45:6; Isaiah 9:6; Hebrews 1:3, 6–8.

“Angels are God’s ministers, radiant with the light ever flowing from His presence and speeding on rapid wing to execute His will. But the Son, the anointed of God, the ‘express image of His person,’ ‘the brightness of His glory,’ ‘upholding all things by the word of His power,’ holds supremacy over them all.”—*Ibid.*

- a. Who created all things? John 1:3, 10; Colossians 1:15–17; Hebrews 1:2.

“It was Christ that spread the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth. It was His hand that hung the worlds in space, and fashioned the flowers of the field. ‘His strength setteth fast the mountains.’ ‘The sea is His, and He made it.’ Psalm 65:6; 95:5. It was He that filled the earth with beauty, and the air with song. And upon all things in earth, and air, and sky, He wrote the message of the Father’s love.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 20.

- b. Describe the way in which the worlds and the universe were created. Psalms 33:6, 9; 104:1–6.

“God spoke, and His words created His works in the natural world. God’s creation is but a reservoir of means made ready for Him to employ instantly to do His pleasure.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 1, p. 1081.

“As the earth came forth from the hand of its Maker, it was exceedingly beautiful. Its surface was diversified with mountains, hills, and plains, interspersed with noble rivers and lovely lakes; but the hills and mountains were not abrupt and rugged, abounding in terrific steeps and frightful chasms, as they now do; the sharp, ragged edges of earth’s rocky framework were buried beneath the fruitful soil, which everywhere produced a luxuriant growth of verdure. There were no loathsome swamps or barren deserts. Graceful shrubs and delicate flowers greeted the eye at every turn. The heights were crowned with trees more majestic than any that now exist. The air, untainted by foul miasma, was clear and healthful. The entire landscape outvied in beauty the decorated grounds of the proudest palace. The angelic host viewed the scene with delight, and rejoiced at the wonderful works of God.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 44.

“The Bible recognizes no long ages in which the earth was slowly evolved from chaos. Of each successive day of creation, the sacred record declares that it consisted of the evening and the morning, like all other days that have followed. At the close of each day is given the result of the Creator’s work.”—*Ibid.*, p. 112.

- a. Who is the Author of all life and light—and how does this benefit us? John 1:4–9; Acts 17:28.
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“It was [Christ] who had spoken through everyone that throughout the ages had declared God’s word to man. Of Him all the excellences manifest in the earth’s greatest and noblest souls were reflections.”—*Education*, p. 73.

“Christ is the ‘Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.’ John 1:9. As through Christ every human being has life, so also through Him every soul receives some ray of divine light.”—*Ibid.*, p. 29.

“The power of God is still exercised in upholding the objects of His creation. It is not because the mechanism once set in motion continues to act by its own inherent energy that the pulse beats, and breath follows breath. Every breath, every pulsation of the heart, is an evidence of the care of Him in whom we live and move and have our being. From the smallest insect to man, every living creature is daily dependent upon His providence. . . .

“The mighty power that works through all nature and sustains all things is not, as some men of science claim, merely an all-pervading principle, an actuating energy. God is a spirit; yet He is a personal being, for man was made in His image. As a personal being, God has revealed Himself in His Son.”—*Ibid.*, p. 131.

- b. What does Jesus say concerning Himself? John 9:5; 8:12; 3:19; 12:46.
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“In the words, ‘I am the light of the world,’ Jesus declared Himself the Messiah. The aged Simeon . . . had spoken of Him as ‘a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel.’ Luke 2:32. In these words he was applying to Him a prophecy familiar to all Israel. By the prophet Isaiah, the Holy Spirit had declared, ‘It is too light a thing that Thou shouldest be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give Thee for a light to the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth.’ Isaiah 49:6, R.V. This prophecy was generally understood as spoken of the Messiah, and when Jesus said, ‘I am the light of the world,’ the people could not fail to recognize His claim to be the Promised One.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 465.

- a. What did Isaiah prophesy about Christ's name? Isaiah 7:14. When was this prophecy fulfilled? Matthew 1:22, 23.

“Since Jesus came to dwell with us, we know that God is acquainted with our trials, and sympathizes with our griefs. Every son and daughter of Adam may understand that our Creator is the friend of sinners. For in every doctrine of grace, every promise of joy, every deed of love, every divine attraction presented in the Saviour's life on earth, we see ‘God with us.’”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 24.

- b. What did Jesus do to reach us in our fallen state? John 1:14; Philippians 2:5–8; Hebrews 2:14–18.

“That we might become acquainted with His divine character and life, Christ took our nature and dwelt among us. Divinity was revealed in humanity; the invisible glory in the visible human form. Men could learn of the unknown through the known; heavenly things were revealed through the earthly; God was made manifest in the likeness of men.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 17.

“The Son of God was assaulted at every step by the powers of darkness. After His baptism He was driven of the Spirit into the wilderness, and suffered temptation for forty days. . . . If He was not a partaker of our nature, He could not have been tempted as man has been. If it were not possible for Him to yield to temptation, He could not be our helper. It was a solemn reality that Christ came to fight the battles as man, in man's behalf. His temptation and victory tell us that humanity must copy the Pattern; man must become a partaker of the divine nature.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 5, p. 1082.

“To keep His glory veiled as the child of a fallen race, this was the most severe discipline to which the Prince of life could subject Himself. Thus He measured His strength with Satan. He who had been expelled from heaven fought desperately for the mastery over the One of whom in the courts above he had been jealous. What a battle was this! No language is adequate to describe it. But in the near future it will be understood by those who have overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 1081, 1082.

5. THE PURPOSE OF THE INCARNATION

Thu, Jan 2

a. What did Jesus come to do for humanity? John 3:16, 17; 1:12; Luke 19:10.

“Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. ‘With His stripes we are healed.’”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 25.

b. How are we restored by Christ’s sacrifice? Galatians 4:5–7; Hebrews 2:10.

“Christ made a full and complete sacrifice, a sacrifice sufficient to save every son and daughter of Adam who should show repentance toward God for having transgressed His law, and manifest faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . Christ is the Captain of our salvation, and by His own sufferings and sacrifice He has given an example to all His followers that watchfulness and prayer, and persevering effort, were necessary on their part if they would rightly represent the love which dwelt in His bosom for the fallen race.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 664.

“God loves His obedient children. He has a kingdom prepared, not for disloyal subjects, but for His children whom He has tested and tried in a world marred and corrupted by sin. As obedient children, we have the privilege of relationship with God. ‘If children,’ He says, ‘then heirs’ to an immortal inheritance. . . . Christ and His people are one.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1077.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

Fri, Jan 3

1. What nature has Jesus possessed since eternity?
2. Who spread the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth?
3. From whom does all true light emanate?
4. What is Jesus called in Isaiah 7:14?
5. What did Jesus become upon assuming our human nature?

The Lamb of God

MEMORY VERSE: “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth” (Isaiah 53:7).

Suggested Reading: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 132–143.

“Let the repenting sinner fix his eyes upon ‘the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’ ”—*The Faith I Live By*, p. 107.

1. THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

Sun, Jan 5

a. What did John the Baptist declare concerning Jesus? John 1:15–18.

b. How did John identify himself to the religious leaders? John 1:19–23. What prophecy did he fulfill—and how shall we relate to it? Isaiah 40:3–5.

“In every stage of this earth’s history God has had His agencies to carry forward His work, which must be done in His appointed way. John the Baptist had a special work, for which he was born and to which he was appointed—the work of preparing the way of the Lord. . . .

“[His wilderness ministry] was a most striking, literal fulfillment of prophecy.”—*The Southern Watchman*, March 21, 1905.

“The Lord gave [John the Baptist] his message. Did he go to the priests and rulers and ask if he might proclaim this message?—No, God put him away from them that he might not be influenced by their spirit and teaching. He was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, [Isaiah 40:3–5 quoted]. This is the very message that must be given to our people; we are near the end of time, and the message is, Clear the King’s highway; gather out the stones; raise up a standard for the people. The people must be awakened. It is no time now to cry peace and safety.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 410.

- a. When Jesus came to John to be baptized, how did John identify Him and testify of His mission to the public? John 1:29, 34. What prophecy did this fulfill? Isaiah 53:4–7.
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“Christ was as much man’s Redeemer in the beginning of the world as He is today. Before He clothed His divinity with humanity and came to our world, the gospel message was given by Adam, Seth, Enoch, Methuselah, and Noah. Abraham in Canaan and Lot in Sodom bore the message, and from generation to generation faithful messengers proclaimed the Coming One. The rites of the Jewish economy were instituted by Christ Himself. He was the foundation of their system of sacrificial offerings, the great antitype of all their religious service. The blood shed as the sacrifices were offered pointed to the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. All the typical offerings were fulfilled in Him.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 126.

- b. How did John introduce Jesus to his disciples? John 1:35, 36. What effect did his words have on them—and what happened next in his own life? John 1:37.
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“On the following day [after Christ’s baptism], while two disciples were standing near, John again saw Jesus among the people. Again the face of the prophet was lighted up with glory from the Unseen, as he cried, ‘Behold the Lamb of God!’ The words thrilled the hearts of the disciples. They did not fully understand them. What meant the name that John had given Him—the Lamb of God? John himself had not explained it. Leaving John, they went to seek Jesus.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 138.

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

- a. Who were some of Jesus' first disciples? Matthew 4:18, 21. What interest in Christ did they manifest and how long was their first meeting with Him? John 1:38, 39.
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“One of the two [that followed Jesus] was Andrew, the brother of Simon; the other was John the evangelist. These were Christ's first disciples. Moved by an irresistible impulse, they followed Jesus—anxious to speak with Him, yet awed and silent, lost in the overwhelming significance of the thought, ‘Is this the Messiah?’

“Jesus knew that the disciples were following Him. They were the first fruits of His ministry, and there was joy in the heart of the divine Teacher as these souls responded to His grace. Yet turning, He asked only, ‘What seek ye?’ He would leave them free to turn back or to speak of their desire.

“Of one purpose only were they conscious. One presence filled their thought. They exclaimed, ‘Rabbi, . . . where dwellest *Thou*?’ In a brief interview by the wayside they could not receive that for which they longed. They desired to be alone with Jesus, to sit at His feet, and hear His words. . . .

“If John and Andrew had possessed the unbelieving spirit of the priests and rulers, they would not have been found as learners at the feet of Jesus. They would have come to Him as critics, to judge His words. Many thus close the door to the most precious opportunities. But not so did these first disciples. They had responded to the Holy Spirit's call in the preaching of John the Baptist. Now they recognized the voice of the heavenly Teacher. To them the words of Jesus were full of freshness and truth and beauty. A divine illumination was shed upon the teaching of the Old Testament Scriptures. The many-sided themes of truth stood out in new light.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 138, 139.

- b. What did the first disciples do soon after meeting Jesus? John 1:41, 42.
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“Andrew sought to impart the joy that filled his heart. Going in search of his brother Simon, he cried, ‘We have found the Messiah.’ Simon waited for no second bidding. He also had heard the preaching of John the Baptist, and he hastened to the Saviour.”—*Ibid.*, p. 139.

- a. Describe what happened when Jesus invited the next disciple to follow Him. John 1:43–45.
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“Philip obeyed the command, and straightway he also became a worker for Christ. Philip called Nathanael.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 139.

- b. What can we learn from the way Christ was able to overcome Nathanael's hesitancy? John 1:46–49.
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“As Nathanael looked upon Jesus, he was disappointed. Could this man, who bore the marks of toil and poverty, be the Messiah? Yet Nathanael could not decide to reject Jesus, for the message of John had brought conviction to his heart.

“At the time when Philip called him, Nathanael had withdrawn to a quiet grove to meditate upon the announcement of John and the prophecies concerning the Messiah. He prayed that if the one announced by John was the deliverer, it might be made known to him, and the Holy Spirit rested upon him with assurance that God had visited His people and raised up a horn of salvation for them. . . .

“ ‘Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.’

“It was enough. The divine Spirit that had borne witness to Nathanael in his solitary prayer under the fig tree now spoke to him in the words of Jesus. Though in doubt, and yielding somewhat to prejudice, Nathanael had come to Christ with an honest desire for truth, and now his desire was met. His faith went beyond that of the one who had brought him to Jesus. He answered and said, ‘Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel.’

“If Nathanael had trusted to the rabbis for guidance, he would never have found Jesus. It was by seeing and judging for himself that he became a disciple. So in the case of many today whom prejudice withholds from good. How different would be the result if they would ‘come and see’!

“While they trust to the guidance of human authority, none will come to a saving knowledge of the truth. Like Nathanael, we need to study God's word for ourselves, and pray for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. He who saw Nathanael under the fig tree will see us in the secret place of prayer. Angels from the world of light are near to those who in humility seek for divine guidance.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 139–141.

- a. What did Christ promise Nathanael—and why? John 1:50, 51.

“[John 1:50, 51 quoted.] Here Christ virtually says, On the bank of the Jordan the heavens were opened, and the Spirit descended like a dove upon Me. That scene was but a token that I am the Son of God. If you believe on Me as such, your faith shall be quickened. You shall see that the heavens are opened, and are never to be closed. I have opened them to you. The angels of God are ascending, bearing the prayers of the needy and distressed to the Father above, and descending, bringing blessing and hope, courage, help, and life, to the children of men.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 142, 143.

- b. What happens when we accept Christ? John 4:14; Revelation 22:17.

“When one has received the truth in the love of it, he will make this manifest in the persuasion of his manner and the tones of his voice. He makes known that which he himself has heard, seen, and handled of the word of life, that others may have fellowship with him through the knowledge of Christ. His testimony, from lips touched with a live coal from off the altar, is truth to the receptive heart, and works sanctification upon the character. . . .

“God could have reached His object in saving sinners without our aid; but in order for us to develop a character like Christ’s, we must share in His work. In order to enter into His joy—the joy of seeing souls redeemed by His sacrifice—we must participate in His labors for their redemption.”—*Ibid.*, p. 142.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

Fri, Jan 10

1. Why was John the Baptist called to the wilderness?
2. How should we apply the lifestyle of John the Baptist to our own?
3. What we can learn from John and Andrew when they met Jesus?
4. How can we be inspired by the early declaration of Nathanael?
5. What reveals whether or not my faith in Christ is genuine?

The Marriage at Cana

MEMORY VERSE: “Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it” (John 2:5, last part).

Suggested Readings: *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 144–153;
Messages to Young People, pp. 403–418.

“Jesus began the work of reformation by coming into close sympathy with humanity.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 150.

1. THE BEGINNING OF CHRIST’S MINISTRY

Sun, Jan 12

a. Where did Jesus begin His ministry on earth? John 2:1, 2.

“Jesus did not begin His ministry by some great work before the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem. At a household gathering in a little Galilean village His power was put forth to add to the joy of a wedding feast. Thus He showed His sympathy with men, and His desire to minister to their happiness. In the wilderness of temptation He Himself had drunk the cup of woe. He came forth to give to men the cup of blessing, by His benediction to hallow the relations of human life.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 144.

b. What happened long before the end of the wedding feast? John 2:3.

“[Mary] longed to have [Jesus] prove to the company that He was really the Honored of God. She hoped there might be opportunity for Him to work a miracle before them.

“It was the custom of the times for marriage festivities to continue several days. On this occasion, before the feast ended it was found that the supply of wine had failed. This discovery caused much perplexity and regret. It was unusual to dispense with wine on festive occasions, and its absence would seem to indicate a want of hospitality.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 145, 146.

- a. What did Christ's mother say, and what was His answer? John 2:3, 4.
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“[John 2:4 quoted.] This answer, abrupt as it seems to us, expressed no coldness or discourtesy. The Saviour's form of address to His mother was in accordance with Oriental custom. It was used toward persons to whom it was desired to show respect. Every act of Christ's earthly life was in harmony with the precept He Himself had given, ‘Honor thy father and thy mother.’ Exodus 20:12. On the cross, in His last act of tenderness toward His mother, Jesus again addressed her in the same way, as He committed her to the care of His best-loved disciple. Both at the marriage feast and upon the cross, the love expressed in tone and look and manner interpreted His words.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 146.

- b. What did Christ's mother say to the servants—and how do these words likewise apply to us today? John 2:5.
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“[Christ's] followers are to become more and more a power in the proclamation of the truth as they draw nearer to the perfection of faith and of love for their brethren. God has provided divine assistance for all emergencies to which our human resources are unequal. He gives the Holy Spirit to help in every strait, to strengthen our hope and assurance, to illuminate our minds and purify our hearts. He means that sufficient facilities shall be provided for the working out of his plans. I bid you seek counsel from God. Seek Him with the whole heart, and ‘whatsoever He saith unto you, do.’ John 2:5.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 414, 415.

- c. What did Jesus tell the servant at the wedding to do? John 2:6–8.
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“Beside the doorway stood six large stone water jars, and Jesus bade the servants fill these with water. It was done. Then as the wine was wanted for immediate use, He said, ‘Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast.’ Instead of the water with which the vessels had been filled, there flowed forth wine.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 148.

- a. When the wine was served, how did the governor of the feast respond? John 2:9, 10.

“Neither the ruler of the feast nor the guests generally were aware that the supply of wine had failed. Upon tasting that which the servants brought, the ruler found it superior to any he had ever before drunk, and very different from that served at the beginning of the feast.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 148.

- b. What type of wine did Christ provide? Isaiah 65:8.

“The wine which Christ provided for the feast, and that which He gave to the disciples as a symbol of His own blood, was the pure juice of the grape. To this the prophet Isaiah refers when he speaks of the new wine ‘in the cluster;’ and says, ‘Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it.’ Isaiah 65:8. . . .

“The unfermented wine which He provided for the wedding guests was a wholesome and refreshing drink. Its effect was to bring the taste into harmony with a healthful appetite.”—*Ibid.*, p. 149.

- c. What does Scripture say about fermented wine? Proverbs 20:1; 23:29–35.

“It was Christ who in the Old Testament gave the warning to Israel, ‘Wine is a mocker; strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.’ Proverbs 20:1. And He Himself provided no such beverage. Satan tempts men to indulgence that will becloud reason and benumb the spiritual perceptions, but Christ teaches us to bring the lower nature into subjection. His whole life was an example of self-denial. In order to break the power of appetite, He suffered in our behalf the severest test that humanity could endure. It was Christ who directed that John the Baptist should drink neither wine nor strong drink. It was He who enjoined similar abstinence upon the wife of Manoah. And He pronounced a curse upon the man who should put the bottle to his neighbor’s lips. Christ did not contradict His own teaching.”—*Ibid.*

- a. What objectives were achieved both through Christ's presence and His miracle at the wedding feast, even for us today? John 2:11.

“Christ knew all things; He looked down the ages to our own time, and saw what would be the condition of society in the close of the world's history. He saw thousands upon thousands perishing in the use of wine and strong drink. The world would gradually come into the same state as it was in the days before the flood. But heaven has lifted a danger signal, that men may take warning, and cooperate with God for their own self-preservation. He has given us examples of absolute abstinence, and provided instruction that, if followed, will result in the creation and preservation of the vigor, skill, and excellency of our children.”—*The Signs of the Times*, April 16, 1896.

- b. Describe the refreshing type of attitude that Christ exemplified throughout His ministry. Matthew 11:29.

“Jesus began the work of reformation by coming into close sympathy with humanity. While He showed the greatest reverence for the law of God, He rebuked the pretentious piety of the Pharisees, and tried to free the people from the senseless rules that bound them. He was seeking to break down the barriers which separated the different classes of society, that He might bring men together as children of one family. His attendance at the marriage feast was designed to be a step toward effecting this.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 150.

“Jesus reproved self-indulgence in all its forms, yet He was social in His nature. He accepted the hospitality of all classes, visiting the homes of the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant, and seeking to elevate their thoughts from questions of commonplace life to those things that are spiritual and eternal. He gave no license to dissipation, and no shadow of worldly levity marred His conduct; yet He found pleasure in scenes of innocent happiness, and by His presence sanctioned the social gathering. A Jewish marriage was an impressive occasion, and its joy was not displeasing to the Son of man. By attending this feast, Jesus honored marriage as a divine institution.”— *Ibid.*, pp. 150, 151.

- a. What should we learn from the example of Christ that distinguished Him in contrast to the religious rulers of His day? Proverbs 18:24.

“The ministry of Christ was in marked contrast to that of the Jewish elders. Their regard for tradition and formalism had destroyed all real freedom of thought or action. They lived in continual dread of defilement. To avoid contact with the ‘unclean,’ they kept aloof, not only from the Gentiles, but from the majority of their own people, seeking neither to benefit them nor to win their friendship. By dwelling constantly on these matters, they had dwarfed their minds and narrowed the orbit of their lives. Their example encouraged egotism and intolerance among all classes of the people.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 150.

- b. What should be our aim in all social interactions? Proverbs 11:30.

“We can manifest a thousand little attentions in friendly words and pleasant looks, which will be reflected upon us again. Thoughtless Christians manifest by their neglect of others that they are not in union with Christ. It is impossible to be in union with Christ and yet be unkind to others and forgetful of their rights.

“We should all become witnesses for Jesus. Social power, sanctified by the grace of Christ, must be improved in winning souls to the Saviour. Let the world see that we are not selfishly absorbed in our own interests, but that we desire others to share our blessings and privileges. Let them see that our religion does not make us unsympathetic or exacting. Let all who profess to have found Christ minister as He did for the benefit of men. We should never give to the world the false impression that Christians are a gloomy, unhappy people.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 428.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

Fri, Jan 17

1. Describe the spiritual fruits borne by the miracle of Christ in Cana.
2. Describe the relationship between Christ and His mother.
3. Why did the governor of the feast show surprise?
4. What kind of wine appropriately symbolizes the blood of Christ?
5. At social gatherings, what should we recall from the example of Jesus?

Jesus in the Temple

MEMORY VERSE: “But the Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him” (Habakkuk 2:20).

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 491–500.

“The precincts of the church should be invested with a sacred reverence.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 494.

1. THE TEMPLE DEFILED

Sun, Jan 19

- a. Describe the situation that prevailed in the temple of Jerusalem at the beginning of Christ’s public ministry. John 2:13, 14.

“Every Jew was required to pay yearly a half shekel as ‘a ransom for his soul.’ . . . Besides this, large sums were brought as freewill offerings, to be deposited in the temple treasury. And it was required that all foreign coin should be changed for a coin called the temple shekel, which was accepted for the service of the sanctuary. The money changing gave opportunity for fraud and extortion, and it had grown into a disgraceful traffic, which was a source of revenue to the priests.

“The dealers demanded exorbitant prices for the animals sold, and they shared their profits with the priests and rulers, who thus enriched themselves at the expense of the people.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 155.

- b. How did this affect the temple services? Ezekiel 22:26 (last part).

“A great number of sacrifices were offered at the time of the Passover, and the sales at the temple were very large. The consequent confusion indicated a noisy cattle market rather than the sacred temple of God. There could be heard sharp bargaining, the lowing of cattle, the bleating of sheep, the cooing of doves, mingled with the chinking of coin and angry disputation. So great was the confusion that the worshipers were disturbed, and the words addressed to the Most High were drowned in the uproar that invaded the temple.”—*Ibid.*

- a. How does God consider the place where He manifests His presence—and what was His first directive at Mt. Sinai? Exodus 3:1–5; 19:12, 13.

“When the Lord descended upon Mount Sinai, the place was consecrated by His presence. . . . Thus was taught the lesson that wherever God manifests His presence, the place is holy.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 155, 156.

- b. How did Christ react to the desecration of the temple? John 2:15, 16.

“As Jesus came into the temple, He took in the whole scene. He saw the unfair transactions. He saw the distress of the poor, who thought that without shedding of blood there would be no forgiveness for their sins. He saw the outer court of His temple converted into a place of unholy traffic. The sacred enclosure had become one vast exchange.”—*Ibid.*, p. 157.

“Slowly descending the steps, and raising the scourge of cords gathered up on entering the enclosure, He bids the bargaining company depart from the precincts of the temple. With a zeal and severity He has never before manifested, He overthrows the tables of the money-changers. The coin falls, ringing sharply upon the marble pavement. None presume to question His authority. None dare stop to gather up their ill-gotten gain. Jesus does not smite them with the whip of cords, but in His hand that simple scourge seems terrible as a flaming sword. Officers of the temple, speculating priests, brokers and cattle traders, with their sheep and oxen, rush from the place, with the one thought of escaping from the condemnation of His presence.”—*Ibid.*, p. 158.

- c. What did Christ’s act in purifying the temple signify? Malachi 3:1–3.

“The courts of the temple at Jerusalem, filled with the tumult of unholy traffic, represented all too truly the temple of the heart, defiled by the presence of sensual passion and unholy thoughts. In cleansing the temple from the world’s buyers and sellers, Jesus announced His mission to cleanse the heart from the defilement of sin—from the earthly desires, the selfish lusts, the evil habits, that corrupt the soul.”—*Ibid.*, p. 161.

- a. What was God's original purpose in establishing His sanctuary among His people? Exodus 25:8.

“That temple, erected for the abode of the divine Presence, was designed to be an object lesson for Israel and for the world. From eternal ages it was God's purpose that every created being, from the bright and holy seraph to man, should be a temple for the indwelling of the Creator.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 161.

- b. Why are believers referred to as the temple of God—and how are we wholeheartedly to maintain the sanctity of this temple? 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; Isaiah 57:15.

“Because of sin, humanity ceased to be a temple for God. Darkened and defiled by evil, the heart of man no longer revealed the glory of the Divine One. But by the incarnation of the Son of God, the purpose of Heaven is fulfilled. God dwells in humanity, and through saving grace the heart of man becomes again His temple.”—*Ibid*.

“If we believe that the end of all things is at hand, ‘what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?’

“Every soul who truly believes the truth will have corresponding works. All will be earnest and solemn, and unwearied in their efforts to win souls to Christ. If the truth is first planted deep in their own souls, then they will seek to plant it in the hearts of others. The truth is kept altogether too much in the outer court. Bring it into the inner temple of the soul, enthrone it in the heart, and let it control the life. The word of God should be studied and obeyed, then the heart will find rest and peace and joy, and the aspirations will tend heavenward; but when truth is kept apart from the life, in the outer court, the heart is not warmed with the glowing fire of God's goodness.

“The religion of Jesus is, by many, reserved for certain days, or certain occasions, and at other times is laid aside and neglected. The abiding principle of truth is not merely for a few hours on the Sabbath, or for a few acts of charity, but it is to be brought into the heart, refining and sanctifying the character.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 547.

- a. What must we realize about our helpless condition in seeking to purify the temple? Jeremiah 2:22; Job 14:4.

“No man can of himself cast out the evil throning that have taken possession of the heart.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 161.

- b. What is the secret to being able to stand before a holy God with a cleansed heart? Ezekiel 36:25–27; Zechariah 3:3–5.

“Jacob had been guilty of a great sin in his conduct toward Esau; but he had repented. His transgression had been forgiven, and his sin purged; therefore he could endure the revelation of God’s presence. But wherever men came before God while willfully cherishing evil, they were destroyed. At the second advent of Christ the wicked shall be consumed ‘with the Spirit of His mouth,’ and destroyed ‘with the brightness of His coming.’ 2 Thessalonians 2:8. The light of the glory of God, which imparts life to the righteous, will slay the wicked.

“In the time of John the Baptist, Christ was about to appear as the revealer of the character of God. His very presence would make manifest to men their sin. Only as they were willing to be purged from sin could they enter into fellowship with Him. Only the pure in heart could abide in His presence.”—*Ibid.*, p. 108.

“Only Christ can cleanse the soul temple. But He will not force an entrance. He comes not into the heart as to the temple of old; but He says, ‘Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him.’ Revelation 3:20. He will come, not for one day merely; for He says, ‘I will dwell in them, and walk in them; . . . and they shall be My people.’ ‘He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.’ 2 Corinthians 6:16; Micah 7:19. His presence will cleanse and sanctify the soul, so that it may be a holy temple unto the Lord, and ‘an habitation of God through the Spirit.’ Ephesians 2:21, 22.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 161, 162.

“While Jesus ministers in the sanctuary above, He is still by His Spirit the minister of the church on earth.”—*Ibid.*, p. 166.

- a. How does God hold the leaders of His people accountable to diligently uphold the sacredness of His house? Habakkuk 2:20; Ezekiel 44:23.
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“The precincts of God’s temple should have been regarded as sacred. But in the strife for gain, all this was lost sight of.

“The priests and rulers were called to be the representatives of God to the nation; they should have corrected the abuses of the temple court. They should have given to the people an example of integrity and compassion.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 156.

“It is too true that reverence for the house of God has become almost extinct. Sacred things and places are not discerned; the holy and exalted are not appreciated. . . . God gave rules of order, perfect and exact, to His ancient people. Has His character changed? Is He not the great and mighty God who rules in the heaven of heavens? Would it not be well for us often to read the directions given by God Himself to the Hebrews, that we who have the light of the glorious truth shining upon us may imitate their reverence for the house of God?”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 495, 496.

- b. Explain the essential victory to be gained in Christ’s strength. Matthew 5:8; 1 John 3:1–3.
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“I call upon everyone who claims to be a son of God never to forget this great truth, that we need the Spirit of God within us in order to reach heaven, and the work of Christ without us in order to give us a title to the immortal inheritance.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 442.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

Fri, Jan 24

1. Who were the leaders of the iniquitous trade in the temple?
2. What should be the attitude of anyone who comes before God?
3. Explain the spiritual significance the temple at Jerusalem was to have.
4. What did Christ declare in cleansing the temple?
5. How only can our faulty human heart be cleansed?

First Sabbath Offering

Sabbath, February 1, 2025



World Disaster Relief

There is no question that wars, rumors of wars, horrific accidents, droughts, floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, fires, and pestilences are increasing around the world with breakneck speed—all in fulfillment of the Bible prophecies we study. Surely, in all these tragedies, we can clearly discern the footsteps of an approaching God. Many thousands suffer immensely from these extreme difficulties, calling for various types of assistance from the ambassadors of Jesus Christ to apply the healing balm of Gilead.

In these painful predicaments, the GC Welfare Department has shared the blessings provided from our fund through the offerings sent by you, our brethren around the world. These are sent in a personal and specific way to meet the needs, as well as through First Sabbath Offerings. Dear brethren, your offerings have served as shelter for those who have lost their homes in natural tragedies; they have provided food for hundreds of families and care for the orphan and widow, extending sustenance and help to them. These offerings have also aided parents in obtaining seeds to plant and feed their families or begin a small enterprise so that countless persons of our faith can have a source of income and work that would be otherwise impossible for them.

Thank God that in these times of trial, many have been touched to place their donations on the altar of the Lord. On behalf of those who are served, we deeply thank you!

However, the needs do not cease—on the contrary, they are increasing more every day, so your generosity helps immensely.

“The cross of Christ appeals to the benevolence of every follower of the blessed Saviour. The principle there illustrated is to give, give. This, carried out in actual benevolence and good works, is the true fruit of the Christian life.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 14.

Today, as you present your special offering for the first Sabbath, please do your utmost to honor God. Whether with little or much, all can do their very best. From the sum of this shared love, we will continue to distribute blessings to our brethren throughout the world. “He who gives to the needy blesses others, and is blessed himself in a still greater degree” (Ibid., p. 13). May God bless you greatly!

General Conference Welfare Department

Jesus and Nicodemus

MEMORY VERSE: “Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

Suggested Reading: *Steps to Christ*, pp. 67–75.

“The fountain of the heart must be purified before the streams can become pure. He who is trying to reach heaven by his own works in keeping the law is attempting an impossibility.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 172.

1. A PROMINENT MAN SEEKS OUT JESUS

Sun, Jan 26

- a. Who was Nicodemus, and how was he considered in the eyes of the people? John 3:1, 10.

“Nicodemus held a high position of trust in the Jewish nation. He was highly educated, and possessed talents of no ordinary character, and he was an honored member of the national council. . . . Though rich, learned, and honored, he had been strangely attracted by the humble Nazarene.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 167.

“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.”—*Ibid.*, p. 171.

- b. At what hour did Nicodemus go to meet Jesus? John 3:2 (first part).

“Learning by special inquiry the Saviour’s place of retirement in the Mount of Olives, he waited until the city was hushed in slumber, and then sought Him.”—*Ibid.*, p. 168.

- a. What shows the kind understanding of Jesus in receiving His visitor at such a late hour of night? Psalm 31:20, 21.

“[Nicodemus] greatly desired an interview with Jesus, but shrank from seeking Him openly. It would be too humiliating for a ruler of the Jews to acknowledge himself in sympathy with a teacher as yet so little known. And should his visit come to the knowledge of the Sanhedrin, it would draw upon him their scorn and denunciation. He resolved upon a secret interview, excusing this on the ground that if he were to go openly, others might follow his example.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 168.

- b. Describe how Nicodemus began his interview with Jesus. John 3:2.

“In the presence of Christ, Nicodemus felt a strange timidity, which he endeavored to conceal under an air of composure and dignity. ‘Rabbi,’ he said, ‘we know that Thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him.’ By speaking of Christ’s rare gifts as a teacher, and also of His wonderful power to perform miracles, he hoped to pave the way for his interview. His words were designed to express and to invite confidence; but they really expressed unbelief. He did not acknowledge Jesus to be the Messiah, but only a teacher sent from God.”—*Ibid.*

- c. With what concept did Christ abruptly surprise Nicodemus? John 3:3.

“Instead of recognizing this salutation, Jesus bent His eyes upon the speaker, as if reading his very soul. In His infinite wisdom He saw before Him a seeker after truth. He knew the object of this visit, and with a desire to deepen the conviction already resting upon His listener’s mind, He came directly to the point, saying solemnly, yet kindly, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ John 3:3, margin.

“Nicodemus had come to the Lord thinking to enter into a discussion with Him, but Jesus laid bare the foundation principles of truth.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 168–171.

- a. How did Nicodemus respond to what Christ said he needed—and, like him, why do we all need a new birth experience? John 3:4–8.
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“The figure of the new birth, which Jesus had used, was not wholly unfamiliar to Nicodemus. Converts from heathenism to the faith of Israel were often compared to children just born. Therefore he must have perceived that the words of Christ were not to be taken in a literal sense. But by virtue of his birth as an Israelite he regarded himself as sure of a place in the kingdom of God. He felt that he needed no change. Hence his surprise at the Saviour’s words. He was irritated by their close application to himself. The pride of the Pharisee was struggling against the honest desire of the seeker after truth. He wondered that Christ should speak to him as He did, not respecting his position as ruler in Israel.

“Surprised out of his self-possession, he answered Christ in words full of irony, ‘How can a man be born when he is old?’ Like many others when cutting truth is brought home to the conscience, he revealed the fact that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. There is in him nothing that responds to spiritual things; for spiritual things are spiritually discerned.

“But the Saviour did not meet argument with argument. Raising His hand with solemn, quiet dignity, He pressed the truth home with greater assurance, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.’ ”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 171.

- b. When and how can an individual be born again? John 1:12, 13.
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“‘God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son,’ that man might be reconciled to God. Through the merits of Christ he can be restored to harmony with his Maker. His heart must be renewed by divine grace; he must have a new life from above. This change is the new birth, without which, says Jesus, ‘he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ ”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 467.

“Through [the] simple act of believing God, the Holy Spirit has begotten a new life in your heart. You are as a child born into the family of God, and He loves you as He loves His Son.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 52.

- a. What symbolizes the cleansing and regeneration that comes with the new birth? Mark 16:16 (first part).
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“The converting power of God can transform inherited and cultivated tendencies; for the religion of Jesus is uplifting. ‘Born again’ means a transformation, a new birth in Christ Jesus.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 206.

“Christ has made baptism the sign of entrance to His spiritual kingdom. He has made this a positive condition with which all must comply who wish to be acknowledged as under the authority of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Before man can find a home in the church, before passing the threshold of God’s spiritual kingdom, he is to receive the impress of the divine name, ‘*The Lord our Righteousness.*’ Jeremiah 23:6.

“Baptism is a most solemn renunciation of the world. Those who are baptized in the threefold name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, at the very entrance of their Christian life declare publicly that they have forsaken the service of Satan and have become members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King. They have obeyed the command: ‘Come out from among them, and be ye separate, . . . and touch not the unclean thing.’ And to them is fulfilled the promise: ‘I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.’ 2 Corinthians 6:17, 18.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 91.

- b. What is declared about the evil of our human nature and God’s plan to transform us? John 3:6; Jeremiah 17:9; Ephesians 5:26, 27.
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“It is impossible for us, of ourselves, to escape from the pit of sin in which we are sunken. Our hearts are evil, and we cannot change them. . . . Education, culture, the exercise of the will, human effort, all have their proper sphere, but here they are powerless. They may produce an outward correctness of behavior, but they cannot change the heart; they cannot purify the springs of life. There must be a power working from within, a new life from above, before men can be changed from sin to holiness. That power is Christ. His grace alone can quicken the lifeless faculties of the soul, and attract it to God, to holiness.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 18.

- a. What message were apostles later to write regarding the change in focus that comes with the new birth? Galatians 2:20; 1 John 2:15–17.

“The converting power of God can transform inherited and cultivated tendencies; for the religion of Jesus is uplifting. ‘Born again’ means a transformation, a new birth in Christ Jesus.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 206.

“[Paul] was convinced that if the minds of men could be brought to comprehend the amazing sacrifice made by the Majesty of heaven, all selfishness would be banished from their hearts. He directs the mind first to the position which Christ occupied in heaven, in the bosom of His Father; he reveals Him afterward as laying off His glory, voluntarily subjecting Himself to all the humbling conditions of man’s nature, assuming the responsibilities of a servant, and becoming obedient unto death, and that death the most ignominious and revolting, the most shameful, the most agonizing—the death of the cross. Can Christians contemplate this wonderful exhibition of the love of God to man without emotions of love and a realizing sense of the fact that we are not our own? Such a Master should not be served from grudging, covetous, selfish motives.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 458.

“I would address you as Christ addressed Nicodemus: ‘Ye must be born again.’ Those who have Christ ruling within will feel no desire to imitate the world’s display. They will carry everywhere the standard of the cross, ever bearing witness of higher aims and nobler themes than those in which worldlings are absorbed. Our dress, our dwellings, our conversation, should testify of our consecration to God. What power would attend those who thus evinced that they had given up all for Christ.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 189.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

Fri, Jan 31

1. Because of his good works, how did Nicodemus view himself?
2. How did Nicodemus behave in the presence of Christ?
3. What does it mean to be “born again”?
4. How does the new birth take place?
5. What change in attitude comes as a result of the new birth, and why?

The Holy Spirit's Moving

MEMORY VERSE: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:14, 15).

Suggested Reading: *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 95–102.

“Look, O look to Jesus and live!”—*Christian Education*, p. 76.

1. PROMPTING INQUIRY

Sun, Feb 2

a. What question of Nicodemus shows that his heart was softening? John 3:9.

“Jesus virtually says to Nicodemus: It is not controversy that will help your case: it is not arguments that will bring light to the soul. You must have a new heart, or you cannot discern the kingdom of heaven. It is not greater evidence that will bring you into a right position, but new purposes, new springs of action. You must be born again. Until this change takes place, making all things new, the strongest evidences that could be presented would be useless. The want is in your own heart; everything must be changed, or you cannot see the kingdom of God.

“This was a very humiliating statement to Nicodemus. . . . He was not spiritually minded enough to discern the meaning of the words of Christ. But the Saviour did not meet argument with argument. . . .

“Some gleams of the truth were penetrating the ruler’s mind. Christ’s words filled him with awe, and led to the inquiry, ‘How can these things be?’ With deep earnestness Jesus answered, ‘Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?’ His words convey to Nicodemus the lesson that, instead of feeling irritated over the plain words of truth, and indulging irony, he should have a far more humble opinion of himself, because of his spiritual ignorance. Yet the words of Christ were spoken with such solemn dignity, and both look and tone expressed such earnest love to him, that he was not offended as he realized his humiliating position.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 368, 369.

- a. In what did the Pharisees pride themselves? Luke 18:9–12.
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“The Jews had been first called into the Lord’s vineyard, and because of this they were proud and self-righteous. Their long years of service they regarded as entitling them to receive a larger reward than others. Nothing was more exasperating to them than an intimation that the Gentiles were to be admitted to equal privileges with themselves in the things of God.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 400.

- b. How did Jesus illustrate the Holy Spirit’s work in the heart? John 3:8.
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“The wind is heard among the branches of the trees, rustling the leaves and flowers; yet it is invisible, and no man knows whence it comes or whither it goes. So with the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart. It can no more be explained than can the movements of the wind. A person may not be able to tell the exact time or place, or to trace all the circumstances in the process of conversion; but this does not prove him to be unconverted. By an agency as unseen as the wind, Christ is constantly working upon the heart.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 172.

- c. How are divine impressions fixed in the heart? Isaiah 30:21; Jeremiah 42:3; Matthew 16:17.
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“Little by little, perhaps unconsciously to the receiver, impressions are made that tend to draw the soul to Christ. These may be received through meditating upon Him, through reading the Scriptures, or through hearing the word from the living preacher. Suddenly, as the Spirit comes with more direct appeal, the soul gladly surrenders itself to Jesus. By many this is called sudden conversion; but it is the result of long wooing by the Spirit of God—a patient, protracted process.”—*Ibid.*

“Allow your hearts to be softened and subdued by the Spirit of God. Let ice-bound souls melt under the Holy Spirit’s working.”—*Letters and Manuscripts*, vol. 12, Letter 53, 1897.

- a. How are inner workings of the Holy Spirit revealed outwardly? Galatians 5:22–25.
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“While the wind is itself invisible, it produces effects that are seen and felt. So the work of the Spirit upon the soul will reveal itself in every act of him who has felt its saving power. When the Spirit of God takes possession of the heart, it transforms the life. Sinful thoughts are put away, evil deeds are renounced; love, humility, and peace take the place of anger, envy, and strife. Joy takes the place of sadness, and the countenance reflects the light of heaven.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 173.

- b. When does a person receive the blessing of transformation? Romans 10:9, 10; 1 John 1:9.
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“No one sees the hand that lifts the burden, or beholds the light descend from the courts above. The blessing comes when by faith the soul surrenders itself to God. Then that power which no human eye can see creates a new being in the image of God.”—*Ibid.*

“If you have the Holy Spirit molding and fashioning your heart daily, then you will have divine insight to perceive the character of the kingdom of God. Nicodemus received the lesson of Christ and became a true believer.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 369, 370.

- c. How does Christ illustrate this process? Matthew 13:33.
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“The leaven hidden in the flour works invisibly to bring the whole mass under its leavening process; so the leaven of truth works secretly, silently, steadily, to transform the soul. The natural inclinations are softened and subdued. New thoughts, new feelings, new motives, are implanted. A new standard of character is set up—the life of Christ. The mind is changed; the faculties are roused to action in new lines. Man is not endowed with new faculties, but the faculties he has are sanctified. The conscience is awakened. We are endowed with traits of character that enable us to do service for God.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 98, 99.

- a. How did Jesus illustrate His crucifixion soon to occur? John 3:14, 15.
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“[John 3:14, 15 quoted.] Here was ground with which Nicodemus was familiar. The symbol of the uplifted serpent made plain to him the Saviour’s mission. When the people of Israel were dying from the sting of the fiery serpents, God directed Moses to make a serpent of brass, and place it on high in the midst of the congregation. Then the word was sounded throughout the encampment that all who would look upon the serpent should live. The people well knew that in itself the serpent had no power to help them. It was a symbol of Christ. As the image made in the likeness of the destroying serpents was lifted up for their healing, so One made ‘in the likeness of sinful flesh’ was to be their Redeemer. Romans 8:3. Many of the Israelites regarded the sacrificial service as having in itself virtue to set them free from sin. God desired to teach them that it had no more value than that serpent of brass. It was to lead their minds to the Saviour. Whether for the healing of their wounds or the pardon of their sins, they could do nothing for themselves but show their faith in the Gift of God. They were to look and live.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 174, 175.

- b. Despite the provision, why did some die? 1 Corinthians 10:9; Hebrews 3:12.
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“Many of the Israelites saw no help in the remedy which Heaven had appointed. The dead and dying were all around them, and they knew that, without divine aid, their own fate was certain; but they continued to lament their wounds, their pains, their sure death, until their strength was gone, and their eyes were glazed, when they might have had instant healing.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 432.

- c. If we want to be saved, where must we look? Hebrews 6:19, 20.
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“The fatal effects of sin can be removed only by the provision that God has made. The Israelites saved their lives by looking upon the uplifted serpent. That look implied faith. They lived because they believed God’s word, and trusted in the means provided for their recovery. So the sinner may look to Christ, and live. He receives pardon through faith in the atoning sacrifice. . . . Christ has power and virtue in Himself to heal the repenting sinner.”—*Ibid.*, p. 431.

- a. What lesson later understood by Nicodemus do we need to assimilate—and always keep in mind? Ephesians 2:8; Luke 13:20, 21.

“Often the question arises, Why, then, are there so many, claiming to believe God’s word, in whom there is not seen a reformation in words, in spirit, and in character? Why are there so many who cannot bear opposition to their purposes and plans, who manifest an unholy temper, and whose words are harsh, overbearing, and passionate? There is seen in their lives the same love of self, the same selfish indulgence, the same temper and hasty speech, that is seen in the life of the worldling. There is the same sensitive pride, the same yielding to natural inclination, the same perversity of character, as if the truth were wholly unknown to them. The reason is that they are not converted. They have not hidden the leaven of truth in the heart. It has not had opportunity to do its work. Their natural and cultivated tendencies to evil have not been submitted to its transforming power. Their lives reveal the absence of the grace of Christ, an unbelief in His power to transform the character.

“ ‘Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.’ Romans 10:17. The Scriptures are the great agency in the transformation of character. Christ prayed, ‘Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth.’ John 17:17. If studied and obeyed, the word of God works in the heart, subduing every unholy attribute. The Holy Spirit comes to convict of sin, and the faith that springs up in the heart works by love to Christ, conforming us in body, soul, and spirit to His own image. Then God can use us to do His will. The power given us works from within outwardly, leading us to communicate to others the truth that has been communicated to us.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 99, 100.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

Fri, Feb 7

1. What was the main characteristic of the Pharisees in the days of Christ?
2. Explain how we are regenerated into the likeness of Christ.
3. How is a transformation of the heart manifested?
4. Explain the symbol of the lifted serpent.
5. How does the parable of the leaven reveal growth in God’s grace?

Jesus and John the Baptist

MEMORY VERSE: “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 721–729.

“John the Baptist was pronounced by our Saviour the greatest of prophets. Yet what a contrast between the language of this man of God and that of many who profess to be ministers of the cross. When asked if he was the Christ, John declares himself unworthy even to unloose his Master’s sandals.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 224.

1. A PROBLEM AMONG THE DISCIPLES

Sun, Feb 9

a. What question arose among the disciples of John and the Jews? John 3:25.

“The disciples of John looked with jealousy upon the growing popularity of Jesus. They stood ready to criticize His work, and it was not long before they found occasion. A question arose between them and the Jews as to whether baptism availed to cleanse the soul from sin; they maintained that the baptism of Jesus differed essentially from that of John. Soon they were in dispute with Christ’s disciples in regard to the form of words proper to use at baptism, and finally as to the right of the latter to baptize at all.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 178.

b. How did John’s disciples express their envy over Christ’s work—and what noble answer did he give? John 3:26, 27.

“John had by nature the faults and weaknesses common to humanity, but the touch of divine love had transformed him. He dwelt in an atmosphere uncontaminated with selfishness and ambition, and far above the miasma of jealousy. He manifested no sympathy with the dissatisfaction of his disciples, but showed how clearly he understood his relation to the Messiah, and how gladly he welcomed the One for whom he had prepared the way.”—*Ibid.*, p. 179.

a. How did John demonstrate that he understood his mission? John 3:28, 29.

“John represented himself as the friend who acted as a messenger between the betrothed parties, preparing the way for the marriage. When the bridegroom had received his bride, the mission of the friend was fulfilled. He rejoiced in the happiness of those whose union he had promoted. So John had been called to direct the people to Jesus, and it was his joy to witness the success of the Saviour’s work.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 179.

b. Describe John’s work—and ours. John 1:23, 29.

“Looking in faith to the Redeemer, John had risen to the height of self-abnegation. He sought not to attract men to himself, but to lift their thoughts higher and still higher, until they should rest upon the Lamb of God. He himself had been only a voice, a cry in the wilderness. Now with joy he accepted silence and obscurity, that the eyes of all might be turned to the Light of life.

“Those who are true to their calling as messengers for God will not seek honor for themselves. Love for self will be swallowed up in love for Christ. No rivalry will mar the precious cause of the gospel. They will recognize that it is their work to proclaim, as did John the Baptist, ‘Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’ John 1:29. They will lift up Jesus, and with Him humanity will be lifted up. ‘Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.’ Isaiah 57:15.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 179, 180.

“Do not seek your own pleasure and convenience, but seek to know and do the will of God. Let each one inquire, Can I not point some soul to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world? Can I not comfort some desponding one? Can I not be the means of saving some soul in the kingdom of God? We want the deep movings of the Spirit of God in our hearts, that we may not only be able to secure for ourselves the white raiment, but that we may so influence others that their names may be entered in the book of life, never to be blotted out.”—*Historical Sketches*, p. 140.

- a. How did the majority of the people react to Christ's message? John 3:32.

“The disciples of John had declared that all men were coming to Christ; but with clearer insight, John said, ‘No man receiveth His witness;’ so few were ready to accept Him as the Saviour from sin. But ‘he that hath received His witness hath set his seal to this, that God is true.’ John 3:33, R.V.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 181.

- b. Upon whom is bestowed the gift of the Holy Spirit? John 3:34.

“We can receive of heaven's light only as we are willing to be emptied of self. We cannot discern the character of God, or accept Christ by faith, unless we consent to the bringing into captivity of every thought to the obedience of Christ. To all who do this the Holy Spirit is given without measure. In Christ ‘dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and in Him ye are made full.’ Colossians 2:9, 10, R.V.”—*Ibid.*

- c. How is the key to receiving a greater measure of the Holy Spirit further revealed in Scripture? John 14:15–17; Acts 5:32.

“We are not only to say, ‘I believe,’ but to practice the truth. It is by conformity to the will of God in our words, our deportment, our character, that we prove our connection with Him. Whenever one renounces sin, which is the transgression of the law, his life will be brought into conformity to the law, into perfect obedience. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. The light of the word carefully studied, the voice of conscience, the strivings of the Spirit, produce in the heart genuine love for Christ, who gave Himself a whole sacrifice to redeem the whole person, body, soul, and spirit. And love is manifested in obedience. The line of demarcation will be plain and distinct between those who love God and keep His commandments, and those who love Him not and disregard His precepts.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 92.

- a. Why is it important to understand the step we are taking for Christ when we decide to be baptized? John 3:36.
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“Apart from Christ, baptism, like any other service, is a worthless form.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 181.

“No need of disputation as to whether Christ’s baptism or John’s purified from sin. It is the grace of Christ that gives life to the soul.”—*Ibid*.

“Only through Christ can immortality be obtained. Said Jesus: ‘He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life.’ John 3:36. Every man may come into possession of this priceless blessing if he will comply with the conditions. All ‘who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality,’ will receive ‘eternal life.’ Romans 2:7.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 533.

“Baptism is a most solemn renunciation of the world. Those who are baptized in the threefold name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, at the very entrance of their Christian life declare publicly that they have forsaken the service of Satan and have become members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 91.

- b. Explain the startling words of John the Baptist which revealed the depth of real-life commitment signified by baptism? Luke 3:7, 8.
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“John laid the ax to the root of the tree. He reproved sin, fearless of consequences, and prepared the way for the Lamb of God.

“Herod was affected as he listened to the powerful, pointed testimonies of John, and with deep interest he inquired what he must do to become his disciple. John was acquainted with the fact that he was about to marry his brother’s wife, while her husband was yet living, and faithfully told Herod that this was not lawful.”—*Early Writings*, p. 154.

“John the Baptist met sin with open rebuke in men of humble occupation and in men of high degree. He declared the truth to kings and nobles, whether they would hear or reject it. He spoke personally and pointedly.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 149.

- a. Upon realizing that the Pharisees were trying to create a crisis between John and Himself, what did Jesus do? John 4:1–3.
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“Jesus knew that [the Pharisees] would spare no effort to create a division between His own disciples and those of John. He knew that the storm was gathering which would sweep away one of the greatest prophets ever given to the world. Wishing to avoid all occasion for misunderstanding or dissension, He quietly ceased His labors, and withdrew to Galilee. We also, while loyal to truth, should try to avoid all that may lead to discord and misapprehension. For whenever these arise, they result in the loss of souls. Whenever circumstances occur that threaten to cause division, we should follow the example of Jesus and of John the Baptist.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 181.

- b. What should we learn from John’s attitude to defuse the crisis? John 3:30.
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“Like John’s disciples, many feel that the success of the work depends on the first laborer. Attention is fixed upon the human instead of the divine, jealousy comes in, and the work of God is marred. The one thus unduly honored is tempted to cherish self-confidence. He does not realize his dependence on God. The people are taught to rely on man for guidance, and thus they fall into error, and are led away from God.

“The work of God is not to bear the image and superscription of man. From time to time the Lord will bring in different agencies, through whom His purpose can best be accomplished. Happy are they who are willing for self to be humbled, saying with John the Baptist, ‘He must increase, but I must decrease.’”—*Ibid.*, p. 182.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

Fri, Feb 14

1. Why did John’s disciples become jealous of Christ’s work?
2. What did John declare to his disciples?
3. For what purpose is the gift of the Holy Spirit granted?
4. How does baptism fulfill its true objective?
5. What did Jesus and John do when they realized the danger of a crisis between their disciples?

Jesus and the Samaritan Woman

MEMORY VERSE: “But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14).

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 384–387.

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

1. JESUS IN SYCHAR

Sun, Feb 16

a. On His journey to Galilee, where did Jesus and His disciples stop? John 4:6.

“As Jesus sat by the well side, He was faint from hunger and thirst. The journey since morning had been long, and now the sun of noontide beat upon Him. His thirst was increased by the thought of the cool, refreshing water so near, yet inaccessible to Him; for He had no rope nor water jar, and the well was deep. The lot of humanity was His, and He waited for someone to come to draw.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 183.

b. Who came to the well, and what favor did Jesus ask of her—and what should we learn from this? John 4:7.

“The hatred between Jews and Samaritans prevented the woman from offering a kindness to Jesus; but the Saviour was seeking to find the key to this heart, and with the tact born of divine love, He asked, not offered, a favor. The offer of a kindness might have been rejected; but trust awakens trust. The King of heaven came to this outcast soul, asking a service at her hands. He who made the ocean, who controls the waters of the great deep, who opened the springs and channels of the earth, rested from His weariness at Jacob’s well, and was dependent upon a stranger’s kindness for even the gift of a drink of water.”—*Ibid.*, p. 184.

- a. How did Jesus call the woman's attention to the gift of salvation? John 4:10.

“The water that Christ referred to was the revelation of His grace in His word; His Spirit, His teaching, is as a satisfying fountain to every soul. Every other source to which they shall resort will prove unsatisfying. But the word of truth is as cool streams, represented as the waters of Lebanon, which are always satisfying. In Christ is fullness of joy forevermore.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 390.

- b. What was the woman's reaction to Christ's offer? John 4:11, 12.

“The woman's understanding did not comprehend the meaning of Christ; she supposed that he was speaking of the well before them.”—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, pp. 140, 141.

- c. How did Jesus distinguish between one kind of water and another—and how is this message to bless us, too? John 4:13, 14; Revelation 22:17.

“We should cherish love and gratitude, we should look unto Jesus and become transformed into His image. The result of this will be increased confidence, hope, patience, and courage. We shall be drinking of the water of life of which Christ spoke to the woman of Samaria. He said: ‘If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water. . . . Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.’ This water represents the life of Christ, and every soul must have it by coming into living connection with God. Then blessed, humble, grateful confidence will be an abiding principle in the soul. Unbelieving fear will be swept away before living faith. We shall contemplate the character of Him who first loved us.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 226.

- a. How did the Samaritan woman show that she still did not understand Christ's words? John 4:15.
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“The divine grace which He alone can impart, is as living water, purifying, refreshing, and invigorating the soul.

“Jesus did not convey the idea that merely one draft of the water of life would suffice the receiver. He who tastes of the love of Christ will continually long for more; but he seeks for nothing else. The riches, honors, and pleasures of the world do not attract him. The constant cry of his heart is, More of Thee. And He who reveals to the soul its necessity is waiting to satisfy its hunger and thirst. Every human resource and dependence will fail. The cisterns will be emptied, the pools become dry; but our Redeemer is an inexhaustible fountain. We may drink, and drink again, and ever find a fresh supply. He in whom Christ dwells has within himself the fountain of blessing— ‘a well of water springing up into everlasting life.’ From this source he may draw strength and grace sufficient for all his needs.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 187.

- b. Like the Samaritan woman and the wilderness sojourners in the Exodus, how do we often fail to recognize the wonderful grace that flows from Christ? Psalms 78:15, 16, 19, 20 (first part); 114:7, 8.
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“Moses smote the rock, but it was the Son of God who, veiled in the cloudy pillar, stood beside Moses, and caused the life-giving water to flow. Not only Moses and the elders, but all the congregation who stood at a distance, beheld the glory of the Lord; but had the cloud been removed, they would have been slain by the terrible brightness of Him who abode therein.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 298.

“Christ's gracious presence in His word is ever speaking to the soul, representing Him as the well of living water to refresh the thirsting soul. It is our privilege to have a living, abiding Saviour. He is the source of spiritual power implanted within us, and His influence will flow forth in words and actions, refreshing all within the sphere of our influence, begetting in them desires and aspirations for strength and purity, for holiness and peace, and for that joy which brings no sorrow with it. This is the result of an indwelling Saviour.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 390.

- a. What new subject did Jesus introduce in His conversation with the Samaritan woman—and how did she respond? John 4:16, 17 (first part).

“Jesus now abruptly turned the conversation. Before this soul could receive the gift He longed to bestow, she must be brought to recognize her sin and her Saviour. He ‘saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.’ She answered, ‘I have no husband.’ Thus she hoped to prevent all questioning in that direction.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 187.

- b. How did Jesus supplement her answer—and what does this remind us about all that He knows about every single one of us? John 4:17 (last part), 18; Psalm 139:7, 8, 11, 12.

“The greatness of God is to us incomprehensible. ‘The Lord’s throne is in heaven’ (Psalm 11:4); yet by His Spirit He is everywhere present. He has an intimate knowledge of, and a personal interest in, all the works of His hand.”—*Education*, p. 132.

“Heavenly angels examine the work that is put into our hands; and where there has been a departure from the principles of truth, ‘wanting’ is written in the records.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 155.

“God’s law reaches the feelings and motives, as well as the outward acts. It reveals the secrets of the heart, flashing light upon things before buried in darkness. God knows every thought, every purpose, every plan, every motive. The books of heaven record the sins that would have been committed had there been opportunity. God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing. By His law He measures the character of every man. As the artist transfers to the canvas the features of the face, so the features of each individual character are transferred to the books of heaven. God has a perfect photograph of every man’s character, and this photograph He compares with His law. He reveals to man the defects that mar his life, and calls upon him to repent and turn from sin.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 5, p. 1085.

5. JESUS REVEALS HIMSELF AS THE SAVIOUR

Thu, Feb 20

- a. What did the woman at the well finally realize about Jesus? John 4:19. Was this recognition sufficient?

“The listener trembled. A mysterious hand was turning the pages of her life history, bringing to view that which she had hoped to keep forever hidden. Who was He that could read the secrets of her life? There came to her thoughts of eternity, of the future Judgment, when all that is now hidden shall be revealed. In its light, conscience was awakened.

“She could deny nothing; but she tried to evade all mention of a subject so unwelcome. With deep reverence, she said, ‘Sir, I perceive that Thou art a prophet.’ Then, hoping to silence conviction, she turned to points of religious controversy. If this was a prophet, surely He could give her instruction concerning these matters that had been so long disputed.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 187, 188.

- b. When the woman manifested hope in the coming of the Messiah, what did Jesus say to her? John 4:25, 26.

“The gospel invitation is not to be narrowed down, and presented only to a select few, who, we suppose, will do us honor if they accept it. The message is to be given to all. Wherever hearts are open to receive the truth, Christ is ready to instruct them. He reveals to them the Father, and the worship acceptable to Him who reads the heart. For such He uses no parables. To them, as to the woman at the well, He says, ‘I that speak unto thee am He.’”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 194.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

Fri, Feb 21

1. Why did Jesus never perform a miracle in His own behalf?
2. What resource did Jesus use to lead the Samaritan woman to the gospel?
3. What did the Master say concerning the water of life?
4. Why did Christ mention the personal life of the Samaritan woman?
5. Name a promise associated with the coming of the Messiah.

First Sabbath Offering

Sabbath, March 1, 2025



“Children of Character” Education Center in Romania

“The early education of the youth generally shapes their characters for life.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 135.

Inspiration tells of an encouraging experience when the “children’s meetings, or Bible kindergarten, has done a good work. The lessons given are repeated by the children in their homes, and the mothers show their interest by preparing the children neatly for the school. Most are children of parents not of our faith.”—*Evangelism*, p. 583.

The “Children of Character” Education Center was founded in 2019 in Fagaras, a mountain city in Romania. Children between the ages of 2 and 5 are beautifully developing here. In addition to age-specific activities, they learn Bible stories, to pray, to sing and to make God their friend. As young as they are, they understand that God is in control and they learn to ask Him for help with their problems. Their character is built day by day. By God’s grace we can see remarkable transformations in the lives of these little children. For the future, we would like to educate those whose material situation does not allow it.

In the first year we started with 12 children; in the fourth year we had 32 children, 31 of them from outside the church. At present, the activity takes place in 4 rooms provided at the Romanian Union headquarters, but these are proving to be overcrowded as the enrollment petitions are beyond our capacity. By this, we understand that God wants us to continue and develop this wonderful activity and thus come in contact with as many children and their families as possible. So, in 2021, a piece of land was purchased outside the city and we obtained the necessary permits to start the construction. Now the foundation is already laid. We are very thankful to God for having touched your hearts—those of you who have sponsored the project up to this stage and those of you who will liberally do so now. With your gift, you will give children who don’t know God a chance to come closer to Him and receive a Christian education. We appeal to your goodwill and are sure that you will not remain indifferent, but will support us to bring this project to a successful conclusion and carry us in your prayers as well.

Your brothers and sisters from of the Romanian Union

The Birth of a Missionary

MEMORY VERSE: “Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest” (John 4:35).

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 182–187.

“Jesus had begun to break down the partition wall between Jew and Gentile, and to preach salvation to the world. Though He was a Jew, He mingled freely with the Samaritans, setting at nought the Pharisaic customs of His nation.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 193.

1. NEW LIFE, NEW PRIORITIES

Sun, Feb 23

- a. Upon recognizing Jesus as the Messiah, what did the Samaritan woman immediately do? John 4:28, 29.

“The woman had been filled with joy as she listened to Christ’s words. The wonderful revelation was almost overpowering. Leaving her waterpot, she returned to the city, to carry the message to others. Jesus knew why she had gone. Leaving her waterpot spoke unmistakably as to the effect of His words. It was the earnest desire of her soul to obtain the living water; and she forgot her errand to the well, she forgot the Saviour’s thirst, which she had purposed to supply. With heart overflowing with gladness, she hastened on her way, to impart to others the precious light she had received.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 191.

- b. What did the inhabitants of Sychar do when they heard the testimony of their fellow citizen? John 4:30.

“[The woman’s] words touched their hearts. There was a new expression on her face, a change in her whole appearance. They were interested to see Jesus.”—*Ibid.*

- a. As Jesus saw the inhabitants of Sychar coming, what did He say to His disciples? John 4:35–38.

“ ‘He that reapeth,’ He said, ‘receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.’ Here Christ points out the sacred service owed to God by those who receive the gospel. They are to be His living agencies. He requires their individual service. And whether we sow or reap, we are working for God. One scatters the seed; another gathers in the harvest; and both the sower and the reaper receive wages. They rejoice together in the reward of their labor.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 191, 192.

- b. What was the effect of the woman’s testimony about Christ—and what can we learn from the impact it had? John 4:39.

“When we are united to Christ, we have the mind of Christ. Purity and love shine forth in the character, meekness and truth control the life. The very expression of the countenance is changed. Christ abiding in the soul exerts a transforming power, and the outward aspect bears witness to the peace and joy that reign within. We drink in the love of Christ, as the branch draws nourishment from the vine. If we are grafted in Christ, if fiber by fiber we have been united with the Living Vine, we shall give evidence of the fact by bearing rich clusters of living fruit. If we are connected with the Light, we shall be channels of light, and in our words and works we shall reflect light to the world. . . .

“By beholding we are to become changed; and as we meditate upon the perfections of the divine Model, we shall desire to become wholly transformed, and renewed in the image of His purity. It is by faith in the Son of God that transformation takes place in the character, and the child of wrath becomes the child of God. He passes from death unto life; he becomes spiritual and discerns spiritual things. The wisdom of God enlightens his mind, and he beholds wondrous things out of His law. As a man is converted by the truth, the work of transformation of character goes on.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 337, 338.

a. What petition did the Samaritans make to Jesus—and why? John 4:40.

b. Describe the result of Christ's time in Samaria. John 4:41.

“In the words spoken to the woman at the well, good seed had been sown, and how quickly the harvest was received. The Samaritans came and heard Jesus, and believed on Him. Crowding about Him at the well, they plied Him with questions, and eagerly received His explanations of many things that had been obscure to them. As they listened, their perplexity began to clear away. They were like a people in great darkness tracing up a sudden ray of light till they had found the day. But they were not satisfied with this short conference. They were anxious to hear more, and to have their friends also listen to this wonderful teacher. They invited Him to their city, and begged Him to remain with them. For two days He tarried in Samaria, and many more believed on Him.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 192.

“Christ revealed God to His disciples in a way that performed in their hearts a special work, such as He has long been urging us to allow Him to do in our hearts. There are many who, in dwelling too largely upon theory, have lost sight of the living power of the Saviour's example. They have lost sight of Him as the humble, self-denying worker. What they need is to behold Jesus. Daily we need the fresh revealing of His presence.”—*Reflecting Christ*, p. 302.

c. What did many Samaritans declare after having accepted Jesus as the Messiah? John 4:42.

“The Pharisees despised the simplicity of Jesus. They ignored His miracles, and demanded a sign that He was the Son of God. But the Samaritans asked no sign, and Jesus performed no miracles among them, save in revealing the secrets of her life to the woman at the well. Yet many received Him. In their new joy they said to the woman, ‘Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.’”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 192, 193.

- a. Upon what prophecy did the Samaritans base their faith in the promised Messiah? Genesis 49:10.
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“The Samaritans believed that the Messiah was to come as the Redeemer, not only of the Jews, but of the world. The Holy Spirit through Moses had foretold Him as a prophet sent from God. Through Jacob it had been declared that unto Him should the gathering of the people be; and through Abraham, that in Him all the nations of the earth should be blessed. On these scriptures the people of Samaria based their faith in the Messiah. The fact that the Jews had misinterpreted the later prophets, attributing to the first advent the glory of Christ’s second coming, had led the Samaritans to discard all the sacred writings except those given through Moses. But as the Saviour swept away these false interpretations, many accepted the later prophecies and the words of Christ Himself in regard to the kingdom of God.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 193.

- b. What can we today learn from the fact that the Samaritans were amazingly open to the truth? Ecclesiastes 11:4, 5.
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“All over the world men and women are looking wistfully to heaven. Prayers and tears and inquiries go up from souls longing for light, for grace, for the Holy Spirit. Many are on the verge of the kingdom, waiting only to be gathered in.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 109.

- c. What do individuals become when they truly receive Christ? Give examples. Mark 5:18–20; 7:31–37.
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“[Christ’s] Spirit will develop in man all that will ennoble the character and dignify the nature. It will build man up for the glory of God in body and soul and spirit. . . . And souls that have been degraded into instruments of Satan are still through the power of Christ transformed into messengers of righteousness, and sent forth by the Son of God to tell what ‘great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.’ ”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 341.

- a. What lessons do we learn from the Samaritan woman? 1 John 1:1–3; 2 Corinthians 5:14 (first part).
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“As soon as she had found the Saviour the Samaritan woman brought others to Him. She proved herself a more effective missionary than His own disciples. The disciples saw nothing in Samaria to indicate that it was an encouraging field. Their thoughts were fixed upon a great work to be done in the future. They did not see that right around them was a harvest to be gathered. But through the woman whom they despised, a whole cityful were brought to hear the Saviour. She carried the light at once to her countrymen.

“This woman represents the working of a practical faith in Christ. Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary. He who drinks of the living water becomes a fountain of life. The receiver becomes a giver. The grace of Christ in the soul is like a spring in the desert, welling up to refresh all, and making those who are ready to perish eager to drink of the water of life.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 195.

- b. How is this experience to motivate us today? Ecclesiastes 11:6.
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“We need not go to foreign lands to become missionaries for God. All around us are fields ‘white already to harvest,’ and whoever will may gather ‘fruit unto life eternal.’ God calls upon many in Battle Creek who are dying of spiritual sloth to go where their labor is needed in His cause. Move out of Battle Creek, even if it requires a pecuniary sacrifice. Go somewhere to be a blessing to others. Go where you can strengthen some weak church. Put to use the powers which God has given you.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 187.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

Fri, Feb 28

1. What did the woman do when she saw Jesus as the only Saviour?
2. Explain what is meant by fields being white already for the harvest.
3. How many days did Jesus remain with the Samaritans?
4. What testimony did the Samaritans give concerning Jesus?
5. What happens to people as soon as they receive Jesus into their lives?

Jesus and the Nobleman's Son

MEMORY VERSE: “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen” (Ephesians 3:20, 21).

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 107, 108, 164–166.

“Not because we see or feel that God hears us are we to believe. We are to trust in His promises. When we come to Him in faith, every petition enters the heart of God. When we have asked for His blessing, we should believe that we receive it, and thank Him that we *have* received it. Then we are to go about our duties, assured that the blessing will be realized when we need it most.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 200.

1. DRAWING ATTENTION

Sun, Mar 2

- a. After spending two days with the Samaritans, where did Jesus go—and who was drawn by this news? John 4:43–46.

“The news of Christ’s return to Cana soon spread throughout Galilee, bringing hope to the suffering and distressed. In Capernaum the tidings attracted the attention of a Jewish nobleman who was an officer in the king’s service.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 196.

- b. Why did the officer go to see Jesus? John 4:47.

“A son of the officer was suffering from what seemed to be an incurable disease. Physicians had given him up to die; but when the father heard of Jesus, he determined to seek help from Him.”—*Ibid.*, p. 197.

- a. Describe how Christ revealed the inner agony of heart in the nobleman who sought Him to heal his son in Capernaum. John 4:48.

“The child was very low, and, it was feared, might not live till his return; yet the nobleman felt that he must present the case in person. He hoped that a father’s prayers might awaken the sympathy of the Great Physician.

“On reaching Cana he found a throng surrounding Jesus. With an anxious heart he pressed through to the Saviour’s presence. His faith faltered when he saw only a plainly dressed man, dusty and worn with travel. He doubted that this Person could do what he had come to ask of Him; yet he secured an interview with Jesus, told his errand, and besought the Saviour to accompany him to his home. But already his sorrow was known to Jesus. Before the officer had left his home, the Saviour had beheld his affliction.

“But He knew also that the father had, in his own mind, made conditions concerning his belief in Jesus. Unless his petition should be granted, he would not receive Him as the Messiah. . . .

“Notwithstanding all the evidence that Jesus was the Christ, the petitioner had determined to make his belief in Him conditional on the granting of his own request.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 197, 198.

- b. When tempted to seek signs, what should we recall? Matthew 12:38, 39.

“Christ was pained that His own people, to whom the Sacred Oracles had been committed, should fail to hear the voice of God speaking to them in His Son.”—*Ibid.*, p. 198.

“The people want a sign, as in the days of Christ. Then the Lord told them that no sign should be given them. The sign that should be manifest now and always is the working of the Holy Spirit upon the mind of the teacher, to make the Word as impressive as possible. The Word of God is not a dead, dry theory, but spirit and life. Satan would like nothing better than to call minds away from the Word, to look for and expect something outside of the Word to make them feel.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 95.

- a. Explain the difference between the Jews and Samaritans in regard to their belief in Jesus. Mark 6:2–6; John 4:40–42.
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“How eagerly the Pharisees sought to prove Christ a deceiver! How they watched His every word, seeking to misrepresent and misinterpret all His sayings! Pride and prejudice and passion closed every avenue of the soul against the testimony of the Son of God. When He plainly rebuked their iniquity and declared that their works proved them to be the children of Satan, they angrily flung back the accusation, saying, ‘Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?’”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 70.

“The Saviour contrasted this questioning unbelief with the simple faith of the Samaritans, who asked for no miracle or sign. His word, the ever-present evidence of His divinity, had a convincing power that reached their hearts.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 198.

“Though [Jesus] was a Jew, He mingled freely with the Samaritans, setting at nought the Pharisaic customs of the Jews with regard to this despised people. He slept under their roofs, ate at their tables, and taught in their streets.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 19.

- b. Describe the experience of many who have spoken present truth to God’s professed people throughout the ages. Jeremiah 20:8–11.
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“All the arguments urged against Christ were founded in falsehood. So was it in the case of Stephen, and of Paul. But the weakest and most unreliable statements made on the wrong side had an influence, because there were so many whose hearts were unsanctified, who desired those statements to be true. Such are ever eager to fasten upon any supposed error or mistake in those who speak to them the unpalatable truth.

“It should not surprise us when evil conjectures are greedily seized upon as undoubted facts by those who have an appetite for falsehood. The opposers of Christ were again and again confounded and put to silence by the wisdom of His words; yet they still eagerly listened to every rumor, and found some pretext to ply Him again with opposing questions.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 70, 71.

- a. When the nobleman's faith took hold of Christ, how did he reiterate his plea? John 4:49.
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“Like a flash of light, the Saviour’s words to the nobleman laid bare his heart. He saw that his motives in seeking Jesus were selfish. His vacillating faith appeared to him in its true character. In deep distress he realized that his doubt might cost the life of his son. He knew that he was in the presence of One who could read the thoughts, and to whom all things were possible. . . . His faith took hold upon Christ as did Jacob, when, wrestling with the Angel, he cried, ‘I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.’ Genesis 32:26.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 198.

- b. What should we learn from what Jesus did instead of going to the nobleman's home? John 4:50.
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“Jesus had a greater gift to bestow. He desired, not only to heal the child, but to make the officer and his household sharers in the blessings of salvation, and to kindle a light in Capernaum, which was so soon to be the field of His own labors. But the nobleman must realize his need before he would desire the grace of Christ. This courtier represented many of his nation. They were interested in Jesus from selfish motives. They hoped to receive some special benefit through His power; and they staked their faith on the granting of this temporal favor; but they were ignorant as to their spiritual disease, and saw not their need of divine grace. . . .

“The Saviour cannot withdraw from the soul that clings to Him, pleading its great need. ‘Go thy way,’ He said; ‘thy son liveth.’ The nobleman left the Saviour’s presence with a peace and joy he had never known before. Not only did he believe that his son would be restored, but with strong confidence he trusted in Christ as the Redeemer.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 198, 199.

“We all desire immediate and direct answers to our prayers, and are tempted to become discouraged when the answer is delayed or comes in an unlooked-for form. But God is too wise and good to answer our prayers always at just the time and in just the manner we desire. He will do more and better for us than to accomplish all our wishes. . . . These experiences that test faith are for our benefit.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 230, 231.

- a. In what manner did Jesus heal the nobleman's son? John 4:51–53. What reality does this call to mind? Ephesians 3:20, 21.
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“At the very moment when the father’s faith grasped the assurance, ‘Thy son liveth,’ divine love touched the dying child.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 199.

“At the same hour the watchers beside the dying child in the home at Capernaum beheld a sudden and mysterious change. The shadow of death was lifted from the sufferer’s face. The flush of fever gave place to the soft glow of returning health. The dim eyes brightened with intelligence, and strength returned to the feeble, emaciated frame. No signs of his malady lingered about the child. His burning flesh had become soft and moist, and he sank into a quiet sleep. The fever had left him in the very heat of the day. The family were amazed, and great was the rejoicing.”—*Ibid.*

- b. How does Jesus respond to anyone pleading for help? Matthew 11:28–30.
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“The Saviour cannot withdraw from the soul that clings to Him, pleading its great need.”—*Ibid.*, p. 198.

“Do you feel that because you are a sinner you cannot hope to receive blessing from God? Remember that Christ came into the world to save sinners. We have nothing to recommend us to God; the plea that we may urge now and ever is our utterly helpless condition, which makes His redeeming power a necessity. Renouncing all self-dependence, we may look to the cross of Calvary and say:

“‘In my hand no price I bring; Simply to Thy cross I cling.’ ”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 65.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS**Fri, Mar 7,**

1. Why are prophets generally not well received in their own lands?
2. What words of the nobleman revealed his unbelief?
3. How did Christ react to the unbelief of the people?
4. Who displayed greater faith in Jesus—the Jews or the Gentiles?
5. What does Jesus promise to all who accept His invitation?

Jesus and the Paralytic of Bethesda

MEMORY VERSE: “But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work” (John 5:17).

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, pp. 560–567.

“The work of Christ in healing the sick was in perfect accord with the law. It honored the Sabbath.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 207.

1. THE HEALING WATERS

Sun, Mar 9

a. For what purpose did many disabled people go to Jerusalem? John 5:2, 3.

b. What belief did the people have about the pool of Bethesda? John 5:4.

“At certain seasons the waters of this pool were agitated, and it was commonly believed that this was the result of supernatural power, and that whoever first after the troubling of the pool stepped into the waters, would be healed of whatever disease he had. Hundreds of sufferers visited the place; but so great was the crowd when the water was troubled that they rushed forward, trampling underfoot men, women, and children, weaker than themselves. Many could not get near the pool. Many who had succeeded in reaching it died upon its brink. Shelters had been erected about the place, that the sick might be protected from the heat by day and the chilliness of the night. There were some who spent the night in these porches, creeping to the edge of the pool day after day, in the vain hope of relief.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 201.

c. How did the interaction between Jesus and one man at the pool begin? John 5:5–7.

- a. What humanly impossible task did Jesus bid the paralytic do—and with what results? John 5:8, 9 (first part).
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“Jesus does not ask this sufferer to exercise faith in Him. He simply says, ‘Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.’ But the man’s faith takes hold upon that word. Every nerve and muscle thrills with new life, and healthful action comes to his crippled limbs. Without question he sets his will to obey the command of Christ, and all his muscles respond to his will. Springing to his feet, he finds himself an active man.

“Jesus had given him no assurance of divine help. The man might have stopped to doubt, and lost his one chance of healing. But he believed Christ’s word, and in acting upon it he received strength.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 202, 203.

- b. In what spiritual condition do people who are separated from Christ find themselves? Isaiah 1:5, 6; Romans 7:24.
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“By sin we have been severed from the life of God. Our souls are palsied. Of ourselves we are no more capable of living a holy life than was the impotent man capable of walking. There are many who realize their helplessness, and who long for that spiritual life which will bring them into harmony with God; they are vainly striving to obtain it.”—*Ibid.*, p. 203.

- c. What is the only remedy for such a condition? Acts 9:34.
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“The Saviour is bending over the purchase of His blood, saying with inexpressible tenderness and pity, ‘Wilt thou be made whole?’ He bids you arise in health and peace. Do not wait to feel that you are made whole. Believe His word, and it will be fulfilled. Put your will on the side of Christ. Will to serve Him, and in acting upon His word you will receive strength. Whatever may be the evil practice, the master passion which through long indulgence binds both soul and body, Christ is able and longs to deliver. He will impart life to the soul that is ‘dead in trespasses.’ Ephesians 2:1. He will set free the captive that is held by weakness and misfortune and the chains of sin.”—*Ibid.*

a. How does Christ help us overcome? Ephesians 2:1–6.

“Man is naturally inclined to follow Satan’s suggestions, and he cannot successfully resist so terrible a foe unless Christ, the mighty Conqueror, dwells in him, guiding his desires, and giving him strength. . . . Satan knows better than God’s people the power that they can have over him when their strength is in Christ. When they humbly entreat the mighty Conqueror for help, the weakest believer in the truth, relying firmly upon Christ, can successfully repulse Satan and all his host.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 341.

“We must learn of Christ. We must know what He is to those He has ransomed. We must realize that through belief in Him it is our privilege to be partakers of the divine nature, and so escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. Then we are cleansed from all sin, all defects of character. We need not retain one sinful propensity. . . .

“As we partake of the divine nature, hereditary and cultivated tendencies to wrong are cut away from the character, and we are made a living power for good. Ever learning of the divine Teacher, daily partaking of His nature, we cooperate with God in overcoming Satan’s temptations. God works, and man works, that man may be one with Christ as Christ is one with God. Then we sit together with Christ in heavenly places. The mind rests with peace and assurance in Jesus.”—*The Review and Herald*, April 24, 1900.

b. Describe the peace that comes by strength from Christ. Romans 8:3–6.

“Every child lives by the life of his father. If you are God’s children, begotten by His Spirit, you live by the life of God. . . . [And] the life of Jesus is made manifest ‘in our mortal flesh’ (2 Corinthians 4:11). That life in you will produce the same character and manifest the same works as it did in Him. Thus you will be in harmony with every precept of His law; for ‘the law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul.’ Psalm 19:7, margin. Through love ‘the righteousness of the law’ will be ‘fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.’ Romans 8:4.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 78.

- a. Ignoring the blessing bestowed upon the paralytic, why did the Pharisees become irritated? John 5:9 (last part), 10.
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“As [the restored paralytic] hurried on his way with firm, free step, praising God and rejoicing in his new-found strength, he met several of the Pharisees, and immediately told them of his cure. He was surprised at the coldness with which they listened to his story.

“With lowering brows they interrupted him, asking why he was carrying his bed on the Sabbath day. They sternly reminded him that it was not lawful to bear burdens on the Lord’s day. In his joy the man had forgotten that it was the Sabbath; yet he felt no condemnation for obeying the command of One who had such power from God. He answered boldly, ‘He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk.’ They asked who it was that had done this, but he could not tell. These rulers knew well that only One had shown Himself able to perform this miracle; but they wished for direct proof that it was Jesus, that they might condemn Him as a Sabbath-breaker. In their judgment He had not only broken the law in healing the sick man on the Sabbath, but had committed sacrilege in bidding him bear away his bed.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 203, 204.

- b. What had the Jews made of the Sabbath? Matthew 23:4.
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“The Jews had so perverted the law that they made it a yoke of bondage. Their meaningless requirements had become a byword among other nations. Especially was the Sabbath hedged in by all manner of senseless restrictions. It was not to them a delight, the holy of the Lord, and honorable. The scribes and Pharisees had made its observance an intolerable burden. A Jew was not allowed to kindle a fire nor even to light a candle on the Sabbath. As a consequence the people were dependent upon the Gentiles for many services which their rules forbade them to do for themselves. They did not reflect that if these acts were sinful, those who employed others to perform them were as guilty as if they had done the work themselves. They thought that salvation was restricted to the Jews, and that the condition of all others, being already hopeless, could be made no worse. But God has given no commandments which cannot be obeyed by all. His laws sanction no unreasonable or selfish restrictions.”—*Ibid.*, p. 204.

a. How did Jesus relate to the law of God and to the Sabbath? Isaiah 42:21.

“Jesus had come to ‘magnify the law, and make it honorable.’ He was not to lessen its dignity, but to exalt it. . . . He had come to free the Sabbath from those burdensome requirements that had made it a curse instead of a blessing.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 206.

b. What should and should not be done on the Sabbath? Exodus 20:8–11.

“Among the afflicted ones at the pool [Christ] selected the worst case upon whom to exercise His healing power, and bade the man carry his bed through the city in order to publish the great work that had been wrought upon him. This would raise the question of what it was lawful to do on the Sabbath, and would open the way for Him to denounce the restrictions of the Jews in regard to the Lord’s day, and to declare their traditions void.

“Jesus stated to them that the work of relieving the afflicted was in harmony with the Sabbath law. It was in harmony with the work of God’s angels, who are ever descending and ascending between heaven and earth to minister to suffering humanity. . . .

“And man also has a work to perform on this day. The necessities of life must be attended to, the sick must be cared for, the wants of the needy must be supplied. He will not be held guiltless who neglects to relieve suffering on the Sabbath. God’s holy rest day was made for man, and acts of mercy are in perfect harmony with its intent. God does not desire His creatures to suffer an hour’s pain that may be relieved upon the Sabbath or any other day.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 206, 207.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

Fri, Mar 14

1. What belief was prevalent about the pool of Bethesda?
2. What special case attracted Christ’s attention?
3. How can our spiritual paralysis be cured?
4. What greatly irritated the Jews about the miraculous healing?
5. What works are in harmony with the Sabbath commandment?

The Authority of the Son

MEMORY VERSE: “For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man” (John 5:26, 27).

Suggested Reading: *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 123–129.

“My authority, [Jesus] said, for doing the work of which you accuse Me, is that I am the Son of God, one with Him in nature, in will, and in purpose. In all His works of creation and providence, I cooperate with God.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 208.

1. EQUAL WITH GOD

Sun, Mar 16

- a. Besides the healing of the paralytic on the Sabbath, for what other reason did the Jews hate Jesus? John 5:17, 18.

“Jesus claimed equal rights with God. . . .

“The whole nation of the Jews called God their Father, therefore they would not have been so enraged if Christ had represented Himself as standing in the same relation to God. But they accused Him of blasphemy, showing that they understood Him as making this claim in the highest sense.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 207, 208.

- b. How did Christ vindicate the authority of God’s commandments above human traditions? Matthew 15:1–9, 13.

“These adversaries of Christ had no arguments with which to meet the truths He brought home to their consciences. They could only cite their customs and traditions, and these seemed weak and vapid when compared with the arguments Jesus had drawn from the word of God and the unceasing round of nature.”—*Ibid.*, p. 208.

a. How did Jesus explain His relationship with the Father? John 5:19, 20.

b. What authority and power pertaining to the Father did Christ declare that He also possessed? John 5:21–23.

“The priests and rulers had set themselves up as judges to condemn Christ’s work, but He declared Himself their judge, and the judge of all the earth. The world has been committed to Christ, and through Him has come every blessing from God to the fallen race. He was the Redeemer before as after His incarnation. As soon as there was sin, there was a Saviour. He has given light and life to all, and according to the measure of light given, each is to be judged. And He who has given the light, He who has followed the soul with tenderest entreaty, seeking to win it from sin to holiness, is in one its advocate and judge.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 210.

c. Describe the change in attitude that occurs as we realize that Christ is our judge. Romans 2:1–3; Matthew 7:1.

“He who indulges a censorious spirit is guilty of greater sin than is the one he accuses, for he not only commits the same sin, but adds to it conceit and censoriousness.

“Christ is the only true standard of character, and he who sets himself up as a standard for others is putting himself in the place of Christ. And since the Father ‘hath committed all judgment unto the Son’ (John 5:22), whoever presumes to judge the motives of others is again usurping the prerogative of the Son of God. These would-be judges and critics are placing themselves on the side of antichrist, ‘who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.’ 2 Thessalonians 2:4.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 125, 126.

“We cannot read the heart. Ourselves faulty, we are not qualified to sit in judgment upon others. Finite men can judge only from outward appearance. To Him alone who knows the secret springs of action, and who deals tenderly and compassionately, is it given to decide the case of every soul.”—*Ibid.*, p. 124.

- a. What assurance is given to every devoted believer in Christ? John 5:24.
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“In every command and in every promise of the word of God is the power, the very life of God, by which the command may be fulfilled and the promise realized. He who by faith receives the word is receiving the very life and character of God.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 38.

“The great work that is wrought for the sinner who is spotted and stained by evil is the work of justification. By Him who speaketh truth he is declared righteous. The Lord imputes unto the believer the righteousness of Christ and pronounces him righteous before the universe. He transfers his sins to Jesus, the sinner’s representative, substitute, and surety. Upon Christ He lays the iniquity of every soul that believeth. ‘He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him’ (2 Corinthians 5:21). . . .

“Although as sinners we are under the condemnation of the law, yet Christ by His obedience rendered to the law, claims for the repentant soul the merit of His own righteousness. In order to obtain the righteousness of Christ, it is necessary for the sinner to know what that repentance is which works a radical change of mind and spirit and action. The work of transformation must begin in the heart, and manifest its power through every faculty of the being; but man is not capable of originating such a repentance as this, and can experience it alone through Christ, who ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 392, 393.

- b. What divine prerogatives did Christ reveal that He possessed? John 5:25–29.
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“Because He has tasted the very dregs of human affliction and temptation, and understands the frailties and sins of men; because in our behalf He has victoriously withstood the temptations of Satan, and will deal justly and tenderly with the souls that His own blood has been poured out to save—because of this, the Son of man is appointed to execute the judgment.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 210.

“Christ is invested with power to give life to all creatures.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 249.

a. How did Jesus explain the cause of the Jews' unbelief? John 5:37, 38.

“Instead of apologizing for the act of which they complained, or explaining His purpose in doing it, Jesus turned upon the rulers, and the accused became the accuser. He rebuked them for the hardness of their hearts, and their ignorance of the Scriptures. He declared that they had rejected the word of God, inasmuch as they had rejected Him whom God had sent.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 211.

b. Why did the Jews fail to understand the Scriptures? John 5:39, 40.

“In every page, whether history, or precept, or prophecy, the Old Testament Scriptures are irradiated with the glory of the Son of God. So far as it was of divine institution, the entire system of Judaism was a compacted prophecy of the gospel. To Christ ‘give all the prophets witness.’ Acts 10:43. From the promise given to Adam, down through the patriarchal line and the legal economy, heaven’s glorious light made plain the footsteps of the Redeemer. Seers beheld the Star of Bethlehem, the Shiloh to come, as future things swept before them in mysterious procession. In every sacrifice Christ’s death was shown. In every cloud of incense His righteousness ascended. By every jubilee trumpet His name was sounded. In the awful mystery of the holy of holies His glory dwelt.

“The Jews had the Scriptures in their possession, and supposed that in their mere outward knowledge of the word they had eternal life. But Jesus said, ‘Ye have not His word abiding in you.’ Having rejected Christ in His word, they rejected Him in person. ‘Ye will not come to Me,’ He said, ‘that ye might have life.’

“The Jewish leaders had studied the teachings of the prophets concerning the kingdom of the Messiah; but they had done this, not with a sincere desire to know the truth, but with the purpose of finding evidence to sustain their ambitious hopes. When Christ came in a manner contrary to their expectations, they would not receive Him; and in order to justify themselves, they tried to prove Him a deceiver. When once they had set their feet in this path, it was easy for Satan to strengthen their opposition to Christ. The very words that should have been received as evidence of His divinity were interpreted against Him. Thus they turned the truth of God into a lie.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 211, 212.

- a. What led the Jews to reject Jesus and seek false teachers? John 5:41–44.

“Jesus said, ‘I receive not honor from men.’ It was not the influence of the Sanhedrin, it was not their sanction He desired. He could receive no honor from their approbation. He was invested with the honor and authority of Heaven. Had He desired it, angels would have come to do Him homage; the Father would again have testified to His divinity. But for their own sake, for the sake of the nation whose leaders they were, He desired the Jewish rulers to discern His character, and receive the blessings He came to bring them.

“ ‘I am come in My Father’s name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.’ Jesus came by the authority of God, bearing His image, fulfilling His word, and seeking His glory; yet He was not accepted by the leaders in Israel; but when others should come, assuming the character of Christ, but actuated by their own will and seeking their own glory, they would be received. And why? Because he who is seeking his own glory appeals to the desire for self-exaltation in others. To such appeals the Jews could respond. They would receive the false teacher because he flattered their pride by sanctioning their cherished opinions and traditions. But the teaching of Christ did not coincide with their ideas. It was spiritual, and demanded the sacrifice of self; therefore they would not receive it. They were not acquainted with God, and to them His voice through Christ was the voice of a stranger.

“Is not the same thing repeated in our day? Are there not many, even religious leaders, who are hardening their hearts against the Holy Spirit, making it impossible for them to recognize the voice of God? Are they not rejecting the word of God, that they may keep their own traditions?”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 212, 213.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

Fri, Mar 21

1. What authority and rights did Christ claim?
2. What relationship has always existed between Jesus and the Father?
3. What life-giving power does Christ possess?
4. Explain John 5:39.
5. Describe the result of the Jewish nation’s rejection of Jesus as Messiah.

Jesus Feeds the Multitude

MEMORY VERSE: “But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat” (Matthew 14:16).

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 341–348.

“Often we hesitate, unwilling to give all that we have, fearing to spend and to be spent for others. But Jesus has bidden us, ‘Give ye them to eat.’ His command is a promise; and behind it is the same power that fed the multitude beside the sea.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 369.

1. HUNGERING SOULS

Sun, Mar 23

- a. Besides the disciples, who else accompanied Jesus when He went over the sea of Galilee before the Passover? John 6:1, 2.

“Christ had retired to a secluded place with His disciples, but this rare season of peaceful quietude was soon broken. The disciples thought they had retired where they would not be disturbed; but as soon as the multitude missed the divine Teacher, they inquired, ‘Where is He?’ Some among them had noticed the direction in which Christ and His disciples had gone. Many went by land to meet them, while others followed in their boats across the water. The Passover was at hand, and, from far and near, bands of pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem gathered to see Jesus. Additions were made to their number, until there were assembled five thousand men besides women and children. Before Christ reached the shore, a multitude were waiting for Him. But He landed unobserved by them, and spent a little time apart with the disciples.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 364.

- b. Describe the spiritual condition of the people assembling. Mark 6:34.
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- a. What did Jesus tenderly recognize that the people needed—and how did He use this opportunity to test the faith of His disciple, Philip? John 6:3–6.
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“From the hillside [Jesus] looked upon the moving multitude, and His heart was stirred with sympathy. Interrupted as He was, and robbed of His rest, He was not impatient. He saw a greater necessity demanding His attention as He watched the people coming and still coming. He ‘was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd.’ Leaving His retreat, He found a convenient place where He could minister to them. They received no help from the priests and rulers; but the healing waters of life flowed from Christ as He taught the multitude the way of salvation. . . .

“The day seemed to them like heaven upon earth, and they were utterly unconscious of how long it had been since they had eaten anything.

“At length the day was far spent. The sun was sinking in the west, and yet the people lingered. Jesus had labored all day without food or rest. He was pale from weariness and hunger, and the disciples besought Him to cease from His toil. But He could not withdraw Himself from the multitude that pressed upon Him. . . .

“He who taught the people the way to secure peace and happiness was just as thoughtful of their temporal necessities as of their spiritual need. The people were weary and faint. There were mothers with babes in their arms, and little children clinging to their skirts. Many had been standing for hours. . . .

“Many had come from far, and had eaten nothing since morning. In the surrounding towns and villages they might be able to buy food. . . . But Jesus said, ‘Give ye them to eat,’ and then, turning to Philip, questioned, ‘Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?’ This He said to test the faith of the disciple.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 364, 365.

- b. What was the reaction of Philip? John 6:7.
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“Philip looked over the sea of heads, and thought how impossible it would be to provide food to satisfy the wants of such a crowd. He answered that two hundred pennyworth of bread would not be nearly enough to divide among them, so that each might have a little.”—*Ibid.*

- a. What information did Andrew give to Jesus—and what did the Lord then direct the disciples to do? John 6:8–10.
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“Jesus inquired how much food could be found among the company. ‘There is a lad here,’ said Andrew, ‘which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes; but what are they among so many?’ Jesus directed that these be brought to Him. Then He bade the disciples seat the people on the grass in parties of fifty or a hundred, to preserve order, and that all might witness what He was about to do.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 365.

- b. Explain the steps Christ took in multiplying the food—and what lessons we can learn from this. Matthew 14:19; Mark 6:37–41; John 6:11.
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“Jesus did not seek to attract the people to Him by gratifying the desire for luxury. To that great throng, weary and hungry after the long, exciting day, the simple fare was an assurance both of His power and of His tender care for them in the common needs of life. The Saviour has not promised His followers the luxuries of the world; their lot may be shut in by poverty; but His word is pledged that their need shall be supplied, and He has promised that which is better than earthly good—the abiding comfort of His own presence.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 47, 48.

“In this miracle, Christ received from the Father; He imparted to the disciples, the disciples to the people, and the people to one another. So all who are united to Christ will receive from Him the bread of life, and impart it to others. His disciples are the appointed means of communication between Christ and the people.”—*Ibid.*, p. 49.

- c. Of what lesson on true ministry are we here reminded? Isaiah 61:6.
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“The disciples brought to Jesus all they had; but He did not invite them to eat. He bade them serve the people. The food multiplied in His hands, and the hands of the disciples, reaching out to Christ, were never unfilled. The little store was sufficient for all. When the multitude had been fed, the disciples ate with Jesus of the precious, heaven-supplied food.”—*Ibid.*

- a. What should we learn from the significant instruction Jesus gave after feeding the multitude? John 6:12, 13.
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“When the baskets of fragments were collected, the people thought of their friends at home. They wanted them to share in the bread that Christ had blessed. The contents of the baskets were distributed among the eager throng, and were carried away into all the region round about.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 368.

“Jesus bade His disciples, ‘Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.’ John 6:12. These words meant more than putting the food into baskets. The lesson was twofold. Nothing is to be wasted. We are to let slip no temporal advantage. We should neglect nothing that would serve to benefit a human being. Let everything be gathered up that will relieve the necessities of earth’s hungry ones. With the same carefulness are we to treasure the bread from heaven to satisfy the needs of the soul. By every word of God we are to live. Nothing that God has spoken is to be lost. Not one word that concerns our eternal salvation are we to neglect. Not one word is to fall useless to the ground.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 48.

- b. Even when it may appear inconvenient or impossible, what Christian quality are we bidden to cultivate? Isaiah 58:6–8; 1 Peter 4:9.
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“In every emergency we are to seek help from Him who has infinite resources at His command. . . .

“As we see the necessities of the poor, the ignorant, the afflicted, how often our hearts sink. We question, ‘What avail our feeble strength and slender resources to supply this terrible necessity? Shall we not wait for someone of greater ability to direct the work, or for some organization to undertake it?’ Christ says, ‘Give ye them to eat.’ Use the means, the time, the ability, you have. Bring your barley loaves to Jesus.

“Though your resources may not be sufficient to feed thousands, they may suffice to feed one. In the hand of Christ they may feed many. Like the disciples, give what you have. Christ will multiply the gift. He will reward honest, simple reliance upon Him. That which seemed but a meager supply will prove to be a rich feast.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 49, 50.

- a. What wonderful characteristic of God must we never forget? Psalm 37:25, 26; Philippians 4:19.

“It is the grace of God on the small portion that makes it all-sufficient. God’s hand can multiply it a hundredfold. From His resources He can spread a table in the wilderness. By the touch of His hand He can increase the scanty provision and make it sufficient for all. It was His power that increased the loaves and corn in the hands of the sons of the prophets. . . .

“When Jesus bade His disciples give the multitude to eat, they answered, ‘We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people.’ Luke 9:13. What is that among so many?

“The lesson is for God’s children in every age. When the Lord gives a work to be done, let not men stop to inquire into the reasonableness of the command or the probable result of their efforts to obey. The supply in their hands may seem to fall short of the need to be filled; but in the hands of the Lord it will prove more than sufficient. . . .

“A fuller sense of God’s relationship to those whom He has purchased with the gift of His Son, a greater faith in the onward progress of His cause in the earth—this is the great need of the church today. Let none waste time in deploring the scantiness of their visible resources. The outward appearance may be unpromising, but energy and trust in God will develop resources. The gift brought to Him with thanksgiving and with prayer for His blessing, He will multiply as He multiplied the food given to the sons of the prophets and to the weary multitude.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 241–243.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

Fri, Mar 28

1. Describe the attitude of the people in listening to Christ’s words.
2. How did the Lord supply their physical necessities?
3. What do we learn from the way Christ kept the multitude in order?
4. What should I remember whenever prompted, “Give ye them to eat”?
5. Name times when God’s providence for you was especially remarkable.

First Sabbath Offerings



Sabbath, January 4

Multipurpose Center for Health and Education in Paraguay

Your generous gifts will revive the health and faith of many (see p. 4).



Sabbath, February 1

World Disaster Relief

This offering provides assistance to individuals in areas impacted by disasters, disease, death, or challenging circumstances. (see p. 25).



Sabbath, March 1

"Children of Character" Education Center

Help to finish construction of a new early education facility for young children in Romania (see p. 46).