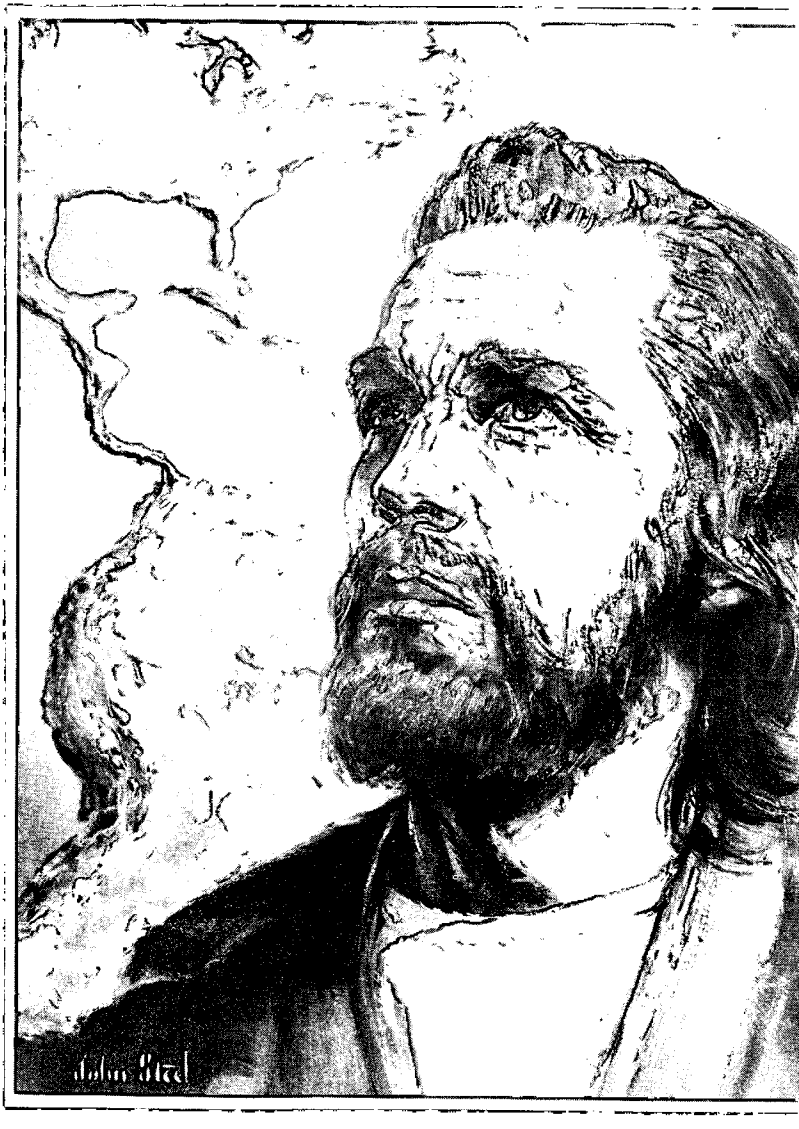
Christ, the Incomparable



Third Quarter

1970

Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly

Adult Division, No. 301, Third Quarter, 1970

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Drawings by Vance Locke

The Blessing of Daily Study

"He who by faith receives the Word is receiving the very life and character of God. Every seed brings forth fruit after its kind. . . . Receive into the soul by faith the incorruptible seed of the Word, and it will bring forth a character and a life after the similitude of the character and the life of God."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 38.

"Appreciation of the Bible grows with its study."—*Ibid.,* p. 132.

"God will make the most precious revelations to His hungering, thirsting people. They will find that Christ is a personal Saviour. As they feed upon His Word, they find that it is spirit and life. The Word destroys the natural, earthly nature, and imparts a new life in Christ Jesus."—*The Desire of Ages,* page 391.

"The neglect of the Word means starvation to the soul." —*Counsels on Sabbath School Work,* page 44.

My Pledge

As one who greatly desires to improve his knowledge of the Scriptures, I pledge myself to the careful and prayerful study of some portion of my Sabbath School lesson each day of the week.

(signed)

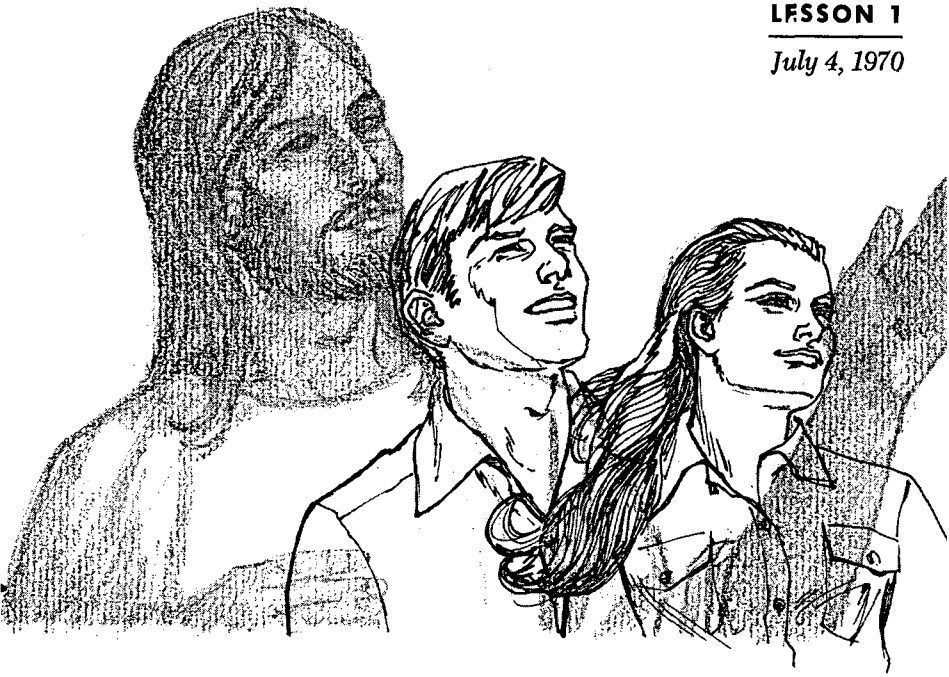
Christ, the Incomparable

THIRD QUARTER, 1970

The perfect union of the divine and the human natures in the person of Jesus Christ is the great central truth of Christianity, out of which all other truths grow and on which they depend for their validity and their saving power. This is not one truth among others, nor simply the first among many truths. It is the very heart of the plan of salvation and of all revealed truth.

The validity of every saving truth grows out of the fact that the Son of Mary was also the Son of God, that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, the Promised One, the Messiah of prophecy. On this basis alone can the sinless life, vicarious death, and bodily resurrection of Christ be explained or even considered credible. It is this great truth that gives meaning to the priestly intercession of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, and that assures us of His second coming. If Christ was only human, as many so-called Christians assert, there can be no objective truth, nor saving power, in any of these. Each of these facets of the life and ministry of Christ on our behalf requires that He be truly God as well as truly man.

Our personal salvation—our hope of eternal life—stands or falls on the issue of the deity of Christ. A study of this great central truth of the gospel will lead to an enlarged understanding and a deeper appreciation of the love of God and the ministry of Christ on our behalf.



CHRIST, THE ANSWER TO MAN'S QUEST 1

"God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." 1 John 5:11.

Like Nicodemus of old, many Christians today are willing to accept Jesus as a great prophet, philosopher, and teacher. They are ready to acknowledge Him as the greatest man of all time, His life as an inspiring example for us to follow, and His words as the most sublime ever spoken. But a belief in Christ that does not go beyond this will not save anyone. The great central fact about Jesus of Nazareth is that He came to this earth as the Son of God; He is God in the full and supreme sense of the word. Only the recognition of this sublime truth can rescue a man from his depraved nature, transform his life, and make him eligible for life eternal.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Life's Great Quest**
   Acts 16:25-31
2. **The Gift of Infinite Love**
   John 3:16-18
3. **God's Provision for Man's Need**
   John 6:51, 54, 55
4. **Jesus Christ Is God Incarnate**
   Matt. 16:13-17
5. **The Great Invitation**
   Matt. 11:28-30
6. **The Two Doors to Destiny**
   1 John 5:6-12

Part 1
LIFE'S GREAT QUEST

"At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

Acts 16:25-31

Sooner or later life confronts every man, as it did the Philippian jailer, with a choice between the way of life eternal and the way of death from which there is no resurrection. Thinking he had no alternative to certain death as prescribed by Roman law, the jailer preferred death at his own hand. But he had not reckoned with the transforming influence of Paul and Silas on their fellow prisoners, and he now recognized the presence of that supernatural power as the alternative that saved him from physical death. Perhaps it would also save him from a life that he had found meaningless, hopeless, and disappointing. Thus it came to pass that the Philippian earthquake released the jailer from the shackles that bound him—as it had already released his prisoners physically—and made him a free man in Christ Jesus.

What decisive act of faith did Paul commend to the jailer as the key to release from a meaningless, hopeless, and disappointing existence?

THINK IT THROUGH

In what ways does my life experience resemble that of the Philippian jailer?

What does belief in Jesus involve? How does belief save a person?

"The jailer had trembled as he beheld the wrath of God manifested in the earthquake; when he thought that the prisoners had escaped he had been ready to die by his own hand; but now all these things seemed of little consequence compared with the new, strange dread that agitated his mind, and his desire to possess the tranquillity and cheerfulness shown by the apostles under suffering and abuse. He saw in their countenances the light of heaven; he knew that God had interposed in a miraculous manner to save their lives; and with peculiar force the words of the spirit-possessed woman came to his mind: 'These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation.' "—"The Acts of the Apostles," page 216.

Part 2
THE GIFT OF INFINITE LOVE

John 3:16-18

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God."

To believe in Jesus Christ as the world's greatest teacher or its ideal man is not saving faith. There must be recognition that Jesus the Christ is, indeed, God incarnate. This essential fact of the Christian faith is the theme of John's Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father)." John 1:1, 14.

The union of Deity and humanity in the person of Jesus of Nazareth is the very heart of the Christian faith, and without this—to borrow the words of Paul—"then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." "Your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." 1 Cor. 15:14, 17. Read verses 12-23.

But even to believe that Christ is, indeed, the God-man is not, in and of itself, sufficient to save a sinner. "The devils also believe" that—"and tremble." James 2:19. It is necessary also to receive Him in a personal way into one's heart and life as well as to believe in Him; this alone brings with it "power to become the sons of God." John 1:12.

What must a person believe "about" Christ in order that belief "in" Him may be effective for salvation?

THINK IT THROUGH

What effect would a denial of the deity of Christ have (a) on other facets of the Christian faith, and (b) on the Christian's personal relationship to Christ?

Have I entered into that personal relationship with Christ described in John 1:12, 13?

"The only plan that could be devised to save the human race was that which called for the incarnation, humiliation, and crucifixion of the Son of God, the Majesty of heaven. After the plan of salvation was devised, Satan could have no ground upon which to found his suggestion that God, because so great, could care nothing for so insignificant a creature as man."—Ellen G. White, "The Signs of the Times," Jan. 20, 1890.

"The humanity of the Son of God is everything to us. It is the golden chain that binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God. This is to be our study. Christ was a real man; He gave proof of His humility in becoming a man. Yet He was God in the flesh."—"Selected Messages," Bk. 1, p. 244.

For further helpful comment on the deity and incarnation of Christ, read "SDA Bible Commentary," Vol. 5, pp. 917-919; "Questions on Doctrine," pages 641-660.

Part 3
GOD'S PROVISION FOR MAN'S NEED

"I am the living Bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

"Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed."

John 6:51, 54, 55

As physical food is essential to the nourishment of physical life, so spiritual food is essential to the sustenance of spiritual life. In this graphic figure our Lord affirms the close, vital relationship that is necessary if belief in Him is to bring salvation —a relationship as vital as food to the body. Here Jesus again affirms the sublime fact that He had come from God in heaven. Christ lives in us, and we live in Him; as a result of this mutual relationship it will be our joyous privilege to live forever.

It is becoming ever more popular among professed Christians to believe that Christ was divine in the same sense that all good men are—no more and no less. They hail Him as the greatest teacher of all time and as the best man who ever lived, but emphatically deny that He was in any special sense divine. But if Jesus is not the God-man, then there is no forgiveness of sin, no justification, no salvation, no eternal life, no home in heaven. "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins," Jesus warned. John 8:24.

Read John 6:25-59 thoughtfully, tracing the development of thought in Jesus' remarks.

How did Jesus illustrate and explain the keystone truth that He had come forth from God, and that eternal life is possible only by receiving Him into the life?

THINK IT THROUGH

On what sort of spiritual diet am I sustaining my Christian experience—one that is nourishing, or one that appears to be good food but from which the vital elements have been removed? Am I starving spiritually?

What practical difference does it make whether I think of Christ as the One who came from heaven to unite humanity with divinity, or simply as a good man and a great teacher?

"Only the day before [Christ's sermon on the Bread of Life], the great multitude, when faint and weary, had been fed by the bread which He had given. As from that bread they had received physical strength and refreshment, so from Christ they might receive spiritual strength unto eternal life."—"The Desire of Ages," page 386.

"Christ became one flesh with us, in order that we might become one spirit with Him. It is by virtue of this union that we are to come forth from the grave,—not merely as a manifestation of the power of Christ, but because, through faith, His life has become ours. Those who see Christ in His true character, and receive Him into the heart, have everlasting life. It is through the Spirit that Christ dwells in us; and the spirit of God, received into the heart by faith, is the beginning of the life eternal."—"Ibid.," p. 388.

Part 4
JESUS CHRIST IS GOD INCARNATE

"Jesus . . . asked His disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that Thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven."

Matt. 16:13-17

This conversation between Jesus and His disciples took place toward the close of His earthly ministry, after they had had ample opportunity to listen and to observe. They knew that other people thought Him saint-like in character and were willing to accept Him as a messenger sent from God. Did the disciples merely reflect popular opinion, or had their more intimate association with Jesus given them a deeper insight?

Peter summed up the consensus of his fellow disciples when he answered Jesus: They knew Him to be the Messiah of prophecy, very God in human flesh. This conviction, Jesus pointed out, had been impressed upon their hearts by the Holy Spirit as they heard Jesus' words and witnessed His mighty works. Happy indeed the men in whom this conviction is fixed! This sublime truth, this conviction, Jesus went on to explain, is the great rock of truth on which He would build His church. Matt. 16:18.

Read Peter's stirring affirmation of faith in Jesus as the Christ, written thirty-five years or so later, as recorded in 2 Peter 1:16-21.

THINK IT THROUGH

Of what two facts concerning Jesus were His disciples fully convinced? How had they arrived at this conclusion?

If I had been in Peter's place, how would I have responded to Jesus' question as to who He really is?

Is my personal opinion about Jesus merely the reflection of what others say, or is this knowledge the result of my own experience and conviction?

"On this day, before they [the disciples] were brought face to face with the great trial of their faith, the Holy Spirit rested upon them in power. For a little time their eyes were turned away from 'the things which are seen,' to behold 'the things which are not seen.' 2 Cor. 4:18. Beneath the guise of humanity they discerned the glory of the Son of God. . . .

"The truth which Peter had confessed is the foundation of the believer's faith. It is that which Christ Himself has declared to be eternal life. But the possession of this knowledge was no ground for self-glorification. Through no wisdom or goodness of his own had it been revealed to Peter. Never can humanity, of itself, attain to a knowledge of the divine."—"The Desire of Ages," page 412.

Part 5
THE GREAT INVITATION

Matt. 11:28-30

"Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

By virtue of His personal knowledge of the Father and the Father's will for men (Matt. 11:27), Christ was preeminently qualified to reveal the Father to men. The wise and learned of earth (verse 25) cannot do so because they have not known the Father as He knows the Father. He speaks authentically for the Father, and in Him we will find true rest of soul.

The rest to which Christ invites us is rest from our heavy loads of sin. These heavy loads are the burden of sin and ignorance of God's divine love and will. But God made man to enjoy the glorious freedom of sons (Rom. 8:21), and, chained like a slave to the burden of sin, his soul cannot be at rest until he finds release from the shackles of sin and enters into the glorious freedom for which the Creator designed him. As Augustine wrote in his *Confessions,* "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee."

To those who follow Him, Christ offers the yoke of loving service. It is "easy" and "light," compared with the yoke of sin. No burden, says the proverb, is heavy to a loving heart, and genuine love for Christ makes it one's supreme joy to live in harmony with His revealed will.

For further inspired comment on the rest of the soul in Christ, read Hebrews 4:1-11.

What surcease from life's burdensome quest did Christ offer those who come to Him in faith and submission?

THINK IT THROUGH

Have I attained fully to the rest of soul the Saviour offers me? Am I gladly wearing the yoke of joyful service for Him?

"Whether they know it or not, all are weary and heavy-laden. All are weighed down with burdens that only Christ can remove. The heaviest burden that we bear is the burden of sin. If we were left to bear this burden, it would crush us. But the Sinless One has taken our place. 'The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.' Isa. 53:6. He has borne the burden of our guilt. He will take the load from our weary shoulders. He will give us rest. The burden of care and sorrow also He will bear. He invites us to cast all our care upon Him; for He carries us upon His heart." —"The Desire of Ages," pages 328, 329.

"Worry is blind, and cannot discern the future; but Jesus sees the end from the beginning. In every difficulty He has His way prepared to bring relief. Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us, of which we know nothing. Those who accept the one principle of making the service and honor of God supreme will find perplexities vanish, and a plain path before their feet."—"Ibid.," p. 330.

Part 6
THE TWO DOORS TO DESTINY

"This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

1 John 5:6-12

At the beginning of Jesus' public ministry the Holy Spirit visibly acknowledged Him to be the Messiah, and a voice from heaven attested Him to be the Son of God. To this event John points as a witness to the deity of our Lord. "The blood of his death" at the close of His life mission likewise provided supernatural confirmation of His Messiahship. On both occasions at least some of the bystanders witnessed these evidences of divinity and were convinced. Read John 1:31-34; Matt. 27:54.

As we contemplate these events in the life of Christ, the Holy Spirit impresses our hearts, as it did the heart of John the Baptist at the baptism and the heart of the centurion at the crucifixion, that Jesus is indeed God's Son. We thus have a threefold witness concerning the deity of the God-man Jesus Christ. It is our privilege to accept this witness, not only as a sublime truth to be apprehended by the mind, but to be accepted also into the heart and life. As we accept this witness, we enter upon life eternal—by faith in Him. Read John 1:12.

To what threefold evidence of the divine sonship of Christ did John point?

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I fully persuaded by the evidence that Jesus is what He claimed to be, the Son of God?

What does it mean to "have" the Son of God? Do I "have" Him in this sense?

"In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived. 'He that hath the Son hath life.' 1 John 5:12. The divinity of Christ is the believer's assurance of eternal life. 'He that believeth in Me,' said Jesus, 'though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.' "—"The Desire of Ages," page 530.

Part 7 ◇ SUMMARY QUESTIONS ◇ A TEST OF YOUR STUDY POWER

Now that you have studied this lesson you are invited to answer the following questions. Check your answers with the answers at the bottom of the sheet.

1. What benefit bestowed upon the Philippian jailer by Paul conditioned him to appreciate and desire salvation? _____

2. Jesus told Nicodemus that judgment comes upon a person for not believing in Him as: (*a*) The Son of David, (*b*) the Son of God, (*c*) the Son of man, (*d*) the Son of Mary and Joseph. _____

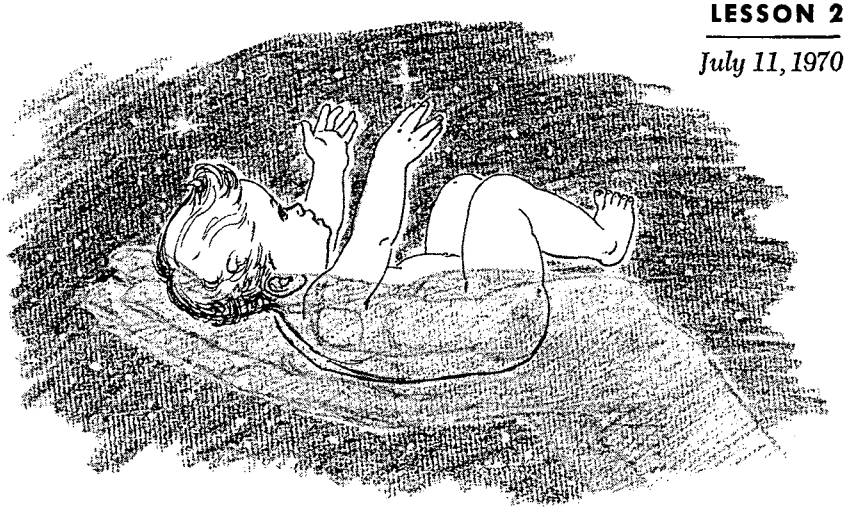
3. Complete: In the synagogue at Capernaum Jesus declared: "I am the _____ which came down from heaven: if any man _____, he shall live forever."

4. True or False: John the beloved was the first of all the disciples to acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God. _____

5. What does Christ give the repentant sinner in exchange for the heavy load of sin he surrenders to Christ? _____

6. According to John, God awards the gift of eternal life to the person who believes in Christ: (*a*) When he accepts Christ as his Saviour, (*b*) at his baptism, (*c*) at the resurrection, (*d*) when he attains to perfection. _____

Answers: (1) physical life; (2) b; (3) living bread, eat of this bread; (4) false; (5) His own yoke; (6) a.



CHRIST: CREATOR AND SAVIOUR 2

"God . . . hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Heb. 1:1-3.

It is of supreme moment that the One appointed by Heaven to save us from our sins and restore us to peace with God, is the very One who created us and gave us life to begin with. Creative power is as necessary to restore the image of God in mortal sinners as it was to make man in God's image and impart the spark of life to him in the beginning. The sublime truth that our Creator is also our Saviour testifies to the infinite wisdom, and above all the infinite, steadfast love, of our heavenly Parent.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Partners in Creation**
   Gen. 1:1, 26, 27
2. **Creator and Saviour Are One**
   Col. 1:12-17
3. **Creatorship Identifies the True God**
   Jer. 10:10-12
4. **Jesus Christ: Truly God**
   1 John 5:11, 12, 20
5. **Salvation Requires Creative Power**
   Eph. 2:4-7, 10
6. **The Sabbath Witnesses to the Creator**
   Ex. 20:8-11

Part 1
PARTNERS IN CREATION

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

"And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness. . . . So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them."

Gen. 1:1, 26, 27

In decisive contrast to the polytheism of all other ancient religious systems, the Old Testament stresses the fact that there is but *one* true God. This sublime truth was set forth succinctly in the great affirmation of Israel's faith: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." Deut. 6:4, 5. Nevertheless, in a few select places in the Old Testament there are clear hints of a plurality of persons within the one true God.

Perhaps the clearest of these indications occurs in the creation record, where God communes with Himself, "Let *Us* make man in *Our* image." Here the Old Testament, while not explicitly identifying the promised Messiah as the divine Creator, provides for that more complete revelation later enshrined in the New Testament, identifying man's Saviour as the One who, in the beginning, created him.

It is fitting that the One who created man should be the One to save and re-create him. Who could have a more personal and profound interest in man than the One who gave him being and breath? Furthermore, the same creative power that gave man being to begin with, was needed to restore him to favor with God and to make him once more in the divine likeness from which, through sin, he fell.

Read also Isaiah 48:16, and the *SDA Bible Commentary* comment on this.

How does the inspired account of creation hint at the sublime truth of a plurality of persons within the one true God?

THINK IT THROUGH

Why is the plurality of persons within the one true God not as clearly set forth in the Old Testament as it is in the New?

Does it make any difference to me personally that my Redeemer is also my Creator?

"Man was to bear God's image, both in outward resemblance and in character. Christ alone is 'the express image' (Heb. 1:3) of the Father; but man was formed in the likeness of God. His nature was in harmony with the will of God. His mind was capable of comprehending divine things. His affections were pure; his appetites and passions were under the control of reason. He was holy and happy in bearing the image of God and in perfect obedience to His will."—"Patriarchs and Prophets," page 45.

Part 2
CREATOR AND SAVIOUR ARE ONE

"The Father . . . hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins: who is the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of every creature: for by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist."

Col. 1:12-17

The New Testament repeatedly and consistently ascribes to Christ the role of Creator of this world, and indeed of all things. Read, for example, such passages as John 1:3, 10; Rom. 9:5; Heb. 1:1, 2. Awesome power was required to create "all things." No less power was required in order to restore what had been lost as a result of sin, and the sublime fact that the work of salvation called for the personal sacrifice of the Creator Himself exalts the work of salvation to the highest possible level of importance.

The expression, "Firstborn of every creature," ascribes to Christ priority in rank above all created beings. By virtue of the fact that He is "before all things," in both time and rank, He is superior to all other beings. "Firstborn" is a figurative expression based on the dignity and office of the firstborn son in a family of Bible times. As Creator of all things, Christ's position in the universe is unique and absolute. The greatness of salvation can be properly understood only in terms of the greatness of the Saviour, who alone could accomplish the task.

What sublime facts does the apostle Paul cite in exalting Christ as the Captain of our salvation?

THINK IT THROUGH

Let us suppose that God had entrusted the work of salvation to some lesser being. What would this tell me about the character of God? About the nature of sin? About the value He places on human beings?

What practical lessons are there with respect to my own personal experience as a Christian in the fact that Christ is both Creator and Sustainer of all things?

"The Son of God had wrought the Father's will in the creation of all the hosts of heaven; and to Him, as well as to God, their homage and allegiance were due. Christ was still to exercise divine power, in the creation of the earth and its inhabitants. But in all this He would not seek power or exaltation for Himself contrary to God's plan, but would exalt the Father's glory and execute His purposes of beneficence and love."—"Patriarchs and Prophets," page 36.

Part 3
CREATORSHIP IDENTIFIES THE TRUE GOD

Jer. 10:10-12

"The Lord is the true God, He is the living God. . . . The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. He hath made the earth by His power, He hath established the world by His wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by His discretion."

When the prophets of old sought to draw a clear line of distinction between the true God and all false gods, they always came back to the fact that the true God had created the heavens and the earth. The difference was not only one of degree—with the true God greater than all other gods, so-called—but of kind. He alone had the power to create; they did not. Turn to Ps. 96:3-5 for one of the finest Bible statements of this sublime truth.

Isaiah looks with scorn upon those who make a graven image and worship it as if it were God. The fact that it is a man-made object proves that man is superior to it. On the other hand, the true God made man as well as everything else in the world, and this is conclusive evidence that the true God is greater than man and that He alone deserves man's worship and service. Read Isa. 44:6-20.

To deny that God created all things is to deprive the Christian religion of its validity and its power. It reduces Christianity to a man-made religion like all other religions. Those who call themselves Christians and yet reject the Bible account of creation have a structure of faith poised precariously in the tenuous atmosphere of their futile imaginations, without any substantial foundation. Salvation and the Christian faith are true because their Author is the One who created and who sustains all things.

To what do the Bible writers point as the supreme distinction between the true God and all false gods?

THINK IT THROUGH

Is it possible to deny the Bible account of creation and at the same time retain anything of value about the Christian religion?

What kind of God does the Christian evolutionist worship?

"The apostle Paul, writing by the Holy Spirit, declares of Christ that 'all things have been created through Him, and unto Him; and He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.' Col. 1:16, 17, RV, margin. The hand that sustains the worlds in space, the hand that holds in their orderly arrangement and tireless activity all things throughout the universe of God, is the hand that was nailed to the cross for us."—"Education," page 132.

Part 4
JESUS CHRIST: TRULY GOD

1 John 5:11, 12, 20

"This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

"And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

Only the One who imparted life to man in the beginning can impart eternal life to him now. No less divine power is involved in the second gift of life than in the first. Unless I believe that human life originally came from God, I have no rational basis for believing that man can become eligible to eternal life. Only He who made man is able to save man.

In this passage John declares his own absolute faith in Christ. "The Son of God is come"—John knew that to be an incontestible fact. 1 John 1:1-3. In the second place, John knew Jesus Christ personally as the Son of God and refers to this personal relationship with Christ as being *in* Christ. In the third place, life eternal is in Jesus Christ, and the person who, by virtue of his faith, is *in* Christ possesses eternal life here and now. Recognition of the sublime fact that Christ is truly God in the supreme sense of the word is the key to eternal life.

By what line of reasoning did the apostle John come to the sure conclusion that he and all other believing Christians are already in possession of life eternal?

THINK IT THROUGH

Do I possess eternal life now, or is it a future gift? Is there a difference between eternal life and immortality? Why is eternal life important to the Christian?

"The only way in which the fallen race could be restored was through the gift of His Son, equal with Himself, possessing the attributes of God. Though so highly exalted, Christ consented to assume human nature, that He might work in behalf of man and reconcile to God His disloyal subject. When man rebelled, Christ pleaded His merit in his behalf, and became man's substitute and surety. He undertook to combat the powers of darkness in man's behalf, and He prevailed, conquering the enemy of our souls, and presenting to man the cup of salvation."—Ellen G. White, "The Review and Herald," Nov. 8, 1892.

"Nearly two thousand years ago, a voice of mysterious import was heard in heaven, from the throne of God, 'Lo, I come.' . . . In these words is announced the fulfillment of the purpose that had been hidden from eternal ages. . . . That we might behold it and not be destroyed, the manifestation of His glory was shrouded. His divinity was veiled with humanity,—the invisible glory in the visible human form." —"The Desire of Ages," page 23.

Part 5
SALVATION REQUIRES CREATIVE POWER

"God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace are ye saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

Eph. 2:4-7, 10

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

In the beginning the Creator imparted physical life to the lifeless form of Adam. Intellectually and morally Adam was in the likeness of his Creator; but sin entailed moral death, which eventually involved man in physical death as well. At the appropriate time, however, the Creator Himself came to earth, with the goal of re-creating fallen man in His own glorious likeness.

In His new role as Saviour and Redeemer Christ set about the task of creating men anew, morally, or "unto good works," as John expresses it. As the Creator formerly imparted life to the lifeless form of Adam, He now imparted moral life to men "dead in sins." He "quickened" them, that is, made them morally alive again. As Christians "we are his workmanship," even as in the beginning Adam was His workmanship. Salvation requires creative power no less certainly, and no less mighty, than physical creation. The essential difference between the two is that moral re-creation requires that human cooperation and effort be united with divine power.

In what expressive words does John describe what takes place in the experience of the individual sinner when the Saviour restores Him to divine favor?

THINK IT THROUGH

Why is it appropriate to describe the experience of conversion as a creative act?

After this creative act has been accomplished, how is a person different from what he was before?

"He who is trying to reach heaven by *his own works in keeping the law is* attempting an impossibility. There is no safety for one who has merely a legal religion, a form of godliness. The Christian's life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. There is a death *to self and sin, and a new life altogether.* This change can be brought about only by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit."—"The Desire of Ages," page 172.

Part 6
THE SABBATH WITNESSES TO THE CREATOR
Ex. 20:8-11

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. . . . For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it."

Having completed the work of creation in six days, God ceased on the seventh day and set it apart as a memorial to His creative work. Read Gen. 2:1-3. As we have already seen (Jer. 10:10-12), the Bible points to the creative power of God as the supreme evidence that He is the true God and as distinguishing Him from all false gods. A denial of the Bible record of creation is a denial of the Creator Himself.

As a memorial to the great creative acts recorded in Genesis 1, the Sabbath becomes in a unique and superlative sense the means ordained by the Creator to bind men to Him with a knowledge of *why* He is the true God—His Creatorship. From a theological point of view this is the primary significance of the Sabbath. The person who remembers the Sabbath day in the way God intended will never forget that "in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is." Every seventh day will remind him of that first seven days; and, ever mindful of his Creator, the worshiper will be less inclined to forget Him.

According to Ezek. 20:12, the Sabbath is likewise a "sign" of the re-creative power of God in sanctifying men. It is thus a memorial of the re-creation of man in the moral image of God, as well as of the original creation of man in the likeness of his Creator.

THINK IT THROUGH

Of what two things was the seventh-day Sabbath designed to be a perpetual memorial?

How can I and my family best utilize the hours of the Sabbath to accomplish God's purpose that the Sabbath be a memorial of His creative power?

Why would some other day of the week not memorialize the work of creation as effectively as the seventh day?

"God designs that the Sabbath shall direct the minds of men to the contemplation of His created works. Nature speaks to their senses, declaring that there is a living God, the Creator, the Supreme Ruler of all. . . . The beauty that clothes the earth is a token of God's love. We may behold it in the everlasting hills, in the lofty trees, in the opening buds and the delicate flowers. All speak to us of God. The Sabbath, ever pointing to Him who made them all, bids men open the great book of nature and trace therein the wisdom, the power, and the love of the Creator."—"Patriarchs and Prophets," page 48.

Part 7 ◇ SUMMARY QUESTIONS ◇ A TEST OF YOUR STUDY POWER

Now that you have studied this lesson you are invited to answer the following questions. Check your answers with the answers at the bottom of this sheet.

1. What pronouns in Genesis 1 imply that more than one divine being took part in the work of creating man? _____

2. True or False: According to the apostle Paul, Christ was the first of all created beings. _____

3. As supreme evidence that the Lord is the true God, Bible writers again and again point to Him as: (*a*) Creator, (*b*) Redeemer, (*c*) Revealer, (*d*) Judge. _____

4. True or False: According to John the beloved apostle, God has already given us eternal life. _____

5. Complete: "For we are His _____, _____ in Christ Jesus unto good works."

6. As a special safeguard against forgetting God, He appointed: (*a*) the tithe, (*b*) baptism, (*c*) the Sabbath, (*d*) the Lord's Supper. _____

Answers: (1) Us and Our; (2) false; (3) a; (4) true; (5) workmanship, created; (6) c.

CHRIST, THE ETERNAL ONE 3

"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." Isa. 57:15.

A concept of Christ that traces Him back only to the manger in Bethlehem and not back to the beginning, before all past ages, falls infinitely short of the eternal existence assigned Him by the inspired writers of the Bible. Only a being fully divine as well as human could live out before us the example of a sinless life, or come forth from the tomb by life in Himself (John 10:18), or impart to us the power and grace to overcome sin and to live in harmony with the Father's revealed will.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **From Everlasting**
   Micah 5:2
2. **Christ, the Son of God**
   Acts 13:32, 33
3. **God Incarnate**
   John 1:1, 14
4. **Father and Son**
   Heb. 1:8-12
5. **Laid Aside the Prerogatives of Deity**
   Phil. 2:5-8
6. **The Eternal One Dwells in Us**
   Isa. 57:15

Part 1
FROM EVERLASTING

Micah 5:2

"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

This prediction that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem is given in the setting of His role as a royal Son of David and heir to his throne. In prophecy (Isa. 9:6, 7; 11:1-4) and by the people (Matt. 20:30; 21:15) the Messiah is acclaimed as "the Son of David." It was thus appropriate, and significant, that Jesus be born in the town of David, Bethlehem.

Micah refers to the Messiah by the cryptic pronoun "He." The future ruler of Israel was to be a Bethlehemite; but it is said of Him that His "goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting"—long before the founding of Bethlehem. The coming Messiah is here declared to have existed in the long ago, prior to the "thousands [literally, 'the clans'] of Judah."

Christ's eternal preexistence is reflected throughout the Bible. The Old Testament gospel prophet Isaiah ascribes to Him the title "everlasting Father." Isa. 9:6. Jesus in His intercessory prayer spoke of the glory He shared with the Father "before the world was." John 17:5. According to John 1:1-3, the eternal Word was God in the supreme sense of the word in the most remote ages of eternity past, and as Creator He necessarily preceded all created things. According to Col. 1:17, He was "before all things."

What information does the prophet Micah give concerning the origin, heritage, birthplace, and future role of the coming Messiah?

THINK IT THROUGH

Why is it important that the Saviour of the world should have preexisted from all eternity?

What reasons can you suggest as to why the Scriptures present Christ as the Son of David?

"There are light and glory in the truth that Christ was one with the Father before the foundation of the world was laid. This is the light shining in a dark place, making it resplendent with divine, original glory. This truth, infinitely mysterious in itself, explains other mysterious and otherwise unexplainable truths, while it is enshrined in light, unapproachable and incomprehensible."—Ellen G. White. "The Review and Herald," Apr. 5, 1906.

Part 2
CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD

Acts 13:32, 33

"We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee."

Another cryptic prediction concerning the Messiah, in the setting of His being heir to David's throne, occurs in Ps. 2:6, 7. Reference here is specifically to the divinely appointed "king upon My holy hill Zion," and in this context occurs the divine announcement concerning the future King, "Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee."

The speaker is "He that sitteth in the heavens . . . : the Lord." Verse 4. He addresses the future Messianic King as His Son, a term which in ancient Hebrew usage stressed relationship and character as well as filial descent. The speaker also declares, "This day have I begotten Thee." If this be pressed as a literal statement, of a father begetting a son in the literal sense, there was necessarily a time before which Christ was not, as Arius claimed sixteen centuries ago. But as we have already seen (Part 1), such a conclusion would be in conflict with the explicit statements of the Bible writers concerning the eternity of Christ.

In Acts 13:32, 33 we have the inspired answer to the question posed by Ps. 2:7. "This day" is the day of Christ's resurrection from the tomb, and the begetting referred to is not the literal begetting of a son by a father, but the calling forth of Christ from the grave. As Paul explicitly states in Col. 1:18, Christ is "the firstborn from the dead." Read also Rev. 1:5, where He is called "the first begotten of the dead." He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, . . . by the resurrection from the dead." Rom. 1:4.

In what sense, and by virtue of what glorious event, is Christ the "firstborn" or "begotten" of the Father?

THINK IT THROUGH

Is the title "Son of God" a reflection of intrinsic relationship between the two members of the Trinity, or does it reflect a relationship subordinate to the plan of salvation and the incarnation?

What does the title "Son of God" mean to me, and how does it help me to understand my relationship to God?

"Christ arose from the dead as the firstfruits of those that slept. He was the antitype of the wave sheaf, and His resurrection took place on the very day when the wave sheaf was to be presented before the Lord. . . . The sheaf dedicated to God represented the harvest. So Christ the firstfruits represented the great spiritual harvest to be gathered for the kingdom of God. His resurrection is the type and pledge of the resurrection of all the righteous dead. 'For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.' 1 Thess. 4:14."—"The Desire of Ages," pages 785, 786.

Part 3
GOD INCARNATE

John 1:1, 14

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

"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."

As applied to Jesus Christ, the title "Word" is unique with John, in his Gospel and also in his epistles. Volumes have been written in an attempt to plumb its depth of meaning.

A word is the verbal expression of an idea. The incarnate Christ was a living demonstration, or expression, of the infinite character and love of God for men lost in sin. John 3:16. He came from heaven to earth to reveal the Father, and in His sinless life, His tender ministry to the needs of men, and His vicarious death on the cross He was expressing Heaven's love for the lost human race. He did this in order that men might believe and know God for what He really is, a gracious and merciful Father, and thus find salvation from the power of sin. John 17:3.

In the opening words of his Gospel, John affirms the absolute deity and timeless preexistence of Christ; then he goes on to say that this same divine Being became incarnate and lived as a man among men. Divinity was shrouded in humanity; but at times, notably on the mount of the transfiguration, the glory of heaven shone through the mask of humanity.

The King James Version expression, "Only begotten," is a mistranslation of the Greek, which is more accurately rendered "unique," "only," or "one of a kind." John is not declaring that, at some moment in remote eternity past, Christ came into being by a process analogous to human fatherhood and sonhood. Here he is declaring that the glory he and the other disciples beheld in Christ was glory such as could be accounted for only as the glory of Deity, and John offers this as absolute proof that Jesus was indeed divine. Read 2 Peter 1:16-18.

What unique title does John use in introducing Jesus Christ to his readers, and what sublime truths does John give concerning Christ's preexistence and His mission to earth?

THINK IT THROUGH

What does the title "Word" mean to me, and how does it help me better to understand and appreciate the love of God and the Saviour?

Has the divine message from God penetrated into my own heart, and has it found expression through my life, so that others may also hear the Word and see it in and through me?

"In speaking of His preexistence, Christ carries the mind back through dateless ages. He assures us that there never was a time when He was not in close fellowship with the eternal God. He to whose voice the Jews were then listening had been with God as one brought up with Him."—"Evangelism," page 615.

Part 4
FATHER AND SON

"Unto the Son He [the Father] saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows. And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thine hands: they shall perish; but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail."

Heb. 1:8-12

The Bible presents Jesus Christ as the incarnate Son of God, in His many-faceted relationship to the plan of salvation and to the human family lost in sin. The Bible writers have little to say about Him apart from His work on behalf of fallen humanity. But here in the first chapter of Hebrews the curtain of eternity is drawn aside as Inspiration gives us a brief glimpse of the absolute, eternal relationship between the two members of the Godhead we know as the Father and the Son. In awe and wonder it is our privilege to listen in on this divine conversation between them.

Here the Father addresses the Son as God and attributes to Him sovereign status. This was the "glory" that Christ shared with the Father "before the world was" (John 17:5), and the "all power" (Matt. 28:18) that was restored to Him at the resurrection. When Jesus came to this earth, He emptied Himself of this glory and power. (Read Phil. 2:7, 8.)

Inasmuch as the Scriptures are concerned almost exclusively with Christ in His role as the Saviour of men, in which He divested Himself of divine power and prerogatives (Phil. 2:5-8), most of the statements about Christ in Scripture picture Him in His role as a man among men, and thus subordinate to the Father. These expressions of subordination are not to be construed as reflecting the absolute relationship between these two members of the Trinity.

Point out seven sublime truths concerning Christ and His status in heaven as set forth in this declaration by the Father.

THINK IT THROUGH

How much does the Bible tell us about the absolute relationship between Christ and the Father, and about His status in heaven as Sovereign of the universe?

How can an insight into Christ's status in heaven strengthen my faith in Him and my appreciation of His love, and thus enable me to cooperate more effectively with Him here and now?

"From all eternity Christ was united with the Father, and when He took upon Himself human nature, He was still one with God."—Ellen G. White Comments, "SDA Bible Commentary," Vol. 5, p. 1115.

Part 5
LAID ASIDE THE PREROGATIVES OF DEITY

Phil. 2:5-8

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Literally in the Greek, the expression "made Himself of no reputation" reads "emptied Himself." The Revised Standard Version translation reflects the original more precisely. Christ laid aside the prerogatives of Deity when He assumed humanity and came to live as a man among men.

Christ was God, says Paul, and might rightfully have declined, even temporarily, to relinquish His status of full equality. Instead, He "emptied Himself" of the "glory" and power of Deity in order that He might take upon Himself "the form of a servant" and "be made in the likeness of men," infinitely inferior to the Father and subject to Him. He not only did so, but became the most despised of men when He went to the cross. Amazing love! What greater "emptying" could be imagined—from ruling as sovereign of the universe, to being condemned as the vilest of criminals by wicked human beings!

He did it for us. If any passage of Scripture can help us understand what Christ's mission to earth must have meant to Him and to the inhabitants of heaven and the other worlds, this is it. In love and gratitude let us bow our hearts before Him, and purpose anew to live for Him as He lives for us. Let us be willing to "empty" ourselves and to serve our fellowmen, as He emptied Himself on our behalf.

What "mind" was in Christ as He looked down in compassion upon the human family lost in sin, and what did this "mind" prompt Him to do?

THINK IT THROUGH

Following Christ's example, what can I do to "empty" myself?

What supreme example has come to my attention of a human being humbling himself in service for his fellowmen?

"The only plan that could be devised to save the human race was that which called for the incarnation, humiliation, and crucifixion of the Son of God, the Majesty of heaven. After the plan of salvation was devised, Satan could have no ground upon which to found his suggestion that God, because so great, could care nothing for so insignificant a creature as man."—Ellen G. White, "The Signs of the Times," Jan. 20, 1890.

Part 6
THE ETERNAL ONE DWELLS IN US

Isa. 57:15

"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."

No inspired affirmation of divine greatness and majesty exceeds this one in beauty and impressiveness. To say that God inhabits eternity is more than a jeweled figure of speech. We usually think of space being habitable, but why not time as well? And if time, why not eternity? Space and time both belong to God. Here we have a pen picture of God in the calm and unhurried tranquillity of His reign as Sovereign of the universe.

But, marvel of marvels, the Sovereign of the universe awaits the faltering invitation of every contrite heart to dwell *with him,* to inhabit his mind, affections, and life. How could He be concerned about us fragile specks of cosmic dust, who have strayed into sin and forgetfulness of God?

In similar vein Paul wrote: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Gal. 2:20. Today the True Witness to the Laodiceans makes the same offer: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." Rev. 3:20.

Read also 1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 3:17.

What exalted privilege does the Sovereign of the universe offer those who are humble and contrite of heart?

THINK IT THROUGH

What does it mean to be humble and contrite of heart? In what ways will my thinking, conversation, and actions be different from what they are if I measure up to this requirement?

"The physical life is to be carefully educated, cultivated, and developed, that through men and women the divine nature may be revealed in its fulness. God expects men to use the intellect He has given them. He expects them to use every reasoning power for Him. They are to give the conscience the place of supremacy that has been assigned it. The mental and physical powers, with the affections, are to be so cultivated that they can reach the highest efficiency."—"Sons and Daughters of God," page 314.

Part 7 ◇ SUMMARY QUESTIONS ◇ A TEST OF YOUR STUDY POWER

Now that you have studied this lesson you are invited to answer the following questions. Check your answers with the answers at the bottom of this sheet.

1. The prophet who foretold Jesus' birth in Bethlehem was: (*a*) Isaiah, (*b*) Micah, (*c*) Daniel, (*d*) David. _____

2. Paul applies the declaration by the Father, "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee," to: (*a*) A moment in eternity past when Christ came into being as the Son of God, (*b*) His birth in Bethlehem, (*c*) His baptism at the Jordan River, (*d*) His resurrection from the grave. _____

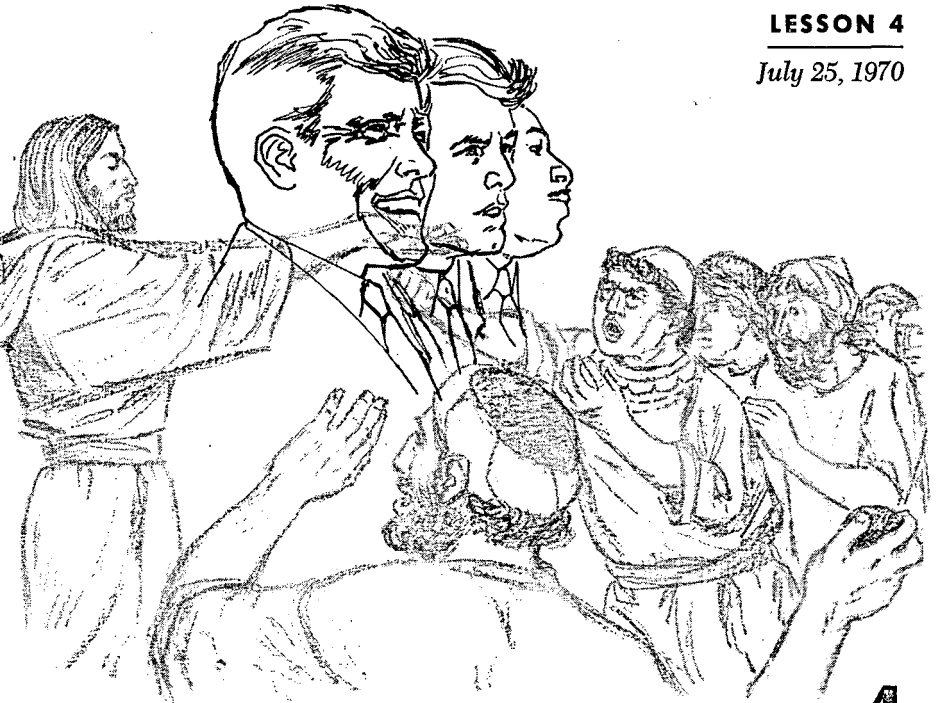
3. Complete: "The _____ was God. . . . And the _____ was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

4. True or False: In the first chapter of Hebrews, Christ is presented as addressing the Father, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy kingdom." _____

5. Complete: Before ever He came to this earth, Christ "thought it not _____ to be _____ with God."

6. The One who inhabits eternity desires also to dwell _____ _____.

Answers: (1) b; (2) d; (3) Word, Word; (4) false; (5) robbery, equal; (6) in our hearts, or, in the humble and contrite heart.



CHRIST, THE GREAT I AM 4

"Trust ye in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Isa. 26:4.

The New Testament presents Christ as Creator and Sustainer of all things, as God in the full and unqualified sense of the word, and as the great "I AM" of the Old Testament. He was the Sovereign of Israel under the old covenant, as He is our Lord under the new covenant. It was He who led Israel out of the land of their bondage, who cared for them through forty years of wandering in the wilderness, and who led them in the conquest of the land of Canaan.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **The Great I AM**
   Ex. 3:13, 14; 6:3
2. **Before Abraham Was, I AM**
   John 8:56-59
3. **The Alpha and Omega**
   Revelation 1:4, 8; 22:12, 13
4. **The Rock of Ages**
   1 Cor. 10:1-4
5. **The Way to the Father**
   John 14:6-9
6. **The Fullness of the Godhead**
   Col. 2:6-9

Part 1
THE GREAT I AM

"And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God *of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall* say to me, What is His name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."

"I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by My name JEHOVAH was I not known to them."

Ex. 3:13, 14; 6:3

Calling Israel out of Egypt to be His chosen people, God revealed Himself to them by a new name by which they were to know Him. That name was Yahweh (incorrectly transliterated into English as Jehovah). In Bible times a personal name was significant in that it reflected a person's character, ideals, aspirations, or some great experience in life. The name Yahweh (usually rendered in the King James Version as LORD, in capital and small capital letters) is thought to be a form of the verb "to be," and may be rendered freely into English as "the self-existent One," "the Eternal," "the ever-living One."

This name, which occurs more than five thousand times in the Old Testament, distinguished the true God from all false gods. Because of the importance ancient peoples attached to personal names, and because of the transcendent majesty of the true God, Sovereign of the universe, the Jews eventually came to regard the name itself with such sanctity that they never took it upon their lips, and as a result knowledge of its true pronunciation was eventually lost. Sometimes scribes, coming to the sacred name Yahweh, would leave the space blank, though usually they added the vowels of the ordinary word for "lord" to the consonants of Yahweh, and read the name as "Lord." This combination of the consonants for Yahweh and the vowels for the Hebrew word for "lord," when vocalized, sounds something like Jehovah. However, a Jewish reader coming to the word always read "Lord," and never "Jehovah."

By what new name did God make Himself known to Moses and the Hebrews when He summoned them out of Egypt to become His chosen, covenant people?

THINK IT THROUGH

***Why did God reveal Himself to Israel by a new name* when He summoned them out of Egypt to become His covenant people?**

In what ways can I express reverence for the various names and titles by which I refer to God?

"I AM means an eternal presence; the past, present, and future are alike to God. He sees the most remote events of past history, and the far distant future with as clear a vision as we do those things that are transpiring daily. We know not what is before us, and if we did, it would not contribute to our eternal welfare. God gives us an opportunity to exercise faith and trust in the great I AM."—Ellen G. White Comments, "SDA Bible Commentary," Vol. 1, p. 1099.

Part 2
BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS, I AM

John 8:56-59

"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto Him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM. Then took they up stones to cast at Him: but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by."

For millenniums those who honored the true God had been looking forward to the promised Messiah, and with earnest longing the devout yearned for His coming. When Jesus came in fulfillment of all that the prophets of old had written concerning Him, those of contrite heart and spiritual discernment recognized in Him this Promised One. Spiritual pride prevented others from accepting Him. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." John 1:11.

Present truth in Christ's day proclaimed Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah of prophecy, incarnate. "Jesus is the Christ" was the watchword of the early church (John 20:31; 1 John 5:1), their creed and confession of faith.

When, during the course of a heated discussion with the leaders of the nation, Jesus referred to Himself by the sacred name "I AM" (Yahweh), thus identifying Himself as the God of the Old Testament, they took up stones intending to kill Him on the spot for what they assumed to be blasphemy. For a mere human being to make the claim would, indeed, have been blasphemy. This, in fact, was one of the charges upon which His enemies based his death warrant. Matt. 26:63-66. Upon another occasion when they took up stones to kill Him, they justified their proposed course of action with the explanation "that Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God." John 10:33.

Account for the crisis that arose when Jesus declared, "Before Abraham was, I AM."

THINK IT THROUGH

Place yourself in the position of the people of Christ's day. If a person who to all appearances was a human being came claiming to be God, how would you react? What evidence would you be willing to accept for such a claim? What evidence did the people of Christ's day have by which they might reach a decision with respect to His claim?

"Silence fell upon the vast assembly. The name of God, given to Moses to express the idea of the eternal presence, had been claimed as His own by this Galilean Rabbi. He had announced Himself to be the self-existent One, He who had been promised to Israel, 'whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity.' Micah 5:2, margin."—"The Desire of Ages," pages 469, 470.

Part 3
THE ALPHA AND OMEGA

"Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come."

"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

"Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last."

Rev. 1:4, 8; 22:12, 13

John's title for the last book of Holy Writ is, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." Rev. 1:1. He begins (verses 4, 5) by ascribing to God the Father three expressions that express His timeless eternity: (1) He "was" in all time and eternity past, He "is" now, and He "is to come," or "will be," in all time and eternity future. (2) He is the "Alpha and Omega"—the "A" and "Z" as we would say—the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. (3) He is "the beginning and the ending," not in the sense that He ever had a beginning or that He will ever have an end, but in the sense that He existed in all eternity past, before other beings and things, and that none will exist after Him, inasmuch as He will never cease to exist.

John closes His revelation of Jesus Christ by ascribing these same attributes to Christ, in a context where it is evident that he refers to Christ. Rev. 22:13, 16.

The Greek expression translated "Him which is," literally "the being [One]," is identical with the Septuagint translation of the sacred name "I AM" in Exodus 3:14. Whether John's omission of the timeless triad—is, was, and is to be—when he applies the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, to Christ in chapter 22, was intentional, we do not know. However, it is evident from such passages as John 1:1-3; 8:56-59; 10:33 and others, that John did, in fact, apply the sacred name reflected in this expression, to Christ. Compare John 20:31.

By what expressions does John refer to the timeless, eternal nature of God the Father and of Christ, and what do these expressions tell us about both members of the Trinity?

THINK IT THROUGH

What if the God I worship were not eternal? What difference does it make to me that He is eternal?

Are there any attributes of Deity that belong to one of the members of the heavenly Trio but not to the others?

"Christ Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the Genesis of the Old Testament, and the Revelation of the New. Both meet together in Christ. Adam and God are reconciled by the obedience of the second Adam, who accomplished the work of overcoming the temptations of Satan and redeeming Adam's disgraceful failure and fall."—Ellen G. White Comments, "SDA Bible Commentary," Vol. 6, pp. 1092, 1093.

Part 4
THE ROCK OF AGES

"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."

1 Cor. 10:1-4

In Deut. 32:4 Moses refers to the God of Israel as "the Rock." A rock aptly represents solidity, strength, endurance, and security. Also, in Israel's wilderness wanderings, a rock was the source of life-giving water. The metaphor "Rock" was thus fraught with meaning and assurance for those who trust in Him.

Writing to the Corinthians, Paul explicitly declares that the Rock accompanying the people of Israel in the wilderness was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. They were under the personal guardianship of the Almighty. In his valedictory address to Israel Moses said of the Lord: "Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them [the nations of Canaan]: for the Lord thy God, He it is that doth go with thee; He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." Deut. 31:6.

In particular, Paul alludes to the smitten rock from which streams of water poured forth for the wanderers in a dry, desolate, and weary land. Like Israel of old, it is our privilege to have that spiritual Rock with us as we journey through life.

With what appropriate and meaningful figure of speech does the apostle Paul sum up the tender watchcare of the Lord for His people?

THINK IT THROUGH

To what extent may it be that references to God in the Old Testament focus particularly on the One who later came to earth as the Christ?

In what ways can the figure of speech comparing Christ with a mighty rock strengthen and encourage me on my journey through life?

"The smitten rock was a figure of Christ, and through this symbol the most precious spiritual truths are taught. As the life-giving waters flowed from the smitten rock, so from Christ, 'smitten of God,' 'wounded for our transgressions,' 'bruised for our iniquities' . . . , the stream of salvation flows for a lost race. As the rock had been once smitten, so Christ was to be 'once offered to bear the sins of many.' . . . Our Saviour was not to be sacrificed a second time; and it is only necessary for those who seek the blessings of His grace to ask in the name of Jesus, pouring forth the heart's desire in penitential prayer. Such prayer will bring before the Lord of hosts the wounds of Jesus, and then will flow forth afresh the life-giving blood, symbolized by the flowing of the living water for Israel."—"Patriarchs and Prophets," page 411.

Part 5
THE WAY TO THE FATHER

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me. If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also: and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him. Philip saith unto Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?"

John 14:6-9

Jesus' mission to earth may be summed up by saying that He came to reveal the Father. This Jesus accomplished by the gracious words He spoke, by His tender ministry to the needs of mankind, and above all by His own perfect life of conformity to the eternal principles of heaven. He was, in and of Himself, the perfect revelation of the Father. Sin had opened a wide and deep chasm of ignorance and suspicion between God and man; Jesus came to earth to build a bridge by which we might find our way back to God. In fact, He *was* that bridge. He is the way by which we can return to God, and there is no other; "No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." Read John 17:3-8.

Down through the centuries men have sought to reach heaven by many paths other than the one over which Jesus pioneered the way—by self-righteous living, by philosophy, by a form of religion without its transforming power, by worshiping the works of their hands. But, one and all, these are dead-end streets. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:12.

How did Jesus, on the night that He was betrayed, sum up for the disciples the purpose of His mission to earth?

THINK IT THROUGH

In what respects is the figurative expression, "the way," an appropriate description of Christ's role as the Saviour of men?

May there be more than a passing connection between what Jesus told His disciples in John 14:6-9, and the fact that the early Christians referred to their religion as "the way"? See Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14.

"Before the days of Christ, men asked in vain, 'What is truth?' Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people. Even Judea was shrouded in gloom, although the voice of God spoke to them in His oracles. The truth of God had been silenced by the superstition and traditions of its professed interpreters, and contention, jealousy, and prejudice divided the professed children of God. Then was a Teacher sent from God, even Him who was the way, the truth, and the life. Jesus presented to view the pure, rich truth of heaven to shine amid the moral darkness and gloom of earth. God had said, 'Let there be spiritual light,' and the light of the glory of God was revealed in the face of Jesus Christ."—"Fundamentals of Christian Education," pages 238, 239.

Part 6
THE FULLNESS OF THE GODHEAD
Col. 2:6-9

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. . . . For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."

Jesus is "the way" in which we are to "walk," that is, to conduct ourselves. Like trees firmly rooted in the soil, we are to be anchored to Him and to gain our nourishment from Him. Read Psalm 1. Like a sturdy building, we are to build and establish ourselves on Him as the foundation of our lives.

All that Jesus means to us is anchored to the fact that "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." In nature, in character, in divine attributes, in solicitous care for the creatures of His hand, Christ and the Father are one. Christ is God in every sense of the word, and this sublime fact is our assurance and hope.

During the early centuries of the Christian Era a number of heresies arose to trouble the church with respect to (1) the nature of Christ as a divine-human being, and (2) His relationship to the other members of the Trinity. Among these heresies were Docetism, Gnosticism, Sabellianism, Monarchianism, Arianism, and Nestorianism. In a series of church councils from A.D. 325 at Nicea to A.D. 680 at Constantinople, the church found its way through to the truth that Christ is God in every sense, and that there is one God in three divine Persons.

The Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) declared: "We . . . confess . . . Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable [rational] soul and body; consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin."—Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom,* Vol. 2, p. 62.

What positive affirmation by the apostle Paul settles for all time the degree of Christ's divinity?

THINK IT THROUGH

Is there any sense, or any degree, in which Christ the Son is divine in a subordinate sense or to a lesser degree?

How shall we understand the repeated statements by Christ while on earth, that of Himself He could do nothing and that the Father was greater than He?

"If Christ made all things, He existed before all things. The words spoken in regard to this are so decisive that no one need be left in doubt. Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense. He was with God from all eternity, God over all, blessed forevermore."—Ellen G. White Comments, "SDA Bible Commentary," Vol. 5, p. 1126.

Part 7 ◇ SUMMARY QUESTIONS ◇ A TEST OF YOUR STUDY POWER

Now that you have studied this lesson you are invited to answer the following questions. Check your answers with the answers at the bottom of this sheet.

1. Complete: God instructed Moses to introduce Him to the Hebrew people in Egypt by the new title, _____.

2. The Jews took up stones to kill Jesus when He spoke of Himself as: (*a*) the Son of God, (*b*) the Son of Abraham, (*c*) the Messiah, (*d*) the I AM. _____

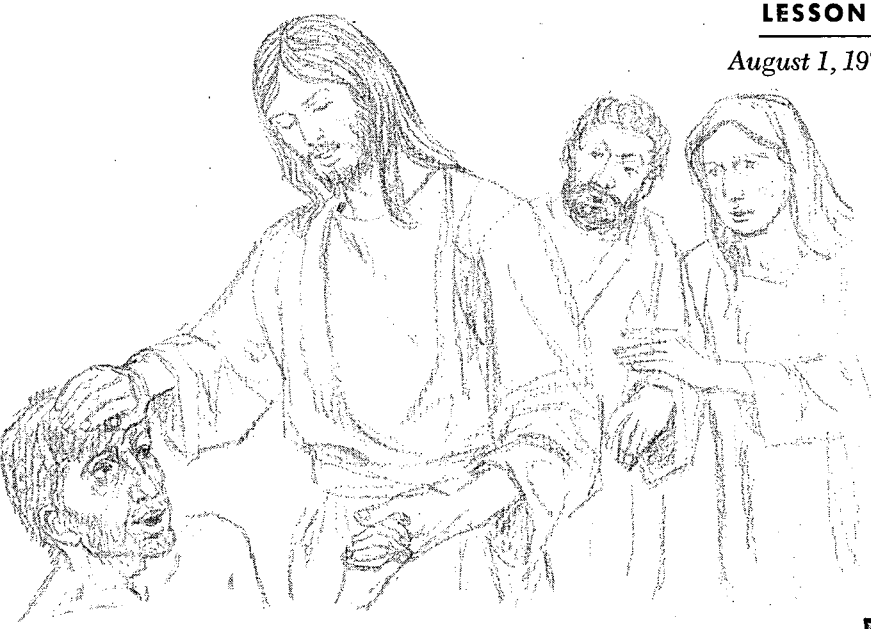
3. True or False: In the Revelation, both God the Father and God the Son are referred to as "Alpha and Omega" and as "the beginning and the end." _____

4. In relating the goodness of God manifested to Israel on their way out of Egypt, Paul refers to Christ under the symbol of: (*a*) a rock, (b) a cloud, (*c*) a shepherd, (*d*) eagle's wings. _____

5. Complete: On the night of His betrayal, Jesus told His disciples, "I am the _____, the _____, and the _____: no man _____ _____ _____ _____ but by Me."

6. True or False: According to Paul, Christ is as truly and fully God as the Father is. _____

Answers: (1) I AM; (2) d; (3) true; (4) a; (5) way, truth, life, cometh unto the Father; (6) true.



CHRIST, THE MESSIAH—1 5

"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." 2 Tim. 1:12.

In order that men might find deliverance from sin and death, it was necessary that they recognize their Deliverer when He should appear; they must have convincing evidence of His divine commission. To this end, God placed on record in the Old Testament a series of prophetic utterances in which He foretold every significant fact about the person, the coming, the life, and the death and resurrection of the Messiah.

Some of these predictions are explicit and clear, while the Messianic import of others might be missed unless later inspired spokesmen had called attention to them. Many of the prophecies to which Jesus directed the minds of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus on the afternoon of the resurrection day were doubtless of this kind. Still other Old Testament passages, which had a local application in historical events of their own time, were later recognized as parallel in certain respects to the Messiah, and thus are helpful in understanding His mission to earth.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **We Have Found the Messias**
   John 1:35-37, 40-42
2. **A Prophet Without Honor**
   Matt. 13:54-57
3. **The Testimony of Eyewitnesses**
   1 John 1:1-3
4. **Fulfilled Prophecy**
   2 Peter 1:16-19
5. **Convincing Evidence**
   Luke 24:25-27, 32, 44-46
6. **Personal Conviction**
   2 Tim. 1:9, 10, 12

Part 1
WE HAVE FOUND THE MESSIAS

John 1:35-37, 40-42

"The next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus."

"One of the two which heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus."

Four thousand years had passed since the first promise of a Saviour in the Garden of Eden. Gen. 3:15. For centuries the prophets had foretold His coming, and with earnest desire men and women of contrite hearts yearned for the fulfillment of the promises. Then one day, in the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son into the world (Gal. 4:4), and a voice was heard proclaiming that the Lamb of God had, at long last, appeared.

With what joy of heart the devout must have passed the word from lip to lip, "We have found the Messias!" The day of deliverance was at hand. The day for which all Israel hoped had at last dawned. The promised Deliverer had come. Eager expectation took possession of hearts and minds.

At the beginning of His ministry Christ was anointed by the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38), thereby receiving Heaven's seal of approval as the One sent by God to be the Saviour of the world. The names "Messiah" and "Christ" thus express the divine commission with which He came to this world.

By what meaningful symbols did John the Baptist introduce Jesus to the throng that had come to hear him speak, and how did some in the audience interpret John's announcement when they reported it to their friends?

THINK IT THROUGH

Why did John introduce Jesus to the listening throng as "the Lamb of God"?

If Jesus had come in our time, how might He be introduced in a way that would be meaningful to people today, as the titles "Lamb of God" and "Christ" were meaningful to the people of John's day?

"When at the baptism of Jesus, John pointed to Him as the Lamb of God, a new light was shed upon the Messiah's work. The prophet's mind was directed to the words of Isaiah, 'He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter.' Isa. 53:7. During the weeks that followed, John with new interest studied the prophecies and the teaching of the sacrificial service. . . .

"Was this the Christ? With awe and wonder the people looked upon the One just declared to be the Son of God. They had been deeply moved by the words of John. He had spoken to them in the name of God. They had listened to him day after day as he reproved their sins, and daily the conviction that he was sent of Heaven had strengthened."—"The Desire of Ages," pages 136, 137.

Part 2
A PROPHET WITHOUT HONOR

"When He was come into His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this Man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's Son? is not His mother called Mary? and His brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? and His sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this Man all these things? And they were offended in Him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and in his own house."

Matt. 13:54-57

John, Andrew, Simon, Philip, and Nathanael accepted Jesus as the Messiah immediately and without question. With spiritual insight they saw in Him more than simply another human being like themselves. To be sure, they were far from understanding all that was involved in Christ's mission to earth, and in fact they had some very mistaken concepts about Him and why He had come. But they did recognize and accept Him at once for what He was, the Messiah.

Not so with the people generally, whose spiritual eyesight was dim. Most people were impressed with His gracious words and His miracles. Never before had they listened to such heart-stirring messages, and they recognized in Him a power at work far beyond human ability. But Jesus appeared to be another human being essentially like themselves. They knew about His human ancestry and were personally acquainted with members of His family. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." "He was in the world, . . . and the world knew Him not." John 1:11, 10. The prince of this world had blinded them with spiritual myopia; they could not see beyond the material to the spiritual reality behind it.

Isaiah had foretold this spiritual blindness. Read Isa. 53:2. Eventually a majority of people "went back, and walked no more with Him"; but a few remained firm in their faith, saying, "We believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." John 6:66, 69.

Into what dilemma did Jesus' return to Nazareth plunge the townspeople? With what result?

THINK IT THROUGH

List a number of reasons why the people who knew Jesus best were among the first to reject Him.

What practical lesson, if any, can I derive from the saying, "A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country"?

"Toward the close of His ministry in Galilee, He again visited the home of His childhood. Since His rejection there, the fame of His preaching and His miracles had filled the land. None now could deny that He possessed more than human power. The people of Nazareth knew that He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed by Satan. About them were whole villages where there was not a moan of sickness in any house; for He had passed through them, and healed all their sick. The mercy revealed in every act of His life testified to His divine anointing."—"The Desire of Ages," page 241.

Part 3
THE TESTIMONY OF EYEWITNESSES

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."

1 John 1:1-3

One of the noteworthy aspects of the New Testament record of the life and mission of Jesus is the absolute confidence its writers reflect in Jesus as the promised Messiah and the Son of God. Those closest to Him and best able to judge the validity of the evidence He offered accepted it as conclusive proof of His Messiahship. The last lingering doubt, even on the part of Thomas, was dispelled. This certainty in what they believed gave convincing power to the message the apostles bore as they went out to the world with the gospel story.

The evidence John cites is threefold: he had seen, heard, and touched Jesus. He saw the miracles Christ performed, he heard the gracious words of truth Jesus spoke, and by touch he knew Jesus to be a real being and not a phantom, as the Docetists of John's time claimed. John's account of events was that of an eyewitness, and no one could shake his testimony. Read also John 6:66-69.

What reasons did the apostle John give for his firm conviction that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, the Son of God?

THINK IT THROUGH

What, to me, is the strongest evidence that Jesus was what He claimed to be? On what is my faith based?

Can I be certain that my faith in Christ and in the Bible as His message to men, is not a gross delusion?

"In the terrible persecution that followed, the apostle John did much to confirm and strengthen the faith of the believers. He bore a testimony which his adversaries could not controvert and which helped his brethren to meet with courage and loyalty the trials that came upon them. When the faith of the Christians would seem to waver under the fierce opposition they were forced to meet, the old, tried servant of Jesus would repeat with power and eloquence the story of the crucified and risen Saviour. He steadfastly maintained his faith, and from his lips came ever the same glad message: 'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; . . . that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.' "—"The Acts of the Apostles," pages 568, 569.

Part 4
FULFILLED PROPHECY

"We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the daystar arise in your hearts."

2 Peter 1:16-19

Like John (see Part 3), Peter presents himself as an eyewitness of the things he proclaimed concerning Jesus of Nazareth. He was there; he knew whereof he spoke. Whereas John is content, in his epistle, to make a general statement to this effect, Peter cites the outstanding incident in his association with Christ that proved to him that Christ was divine—the transfiguration on the mount. Read Matt. 17:1-8. With his own eyes Peter had seen the celestial glory that radiated, momentarily, from the person of Christ. With his own ears he had heard the voice from heaven proclaiming Jesus to be the Son of God. This, says Peter, confirmed the words of the prophets of old and proved that the Messianic predictions of the Old Testament had, indeed, met their fulfillment in Christ.

To Peter, it was this correspondence between prophecy on the one hand, and its fulfillment in history, on the other, that provided conclusive, incontestable evidence of the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth.

Sum up Peter's affirmation of faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah of whom the prophets of old had spoken.

THINK IT THROUGH

Is the evidence to which Peter points attesting the divine origin of Christ as valid and convincing today as it was in New Testament times?

Is evidence of Christ's Messiahship that Peter and John did not have available to us today? What is the most convincing evidence we can give a doubting world today of the claims of the Christian faith?

"The apostle was well qualified to speak of the purposes of God concerning the human race; for during the earthly ministry of Christ he had seen and heard much that pertained to the kingdom of God. 'We have not followed cunningly devised fables,' he reminded the believers, 'when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.' . . .

"Yet convincing as was this evidence of the certainty of the believers' hope, there was another still more convincing in the witness of prophecy, through which the faith of all might be confirmed and securely anchored."—"The Acts of the Apostles," page 534.

Part 5
CONVINCING EVIDENCE

"Then He [Jesus] said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."

"And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?"

"And He said unto them, . . . All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day."

Luke 24:25-27, 32, 44-46

How we wish Luke had reported the passages of Scripture to which Jesus pointed the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, in proof that His life and ministry, and especially His recent death and resurrection, were indeed a fulfillment of prophecy! What a Bible reading that would make! Perhaps in the glory land we can ask Jesus for a repeat performance of that Bible study, which led its recipients later to comment to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?"

How did Jesus lift the gloom from the hearts and minds of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and prepare them to understand and appreciate fully the personal evidence of the resurrection He presented to them a little later?

THINK IT THROUGH

Which do you suppose was more convincing to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, fulfilled prophecy or their personal encounter with the risen Christ?

On what was the emotional experience ("Did not our heart burn within us?") based? What lesson is there in this relationship for us today?

"Beginning at Moses, the very Alpha of Bible history, Christ expounded in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Had He first made Himself known to them, their hearts would have been satisfied. In the fullness of their joy they would have hungered for nothing more. But it was necessary for them to understand the witness borne to Him by the types and prophecies of the Old Testament. Upon these their faith must be established."—"The Desire of Ages," pages 796, 799.

Part 6
PERSONAL CONVICTION

"[God] hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

2 Tim. 1:9, 10, 12

John, Peter, and the other apostles were eyewitnesses to the life and ministry of Jesus, and their conviction that He was all that He claimed to be was absolute. But can others who have not had the privilege of personal association with Jesus be equally convinced? Those who listened to the disciples tell about Christ, and all since then, have had to take the word of the disciples for it.

The experience of the apostle Paul in accepting Christ, and his role as the great foreign missionary of New Testament times as well as writer of a major part of the New Testament, prove that a person who is not an eyewitness can be just as certain about the gospel record as the eyewitnesses themselves were. Thus Paul's emphatic declaration, "I know whom I have believed," is fraught with meaning and assurance to us today. Paul *knew*. So can we.

In what dramatic words did Paul affirm his own faith and confidence in Christ and in the salvation He came to make possible?

THINK IT THROUGH

On what basis can I be as sure about Christ and the gospel as Paul was?

How can I convince others that what I believe is really so and persuade them to believe also?

"The few Christians who accompanied him to the place of execution he endeavored to strengthen and encourage by repeating the promises given for those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. He assured them that nothing would fail of all that the Lord had spoken concerning His tried and faithful children. For a little season they might be in heaviness through manifold temptations; they might be destitute of earthly comforts; but they could encourage their hearts with the assurance of God's faithfulness, saying, 'I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him.' . . . Soon the night of trial and suffering would end, and then would dawn the glad morning of peace and perfect day."—"The Acts of the Apostles," page 511.

Part 7 ◇ SUMMARY QUESTIONS ◇ A TEST OF YOUR STUDY POWER

Now that you have studied this lesson you are invited to answer the following questions. Check your answers with the answers at the bottom of this sheet.

1. Upon hearing John the Baptist identify Jesus as "the Lamb of God," Andrew went in search of his own brother, Simon Peter, and told him, "We have found _____ _____."

2. The people of Nazareth were offended because: (*a*) Jesus never returned to His hometown to preach and heal; (*b*) Jesus openly condemned them for rejecting Him; (*c*) they knew His family and thought of Him as just another townsman like themselves; (*d*) they were jealous of Him.

3. John presented himself as an _____ of the fact that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, the Son of God.

4. True or False: In testifying of his own certainty about Jesus' being the Messiah, Peter reports having heard a voice from heaven declaring Jesus to be the Son of God. _____

5. Complete: "Did not our _____ _____ within us, while He _____ _____ _____ by the way, and while He opened to us the _____?"

6. An important New Testament writer, not an eyewitness of the events connected with the life and mission of Jesus, was: (*a*) Paul; (*b*) John; (*c*) Peter; (*d*) Matthew.

Answers: (1) the Messias; (2) c; (3) eyewitness; (4) true; (5) heart burn, talked with us, Scriptures; (6) a.

CHRIST, THE MESSIAH—2 6

"Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." 1 Peter 1:10, 11.

"I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am He." John 13:19.

The Lord gave Adam and Eve the first cryptic promise of a Deliverer just before He expelled them from the Garden of Eden. Gen. 3:15. Enoch, and doubtless many others not mentioned in Scripture, kept the hope of redemption alive. Read Jude 14, 15. Moses' prophecy concerning his own immediate successor, who led Israel into the Promised Land, was also a prediction of Christ, who was destined to lead His people of all ages into the heavenly Canaan. Deut. 18:15; cf. Acts 3:22.

From that time forward the prophets were led, sometimes clearly and sometimes in cryptic language, to set forth every essential fact concerning the person and mission of the Messiah. This lesson considers the more important points of Messianic prophecy.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Divinity United With Humanity**
   Isa. 7:14; 9:6, 7
2. **The Son of David**
   Jer. 23:5, 6
3. **Place and Time of His Birth**
   Micah 5:2; Dan. 9:25
4. **Objectives of Jesus' Ministry**
   Isa. 61:1-3
5. **A Vicarious Sacrifice**
   Isa. 53:5-12
6. **His Resurrection and Ascension**
   Ps. 16:10; 110:1

Part 1
DIVINITY UNITED WITH HUMANITY

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel."

"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever."

Isa. 7:14; 9:6, 7

The essential truth about Jesus Christ is the fact that, in Him, divinity and humanity were united in one person. He was God incarnate. This union was accomplished by providing that a virgin should give birth to the Messiah. His divine nature was in no way diminished by being united with humanity, nor was His humanity in any way diminished by being united with divinity. The two natures were mysteriously blended in one divine-human Person in such a way that each nature retained its identity. Only thus could divinity enter directly into the human experience. Only thus could His life be a perfect example of what God would have us become. His death a vicarious sacrifice in our stead, and His resurrection our guarantee of eternal life.

The virgin birth of the Messiah as a human being with a human mother, and His status as God, were both the subject of prophecy. Both of these sublime facts are likewise attested in the gospel record (Matt. 1:23; Luke 1:31-35) as having occurred in the birth of Jesus.

At the same time, Christ's divine nature was veiled in His humanity. He was tempted, and He overcame as a man, making use of no attributes or powers not available to us. He suffered and died as a man. Deity could not be tempted; Deity could not die. But in the intimate association of the divine and the human in Jesus Christ, Deity entered into close fellowship with fallen humanity; and in Christ humanity, by power from above, overcame temptation and triumphed over death. Read Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 2:14, 17; 4:15.

What sublime facts about the nature and person of the coming Messiah were foretold by the prophet Isaiah seven centuries before His coming?

THINK IT THROUGH

Why was it necessary that the Messiah be divine? Why must He also be a human being? By what divine provision was it possible for both natures to be united in one person?

From the union of the two natures in Christ, what can I learn about my own relationship to God?

"Was the human nature of the Son of Mary changed into the divine nature of the Son of God? No; the two natures were mysteriously blended in one person—the Man Christ Jesus. In Him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."—Ellen G. White Comments, "SDA Bible Commentary," Vol. 5, p. 1113.

Part 2
THE SON OF DAVID

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

Jer. 23:5, 6

When He selected David to be king over Israel, the Lord chose "a man after His own heart." 1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22. David made mistakes, some of them grievous indeed, but when called to account for them he manifested a humble, contrite heart and repented of his evil deeds. Read 2 Sam. 11:1 to 12:14; Psalm 51. Such a spirit "is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Peter 3:4), and God is able to "dwell . . . with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit" (Isa. 57:15) despite his mistakes. With God the attitude, the spirit, the intent of the heart is more important than the overt act because, when a man has the right frame of mind and heart, divine power can unite with human effort to transform the life.

With such a spirit, David became an able ruler of God's people, despite his mistakes, and thus also a type of the Messiah as ruler of all God's people throughout eternal ages. Accordingly, God promised to "stablish the throne of His kingdom forever" (2 Sam. 7:13), a promise yet to meet its complete fulfillment in the eternal reign of Jesus Christ as Lord.

What prophecy of Jeremiah is significant with respect to the Messiah in His role as Lord over the people of God?

THINK IT THROUGH

In what respects was David an appropriate prototype of the Messiah? What connection is there between the Messiah's being a son of David, and His being called "The Lord our righteousness"?

What practical lessons are there for me in the relationship David sustained to God?

"The Pharisees had gathered close about Jesus as He answered the question of the scribe. Now turning He put a question to them: 'What think ye of Christ? whose son is He?' This question was designed to test their belief concerning the Messiah,—to show whether they regarded Him simply as a man or as the Son of God. A chorus of voices answered, 'The Son of David.' This was the title which prophecy had given to the Messiah. When Jesus revealed His divinity by His mighty miracles, when He healed the sick and raised the dead, the people had inquired among themselves, 'Is not this the Son of David?' . . . But many who called Jesus the Son of David did not recognize His divinity. They did not understand that the Son of David was also the Son of God."—"The Desire of Ages," pages 608, 609.

Part 3
PLACE AND TIME OF HIS BIRTH

Micah 5:2; Dan. 9:25

"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

"Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times."

The time and place of Messiah's birth were both subjects of prophecy. Micah foretold the place where He was to be born, and Daniel the approximate time. Inasmuch as Messiah was to be known as "the Son of David" and to sit upon the throne of David, it was appropriate that he should be born in Bethlehem, the City of David. But, though Jesus was to be born in Bethlehem, Micah emphatically affirms His eternal preexistence.

According to Daniel, Messiah was to appear at the close of "seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks" of years, or sixty-nine weeks of years (69 x 7), or 483 years "from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem." The effective decree that resulted in the complete restoration of Jerusalem was that issued by Artaxerxes, king of Persia, in the seventh year of his reign (read Ezra 7:1, 8, 11, 13), or 457 B.C. Four hundred eighty-three years from 457 B.C. brings us to A.D. 27, in which year Christ entered upon His public ministry. Thirty was the age at which it was customary, among the Jews, for a person to enter public service. See Num. 4:3; 1 Chron. 23:3. Jesus doubtless had this prophecy of Daniel in mind when He declared, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand." Mark 1:15; compare Gal. 4:4.

In what words did the prophets foretell the place and the approximate time when Messiah was to be born and enter upon His ministry?

THINK IT THROUGH

Why had inspiration specified the time and place of Messiah's birth?

Paul declares that Jesus came "in the fullness of the time."

In what sense was "the time" "full" when Jesus came the first time?

"The burden of Christ's preaching was, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.' Thus the gospel message, as given by the Saviour Himself, was based on the prophecies. The 'time' which He declared to be fulfilled was the period made known by the angel Gabriel to Daniel. . . . The commandment to restore and build Jerusalem, as completed by the decree of Artaxerxes Longimanus (see Ezra 6:14; 7:1, 9, margin), went into effect in the autumn of B.C. 457. From this time four hundred and eighty-three years extend to the autumn of A.D. 27. According to the prophecy, this period was to reach to the Messiah, the Anointed One."—"The Desire of Ages," page 233.

Part 4
OBJECTIVES OF JESUS' MINISTRY

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified."

Isa. 61:1-3

Jesus chose this passage of Isaiah as the text for His first recorded sermon, in the synagogue of Nazareth at the beginning of His Galilean ministry. After reading it, He announced, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Luke 4:21. The theme of Jesus' message was, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17), by which He referred to the kingdom of divine grace in the hearts of men.

This was the "good tidings," the good news or gospel, that Jesus brought to all who would listen. He came to proclaim liberty to those whom Satan held captive in the prison house of sin; there was freedom for all who wanted to escape. He came to announce the "acceptable year" of salvation, the day of grace for all who would accept it. Jesus came to bind up those who, upon hearing the gospel, were brokenhearted over their sins, to comfort those who mourned for the wrong they had done, and to plant them as "trees of righteousness" in the garden of divine grace. Compare Psalm 1.

In your own words, summarize Isaiah's prediction of the nature of Christ's message and the purpose of His ministry.

THINK IT THROUGH

To what extent should I endeavor to make the objectives of Christ's ministry the objectives of my own life?

How can I order my life so that it will follow more closely the pattern of His perfect life of service for others?

"Jesus stood before the people as a living expositor of the prophecies concerning Himself. Explaining the words He had read, He spoke of the Messiah as a reliever of the oppressed, a liberator of captives, a healer of the afflicted, restoring sight to the blind, and revealing to the world the light of truth. His impressive manner and the wonderful import of His words thrilled the hearers with a power they had never felt before. The tide of divine influence broke every barrier down; like Moses, they beheld the Invisible. As their hearts were moved upon by the Holy Spirit, they responded with fervent amens and praises to the Lord."—"The Desire of Ages," page 237.

Part 5
A VICARIOUS SACRIFICE

"He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. 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. . . . For He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was He stricken. . . . Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin. . . . By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities. . . . He hath poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

Isa. 53:5-12

The sublime beauty of Isaiah's word portrait of the suffering Servant of God is a literary as well as a spiritual masterpiece. Read from the preceding chapter Isaiah's introduction (Isa. 52:7-15) to the fifty-third chapter. There the Messenger of the Lord bursts upon the scene like a courier arriving in haste with good news—"good tidings" of "peace" and "salvation" (verse 7) addressed to all men everywhere (verse 10). He would prosper as God's appointed Ambassador to earth (verse 13), but would also suffer "more than the sons of men" are called upon to suffer (verse 14).

Isaiah stresses the vicarious nature of Christ's sacrifice. In one way or another this refrain is repeated again and again in Isaiah 53. See how many times you can find this aspect of Christ's sacrifice mentioned, and note the different forms in which it is expressed.

What aspects of Messiah's sufferings and death are graphically portrayed by the prophet Isaiah?

THINK IT THROUGH

Why was it necessary for the Messiah to die on my behalf? Could God not have devised some other plan? How can it be fair for one person to suffer for another's wrongdoing, and how can God accept Jesus' death in place of the death I ought to die for my sins?

What hints can you find in Isaiah 53 of the resurrection and priestly ministry of Christ in heaven after His ascension?

"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," page 25.

Part 6
HIS RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION
Ps. 16:10; 110:1

"Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption."

"The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool."

The inspired writers of the New Testament have picked up both of these passages from the Psalms and applied them to the resurrection of Christ from the grave, and to His exalted position in heaven following His ascension. Read Acts 2:25-32; Heb. 1:13. Isaiah foretold that after Messiah's death He would "see His seed," that is, "see of the travail of His soul" and "be satisfied" (Isa. 53:10-12). He would "prolong His days," or live on after death. Having borne the iniquities of His people in His death, He would "justify many" and make "intercession for the transgressors."

In the Bible "my soul," as used in Ps. 16:10, means "me." "Soul" is often substituted for the personal pronoun and is so translated in modern translations such as *The Torah,* a Jewish version issued by the Jewish Publication Society of America, that reflects the best contemporary Jewish scholarship. The word "hell" means the grave, or abode of the dead. Speaking on the Day of Pentecost, Peter placed the words of Ps. 16:10 in the mouth of Christ, as a prediction that He would rise from the dead.

The writer of Hebrews (Heb. 1:13) attributes the words of Ps. 110:1 to God the Father at the enthronement of Christ as High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. Read Heb. 2:1; 10:20-22.

In what cryptic words does the psalmist foretell the resurrection of our Lord and His exalted position in heaven following the ascension?

THINK IT THROUGH

How was the assurance that Jesus would not "see corruption" fulfilled in the experience of His death and resurrection?

Is Christ's relationship to the Father and to the universe now any different from what it was before the incarnation?

"The intercession of Christ in man's behalf in the sanctuary above is as essential to the plan of salvation as was His death upon the cross. By His death He began that work which after His resurrection He ascended to complete in heaven. We must by faith enter within the veil, 'whither the Forerunner is for us entered.' . . . There the light from the cross of Calvary is reflected. There we may gain a clearer insight into the mysteries of redemption. The salvation of man is accomplished at an infinite expense to heaven; the sacrifice made is equal to the broadest demands of the broken law of God. Jesus has opened the way to the Father's throne, and through His mediation the sincere desire of all who come to Him in faith may be presented before God."—"The Great Controversy," page 489.

Part 7 ◇ SUMMARY QUESTIONS ◇ A TEST OF YOUR STUDY POWER

Now that you have studied this lesson you are invited to answer the following questions. Check your answers with the answers at the bottom of this sheet.

1. One prophet who foretold the Messiah would be a divine Being was:

(*a*) Moses, (*b*) Isaiah, (*c*) Micah, (*d*) Daniel. _____

2. Complete: The affectionate title, Son of _____, pointed to the Messiah as Lord and King over His people.

3. True or False: Nazareth was pointed out in prophecy as the place where

Messiah was to be born. _____

4. Complete: "The Lord hath anointed Me to preach _____ _____

to the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the _____, to pro-

claim _____ to the captives, and the opening of the _____ to them that are bound."

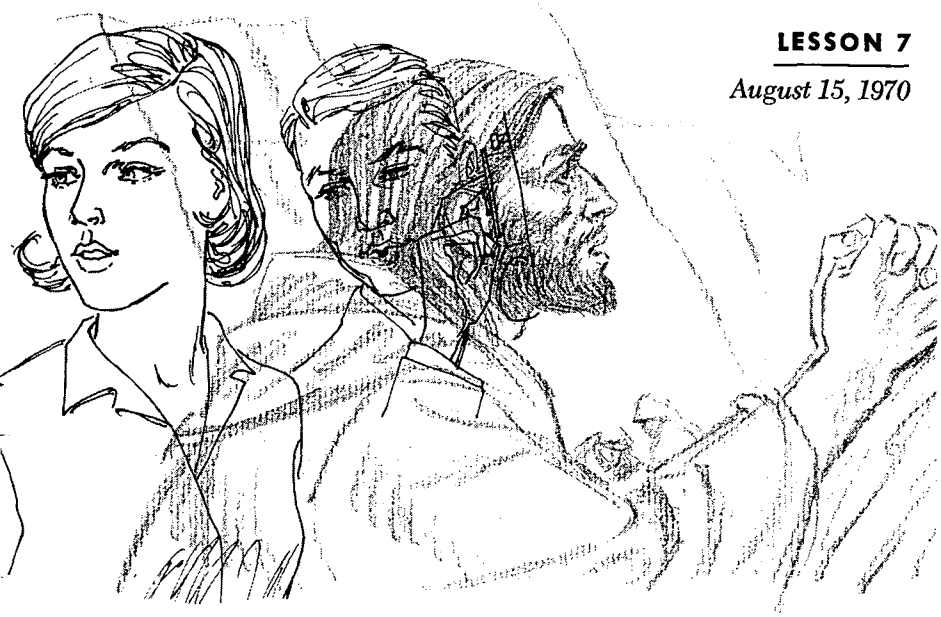
5. Complete: "He is brought as a _____ to the slaughter, and as a

_____ before her _____ is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth."

6. Complete: "Thou wilt not leave My _____ in _____; neither

wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see _____."

Answers: (1) b; (2) David; (3) false; (4) good tidings, brokenhearted, liberty, prison; (5) lamb, sheep, shearers; (6) soul, hell, corruption.



CHRIST, OUR MEDIATOR 7

"Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted." Heb. 2: 17, 18.

Sin came into the world as a result of Adam's transgression, and death as a result of sin. Read Rom. 5:8-10, 18. Man was estranged from God, and in his perverted, sinful nature had no desire to be reconciled to God. Unless God took an effective initiative, the separation would be eternal. Thus it was that Deity stooped to take on the nature of fallen humanity, in order that He might effectively represent God to us, and that in His human nature He might represent our plight to the Father and reconcile us to God. He came to this earth as God's ambassador of peace to fallen humanity and returned to heaven as our ambassador at the throne of the universe.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **God's Concern for Sinners**
   John 3:16, 17
2. **God With Us**
   Matt. 1:21-23
3. **Justification and Reconciliation**
   Rom. 5:8-10, 12, 18
4. **Our Great High Priest**
   Heb. 2:14, 15, 17, 18
5. **Jesus Intercedes for Us**
   Heb. 7:24, 25
6. **In Time of Need**
   Heb. 4:14-16

Part 1
GOD'S CONCERN FOR SINNERS
John 3:16, 17

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved."

How fitting that God in His mercy did not abandon the human family to the results of its evil choice! How fitting that deep in the heart of the Creator was a yearning for His erring, earthborn children! How thankful we can be that while "to err is human, to forgive [is] divine."

God's love for lost humanity consists in infinite compassion for man and concern for his eternal happiness and well-being. He might properly have sent His Son into the world to condemn the world for its rebellion, but He did not do so. Justice would have approved of such a course of action, but mercy not so. Though it appeared that all was lost, divine wisdom knew that there was still hope, yes certainty, that some at least might yet be saved. To all the universe, throughout all eternity, the most sublime facet of the divine character is revealed through the plan of salvation—mercy, the supreme demonstration of love. This abiding confidence in the infinite goodness of God will safeguard the universe against the plague of sin ever breaking out again.

God provided a way of escape from the death grip of sin, but divine wisdom provided that every man should make his own decision as to whether he would accept the gift of infinite grace. Satan made death inevitable by taking from man the power of choice; Christ made life possible by restoring to man the power to choose between death and life.

With what alternatives did the entrance of sin into this world confront God? With what alternative did the entrance of Christ into the world confront lost sinners?

THINK IT THROUGH

How can God be strictly just, yet merciful at the same time? Is God less just because He has chosen to be merciful?

In the end, will the eventual exercise of divine justice in any way diminish God's mercy? Are justice and mercy perhaps two facets of the same divine attribute? Which attribute?

"Satan in heaven had hated Christ for His position in the courts of God. He hated Him the more when he himself was dethroned. He hated Him who pledged Himself to redeem a race of sinners. Yet into the world where Satan claimed dominion God permitted His Son to come, a helpless babe, subject to the weakness of humanity. He permitted Him to meet life's peril in common with every human soul, to fight the battle as every child of humanity must fight it, at the risk of failure and eternal loss."—"The Desire of Ages," page 49.

Part 2
GOD WITH US

"She [Mary] shall bring forth a Son, and thou [Joseph] shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."

Matt. 1:21-23

The names "Jesus" and "Immanuel" express the purpose of the Saviour's mission to earth. "Immanuel" is a transliteration of the Hebrew meaning "God with us." The name "Jesus" is also from the Hebrew, and means "the Lord will save." In the person of Jesus of Nazareth, God came into intimate association with His people on earth. He was not content to be forever estranged from them, but came to make peace. Think of it! The infinite God desires the companionship of beings who have revolted against Him! He came to be with us, to save us from our sins and to qualify us for restoration to the family in heaven.

Isaiah's prophecy that a young woman would bear a child (read Isa. 7:14), which originally expressed God's purpose to be with His people Israel in their confrontation with the Syrian hosts, is clothed by the angel who came to Joseph with the higher spiritual significance that, in our confrontation with Satan and the hosts of evil, God came, in the person of Jesus Christ, to be with us and to rescue us from his power. The earlier, historical experience was fulfilled—filled with a fuller meaning—when the Son of God took upon Himself the nature of mankind.

What name and what title were given the Saviour by the angel who appeared to Joseph, and how does he explain their meaning?

THINK IT THROUGH

Why do the Scriptures use so many different names and titles in referring to Christ?

How did Jesus, in His person, life, and ministry, impart to various incidents and statements of the Old Testament more meaning than they had originally?

"In the place where sin abounded, God's grace much more abounds. The earth itself, the very field that Satan claims as his, is to be not only ransomed but exalted. Our little world, under the curse of sin the one dark blot in His glorious creation, will be honored above all other worlds in the universe of God. Here, where the Son of God tabernacled in humanity; where the King of glory lived and suffered and died,—here, when He shall make all things new, the tabernacle of God shall be with men, 'and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.' And through endless ages as the redeemed walk in the light of the Lord, they will praise Him for His unspeakable Gift,—IMMANUEL, 'GOD WITH US.' "—"The Desire of Ages," page 26.

Part 3
JUSTIFICATION AND RECONCILIATION

"God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

Rom. 5: 8-10, 12, 18

"Even so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."

Paul argues the justice of God in accepting the death of one person—Jesus Christ—on behalf of the entire human race, on the basis that the entire race had fallen into sin as the result of the wrong choice of one other person, Adam. If all men could become sinners as a result of Adam's sin, then it is right and proper that all men can become righteous through the gift of divine grace in the person of Jesus Christ. "God commendeth his love toward us, . . . while we were yet sinners," by sending Christ to die for us.

If Christ died for us while we were still enemies of God, with no desire to be reconciled to God, surely, having been reconciled to God by that infinite sacrifice, we can with all confidence believe that He will rescue us from death, which is the result of sin.

As a result of Adam's sin all men inherited a sinful nature. But by their own choice this sinful nature has involved all men in sin.

In your own words, summarize Paul's argument about the justice of God in granting divine amnesty to all repentant sinners.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is the difference, if any, between reconciliation and justification? Does one precede the other, or are they simultaneous?

What evidence do I have that I, personally, have been reconciled to God?

How does Christ's death on the cross reconcile us to God?

"Not because we first loved Him did Christ love us; but 'while we were yet sinners' He died for us. He does not treat us according to our desert. Although our sins have merited condemnation, He does not condemn us. Year after year He has borne with our weakness and ignorance, with our ingratitude and waywardness. Notwithstanding our wanderings, our hardness of heart, our neglect of His Holy Word, His hand is stretched out still.

"Grace is an attribute of God exercised toward undeserving human beings. We did not seek for it, but it was sent in search of us. God rejoices to bestow His grace upon us, not because we are worthy, but because we are so utterly unworthy. Our only claim to His mercy is our great need."—"The Ministry of Healing," page 161.

Part 4
OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

"Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted."

Heb. 2:14, 15, 17, 18

By taking upon Himself humanity, the Son of God identified with the human race. For the duration of His mission to earth He laid aside the prerogatives of Deity (Phil. 2:5-8); He "emptied himself," as the Greek of Phil. 2:7 reads literally, and came to live as a man, with a human body, a human nature, and human frailties and limitations. In His confrontations with the tempter He relied on the same help from above that is available to us. He never performed a miracle to benefit Himself. There was no make-believe about His struggle with the enemy; He was tempted, and He suffered as He struggled against His wily foe.

The Saviour chose to meet the tempter as we must meet him, in order that He might be able to help us when we are tempted. Now, as a merciful and faithful High Priest, He is our representative before God, in order that He may reconcile us to God. He was made like us in all things, in order that He might become our representative, in all things, before the Father.

In what ways did Jesus identify Himself with humanity? Why?

THINK IT THROUGH

Knowing all things, why could the Son of God not have become "a merciful and faithful High Priest" and "make reconciliation for the sins of the people" without a personal encounter with temptation?

Did Jesus meet temptation in His divine nature or in His human nature?

"Would that we could comprehend the significance of the words, Christ 'suffered, being tempted.' While He was free from the taint of sin, the refined sensibilities of His holy nature rendered contact with evil unspeakably painful to Him. Yet with human nature upon Him, He met the archapostate face to face, and single-handed withstood the foe of His throne. Not even by a thought could Christ be brought to yield to the power of temptation.

"Satan finds in human hearts some point where he can gain a foothold; some sinful desire is cherished, by means of which his temptations assert their power. But Christ declared of Himself, 'The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me.' The storms of temptation burst upon Him, but they could not cause Him to swerve from His allegiance to God."—Ellen G. White Comments, "SDA Bible Commentary," Vol. 7, p. 927.

Part 5
JESUS INTERCEDES FOR US
Heb. 7:24, 25

"But this Man [Jesus], because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

The writer of the book of Hebrews has been comparing the priesthood of Christ with that of the ancient Levitical system. Writing to the Hebrew people, who understood and esteemed the Levitical system and priesthood, he sought to create in their minds an understanding and appreciation of the infinite superiority of Christ's priesthood and a desire for participation in its benefits. The great advantage of Christ's priesthood, he says, is its permanence and reliability. "By reason of death," the Levitical priests were prevented from continuing their ministry. In contrast, Jesus "ever liveth to make intercession" for all who "come unto God by Him." He is always accessible when we need Him, and He is able to save "to the uttermost."

Human language reflects eternal realities imperfectly at best. The word "intercession" may seem to imply that God the Father is not kindly disposed toward us (compare John 3:16), and that were it not for Jesus' persuasiveness He would deal harshly with us, as we deserve. Not so. Sin separated the human family from God, for sin cannot live in the sight of a holy God. But God, who loves us with an everlasting love, does not need to be reconciled to us; we stand in need of being reconciled to Him.

Point out two great benefits that are ours through the priestly ministry of Jesus Christ.

THINK IT THROUGH

Whether in the ancient Levitical system or in Christ's ministry on our behalf, why is a priest necessary? Why can we not each one be his own priest before God?

"Christ as High Priest within the veil so immortalized Calvary, that though He liveth unto God, He dies continually to sin and thus if any man sin, he has an Advocate with the Father. He arose from the tomb enshrouded with a cloud of angels in wondrous power and glory,—the Deity and humanity combined. He took in His grasp the world over which Satan claimed to preside as his lawful territory, and by His wonderful work in giving His life, He restored the whole race of men to favor with God. The songs of triumph echoed and re-echoed through the worlds. Angel and archangel, cherubim and seraphim, sang the triumphant song at the amazing achievement."—Ellen G. White, Manuscript 50, quoted in "Questions on Doctrine," page 689.

Part 6
IN TIME OF NEED

"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Heb. 4:14-16

We have no reason for hesitation in approaching the throne of grace. Those who fall into sin and are sorry need sympathetic understanding, and the writer of the book of Hebrews here assures all who read that they need have no fear of a cold, harsh, severe reception when they return to God. Jesus is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" because He knows from personal experience what it is to be tempted.

Furthermore, there is no point on which we can be tempted that He did not experience, and no sin into which we may fall for which His experience and sympathetic understanding are inadequate. When we have sinned—literally, fallen short of the mark at which we are aiming—we need forgiveness first of all. But we also need strength and courage to go and "sin no more," that is, to overcome next time where we fell short this time. Read John 5:14.

As our High Priest, Christ provides for both of these needs: (1) "We may obtain mercy," or forgiveness for our sins, and (2) we may "find grace to help in time of need," that is, the grace of Christ to enable us to overcome as He overcame. It is the Saviour's purpose not only to forgive us our sins when we confess them, but "to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," including the natural tendencies and weaknesses that lead us into sin when we are tempted. 1 John 1:9.

What two great benefits may be ours when we come to the throne of divine grace?

THINK IT THROUGH

Is there any temptation I have to meet that Christ did not have to meet when on earth?

What does it mean to "hold fast our profession"? How is this related to the invitation to come to the throne of grace?

"Christ glorified not Himself in being made High Priest. God gave Him His appointment to the priesthood. He was to be an example to all the human family. He qualified Himself to be, not only the representative of the race, but their Advocate, so that every soul if he will may say, I have a Friend at court. He is a High Priest that can be touched with the feelings of our infirmities."—Ellen G. White Comments, "SDA Bible Commentary," Vol. 7, p. 930.

Part 7 ◇ SUMMARY QUESTIONS ◇ A TEST OF YOUR STUDY POWER

Now that you have studied this lesson you are invited to answer the following questions. Check your answers with the answers at the bottom of this sheet.

1. What was necessary on God's part to make salvation available to us? _____. What is necessary on our part before it becomes ours? _____

2. True or False: The name Immanuel means, "the Lord will save." _____

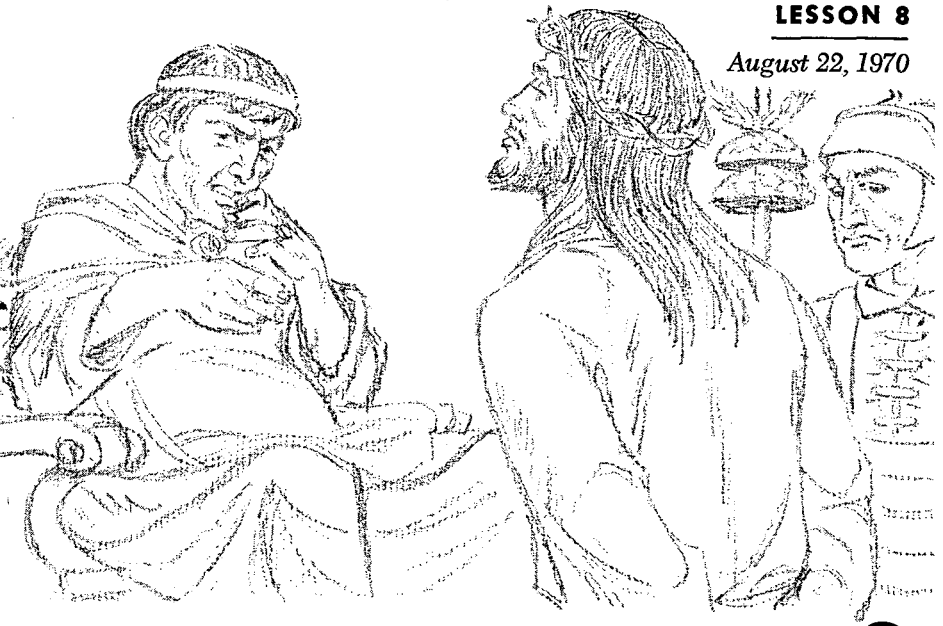
3. Complete: "By _____ _____ sin entered into the world, and _____ by sin; and so _____ passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

4. Which of the following is *not* mentioned in Heb. 2:14, 15, 17, 18 as a benefit derived from the incarnation of Christ: (*a*) deliverance from the fear of death, (*b*) reconciliation with God, (*c*) succor in temptation, (*d*) hope of the resurrection. _____

5. Complete: "He is able also to save them to the _____ that come unto God by Him, seeing He _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ for them."

6. True or False: To "obtain mercy" means to receive forgiveness for sins we have committed. _____

Answers: (1) love, or God's gift, believe; (2) false; (3) one man, death, death; (4) d; (5) uttermost, ever liveth to make intercession; (6) true.



CHRIST: SERVANT OF MAN'S NECESSITY 8

"I am the living Bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." John 6:51.

Though He was Lord of all, Jesus presented Himself to the people of His day as God's Servant sent to minister to man's many needs. "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant," Jesus told the Pharisees. Matt. 23:11. "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant," He counseled His disciples. Matt. 20:27. This lesson highlights some of the ways in which the Saviour gave Himself to meet man's need. The ultimate test of Christ's mission to earth is the degree to which He met the needs of men. Similarly, the test of our lives is the degree to which we serve our fellowmen.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **The Bread of Life**
   John 6:48-51
2. **Sins Forgiven**
   Mark 2:5-11
3. **Miracles Attest Jesus' Messiahship**
   John 20:30, 31
4. **The Living Christ**
   John 10:17, 18
5. **Many Reject Jesus**
   John 6:51, 52, 60, 66
6. **There Is No Alternative**
   John 6:67-69

Part 1
THE BREAD OF LIFE

"I am that Bread of Life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living Bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this Bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

John 6:48-51

Christ addressed these words to people who, the day before, had been among the five thousand He fed miraculously and who had then been ready to acclaim Him as the Messiah and crown Him King of Israel. Read verses 14, 15, 22. They conceived of Him as a political Messiah, however, and intended to make Him their leader in overthrowing the Roman power and liberating their nation.

In providing the throng with literal food, Jesus had been ministering to a genuine human need. The people had come from a distance to hear Him speak. They were hungry, and there was nothing to eat. By this miracle Jesus sought to direct their minds to the spiritual food He was offering them. Spiritually, they were far from their Father's home, and their vaguely felt spiritual hunger made them eager for the spiritual food with which He provided them that day.

Both the literal food and the spiritual fare were from His Father's table. Jesus gave them a taste of both, in the hope that their desire for more would lead them back from the far country, in which they were largely unmindful of spiritual things, to their Father's home where there was plenty.

By what practical illustration did Jesus explain the purpose of His mission to earth? To what two advantages of this did Jesus point their minds?

THINK IT THROUGH

Why did Jesus, at this point in His discourse, refer to the manna in the wilderness?

What similarities and differences are there between the manna and the food with which Jesus had provided them, and the spiritual food He sought to give them?

In what sense is Jesus' "flesh" the "bread" He offered the people?

"As our physical life is sustained by food, so our spiritual life is sustained by the Word of God. And every soul is to receive life from God's Word for himself. As we must eat for ourselves in order to receive nourishment, so we must receive the Word for ourselves. We are not to obtain it merely through the medium of another's mind. We should carefully study the Bible, asking God for the aid of the Holy Spirit, that we may understand His Word. We should take one verse, and concentrate the mind on the task of ascertaining the thought which God has put in that verse for us. We should dwell upon the thought until it becomes our own, and we know 'what saith the Lord.' "—"The Desire of Ages," page 390.

Part 2
SINS FORGIVEN

"When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this Man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? And immediately when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, He said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (He saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house."

Mark 2:5-11

Man needs not only food to sustain life, but physical healing as well, for disease often fastens upon him. The same is true of man's spiritual life. He needs healing from the wounds sin has inflicted, and from the virus of sin that infects his life. As Jesus taught a spiritual lesson from the physical food with which He had provided them (Part 1), He now draws a lesson from the act of physical healing He is about to perform.

Only God can forgive sins. Had Jesus been merely a man, the unspoken complaint of the scribes would have been justified. He would have been guilty of blasphemy. But, because Jesus was divine as well as human, He had the right and the power, even on earth, to forgive men their sins. Read John 1:29; 1 John 1:7. The refusal of the scribes to recognize Jesus as divine prompted the suggestion that His forgiving of sins was an act of blasphemy.

In what incident, and by what means, did Jesus demonstrate the nature of sin and forgiveness?

THINK IT THROUGH

Read once more Mark's account of the healing of the paralyzed man let down through the roof, looking for points in the man's illness and his healing that illustrate the nature of sin and Heaven's provision for release from it.

What point in the narrative helps you most to understand your relationship to God, and how to relate to sin and divine forgiveness in your own life?

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

Part 3
MIRACLES ATTEST JESUS' MESSIAHSHIP

John 20:30, 31

"Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: but these *are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ,* the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name."

Each of Jesus' miracles was His response to a real, immediate human need. He never performed a miracle just to prove that He could do so; and when Herod asked for one to satisfy his curiosity, Jesus refused—even though this would, presumably, have procured His release and averted His crucifixion. Luke 23:8, 9. When asked for a "sign" (a miracle), which Jesus' critics presumably offered to accept as evidence of His Messiahship and of His authority for deeds such as the cleansing of the temple, Jesus refused. Read Matt. 12:38, 39; John 2:18; 6:30, 31; Mark 8:11, 12.

Jesus' miracles were also a means of teaching spiritual truth. For instance, the miracle of the loaves and the fishes taught a lesson about spiritual food, particularly about Jesus Himself as the Bread of Life. By the healing of the paralyzed man let down through the roof, Jesus illustrated spiritual restoration. By healing the man born blind, He taught the importance of spiritual eyesight.

Most important of all, the miracles attested Jesus' Messiahship and affixed to His message and mission the approval of Heaven. He called on His disciples to believe Him "for the very works' sake." Read John 14:10, 11. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter declared that Jesus was "approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you." Acts 2:22.

How does John state Jesus' purpose in the many miracles He performed?

THINK IT THROUGH

Would the world be impressed by miracles today as the people of Jesus' day were?

Should we expect miracles today? Under what circumstances and conditions might we expect God to work in extraordinary ways?

"Every miracle that Christ performed was a sign of His divinity. He was doing the very work that had been foretold of the Messiah; but to the Pharisees these works of mercy were a positive offense. The Jewish leaders looked with heartless indifference on human suffering. In many cases their selfishness and oppression had caused the affliction that Christ relieved. Thus His miracles were to them a reproach.

"That which led the Jews to reject the Saviour's work was the highest evidence of His divine character. The greatest significance of His miracles is seen in the fact that they were for the blessing of humanity. The highest evidence that He came from God is that His life revealed the character of God. He did the works and spoke the words of God. Such a life is the greatest of all miracles."—"The Desire of Ages," pages 406, 407.

Part 4
THE LIVING CHRIST

John 10:17, 18

"Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father."

Of the Son of God coming to this world John wrote, "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." John 1:4. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. 6:23. In a sense death is man's worst enemy, for it deprives him of everything else. 1 Cor. 15:26. The prince of light and life came to destroy this enemy, and with it the prince of darkness and death. Heb. 2:14, 15.

At the resurrection the angel from heaven came with the message, "Come forth, Thy Father calls Thee."—*The Desire of Ages,* page 780. And by the divine life Christ always possessed, even in death, He rose from the tomb.

In what words did Jesus set forth the voluntary nature of His coming death, and the manner of His resurrection?

THINK IT THROUGH

How can a vicarious death be fair? On what basis can God accept Jesus' death in place of the sinner's?

" 'I am the resurrection and the life.' He who had said, 'I lay down My life, that I might take it again,' came forth from the grave to life that was in Himself. Humanity died: divinity did not die. In His divinity, Christ possessed the power to break the bonds of death. He declares that He has life in Himself to quicken whom He will.

"All created beings live by the will and power of God. They are recipients of the life of the Son of God. However able and talented, however large their capacities, they are replenished with life from the Source of all life. He is the spring, the fountain, of life. Only He who alone hath immortality, dwelling in light and life, could say, 'I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it again.' "—Ellen G. White Comments, "SDA Bible Commentary," Vol. 5, p. 1113.

Part 5
MANY REJECT JESUS

"The bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?"

"Many therefore of His disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?"

John 6:51, 52, 60, 66

"From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him."

At Jacob's well the year before, Jesus had presented salvation as "living water" (John 4:10-14); now He refers to Himself as "living bread." As water and bread sustain the natural, physical life, so Christ imparts and sustains the supernatural, spiritual life. The former is temporal and must be continually replenished, whereas the latter is permanent and results in everlasting life. Read John 4:14; 6:51, 58.

Upon this occasion Jesus foreshadowed His death a year later. The throng, which the day before had been ready to crown Him King of Israel for salvation from the Romans (John 6:14, 15), began to realize that the salvation He offered was personal salvation from the power of evil, and they refused this living bread. Like Nicodemus dodging the import of Christ's affirmation concerning the new birth, they professed to take Christ's metaphor literally in order to make it appear absurd. With this excuse the Galileans now rejected Christ, and He terminated His Galilean ministry.

What excuses did the majority of the people who heard Jesus' sermon on the Bread of Life give for their refusal to accept it?

THINK IT THROUGH

Do you think the people really understood what Jesus meant about the living bread, and made an informed and therefore responsible decision?

In what other ways is it possible to refuse the living bread? Are there trends in my life that could eventually result in my rejecting it?

"The test was too great. The enthusiasm of those who had sought to take Him by force and make Him king grew cold. This discourse in the synagogue, they declared, had opened their eyes. Now they were undeceived. In their minds His words were a direct confession that He was not the Messiah, and that no earthly rewards were to be realized from connection with Him. They had welcomed His miracle-working power; they were eager to be freed from disease and suffering; but they would not come into sympathy with His self-sacrificing life. They cared not for the mysterious spiritual kingdom of which He spoke. The insincere, the selfish, who had sought Him, no longer desired Him. If He would not devote His power and influence to obtaining their freedom from the Romans, they would have nothing to do with Him." —"The Desire of Ages," page 391.

Part 6
THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE

John 6:67-69

"Then said Jesus unto the Twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

To the vast majority of those who had partaken of the miraculous bread, and who the following day listened to His sermon on the bread of life, it appeared unattractive; they would have none of it. The rejection appeared to be unanimous. Only the Twelve, seemingly, were left. Would they follow the crowd? Jesus placed the question to them directly, in order to strengthen their faith.

Speaking for his fellow disciples, Peter asked in reply, "To whom shall we go?" They realized that there was no real alternative. A year later Peter and John declared, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:12.

Even though, like the twelve disciples, we may have been following Christ for years, we shall do well to face up to this question. To whom shall we go today? Is there anything else worth living for? Are we accepting, and partaking of, the living bread from heaven, or are we, in effect though perhaps not directly, turning away from it?

Weigh carefully Peter's response to Jesus' searching question. What understanding of Jesus' mission to earth does this question, and Peter's own answer to it, reflect?

THINK IT THROUGH

What experiences during his two and a half years with Christ do you think prepared Peter to respond as he did? How would you have responded had you been in his place, and what reasons would you give for your response, if asked?

To whom, or to what, would you turn as an alternative to your faith in Christ?

" 'To whom shall we go?' Not from the teaching of Christ, His lessons of love and mercy, to the darkness of unbelief, the wickedness of the world. While the Saviour was forsaken by many who had witnessed His wonderful works, Peter expressed the faith of the disciples,—'Thou art that Christ.' The very thought of losing this anchor of their souls filled them with fear and pain. To be destitute of a Saviour was to be adrift on a dark and stormy sea." —"The Desire of Ages," page 393.

Part 7 ◇ SUMMARY QUESTIONS ◇ A TEST OF YOUR STUDY POWER

Now that you have studied this lesson you are invited to answer the following questions. Check your answers with the answers at the bottom of this sheet.

1. To the people gathered in the synagogue at Capernaum Jesus compared the blessings of salvation to: (*a*) seed, (*b*) pearls, (*c*) bread, (*d*) water. _____

2. True or False: Jesus demonstrated His power to forgive sins when He restored sight to the blind man let down through the roof of Peter's home in Capernaum. _____

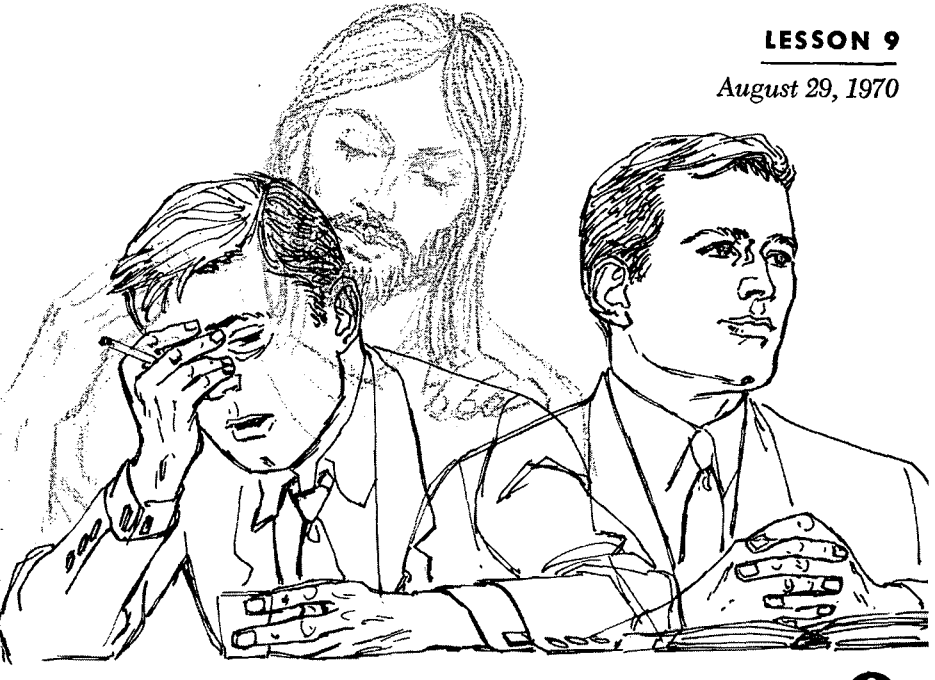
3. The supreme objective of Jesus' miracles was _____ _____.

4. Speaking of His own life, Jesus said that He had power to _____ and power to _____.

5. The crisis of Jesus' ministry in Galilee came the day following the miracle of: (*a*) feeding the 5,000, (*b*) raising Lazarus, (*c*) stilling the tempest on Galilee, (*d*) healing the man born blind. _____

6. When Jesus asked the Twelve if they, too, were planning to leave Him, Peter replied, "Lord _____ _____ _____ _____ _____?"

Answers: (1) c; (2) false; (3) that men might believe in Him; (4) lay down His life, take it up again; (5) a; (6) to whom shall we go?



CHRIST: TRANSFORMER OF MEN 9

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor. 3:18.

The goal of the gospel is a transformed life. From human beings with a nature resembling that of the evil one, it is Christ's purpose to make us over again into His own image, as He originally created us. This lesson is concerned with the means by which this transformation takes place, the difference thus effected, and the maintenance of this new way of life.

Plastic surgeon, beautician, barber, and tailor can make marked changes in a person's outward appearance. But they are unable to change the heart. With all of his technological skill, man is powerless to transform himself. Nothing short of God's creative power operating deep within a person can accomplish this objective. But this transformation has been attested millions of times in actual practice.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **The Set of the Soul**
   Rom. 8:5-9, 14
2. **A Transformed Mind**
   Rom. 12:1, 2
3. **Born of the Spirit**
   John 3:5-8
4. **The New Man**
   Eph. 4:22-24, 30
5. **Abiding in Christ**
   John 15:4, 5, 8
6. **Fruits of the Indwelling Christ**
   Gal. 2:20; 5:22, 23

Part 1
THE SET OF THE SOUL

"They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

Rom. 8:5-9, 14

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

In Paul's writings "the flesh" includes all of the evil, natural tendencies of human nature. Read Rom. 13:14; Gal. 5:16-24. Though sins of intellect and pride are as heinous in God's sight as any others, so many of what appear to men to be the grosser sins are related to material things and to the physical nature.

With Paul, "the Spirit" is the opposite of "the flesh." To be "in the flesh" or "after the flesh" is to let natural inclination determine one's choices, whereas to be "in the Spirit" or "after the Spirit" is to be governed by the principles of heaven. By "the carnal mind" Paul means the natural desires and motives of the unregenerate heart. Only those, he says, who have opened their hearts and minds to the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ are able to resist the temptations of the evil one; and those in whom this experience has become a living reality God acknowledges as His sons.

How does Paul describe the differences between a life motivated by a desire to cooperate with God's will, and one motivated by natural inclination?

THINK IT THROUGH

Does a candid examination of my own motives and conduct over the past week reveal any traces of "the flesh," in the sense that Paul uses the expression?

Conversely, can I recall any specific instances in which I chose to follow the leading of the Spirit of God instead of following inclination in the opposite direction?

"Religion consists in doing the words of Christ; not doing to earn God's favor, but because, all undeserving, we have received the gift of His love. Christ places the salvation of man, not upon profession merely, but upon faith that is made manifest in works of righteousness. Doing, not saying merely, is expected of the followers of Christ. It is through action that character is built. 'As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.' Rom. 8:14. Not those whose hearts are touched by the Spirit, not those who now and then yield to its power, but they that are led by the Spirit, are the sons of God."—"Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing," pages 149, 150.

Part 2
A TRANSFORMED MIND

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

Rom. 12:1, 2

The two great alternatives of life are: (1) to be "conformed to this world" by modeling one's life and conduct after the pattern provided by those who live exclusively for this world and what it has to offer, or (2) to be "transformed" by having one's desires and motives altered to be in harmony with the principles of heaven. There is no middle ground. A person is in either one category or the other.

Our English word "metamorphosis," which is derived from the same Greek word here translated "transformed," denotes a basic, fundamental change in nature. This change is well illustrated in the metamorphosis of the butterfly through the stages of caterpillar, pupa, and adult insect. No stage resembles any of the others. At each change there is a complete metamorphosis. When transformed by the grace of Christ, the life from that point forward—despite mistakes—is oriented heavenward, the exact opposite of what it was before.

This transformation, says Paul, comes about as the result of God's mercy and of the human act here described as presenting oneself as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.

This sacrifice is made by an act of the will inviting the divine Spirit to take complete and permanent control of the mind, the affections, and the life. Thereupon the Spirit goes to work—silently, persistently, continuously—to remold a person's desires, motives, thoughts, words, and actions to correspond to God's will. The goal is a life morally in God's image, after His likeness, as in the beginning.

How is the fundamental change by which a person's life is reoriented heavenward accomplished? Point out four steps in this process.

THINK IT THROUGH

Does the experience described in Rom. 12:1, 2 take place instantaneously, or is it a process covering a long period of time?

According to this passage of Scripture, what is the key to a changed life? Do I have this key in my possession?

"The transforming power of Christ's grace molds the one who gives himself to God's service. Imbued with the Spirit of the Redeemer, he is ready to deny self, ready to take up the cross, ready to make any sacrifice for the Master. No longer can he be indifferent to the souls perishing around him. He is lifted above self-serving. He has been created anew in Christ, and self-serving has no place in his life. He realizes that every part of his being belongs to Christ, who has redeemed him from the slavery of sin; that every moment of his future has been bought with the precious life-blood of God's only-begotten Son."—"Testimonies," Vol. 7, pp. 9, 10.

Part 3
BORN OF THE SPIRIT

"Jesus answered, 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. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit."

John 3:5-8

In conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus described the change from being "in the flesh" to being "in the spirit" as a rebirth. As there can be no physical life without birth, so there can be no spiritual life without spiritual birth. As physical birth is the beginning of physical life, so spiritual birth is the beginning of spiritual life. Read John 1:12, 13 for John's further explanation of this process, noting the steps and the means by which it is accomplished.

As physical birth results in children that resemble their parents, so to be born by the Spirit of God will result in children who resemble their heavenly Father, whose wills are in harmony with His. In a later conversation with the Pharisees, Jesus charged them with being children of the devil because they resembled him. See John 8:39, 44. If, as they claimed, they were "Abraham's children," they "would do the works of Abraham." Even so today, a person's moral profile is a sure index to his spiritual ancestry.

What truths with respect to conversion did Jesus set forth in His conversation with Nicodemus?

THINK IT THROUGH

Why do you suppose Jesus discussed conversion in terms of childbirth, rather than in the more abstract, philosophical language with which Nicodemus was familiar?

What truth about the transformation of the life at conversion is taught by Jesus' illustration of the wind?

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

Part 4
THE NEW MAN

"Put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Eph. 4:22-24, 30

"And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

The person who has been "born again" is altogether different from what he was before, so different in fact that those who know him best would not even recognize him from his manner of speaking and acting. It is a matter of "off with the old and on with the new"—as a person would cast aside a threadbare garment for one that is new, attractive, and becoming.

In the English language in the days when the King James Version was translated—the days just after Queen Elizabeth I and William Shakespeare—the word "conversation" meant "conduct" or "way of life." It is one's conduct, or way of life, that determines whether the inner change to the garment of Christ's righteousness has taken place. If there is no change in the conduct, it is evident to all that there has been no true change of mind and heart. Conversely, a changed life is proof positive that the inner change has, indeed, taken place.

As we have seen (Part 2), the Spirit of God is at work in the life of the person who exchanges the old way of life for the new. But if, in desire and persistently in action, we cling to the old, we grieve the Spirit of God and thereby prevent Him from making the change.

How does Paul describe the "old" or unconverted man, and the "new" or converted man?

THINK IT THROUGH

Is the change of which Paul here speaks from the old to the new instantaneous? In what aspects may it require more time? At what point in life is the process complete?

How much of the old, shabby way of life have I retained in my spiritual wardrobe for use when I may be disposed to revert to it?

What does it mean to be "sealed unto the day of redemption"?

"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," pages 98, 99.

Part 5
ABIDING IN CHRIST

"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing."

John 15:4, 5, 8

"Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples."

Paul warns against hindering the work of the Holy Spirit in effecting a transformation of the life to conformity with God's perfect will. Eph. 4:30. Christ here deals with the positive aspect of the process of Christian transformation, under the illustration of a branch remaining attached to the grapevine out of which it grew and of which it is part. Everything depends on maintaining that vital connection, or it will wither and die. Unless a branch is nourished by the life-giving substances the vine provides, it is lifeless and fruitless.

The objective of the vinedresser in tending his vines is fruit; the objective of Christ's solicitous care for us is the fruit of a character that will be an honor to Him as Owner of the vineyard. It is the purpose of the heavenly Vinedresser to demonstrate that His vines and His method of care are superior in every way to all other vine stock and methods of culture. Under His care every branch will produce prizewinning clusters of grapes for exhibition on the great day of eternal awards.

In His metaphor making Himself the vine and His disciples the branches, what aspects of the branch-vine relationship does Christ specifically mention?

THINK IT THROUGH

Mention at least three ways in which the vine contributes to the ability of the branches to bear choice fruit.

How does a person "abide" in Christ? How can I tell whether I am abiding in Christ?

"The sap of the vine, ascending from the root, is diffused to the branches, sustaining growth and producing blossoms and fruit. So the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Saviour, pervades the soul, renews the motives and affections, and brings even the thoughts into obedience to the will of God, enabling the receiver to bear the precious fruit of holy deeds."—"The Acts of the Apostles," page 284.

"The connection of the branch with the vine, He said, represents the relation you are to sustain to Me. The scion is engrafted into the living vine, and fiber by fiber, vein by vein, it grows into the vine stock. The life of the vine becomes the life of the branch. So the soul dead in trespasses and sins receives life through connection with Christ. . . . The sinner unites his weakness to Christ's strength, his emptiness to Christ's fullness, his frailty to Christ's enduring might. Then he has the mind of Christ. The humanity of Christ has touched our humanity, and our humanity has touched divinity. Thus through the agency of the Holy Spirit man becomes a partaker of the divine nature. He is accepted in the Beloved."—"The Desire of Ages," page 675.

Part 6
FRUITS OF THE INDWELLING CHRIST

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

Gal. 2:20; 5:22, 23

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, *gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance:* against such there is no law."

In this description of his personal experience as a Christian, Paul's thoughts, and the words in which he expressed them, soar into the stratosphere of human experience. It all began when Paul chose to follow his Master's footsteps all the way to the cross. The apostle develops this aspect of Christian experience more fully in the sixth chapter of Romans. Read especially verses 3-11.

In the natural course of events nothing can be more final than death. The same is true of the person who, in spirit and in truth, yields mind and heart to the transforming power of God's Spirit. He burns all bridges behind him. He does not look back with wistful longing at the spiritual Sodom he has left behind. His death to the old way of life is final, complete, and all-pervasive.

Death does not occur so long as there is a spark of life—so long as the least desire for the world and the flesh remains—and unless death occurs there can be no resurrection. But when death to the old does take place, the resurrection of which Paul speaks is sure and certain, and the fruits of the Spirit are sure to follow.

How is Christ's death, burial, and resurrection repeated in the experience of the Christian? In what ways does the experience of the born-again Christian resemble the resurrected Christ?

THINK IT THROUGH

What does it mean to "live by the faith of the Son of God"? Does this mean the same kind of faith He had, or does it mean my faith in Him?

Spend a few moments inspecting the fruits of the Spirit in your life, one by one checking over the nine Paul specifically mentions. Which of the nine are already ripe? Which are still small, hard, and green?

Which of your friends best represent the mature fruit of character, on each of the nine points?

"More than this, Christ changes the heart. He abides in your heart by faith. You are to maintain this connection with Christ by faith and the continual surrender of your will to Him; and so long as you do this, He will work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. So you may say, 'The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.' . . . So Jesus said to His disciples, 'It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.' . . . Then with Christ working in you, you will manifest the same spirit and do the same good works—works of righteousness, obedience."—"Steps to Christ," pages 62, 63.

Part 7 ◇ SUMMARY QUESTIONS ◇ A TEST OF YOUR STUDY POWER

Now that you have studied this lesson you are invited to answer the following questions. Check your answers with the answers at the bottom of this sheet.

1. Complete: "To be carnally minded is _____; but to be spiritually minded is _____ and _____."

2. In describing conversion Paul emphasizes the renewing of: (*a*) the heart, (*b*) the mind, (*c*) the motives, (*d*) the actions. _____

3. In His conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus described entrance to the kingdom of God under the figure of _____.

4. Complete: "And _____ not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are _____ unto the day of redemption."

5. True or False: A good branch bears fruit even when not connected with the vine. _____

6. In describing his personal experience as a Christian, Paul said that he lived by the _____ of the Son of God.

Answers: (1) death, life, peace; (2) b; (3) birth; (4) grieve, sealed; (5) false; (6) faith.

CHRIST, THE TRUTH 10

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." John 14:6.

One of Satan's principal weapons in the great confrontation between good and evil is to keep men in ignorance of the truth. Totalitarian governments resort to censorship, a denial of free speech and press, jamming the air waves, and similar procedures in order to prevent the people under their control from learning what is going on elsewhere and from hearing about the benefits of freedom. Dictators spare no effort to keep their people in ignorance of truth and feed them with propaganda designed to shackle their minds and their lives. These procedures and the principles on which they are based aptly illustrate those on which Satan operates.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Blinded Minds**
   2 Cor. 4:3-7
2. **Love of the Truth**
   2 Thess. 2:7-12
3. **Test the Spirits**
   1 John 4:1-3, 6
4. **Personal Conviction**
   Matt. 16:15-19
5. **Human Traditions**
   Mark 7:6-9
6. **Christ Is the Truth**
   John 8:31, 32; 14:6; 17:3, 17

Part 1
BLINDED MINDS

"If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

2 Cor. 4:3-7

The Creator's first act in preparing this world as a suitable habitation for man was to command physical light to shine forth and dispel the darkness that shrouded our planet. Read Gen. 1:3-5. In like manner our hearts were spiritually dark, in ignorance of the true character of God and His infinite purpose for us. Compare Isa. 9:2. But Jesus brought the light of heaven into this spiritually dark world; He was "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." John 1:4-9.

The prince of darkness blinded the minds of those who chose not to receive the true light, but closed their minds to its saving rays. To reject truth is to choose darkness, and the result is blindness of mind, heart, and soul. Jesus restored sight to the blind and spiritual sight to their souls. He would perform this miracle for us today.

What two factors does Paul point out as contributing to spiritual blindness? Conversely, what can restore spiritual sight? What is the real cause of spiritual blindness?

THINK IT THROUGH

Which is the preferable state to be in—ignorant blindness or willful blindness? Why?

Am I in danger of spiritual blindness? How does my attitude toward truth affect my spiritual sight?

"Let the glorious conceptions of God possess your mind. Let your life be knit by hidden links to the life of Jesus. He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness is willing to shine in your heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit will take the things of God and show them unto you, conveying them as a living power into the obedient heart. Christ will lead you to the threshold of the Infinite. You may behold the glory beyond the veil, and reveal to men the sufficiency of Him who ever liveth to make intercession for us."—"Christ's Object Lessons," page 149.

Part 2
LOVE OF THE TRUTH

"The mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

2 Thess. 2:7-12

In words that cannot be misunderstood the apostle Paul points out the basic cause of spiritual blindness on the part of those who have had an opportunity to gain spiritual sight: "They received not the love of the truth." The attitude we take toward revealed truth is the crux of the matter. Do we *love* truth wherever we encounter it, or do we *resent* it and reject it because it reveals our imperfections and would require us to change our beliefs and practices? There is no room in heaven for those who do not love truth.

God does not force anyone to accept truth. But in resenting or rejecting truth a man deliberately chooses to believe a lie. The "strong delusion" God sends, or permits to come, upon those who deliberately inflict spiritual blindness upon themselves, is to abandon them to their chosen attitude and fate. This fate came upon literal Israel when God said, "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone." Hosea 4:17. The same truth is expressed in Ephesians 4:30, in the form of a warning against grieving the Holy Spirit.

What is the role of the individual in coming to the place where he stands eternally condemned in God's sight? The role of Satan? The role of God?

THINK IT THROUGH

Why does Satan rely on "signs and lying wonders" in leading men astray?

In what way would Satan be most likely to succeed in inflicting spiritual blindness upon me? Upon the church today?

"Those who study the Bible, counsel with God, and rely upon Christ will be enabled to act wisely at all times and under all circumstances. Good principles will be illustrated in actual life. Only let the truth for this time be cordially received and become the basis of character, and it will produce steadfastness of purpose, which the allurements of pleasure, the fickleness of custom, the contempt of the world-loving, and the heart's own clamors for self-indulgence are powerless to influence. Conscience must be first enlightened, the will must be brought into subjection. The love of truth and righteousness must reign in the soul, and a character will appear which Heaven can approve."—"Testimonies," Vol. 5, p. 43.

Part 3
TEST THE SPIRITS

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world."

"We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error."

1 John 4:1-3, 6

No man will be condemned because he honestly believes error, but for a knowing rejection of truth or for carelessly failing to accept it. The difference between truth and error is the difference between life and death, and, having equipped every intelligent being with the ability to discriminate between truth and error, God requires that the faculties of the intellect be used to seek truth, to incorporate it into one's store of knowledge, and to apply it in making the decisions of life.

A sincere desire for truth is essential to the acquisition and recognition of truth. A man is not likely to find that which he is not looking for, or may, indeed, be trying to avoid. Nothing so effectively blinds a man to truth as a distaste for it because it is uncongenial or unwelcome.

In John's day the great issue between truth and error centered in the question as to whether Jesus Christ was truly God incarnate in humanity. The Docetists claimed that He appeared to be a man but was, in reality, only a phantom and not truly human. Thus in John's day present truth centered in recognition of the sublime fact that true humanity and true divinity were united in the one person Jesus Christ.

What factors are essential in discriminating between truth and error?

THINK IT THROUGH

To what facets of truth might John have pointed had he been writing to Christians today?

What difference does it make to me that "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh," that He is truly man as well as truly God? What difference does it make whether a man believes this or not?

"In these days of peril we are not to accept everything that men bring to us as truth. As professed teachers from God come to us declaring that they have a message from God, it is proper to inquire carefully, How do we know that this is truth? Jesus has told us that 'false prophets shall arise and shall deceive many.' But we need not be deceived; for the Word of God gives us a test whereby we may know what is truth. The prophet says, 'To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them' "—Ellen G. White Comments, "SDA Bible Commentary," Vol. 7, p. 951.

Part 4
PERSONAL CONVICTION

"He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Matt. 16:15-19

John declared that Jesus Christ was truly a human being as well as truly God. Confidently he wrote, "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us." John and the other disciples knew personally that this was true. Lesson 5. How could they be so sure?

In the passage here quoted, Matthew goes back to the original confession of faith that Jesus of Nazareth was "the Son of the living God." Upon that occasion Jesus immediately pointed out to Simon Peter, spokesman for the group, that this great central truth of the Christian faith could not be attained through intellectual processes alone. It must come as a conviction in the heart and mind that the evidence provides conclusive proof that Jesus is the Messiah foretold by the prophets of old, and moreover that He is the Son of God.

"Blessed"—happy—said Jesus, is the person who believes this truth. True happiness in life comes through accepting it.

How can a person know with absolute certainty the truth about Jesus Christ?

THINK IT THROUGH

Upon what does my personal belief that Jesus Christ is the Messiah and Son of God rest? Am I sure of this? How can I be sure?

Do I have the joy of which Jesus spoke, the joy that comes with the knowledge of who Jesus is and what He can do for me?

"From the first, Peter had believed Jesus to be the Messiah. Many others who had been convicted by the preaching of John the Baptist, and had accepted Christ, began to doubt as to John's mission when he was imprisoned and put to death; and they now doubted that Jesus was the Messiah, for whom they had looked so long. Many of the disciples who had ardently expected Jesus to take His place on David's throne left Him when they perceived that He had no such intention. But Peter and his companions turned not from their allegiance. The vacillating course of those who praised yesterday and condemned today did not destroy the faith of the true follower of the Saviour. Peter declared, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' He waited not for kingly honors to crown his Lord, but accepted Him in His humiliation."—"The Desire of Ages," pages 411, 412.

Part 5
HUMAN TRADITIONS

"He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoreth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. Howbeit in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And He said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition."

Mark 7:6-9

All truth about God comes from God. Human intellect is at its highest in perceiving this truth, which must come as a revelation from God. Human reasoning about God is a precarious compound of truth and error, and "the commandments of men" —human requirements—are unacceptable to God as a valid basis of worshiping Him. The traditions of men have always been, and always will be, opposed to the truth God has revealed about Himself.

The pretense of honoring God with one's lips is worthless when a person's heart is far from God. Here Jesus emphasizes the same truth expressed by Paul (Part 2), that the crucial factor in *knowing* truth is to *love* it—to desire it, to accept it with joy, and to cherish it. Not along *with* human traditions and commandments, but exclusively and single-heartedly.

Here Jesus declares that true religion does not consist in forms and regulations, but in accepting divine revelation. This is especially true with respect to man-devised forms and regulations that tend to obscure truth rather than make it manifest. Man-devised commandments and traditions tend to exalt man and to lead him to forget God or to minimize what God has explicitly enjoined.

In what forceful language did Jesus distinguish between true and false religion?

THINK IT THROUGH

Are any aspects of my personal practice of religion of human origin—merely form? How can I enter more fully into the experience Christ here invites sincere believers to enter?

"Human theories and speculations will never lead to an understanding of God's Word. Those who suppose that they understand philosophy think that their explanations are necessary to unlock the treasures of knowledge and to prevent heresies from coming into the church. But it is these explanations that have brought in false theories and heresies. Men have made desperate efforts to explain what they thought to be intricate scriptures; but too often their efforts have only darkened that which they tried to make clear."—"Christ's Object Lessons," page 110.

Part 6
CHRIST IS THE TRUTH

"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

"Jesus saith unto him [Thomas], I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me."

"And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."

John 8:31, 32; 14:6; 17:3, 17

"Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth."

Jesus not only came to reveal the great ultimate truth about God and His infinite purpose for man; He *was* ultimate truth incarnate—in action, lived out so that men of all time can see it—not in theory but in practice. In such discourses as the Sermon on the Mount He presented the theory also and placed it on record in Scripture to accompany the demonstration of truth He gave us in His perfect life.

The theory and practice of truth revealed by Jesus Christ liberates fallen men and women from the bonds of ignorance about God and from the shackles of their own sinful nature and Satan's power over their lives. Without this knowledge and this power men are bound to collect the wages of sin and the sinful nature that binds them. But by receiving Jesus Christ as the infinite revelation of divine truth, and by believing that He is the truth, they receive also "power to become the sons of God." John 1:12. Sanctifying power liberates men from the kingdom of error and death and opens to them the gates of eternal truth and eternal life.

Point out at least four things about the revelation of divine truth as set forth by Jesus.

THINK IT THROUGH

From what wrong and harmful ways of thinking and living has the truth set you free? Are there still some things from which you need to be set free?

What do you think Jesus included in the word "truth" as He used it?

"The truths of the Word of God meet man's great practical necessity—the conversion of the soul through faith. These grand principles are not to be thought too pure and holy to be brought into the daily life. They are truths which reach to heaven and compass eternity, yet their vital influence is to be woven into human experience. They are to permeate all the great things and all the little things of life.

"Received into the heart, the leaven of truth will regulate the desires, purify the thoughts, and sweeten the disposition. It quickens the faculties of the mind and the energies of the soul. It enlarges the capacity for feeling, for loving."—"Christ's Object Lessons," pages 100, 101.

Part 7 ◇ SUMMARY QUESTIONS ◇ A TEST OF YOUR STUDY POWER

Now that you have studied this lesson you are invited to answer the following questions. Check your answers with the answers at the bottom of this sheet.

1. As "the god of this world," Satan has (*a*) blinded, (*b*) imprisoned, (*c*) wounded, (*d*) poisoned the minds of those who do not wish to believe the glorious gospel of Christ. _____

2. Those who are lost suffer their fate "because they received not the _____ of the truth, that they might be saved."

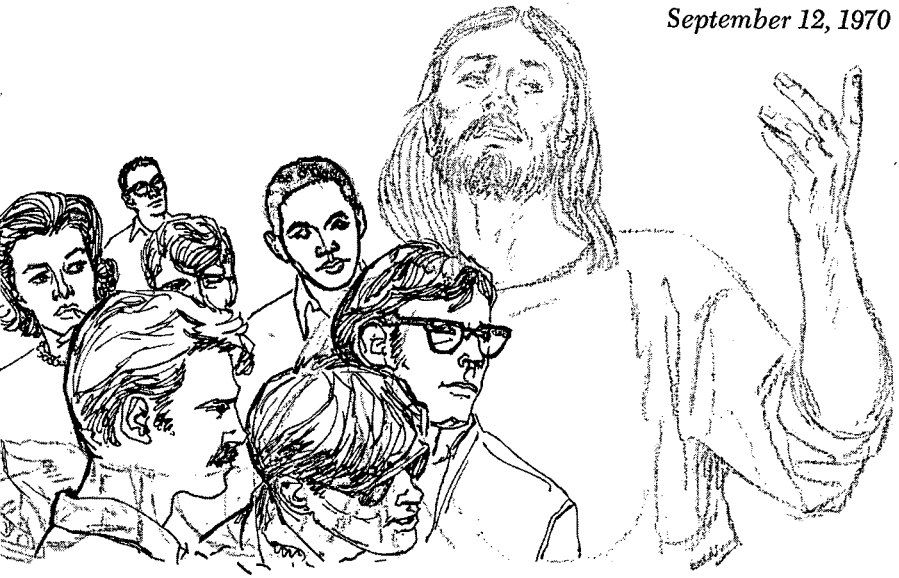
3. One's only safety in attempting to decide between the conflicting claims of those who profess to teach truth is to _____ _____.

4. True or False: Peter, by careful investigation and logical reasoning, became convinced that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. _____

5. Complete: "This people honoreth Me with their _____, but their _____ is far from Me."

6. Choose the correct completion: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you _____" (*a*) wise unto salvation, (*b*) free, (*c*) able to resist Satan's temptations, (*d*) the sons of God.

Answers: (1) a; (2) love; (3) try, or test, the spirits, those who claim to be speaking the truth; (4) false; (5) lips, heart; (6) b.



CHRIST, OUR FULL SALVATION 11

"It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." Isa. 25:9.

This lesson is concerned with ultimates. It begins with the universal, ultimate need of all men for salvation because all have sinned. It continues with the ultimate values of life, the things that are ultimately and supremely worth living for. Man's universal need is met by God's abounding grace, which is sufficient for even the worst of sinners. God's eternal purpose is to obliterate sin and death, and the fact that Christ did come into the world gives us confidence that God can and will work things out according to His purpose. If we patiently endure, holding firmly and confidently to God's promises, we shall enter into His eternal rest. Ultimately the time will come when one pulse of harmony again beats throughout the universe, and the plan of salvation will be complete.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Universal Need**
   Rom. 3:23-25
2. **Ultimate Values**
   Matt. 16:24-26
3. **God's Abounding Grace**
   1 Tim. 1:12-16
4. **God's Eternal Purpose**
   2 Tim. 1:9-12
5. **Patient Endurance**
   Heb. 3:12-15
6. **Predestined to Unity in Christ**
   Eph. 1:3-5, 9, 10

Part 1
UNIVERSAL NEED

Rom. 3:23-25

"All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."

Deeply embedded in everyone's heart—unless and until it is suppressed—is the awareness that he ought to be a better person than he is. He is ashamed of himself for selfish and mean words and acts, for doing to others as he would not want them to do to him. Often his associates are more aware of his shortcomings than he is, and those who do not have a personal interest in him may react negatively to him. If despite our personal limitations we are thus aware of our own imperfections, how must others see us! How we need to see ourselves as others see us and, most important of all, as God sees us!

Even the most nearly perfect man on earth, one who is honored and respected by all of his associates and especially by those who know him best, is imperfect and in need of salvation. Unless he avails himself of God's mercy, his very best falls short of perfection. A gloomy prospect indeed! But the apostle hastens on to brighten the dark picture: All have sinned, to be sure, but all can be made just by God's free grace, which is available to us through Christ Jesus! Divine forbearance is infinite, even as divine justice is infinite.

To what universal condition of the human race does Paul point, and to what universal provision to meet that need? What is necessary on our part?

THINK IT THROUGH

In what major respects have I come short of the glory of God during the past twenty-four hours? What is the "glory of God," in this sense?

How can I know whether the experience of justification has taken place in my life? Is it possible to retain the status of justification if I fall into temptation again? Under what circumstances will I forfeit this status before God?

"The Lord saw our fallen condition; He saw our need of grace, and because He loved our souls, He has given us grace and peace. Grace means favor to one who is undeserving, to one who is lost. The fact that we are sinners, instead of shutting us away from the mercy and love of God, makes the exercise of His love to us a positive necessity in order that we may be saved."—Ellen G. White Comments, "SDA Bible Commentary," Vol. 6, p. 1117.

Part 2
ULTIMATE VALUES

Matt. 16:24-26

"Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

In these dramatic contrasts Jesus set forth the ultimate aims of life. He who makes himself and his own interests first is certain to lose everything. He who forgets himself and his own interests will gain everything. Herein lies the great paradox of Christianity. No man works more effectively against his own best interests than the man who works for them exclusively, but the man who lives most fully for God and his fellowmen is working most effectively for himself.

A man may amass a great fortune and live in luxury, but he must have life in order to enjoy his riches. To this fundamental truth the rich fool (read Luke 12:13-21), who had amassed wealth sufficient to live in luxury the rest of his days, seems to have been oblivious. That very night his life was required of him. "Then," God asked, "whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" The surest road to eternal poverty is the road along which a man plods in pursuit of material riches.

Enumerate your three major objectives in life. If you were granted the privilege of making three wishes, and only three, with respect to the things you want to get out of life, what would they be? Be honest with yourself. How do these three compare with what your conscience tells you you ought to live for?

With what two supreme alternatives did Jesus confront those who proposed to follow Him?

THINK IT THROUGH

What is meant by "denying" oneself? How does a person "take up" the cross of Christ?

If confronted with the threat of death, what would you be willing to give in exchange for your life?

"In view of the glorious inheritance that may be his, 'what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?' . . . He may be poor, yet he possesses in himself a wealth and dignity that the world could never bestow. The soul redeemed and cleansed from sin, with all its noble powers dedicated to the service of God, is of surpassing worth; and there is joy in heaven in the presence of God and the holy angels over one soul redeemed, a joy that is expressed in songs of holy triumph."—"Steps to Christ," page 126.

Part 3
GOD'S ABOUNDING GRACE

"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting."

1 Tim. 1:12-16

Out of the blindness that overtook Paul on the Damascus road came first a glorious vision of Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world, and then a candid view of himself. He saw himself as God saw him—a great sinner. Perhaps this candid view of oneself is prime evidence that the gospel has penetrated one's mind and heart with the realization that "in me . . . dwelleth no good thing." Read Rom. 7:13-25.

This sense of utter need is prerequisite to a desire for the gracious gift of salvation Christ offers to sinners. As Paul reflected on his past life, he could think of nothing for which to commend himself; and this utter worthlessness of his past life prepared him to appreciate to the full the gracious gift of God in Christ Jesus. "God forbid," he wrote, "that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Gal. 6:14. At the time he had been sincere, but he had been so wrong. Paul thought of his personal experience as an example of the abounding grace of God. Paul was the worst possible prospect, but divine grace had transformed him into a first-prize exhibit of what God can do to make useless men into men of infinite worth for Him and their fellowmen. And if God could do that for him, says the apostle, surely He can do the same for anyone.

To what personal experience did Paul point as evidence of the abounding grace of God for saving the worst of sinners?

THINK IT THROUGH

Is there any cause in my own past life experience for applying Paul's evaluation of himself—"sinners; of whom I am chief"—to myself? In the sight of God, is my own past any less open to divine censure than was that of Paul prior to his conversion? What extenuating circumstance in his former life did Paul mention?

What import does this have with respect to my present attitude toward known duty?

"God has an abundance of grace and power awaiting our demand. But the reason we do not feel our great need of it is because we look to ourselves and not to Jesus. We do not exalt Jesus and rely wholly upon His merits."—"Testimonies," Vol. 5, p. 167.

Part 4
GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE

"[God] hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: whereunto I am appointed *a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.* For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have I committed unto Him against that day."

2 Tim. 1:9-12

Paul's absolute confidence in the gospel and his absolute commitment to it have thrilled and inspired all believers who, like him, did not have the privilege of personal association with Jesus during His earthly ministry. If Paul could be so certain, so can we. To Paul, the logical response to this certainty, divinely implanted in mind and heart, was to dedicate his ability, life, energy, and fortunes without stint to proclaim the message so that others might learn to know Jesus Christ as he did and to share the same joy that had brought a depth of meaning into his own life.

We did not deserve the infinite provision made for us. Credit belongs wholly to divine grace. In fact, says Paul, the divine purpose operating through Christ was in effect even before the creation of this world, and thus before there was any need for it. A man who foresees the needs of his fellowmen and makes provision for them earns their eternal gratitude. This being so much more true of God, says Paul, it should inspire a like response to Him.

What facts about the plan of salvation gave Paul such abounding confidence in Jesus Christ, and what aspects of his personal response does the apostle mention?

THINK IT THROUGH

Point by point, analyze Paul's response to the gospel. To what extent is my response like that of Paul? Are there ways in which my response ought to be more complete?

Do you think Paul's summary of the purpose of Christ's mission to earth, as stated in verse 10, is adequate? If you were giving a brief summary of Jesus' mission to earth, what would you add to Paul's statement?

"The plan for our redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. It was a revelation of 'the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal.' Rom. 16:25, R.V. It was an unfolding of the principles that from eternal ages have been the foundation of God's throne. From the beginning, God and Christ knew of the apostasy of Satan, and of the fall of man through the deceptive power of the apostate. God did not ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence, and made provision to meet the terrible emergency." —"The Desire of Ages," page 22.

Part 5
PATIENT EDURANCE

"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end; while it is said, Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation."

Heb. 3:12-15

Eagerly expecting soon to reach the promised rest in the land of Cannan, the liberated Hebrew slaves set out from the land of their servitude. There they were to find "rest" from the bitter slavery of Egypt, rest from the weary wilderness, rest from being strangers in a land that was not theirs. Canaan was to be their permanent home.

But upon reaching the borders of the Promised Land "they could not enter in because of unbelief." Verse 19. They doubted God's power to subdue the giants and the walled cities before them.

As Christians we have set out from the land where we were once bondslaves of sin. Our goal is the heavenly Canaan, where we expect to find rest from sin and its baleful results. "If we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end," all will be well. The way may be long and weary and beset by dangers of every kind; it may call forth every ounce of reserve energy and fortitude. But if we persevere to the end, we will enter the eternal "rest" that remains to the people of God. God is able; let us persevere, in His strength overcoming the many dangers that beset pilgrims of the heavenward way.

What supreme danger lurks along the way to the heavenly Canaan, and what is necessary if a person is to reach his ultimate objective?

THINK IT THROUGH

How is a person's heart "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin"?

What causes hardening of the heart?

How does my confidence in God today compare with the confidence with which I set out on my heavenward journey?

"By the grace of God let us be steadfast to the principles of truth, holding firm to the end the beginning of our confidence. We are to be 'not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord' (Rom. 12:11). One is our Master, even Christ. To Him we are to look. From Him we are to receive our wisdom. By His grace we are to preserve our integrity, standing before God in meekness and contrition, and representing Him to the world."—"Selected Messages," Bk. 1, p. 127.

Part 6
PREDESTINED TO UNITY IN CHRIST

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will."

"Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him.

Eph. 1:3-5, 9, 10

From our point of view as sinners saved by grace, the purpose of the plan of redemption was to rescue us from the pit into which the human race fell when Adam sinned. From the point of view of the inhabitants of the unfallen worlds its purpose is to reunify the universe, whose harmony was interrupted by sin. The first makes possible the second.

The concept that God has arbitrarily accepted certain individuals and rejected others is the result of misunderstanding this passage. God's original purpose was that "all men" be "saved" and "come unto the knowledge of the truth" (read 1 Tim. 2:4-6), and that "whosoever believeth in Him [Christ] should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. God made provision for saving all men, but He coerces no one to believe or to accept His gracious gift. It is those who accept Christ and believe in Him who actually receive "power to become the sons of God." John 1:12.

In what words does Paul set forth the twofold objective of the plan of salvation?

THINK IT THROUGH

Inasmuch as God predestined the salvation of the entire world, why will not all men actually be saved?

What practical application can be made, here and now, of the ultimate objective of God to "gather together in one all things in Christ"?

"In the council of heaven, provision was made that men, though transgressors, should not perish in their disobedience, but, through faith in Christ as their substitute and surety, might become the elect of God, predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will. God wills that all men should be saved; for ample provision has been made, in giving His only-begotten Son to pay man's ransom. Those who perish will perish because they refuse to be adopted as children of God through Christ Jesus."—Ellen G. White Comments, "SDA Bible Commentary," Vol. 6, p. 1114.

Part 7 ◇ SUMMARY QUESTIONS ◇ A TEST OF YOUR STUDY POWER

Now that you have studied this lesson you are invited to answer the following questions. Check your answers with the answers at the bottom of this sheet.

1. Complete: "All have _____, and _____ _____ of the glory of God."

2. True or False: The great paradox of human existence is that the man who sets out to live exclusively for himself is certain to lose everything that is worth having. _____

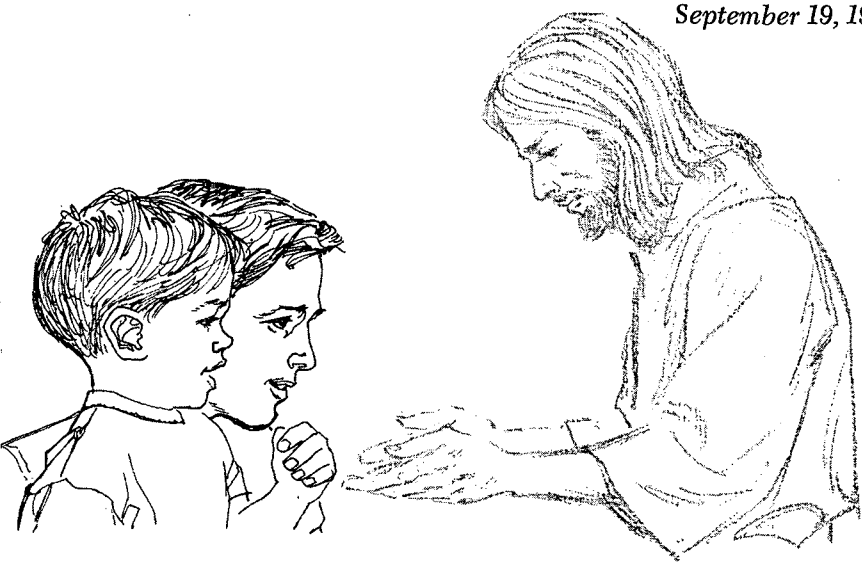
3. The man who claimed to be the most abject of all sinners was (*a*) John (*b*) Judas, (*c*) Peter, (*d*) Paul. _____

4. God's grace was given us in Christ (*a*) before the world began, (*b*) when Adam and Eve sinned, (*c*) at Jesus' birth, (*d*) at the cross. _____

5. We have been promised an eternal share in the inheritance of the saints, if we "hold the beginning of our confidence _____ _____ _____ _____."

6. True or False: God has predestined all men to find salvation in Christ. _____

Answers: (1) sinned, come short; (2) true; (3) d; (4) a; (5) steadfast unto the end; (6) true.



CHRIST: JUSTIFIER AND SANCTIFIER 12

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. 5:1.

In the Bible sense, the two words "justification" and "sanctification" refer to essentially the same experience. Both describe the transition from a state of mind in which a person lives for himself and for the pleasures the world has to offer to a state of mind in which he lives as God would have him live and with the best interests of his fellowmen in view. In the Bible sense a person is justified, or sanctified, the moment he renounces himself and the world and dedicates heart, mind, and life to God. In an extended theological sense we commonly use the word "sanctification" to describe the process that follows justification, during which the various aspects of the character are remodeled after the pattern given us by Christ. In this lesson "justification" and "sanctification" are used in the Bible sense rather than the theological sense.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Righteousness by Faith**
   Rom. 4:5-8
2. **No Condemnation**
   Rom. 8:1, 2, 6
3. **At Peace With God**
   Rom. 5:1, 2, 5, 8, 10
4. **A New Person**
   2 Cor. 5:17-19
5. **Be Ye Holy**
   1 Peter 1:13-16, 23; 2:9
6. **Christian Perfection**
   Heb. 13:20, 21

Part 1
RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH

"To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."

Rom. 4:5-8

In this passage the great apostle of righteousness by faith uses a number of different expressions to describe the keynote experience of his own life as a Christian, and of the gospel message as he proclaimed it. Careful study of this passage etches a clear outline of what the sometimes misused expression, righteousness by faith, means.

The key difference, as here set forth, is between *working* and *believing* as the means by which to attain to righteousness, that is, acceptance by God. The difference is between doing something oneself to merit God's acceptance, or believing that what Christ has done for him is acceptable in God's sight as meeting the requirement of moral rectitude. Faith, then, is the key factor in attaining to righteousness by faith.

The person who comes to God on the basis of faith in Christ has his iniquities forgiven, his sins covered. Verse 7. Thereafter, God no longer imputes sin to such a person (verse 8), but considers him just, or upright. Verse 5. It is important to note further that a man attains to this status, not on the basis of anything he does, but on the basis of his faith in what Christ has done for him. God imputes Christ's righteousness to him as if it were his own (verse 6), that is, *credits,* or *counts* it to him as his very own (verse 5), and in so doing *justifies* him. The "blessed," or happy, state of such a man is mentioned three times in verses 6 to 8.

Summarize in your own words the apostle Paul's description of the status of a person before and after he comes to Christ in faith, and the means by which the change is accomplished.

THINK IT THROUGH

In describing the experience of righteousness by faith, why does the apostle say nothing about the Christian's experience after God has accepted his faith in what Christ has done?

How fully has the experience here described become a reality in my own life?

"Faith is the condition upon which God has seen fit to promise pardon to sinners; not that there is any virtue in faith whereby salvation is merited, but because faith can lay hold of the merits of Christ, the remedy provided for sin. Faith can present Christ's perfect obedience instead of the sinner's transgression and defection. When the sinner believes that Christ is his personal Saviour, then according to His unfailing promises, God pardons his sin and justifies him freely. The repentant soul realizes that his justification comes because Christ, as his substitute and surety, has died for him."—Ellen G. White Comments, "SDA Bible Commentary," Vol. 6, p. 1073.

Part 2
NO CONDEMNATION

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

Rom. 8:1, 2, 6

"For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

Those who have been justified on the basis of their faith in Christ Jesus stand before God without condemnation. The charges against them have been dropped; there is "no condemnation." Here the apostle refers to the Christian experience of such persons as *walking:* They do not stand still in the happy experience of being declared free from the charges against them in their former state as sinners, but they make progress (walk) toward the destination God has marked out for them. This walk is "after the Spirit," that is, they follow where the Spirit leads them, not where their fleshly lusts formerly led them. Read all of verses 1 to 6.

In verse 2 Paul contrasts "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" with "the law of sin and death." As here used, the word "law" might better be translated "principle." It is a fundamental principle that sin brings death, and another fundamental principle that faith in Christ results in life. In Christ, says Paul, the higher principle of life in Christ transcends the lower principle that sin results in death. Christ has provided the antidote for effectively counteracting the principle that sin brings death.

How does Paul describe the Christian experience of a person who has been justified by faith in Christ?

THINK IT THROUGH

With a modern court case as an illustration, compose a modern parable based on this passage of Scripture.

To what extent am I walking as a Christian "after the Spirit"? Am I, in some respects at least, still walking "after the flesh"?

"Christ has made a way of escape for us. He lived on earth amid trials and temptations such as we have to meet. He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned."—"Steps to Christ," page 62.

Part 3
AT PEACE WITH GOD

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

"And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

"But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

Rom. 5:1, 2, 5, 8, 10

The "ungodly" (Rom. 4:5) are at war with God. The unregenerate mind "is enmity against God"; "it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Rom. 8:7. But Christ came to earth as the "Prince of peace," with an embassage of peace (Isa. 9:6) and reconciled us to God. 2 Cor. 5:18. God does not consider the sinner an enemy, but a son held captive by sin and brainwashed by the enemy. God loves the sinner, but hates the sin that binds him. When a sinner repents and is justified before God by faith, he is no longer an enemy; then he is at peace with God.

One thus reconciled and at peace with God rejoices in hope and God's love fills his heart. Rom. 5:2, 5. It was Christ's death that effected reconciliation with God. Verse 10. To carry through Paul's thought in verse 10, we would be reconciled but without the prospect of life except for Christ's resurrection. The fact that He lives again saves us from death. Read Romans 6:3-11. As Christ arose, so we rise from a moribund state in sin to "walk in newness of life."

Point out at least four aspects of the experience that comes to the person who has been justified by faith.

THINK IT THROUGH

Except for God's initiative in providing salvation, would men ever desire, or seek, reconciliation with God? Why?

To what extent do I possess the peace, joy, hope, and love of God of which Paul writes? If to some degree these are lacking in my life, what is the reason, and what can I do to make them a living reality?

"Faith is not the ground of our salvation, but it is the great blessing—the eye that sees, the ear that hears, the feet that run, the hand that grasps. It is the means, not the end. If Christ gave His life to save sinners, why shall I not take that blessing? My faith grasps it, and thus my faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen. Thus resting and believing, I have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ."—Ellen G. White Comments, "SDA Bible Commentary," Vol. 6, p. 1073.

Part 4
A NEW PERSON

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."

2 Cor. 5:17-19

The key concept in this passage is in the word "new." The contrast between what a person used to be before finding reconciliation with God, and what he is afterward, is evident in every aspect of his life. He has new objectives to live for. New impulses stir his life and, one by one, sweep away the old desires and aspirations. New ideals replace the old. New emotions swell in the heart. New traits of character take root and grow to maturity.

As the newborn Christian sets out to mortify, or put to death, his former desires and evil practices (Rom. 8:13), a pitched battle ensues. No longer, in his inmost heart, does he care for these things, yet he finds that the old thoughts, emotions, habits, and practices must be resolutely put down. He battles with one, marches on, and then battles with another. One and all, he hates them (Rom. 7:15-25), struggles for victory over them, and finds deliverance through Jesus Christ. He is walking "after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:1); and resolutely, by the grace and power of Christ, he subdues every un-Christ-like trait of character, until he grows up in character, as well as in name, to be a son of God.

What exhilarating, joyful experience comes to the person who has been reconciled to God?

THINK IT THROUGH

As you think back on your own experience in finding Christ, what aspects of your life became notably "new"? For which of these are you particularly thankful?

"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. Then 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," pages 98, 99.

Part 5
BE YE HOLY

1 Peter 1:13-16, 23; 2:9

"Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever."

"Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

The person who finds righteousness by faith, who stands justified before God, at peace with Him, and a new person in Christ Jesus, is declared to be holy. Bible writers use the word "holy" to describe a person or an object as set apart or dedicated to the service of God. God is holy by virtue of His intrinsic righteous character as God; man is holy by virtue of his relationship to God, never in his own right. Thus, Israel is commonly referred to as a holy nation, not because its people were uniformly upright and without moral fault, but because, as a nation, they sustained a special relationship to God as the one nation on earth dedicated to God as the instrument of His divine purpose on earth.

As the apostle Peter here points out, however, the person who enters into this relationship with God will reflect that relationship in all his "conversation," that is, his conduct or manner of life. Those whose lives are thus dedicated to Christ constitute a "holy nation" like Israel of old. Furthermore, they are a "peculiar people," that is (as the Greek reads) "God's own people," and as such they are His personal possession. A privilege indeed!

How does Peter describe the special relationship that exists between God and those who accept Christ as their Saviour?

THINK IT THROUGH

How does a person "gird up the loins" of his mind? How would you express this in modern language?

Does a holy person ever make mistakes? Does God consider a person who sins, holy? Or does a person lose this status the moment he misses the mark?

"No repentance is genuine that does not work reformation. The righteousness of Christ is not a cloak to cover unconfessed and unforsaken sin; it is a principle of life that transforms the character and controls the conduct. Holiness is wholeness for God; it is the entire surrender of heart and life to the indwelling of the principles of heaven."—"The Desire of Ages," pages 555, 556.

Part 6
CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

Heb. 13:20, 21

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever."

The Greek word translated "perfect" means "mature," "full-grown," "that which has reached its objective." By this definition, a "perfect" Christian is a mature Christian. He has a reasonably symmetrical understanding of his relationship to God and to his fellowmen. He assumes the responsibilities of Christian maturity, along with its privileges. He acts like a mature person, spiritually, not with the irresponsibility that sometimes characterizes childhood and youth. In his attitude toward the various situations of life he is consistent, steady, self-reliant, considerate of others.

It is the purpose of the mature Christian to order his life in harmony with the divine will, to bring every aspect of his life into harmony with that will. This is his steadfast objective, one toward which he works persistently and steadily. When he misses the mark, he does not become discouraged and let setbacks stop his progress toward his ideal. He may fall into temptation, but he rises again.

In this lesson we have traced the experience of a person in coming to Christ (Parts 1 and 2) and then his relationship to God as a sinner justified by the blood of Christ. The person who by the grace of God has complied with the divine will each step of the way attains to perfection in Christ.

What is the goal of the born-again Christian, and how does God look upon a life thus dedicated to reflect the character of Jesus Christ?

THINK IT THROUGH

How can a person be perfect, and yet be working toward Christian perfection? (See "SDA Bible Commentary" on Matt. 5:48 and on Phil. 3:12-16.)

At what point in his experience as a Christian does he attain to perfection in the Bible sense of the word?

"While we cannot claim perfection of the flesh, we may have Christian perfection of the soul. Through the sacrifice made in our behalf, sins may be perfectly forgiven. Our dependence is not in what man can do; it is in what God can do for man through Christ. When we surrender ourselves wholly to God, and fully believe, the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin. The conscience can be freed from condemnation. Through faith in His blood, all may be made perfect in Christ Jesus. Thank God that we are not dealing with impossibilities. We may claim sanctification. We may enjoy the favor of God. We are not to be anxious about what Christ and God think of us, but about what God thinks of Christ, our Substitute. Ye are accepted in the Beloved. The Lord shows, to the repenting, believing one, that Christ accepts the surrender of the soul, to be molded and fashioned after His own likeness."—"Selected Messages," Bk. 2, pp. 32, 33.

Part 7 ◇ SUMMARY QUESTIONS ◇ A TEST OF YOUR STUDY POWER

Now that you have studied this lesson you are invited to answer the following questions. Check your answers with the answers at the bottom of this sheet.

1. True or False: According to Paul, a man attains to righteousness through faith and works. _____

2. Complete: "There is therefore now no _____ to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the _____, but after the _____."

3. Which of the following is *not* pointed out as a *result* of experiencing justification by faith: (*a*) peace, (*b*) love, (*c*) hope, (*d*) faith.

4. Complete: "If any man be in Christ, he is a _____ _____."

5. True or False: To be "holy" in the Bible sense is to be in a state of sinless perfection. _____

6. What other word would you suggest as expressing most accurately the import of the word "perfect" used in the Bible sense? _____

Answers: (1) false; (2) condemnation, flesh, Spirit; (3) d; (4) new creature; (5) false; (6) mature, or some similar word.

CHRIST, THE WAY TO HEAVEN 13

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way . . . ; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." Heb. 10:19-22.

In the plan of salvation Christ has opened up before us a way by which we can attain to His original purpose for the human race. It is new, it is living, it is the way of union with Christ. He identified Himself with humanity in order that we might identify ourselves with divinity. The Christian life is a life of pressing toward the mark, the ideal set by Christ. The future reward of the faithful, the eternal inheritance, is one for which those who are faithful in this life qualify by accepting the gift of salvation in Christ and by conforming their characters to the ideal He set before them in His own life.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **A New and Living Way**
   Heb. 10:19-22
2. **Union With Christ**
   John 14:20; 15:5-8
3. **The Pathway of Obedience**
   John 14:21; 15:10
4. **Pressing Toward the Mark**
   Phil. 3:10-14
5. **A Reward for Every Man**
   Matt. 16:24-27
6. **The Eternal Inheritance**
   Matt. 25:31-34

Part 1
A NEW AND LIVING WAY

Heb. 10:19-22

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

The "new and living way" of which the author of Hebrews writes is "new" in contrast to the "old" way operative under the "old covenant," of approaching God through the ancient sacrificial system. Read Heb. 9:1-15; 8:6-10; 10:1-12. It is "living" in the sense that it does "take away sins," whereas "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." Heb. 10:4. The ancient sacrificial system never did take away sins, for it was a "ministration of death." 2 Cor. 3:6-8.

But to us in our day, when we come to Christ, His ministry in heaven on our behalf can also be "new" and "living" —new because we have entered into a new experience and relationship, and living because Christ's power to cleanse from sin is a living reality in the experience of the born-again Christian.

The four prerequisites to this experience are simple and clear: (1) "a true heart," that is, faith and sincere motives; (2) "full assurance of faith," or complete confidence and trust; (3) "our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience," that is, a clear conscience, clear because we have made everything right with God and with fellowmen whom we may have wronged, and with a sincere purpose to cooperate willingly and gladly with all that God may require of us; and (4) "our bodies" have been "washed with pure water"—we have complied with the outward sign of inward regeneration, baptism.

What four requirements are set forth with which those are to comply who would enter upon the "new and living way" Christ has opened for us?

THINK IT THROUGH

Why does God specify "boldness" as one of the traits He expects of those who approach the throne of divine grace by the "new and living way"?

Is my conscience clear with respect to my past relationships to God and to my fellowmen?

"The intercession of Christ in man's behalf in the sanctuary above is as essential to the plan of salvation as was His death upon the cross. By His death He began that work which after His resurrection He ascended to complete in heaven. We must by faith enter within the veil, 'whither the Forerunner is for us entered.' Hebrews 6:20. There the light from the cross of Calvary is reflected. There we may gain a clearer insight into the mysteries of redemption. The salvation of man is accomplished at an infinite expense to heaven; the sacrifice made is equal to the broadest demands of the broken law of God.—"The Great Controversy," page 489.

Part 2
UNION WITH CHRIST

"At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you."

"I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples."

John 14:20; 15:5-8

The new and living way upon which the person enters who accepts salvation in Christ requires a continuous living connection with Christ in order to maintain a healthy experience.

For those who have found the joy of salvation in Christ, Satan has a new temptation—to stray from Christ, or to suppose that one's present experience is enough to guarantee eternal life. To many he whispers the subtle error, "You are a Christian now. Your name is on the church books. You are sure of heaven. Now you can relax and enjoy life." To others he comes with a subtle variant of the same temptation: "Yes, you're saved. Once saved, always saved. God's grace has released you from obeying God's commands. You can do as you please without any worry. God is obliged, now, to let you into heaven. From now on out He won't be concerned with what you do or don't do. You're in!"

What vital facts with respect to discipleship did Jesus illustrate by the brief parable of the vine and its branches?

THINK IT THROUGH

In a practical, literal sense, how does a person abide in Christ? What is the difference between abiding in Christ, and Christ abiding in us?

What points of comparison are there between the parable and the experience of the Christian abiding in Christ?

"Though He was about to be removed from them, their spiritual union with Him was to be unchanged. The connection of the branch with the vine, He said, represents the relation you are to sustain to Me. . . . The life of the vine becomes the life of the branch. So the soul dead in trespasses and sins receives life through connection with Christ. By faith in Him as a personal Saviour the union is formed. The sinner unites his weakness to Christ's strength, his emptiness to Christ's fullness, his frailty to Christ's enduring might. Then he has the mind of Christ."—"The Desire of Ages," page 675.

"He who is imbued with the Spirit of Christ abides in Christ. The blow that is aimed at him falls upon the Saviour, who surrounds him with His presence. Whatever comes to him comes from Christ. He has no need to resist evil, for Christ is his defense. Nothing can touch him except by our Lord's permission." —"Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing," page 71.

Part 3
THE PATHWAY OF OBEDIENCE

"He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him."

"If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love."

John 14:21; 15:10

The modern mind resents the idea of having to comply with any objective requirements, whether human or divine. It wants to do only what it pleases. This attitude is a modern version of the temptation Satan presented to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, a sophisticated manifestation of the spirit of rebellion and defiance that has characterized Satan from the first. As the apostle Paul says in Rom. 8:7, "The carnal mind . . . is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

The "situation ethics" concept that permits a man to rationalize away his obligation to obey God at all times and under all circumstances and to decide for himself that something God has declared to be all wrong is, after all, all right, is of the devil.

Situation ethics errs by placing love and commandment in oppositon to each other, as if one could love God without obeying Him. This is a modern version of the same charge Satan made against God before being cast out of heaven. In our scripture for today Christ declares that genuine love for Him will be reflected in obedience to His commands. Love is not contrary to the law of God, but the "fulfilling of the law." Rom. 13:10. We are to "abide," or "continue," in Christ's love *by* keeping His commandments.

What relationship did Jesus repeatedly affirm as existing between genuine love for Him and obedience to His requirements?

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I ever tempted to think that circumstances release me from obeying God?

Are there circumstances under which a person might, for example, make a purchase on the Sabbath, or disobey his parents, or appropriate to his own use that which belongs to someone else—and yet in so doing actually be carrying out God's will for him under the circumstances? How can a person know, under particular circumstances, what he ought to do, how he ought to obey God? How can he be sure that he is not rationalizing a situation in an endeavor to justify himself for doing what he wants to do?

"It is not enough to believe the theory of truth. It is not enough to make a profession of faith in Christ and have our names registered on the church roll. . . . 'Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.' 1 John 3:24; 2:3. This is the genuine evidence of conversion. Whatever our profession, it amounts to nothing unless Christ is revealed in works of righteousness."—"Christ's Object Lessons," pages 312, 313.

Part 4
PRESSING TOWARD THE MARK

"That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Phil. 3:10-14

On no other aspect of the Christian life does there seem to be so much misunderstanding as on the point of Christian perfection. In part, this is because the English word "perfect" does not accurately reflect the meaning of the Greek word from which it is translated in the various New Testament passages where it occurs. "Mature" more closely reflects the meaning of the Greek word. It denotes an animal or a person who is able to function effectively as may properly be expected of him at the time; he is mature for his age and station in life. In this sense, a child of twelve is mature when he conducts himself as a child of that age should. But his perfection as a twelve-year-old child does not mean that he has attained to the mature attitudes, ability, and conduct that will be expected of him when he is twenty-one. He is "perfect" as a child of twelve; but, like Paul, he is still pressing toward the mark of full maturity. For that matter, he should be growing in character, ability, and conduct throughout life.

There is, thus, an immediate perfection that all may have instantly the moment they accept Christ and may retain continuously throughout life; there is also an ultimate perfection to which they attain at the end of life's journey. The first is relative; the second is absolute. God does not expect, nor does He require, the sincere, earnest Christian to attain to ultimate perfection before he reaches the end of life's journey; but He does require him, like Paul, to be earnestly pressing toward the mark of absolute perfection in Christ Jesus. And God accounts such a Christian perfect so long as he maintains this attitude and relationship to Christ.

THINK IT THROUGH

Should I expect to attain to a state of sinless perfection at any point in life prior to the close of probation?

If I fall unwillingly before the tempter, does God take away from me the robe of Christ's righteousness until I confess my sin and ask His forgiveness?

"The steps of a Christian may at times appear feeble and faltering, yet in his conscious weakness he leans upon the Mighty One for support. He is sustained, and makes sure progress onward and upward toward perfection. He gains new victories daily, and comes nearer and nearer to the standard of perfect holiness. His eye is not downward to the earth, but upward, ever keeping in view the heavenly Pattern." —"Testimonies," Vol. 2, p. 228.

Part 5
A REWARD FOR EVERY MAN

"Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works."

Matt. 16:24-27

Christ here uses the words "save" one's life, "find" one's life, and "reward" to express the ultimate goal of Christian living. To this end He invites His followers to follow His example, to deny themselves, to take up their crosses and follow Him, and to lose their lives. The mature Christian does not think of doing these things in order to earn the reward Christ here promises. He now purposes to live in harmony with the principles of heaven because it is in his heart to be in harmony with those principles. It is by being in harmony with heaven's principles now that we become eligible for the reward of life eternal in that new universe. There, all will be perpetually in harmony with God's will on the basis of an unalterable conviction that God's way is best.

It is one of the great paradoxes of life that no one works more effectively against himself than the man who works exclusively for himself. God will never forget those who forget themselves by becoming so involved in their concern for others that they neglect themselves for others.

What requirements did Jesus set forth to be met by those who aspire to the reward of eternal life at His coming?

THINK IT THROUGH

How does a person "deny" himself in the sense in which Christ uses the term?

In a practical way, what does it mean to "take up" the cross of Christ?

What might a man "give in exchange for his soul"?

"Let no one say, I cannot remedy my defects of character. If you come to this decision, you will certainly fail of obtaining everlasting life. The impossibility lies in your own will. If you will not, then you cannot overcome. The real difficulty arises from the corruption of an unsanctified heart, and an unwillingness to submit to the control of God.

"Many whom God has qualified to do excellent work accomplish very little, because they attempt little. Thousands pass through life as if they had no definite object for which to live, no standard to reach. Such will obtain a reward proportionate to their works." —"Christ's Object Lessons," page 331.

Part 6
THE ETERNAL INHERITANCE

"When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Matt. 25:31-34

"The kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" is the original dominion over this earth granted to Adam in the Garden of Eden but forfeited because of Adam's sin. It is restored by virtue of the righteousness of the second Adam. Read Rom. 5:12-19. In other words, the Creator's original plan for this world, interrupted though it has been by six thousand years of sin, will eventually be carried out. When? "When the Son of man shall come in His glory." Christ is now the Great Shepherd of the flock, but then He will sit as man's righteous Judge and King.

An Oriental flock was often composed of both sheep and goats. They would graze together, rest together, go about together. But there was a time of separation when each would be called to fulfill its destiny, as determined by its inherent nature as a sheep or a goat and by the product it had to offer. In the same way our eternal destiny is determined by the character we develop in this life, and by whether or not that character qualifies us to inherit the kingdom God has prepared for us from the foundation of the world.

In what expressive figures of speech does Christ set forth the eternal reward of those who aspire to the prize of eternal life in Christ Jesus?

THINK IT THROUGH

A goat cannot help acting like a goat, nor a sheep like a sheep. How then is it fair to condemn the goats in Christ's parable of the kingdom? Is this not an arbitrary act on God's part?

If Christ were living today, would He speak of the future life as a "kingdom"? Would it be just as accurate to picture the future life as a democracy?

"Before the ransomed throng is the Holy City. Jesus opens wide the pearly gates, and the nations that have kept the truth enter in. There they behold the Paradise of God, the home of Adam in his innocency. Then that voice, richer than any music that ever fell on mortal ear, is heard, saying: 'Your conflict is ended.' 'Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' "—"The Great Controversy," page 646.

Part 7 ◇ SUMMARY QUESTIONS ◇ A TEST OF YOUR STUDY POWER

Now that you have studied this lesson you are invited to answer the following questions. Check your answers with the answers at the bottom of this sheet.

1. Complete: "Let us draw near with a true _____ in full assurance of _____," by the "new and living _____" that Christ pioneered for us by His own perfect example on earth and by His vicarious sacrifice on Calvary.

2. To illustrate the relationship we are to sustain to Him, Christ used as an illustration: (*a*) a mustard seed, (*b*) a grapevine, (*c*) a fig tree, (*d*) a shepherd and his flock. _____

3. Christ repeatedly stressed the fact that our love for Him will find expression in, or be demonstrated by, _____.

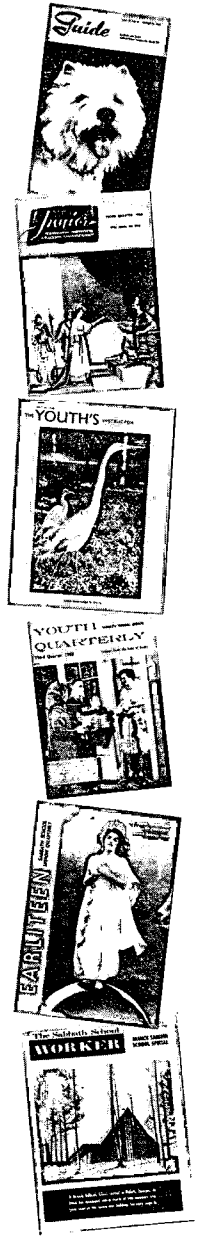
4. Complete: "Reaching forth unto those things which are before, I _____ _____ _____ _____ for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

5. True or False: Jesus said that eternal rewards will be meted out on the basis of how a man has lived in this life. _____

6. Jesus compared the future reward of the faithful to a: (*a*) home, (*b*) city, (*c*) kingdom, (*d*) vineyard. _____

Answers: (1) heart, faith, way; (2) b; (3) obedience, or keeping His commandments; (4) press toward the mark; (5) true; (6) c.

Studied Your Lesson?



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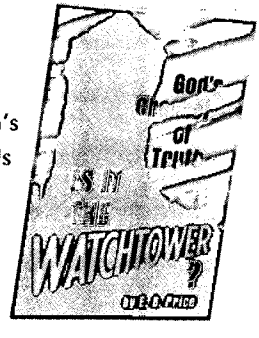

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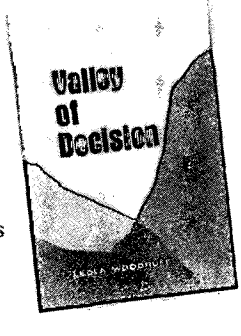

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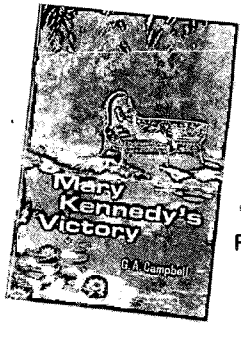

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Thirteenth Sabbath Offering

SEPTEMBER 26, 1970 · SOUTHERN EUROPEAN DIVISION

On September 26 you will be asked to give a special offering, and it is important that you know something about the projects to benefit from your offering. Three different sections of the Southern European Division will benefit from the overflow of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering: Yugoslavia in Europe, the Republic of Chad in Equatorial Africa, and Malagasy Republic (Madagascar).

The European project is the establishment of an evangelistic center in Nis, the sixth largest city in Yugoslavia, where our work has progressed very well. Since the end of World War II, more than one hundred places of worship have been opened in Yugoslavia as the result of the generosity of her own people. Authorization has been obtained to build an evangelistic center in the city of Nis.

In the Republic of Chad in Africa the authorities have asked us to help them in establishing a dispensary with a maternity wing in the southern part of the country. We have no Adventists here. But now we may give these people the message of God's love.

On the large island of Madagascar we have a secondary school with 500 students but we could easily have 800 or 1,000. Unfortunately we do not have the space. Therefore a part of the overflow will be used to enlarge and improve this school. The carrying forward of all these projects depends on the generosity of our Sabbath School members around the world on September 26.

Lessons for the Fourth Quarter of 1970

Sabbath School members who have not received an adult *Lesson Quarterly* for the fourth quarter of 1970 will be helped by the following outline in studying the first lesson. The title of the series is "To Make Man Whole." The title of the first lesson is "The Restoration of Man." The memory verse is John 3:16. The outline is as follows:

1. Original State of Man. Gen. 1:27, 31. 2. Man's Moral Fall. Gen. 3:6. 3. The Curses Pronounced. Gen. 3:16, 17. 4. Promise of a Saviour. Gen. 3:15; Rom. 5:12, 20 (last part). 5. Jesus' Mission—to Restore. Luke 19:10; Matt. 20:28; Rom. 5:8. 6. Dimension of Restoration. Acts 3:20, 21.

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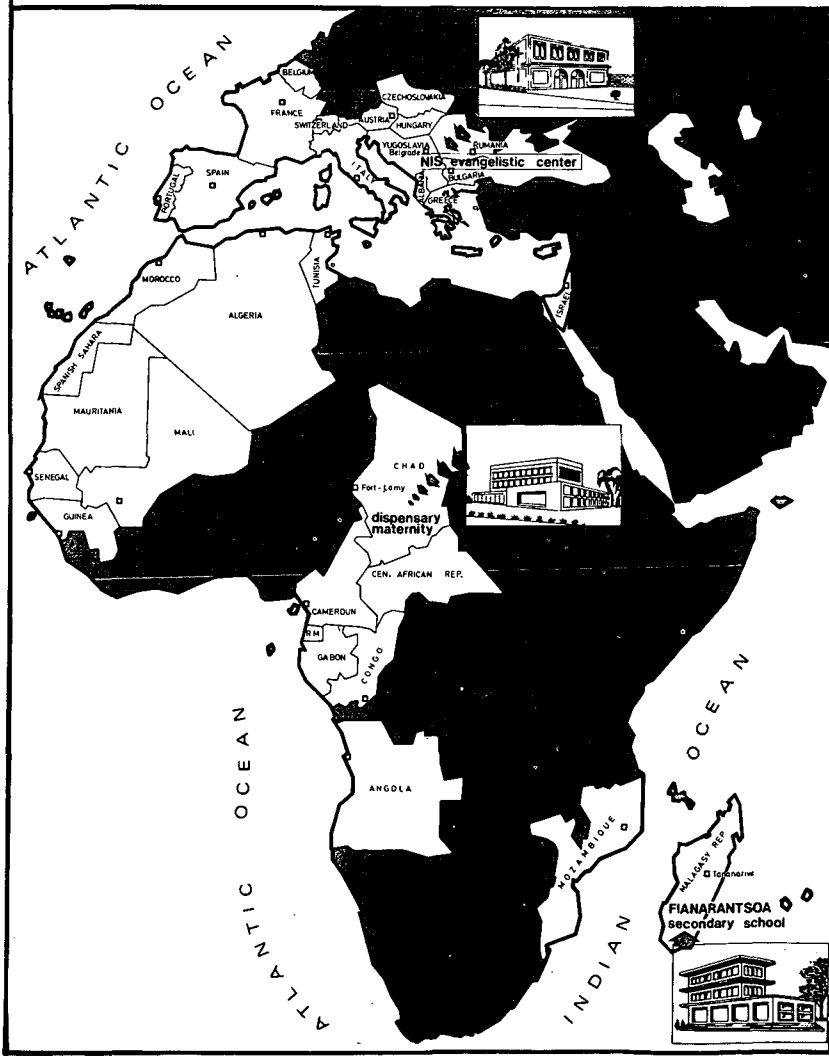
UNIONS	POPULATION	CHURCHES	CHURCH MEMBERS	SAB. SCH. MEMBERS
Angola Union Mission	5,373,000	64	20,555	31,294
Austrian Union	7,323,000	46	2,614	2,880
Bulgarian Church	8,309,000	70	2,803	2,940
Czechoslovakian Union Conference	14,305,000	153	7,011	10,241
Equatorial African Union Mission	11,861,810	55	11,103	21,923
Franco-Belgian Union Conference	59,891,170	106	6,230	4,614
Hungarian Union Conference	10,236,000	153	5,800	6,168
Indian Ocean Union Mission	7,543,511	110	7,077	13,041
Italian Union Mission	52,334,000	62	3,311	3,674
Portuguese Union Mission	10,678,000	37	3,579	3,349
Rumanian Union Conference	19,287,000	512	40,864	51,943
Spanish Church	33,508,051	25	2,612	2,821
Swiss Union Conference	6,066,000	58	3,846	3,577
Yugoslavian Union Conference	19,958,000	251	10,229	10,439
Greek Mission	10,568,699	10	268	214
Israel Mission	2,686,200	3	53	67
Mozambique Mission	7,124,000	44	8,746	12,280
North African Mission	30,699,862	7	130	78
Senegal Mission	16,583,036	2	27	185
Division Totals	334,335,339	1,768	136,858	181,728