

International Camp 2003

Leaving Our Own World



Manuscript Version

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Report from the July Messenger 2003:

The International Seminar

Believers from all parts of the world came to Dickendorf for this year's international seminar, which took place from June 13–21. While last year the emphasis had been on a seminar type of meeting, this year's meetings were more orientated to study. Yet we still called it a seminar as the purpose was to train workers for the world field. The message spreads from here to different places and countries, eventually illuminating the whole earth with the light of present truth.

The main subject this year was the school of life. Those of you who read the articles in *The Messenger* are sufficiently acquainted with the subject so that we do not need to repeat it in detail here. In connection with this topic we also considered the parable of the ten virgins and the work of cutting off our own worlds. It is a very timely message that is intended to prepare us for the coming of the Lord.

I was encouraged with all the input that came from the various believers from the world church. Those who are acquainted with the word of God and are walking closely with Him, are quickly able to see the significance of the message and they are able to give very good contributions.

Apart from the regular studies we also had some history studies. We looked into the history of the United States, especially in connection with the principles of religious liberty. This is also a timely study, because at the present time we can clearly see that the stage is being set for the image of the beast to be erected.

In the afternoons we had some additional studies and discussions about life-reform, true medical missionary work, and other related topics.

The light grew as I presented the subject, and now the theme for this year's round of camp meetings has been clearly delineated. Still, we expect the light to continue to grow and we pray that the sword of truth will cut very deeply and remove the sin problems that are still present among God's people. In some countries the work is advancing nicely, while in others many are unwilling to submit to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. However, the work continues to move forward, and therefore we fear that many will be unprepared for the final crisis.

The second Sabbath of the camp was the final day of our studies, and many of the German believers who understand English participated in the meetings as well. Our week of study was concluded with the Lord's Supper, which was a great blessing for all. However, the seminar was not over yet.

For the first time since we have held the international seminars, we stayed together for a second week. For some of the believers the international camp is the only

opportunity to counsel together with other members of the worldwide church, whom the Lord has endowed with special gifts in the different areas of the work. During the camp meeting we concentrate so much on the biblical theme presented that it is very difficult to find time for personal counsel. Furthermore, we also have the pattern of the religious year of Israel in the Old Testament, where believers stayed together for prolonged periods at the feast of Unleavened Bread, and also at the Feast of Tabernacles. For example, the Feast of Tabernacles was a time of joyful fellowship that lasted for seven days. It took place five days after the solemn Day of Atonement. For us, the camp studies and the Lord's Supper was also a Day of Atonement in which we searched our hearts, and after this we spent the time in joyous fellowship in order to be strengthened in the present truth.

During this second week we had time to counsel together, and to hear detailed reports from the different world fields. There was ample opportunity to ask questions, and in this way we all got better acquainted with the different branches of the work. We prayed together and sang quite a number of new songs.

On Tuesday we went on a field trip to a historic site. As we had especially studied the Moravian Brethren last year, we visited one of their settlements in Germany called Herrnhag. The believers had to abandon this place in 1750 after having built it for more than 12 years into a missionary training center. The place is now fairly run down, and only a few houses remain, although there is a group of Moravians who are trying to keep the memory of those days alive. We had the opportunity to speak with a female pastor of this group and she told us a little about their history. She also wanted to know more about us, and towards the end of our visit she asked us to sing one of our songs for her, which we gladly did. We sang "Trust in God" in one of their meeting rooms, which sounded quite impressive with all the voices present. The woman joined in our song and was obviously impressed. She wanted to have a copy of the song for herself.

After this we visited a nearby castle called Ronneburg, where Zinzendorf lived for a while before he founded Herrnhag. Here we also saw how people lived during those times. We saw some armor, a kitchen, a torture chamber, a laboratory, a filing cabinet, and many more things too numerous to list here. It was highly educational.

On Sabbath morning, at the end of the second week, we had a final study about self-supporting ministry, based on the example of the apostle Paul. This subject demands our close attention.

After this second week the believers dispersed in different directions around the world in order to take up their work again with new vigor and strength.

Andreas Dura

Study 1

We will begin our studies with the parable of the ten virgins, which we find in *Matthew* 25. The context of this parable is the disciples' question concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the second coming of Christ. For them these events were closely connected. For them this was one and the same event, and Jesus explained it to them. As Christ went on in His discourse, He emphasized the second coming rather than the destruction of Jerusalem. And finally he gave some very important instructions to prepare His disciples for His second coming. This is the context in which He gave the parable of the ten virgins.

"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming." *Matthew* 25:1-13.

Jesus' words, "Watch therefore," were a repetition of the admonishment already given to the disciples, but in *Matthew* 25 He

connected this thought with the parable of the ten virgins, and so instructs us how to watch.

"The kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins." In the past we tended to understand this parable in the following way: the wise virgins are those who are in the true church; they are those who pay their tithes and are active members of the church. The foolish virgins are, generally speaking, those in the fallen churches. This is how we categorized these two classes. However, this is not the case. If we take a closer look, we see that both the wise and the foolish virgins are very similar in many respects. In fact, they are so similar that initially it is difficult to find any differences between them. You know that ten virgins were actually standing in front of the bride's house when Jesus saw them and said to his disciples, "Look, five of them are wise and five are foolish." But how could the disciples know this? They could not look into the flasks and see how much oil was in there. All they could see was ten virgins with their lamps burning. Not very brightly, but burning nevertheless. No one could see any difference between them—and this reveals the fact that although the wise and the foolish virgins represent two very different classes, in appearance they are very similar. Let us now take a closer look at some aspects of the foolish virgins in order to understand in what ways they are similar to the wise virgins.

First of all, they are waiting for Christ's second coming. In fact, I should emphasize this point even more and say, they are confidently waiting for Christ's second coming. Would a virgin spend her time in front of a house if she thinks that there is only a vague possibility that the bridegroom may come? Would she wait there hour after hour? She would do so only if she confidently expected him to come! This is no mere guesswork. And this is true of all the ten virgins.

Are the fallen churches, generally speaking, confidently expecting Christ's second coming? Not really, because most of them believe that

before Christ comes there will be a tremendous victory for Christianity in this world. They expect a thousand years of prosperity to follow the victory of Christianity over the Antichrist. This is what most of them expect. But here they are badly mistaken. Therefore, they are not confidently waiting for Christ's imminent return. They are waiting for a kingdom to be set up on this earth before the Second Advent. Only a very small group of believers are confidently waiting for Christ to come again in the near future.

What are the other characteristics of the foolish virgins? Let us turn to *Christ's Object Lessons*, 806, where we read the following:

"As Christ sat looking upon the party that waited for the bridegroom, He told His disciples the story of the ten virgins, by their experience illustrating the experience of the church that shall live just before His second coming.

"The two classes of watchers represent the two classes who profess to be waiting for their Lord. They are called virgins because they profess a pure faith. By the lamps is represented the word of God. The psalmist says, 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.' Ps. 119:105. The oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Thus the Spirit is represented in the prophecy of Zechariah. 'The angel that talked with me came again,' he says, 'and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep, and said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof; and two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof. So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord? ... Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.... And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two

olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves? ... Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.' *Zechariah* 4:1-14.

"From the two olive trees the golden oil was emptied through the golden pipes into the bowl of the candlestick, and thence into the golden lamps that gave light to the sanctuary. So from the holy ones that stand in God's presence His Spirit is imparted to the human instrumentalities who are consecrated to His service. The mission of the two anointed ones is to communicate to God's people that heavenly grace which alone can make His word a lamp to the feet and a light to the path. 'Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.' *Zechariah* 4:6." *Christ's Object Lessons*, 406.2-408.1.

By the way, this vision was very significant for Zechariah. It was given at a time when he was in great need of support. Shortly before, the call had been given, "Come out of Babylon!" But only a few of the Jews obeyed this call, and consequently there were very few builders of the temple and Jerusalem. It was in response to this decree from Cyrus that Zechariah, together with Zerubbabel, was in Jerusalem.

"In the parable, all the ten virgins went out to meet the bridegroom. All had lamps and vessels for oil. For a time there was seen no difference between them. So with the church that lives just before Christ's second coming. All have a knowledge of the Scriptures. All have heard the message of Christ's near approach, and confidently expect His appearing. But as in the parable, so it is now. A time of waiting intervenes, faith is tried; and when the cry is heard, 'Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him,' many are unready. They have no oil in their vessels with their lamps. They are destitute of the Holy Spirit.

"Without the Spirit of God a knowledge of His word is of no avail. The theory of truth, unaccompanied by the Holy Spirit, cannot

quicken the soul or sanctify the heart. One may be familiar with the commands and promises of the Bible; but unless the Spirit of God sets the truth home, the character will not be transformed. Without the enlightenment of the Spirit, men will not be able to distinguish truth from error, and they will fall under the masterful temptations of Satan.

“The class represented by the foolish virgins are not hypocrites. They have a regard for the truth, they have advocated the truth, they are attracted to those who believe the truth; but they have not yielded themselves to the Holy Spirit’s working. They have not fallen upon the Rock, Christ Jesus, and permitted their old nature to be broken up. This class are represented also by the stony-ground hearers. They receive the word with readiness, but they fail of assimilating its principles. Its influence is not abiding. The Spirit works upon man’s heart, according to his desire and consent implanting in him a new nature; but the class represented by the foolish virgins have been content with a superficial work. They do not know God. They have not studied His character; they have not held communion with Him; therefore they do not know how to trust, how to look and live. Their service to God degenerates into a form.” *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 408.2–411.1.

“The class represented by the foolish virgins are not hypocrites.” What is a hypocrite? A person who professes to be something other than what he really is, or who disguises his real intentions. That is a hypocrite. However, the foolish virgins are not hypocrites—they really do mean what they say. They are confidently waiting for Christ’s second coming. Furthermore, “they have a regard for the truth.” This is another important aspect. They are not hypocrites—they have a regard for the truth! What does this mean, to have a regard for the truth? What is the truth that they regard? It is the present truth. It is not just any truth; it is the present truth that we believe today. This is what they have a

regard for. But more than this, they also “advocate the truth!” They have a regard for the truth, and they advocate the truth. Now, to advocate the truth can be fairly easy, but it can be very hard too. To advocate the truth in face of opposition and difficulties, in face of contempt and ridicule, etc., means to really take a stand. So we see that they are church members who take a stand. Not only do they profess the truth in their hearts, they also profess it with their mouth.

The foolish virgins are also “attracted to those who believe the truth.” They want to be a part of God’s people. And they have a knowledge of Scriptures; they have heard the message of Christ’s near approach and confidently expect His appearing.

Now that we have seen some of the characteristics of the foolish virgins, let us look at what they are lacking. This is just as important for us to understand.

First of all, “they have not yielded to the Holy Spirit’s working.” In other words, they speak about the Holy Spirit, and even pray for the Holy Spirit, but they still want to mold themselves; they want to control themselves. They hold the truth as if it were their own possession; they regard the gifts God gives them as their own. This is the same problem that Lucifer had. To a certain extent, it is a problem that each one of us is acquainted with. Whenever God gives us a special gift, or we accomplish something by His grace, we tend to be proud of it. But if these things are suddenly taken away from us, we start to tremble and do not understand what is happening.

This reminds me of when I was a schoolboy and I was learning to write. I could not write the letters very well, and my mother used to tell me, “You cannot write!” So I thought I would try very hard and show her that I could write! I wrote a whole page full of “a’s” and I thought, “I never wrote so many letters before, surely she will be very pleased with my work!” I proudly showed her what I had done,

but she only said, "That does not look very nice!" I was crushed. How could she say, "That is not nice," when it took me such an effort to write all those letters? I was disappointed because I felt that something had been taken away from me. Have you experienced such disappointments? You really accomplish something in your life and then someone tells you, "That is nothing! Forget it!" This disappointment reveals something! It shows that we have not yielded ourselves to the working of the Holy Spirit. We are more concerned with ourselves than with the work of God. This is what it reveals and this is what we need to understand. We need to yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit's working. We will study more about this later.

The next point is, "They have not fallen upon the Rock, Christ Jesus, and permitted their old nature to be broken up." What does this mean? It could mean that they are not born again. In the past we tended to think that the foolish virgins were not born again. But I would not be so confident about this because even born-again Christians can be foolish virgins. The reference to their old nature not having been "broken up" could also mean that their stubborn will has not been completely broken. They still cling to what they think is right or wrong, instead of submitting themselves to the Holy Spirit's working. They are very, very self-willed and very confident in themselves. What does the scripture say? "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." *Proverbs 14:12*. This is a description of those who have not permitted their old natures to be broken up. "This class is represented also by the stony-ground hearers. They receive the word with readiness, but they fail of assimilating its principles. Its influence is not abiding." *Christ's Object Lessons*, 411.1.

They fail of assimilating the principles of truth: What does this mean? During a camp meeting we learn the principles of truth, and

usually, because the message is presented in a logical and clear way, and because all the other believers accept it, we say "Yes!" to the message. There is a general agreement to it. This reminds me of Lucifer, and the council in heaven. After hearing the speech concerning the position of God's son, Lucifer bowed together with the other angels to worship Christ. But he failed to assimilate the principles of truth. In other words, although he confessed that God was right, he did not go on to make this his own experience. To assimilate means to actually take something in, to chew it, to meditate upon it, and to make it our very own.

The Sabbath school lessons help us in this respect. Although they obviously cannot take the place of our own study, they can assist us. In other words, they help us to make the messages our own. But it is not enough to assimilate the principles intellectually; they must be practically applied in our life. That means we must ask ourselves: "How do these principles apply to my life? Can I see the fruits of this message in my life?" If so, then I will know that the message is from God. If not, then I have failed of assimilating the truth! The foolish virgins have not assimilated it. They have been satisfied with a mere theoretical knowledge of the truth.

We also read that, "the influence of the truth is not abiding." This is the same thing that we have just mentioned. The truth has come to them, but it does not stay there. It is not cherished, and therefore it is lost again.

The foolish virgins are "content with a superficial work." "The Spirit works upon man's heart, according to his desire and consent implanting in him a new nature." That is a very important point, "according to his desire and consent." Without our desire and consent there can be no implantation of a new nature.

"But the classes represented by the foolish virgins have been content with a superficial work." What is a superficial work? To learn something quickly and leave it at that! Not

really chewing it. Not making it our very own. A superficial work would also be to pray in a hasty manner; being satisfied to attend the meetings and listening, but never restudying it myself. When I listen to the message, do I actually take my Bible and read the texts or the Spirit of Prophecy quotations in order see these points for myself? That is a question I need to ask myself. And this especially applies to the young people. Many of them are satisfied with a superficial work.

“They do not know God.” This cannot apply to us because we know God. We know that He does not destroy. And we know that the world does not possess this knowledge. Furthermore, we have many arguments to show this point. But does knowing God simply mean that we know God does not destroy? No! To know God means to be personally acquainted with Him. For example, when a man knows his wife, or vice versa, they know each other very well. They have a very close, intimate relationship. In fact, they know each other so well that they can read each other’s thoughts. To know God means to have the same mind as God, to anticipate what He is going to say. People often say, “I do not know, because God does not talk to me!” This is because they do not know God! If we knew God, we would not need to ask Him so many questions because we would know the answers! Many questions that we ask Him are the result of a sheer lack of knowledge of God. For example, when Balaam came to God and asked

Him, “Should I go with these messengers? Should I fulfill their request?” was it necessary to ask these questions? If he had known God, then he would have known that God would never do such a thing because He loves His people. To know God means to be personally acquainted with Him, not just a theoretical knowledge of the character of God.

Again we read, “They have not studied His character.” They have not contemplated it over and over again. One thing that we need to ask ourselves is, “What would Jesus have done?” This is the question that we need to contemplate. When we become acquainted with God, when we study His character, we will automatically ask this question: “What would Jesus do now?” This would give us the answer to many a puzzling question. We would have far fewer difficulties if we did this.

“They have not held communion with Him; therefore they do not know how to trust, how to look and live.” Last year we studied the science of prayer and how to hold communion with God. What has our experience been since then? Have we gotten to know Him better? Do we have a deeper knowledge than we had last year?

The Foolish Virgins

- They have heard the message of present truth
- They receive the word with readiness
- They wait confidently for Christ’s second coming
- They have a knowledge of the Scriptures
- They are not hypocrites
- They have a regard for the truth
- They advocate the truth
- They are attracted to those who believe the truth
- They have not yielded to the Holy Spirit
- They are destitute of the Holy Spirit
- They have not permitted their old natures to be broken up
- They have failed to assimilate the principles of truth
- The influence of the truth does not abide in them
- They are content with a superficial work
- They do not know God
- They have not held communion with God
- They do not know how to trust
- Their service has degenerated into a form
- They give the Peace and Safety cry

Do we have a better understanding of His character because we have held communion with Him? Do we know how to trust Him? How to look and live? These are important questions that we need to ask ourselves. The foolish virgins do not know. They have not held communion with God, and therefore they do not know how to trust.

When we look at this list, we naturally ask ourselves: "Am I a wise or a foolish virgin?" Let me ask you this personal question: What do you think? Are you a wise or a foolish virgin? What do you think our church is? Is it a wise or a foolish church?

This is a very important question, and each one of us needs to answer it for himself. Am I a wise or a foolish virgin? And remember, if we are a foolish virgin it means that we are not ready for the coming of Christ. We will not be able to go in with Him when the loud cry, "Go out to meet him!" comes.

"Their service to God degenerates into a form." The word "degenerates" indicates that there is a gradual development into this condition.

"They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as My people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." *Ezekiel 33:31*. The apostle Paul points out that this will be the special characteristic of those who live just before Christ's second coming. He says, 'In the last days perilous times shall come: for men shall be lovers of their own selves; ... lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.' *2 Timothy. 3:1-5*."

"This is the class that in time of peril are found crying, Peace and safety." *Christ's Object Lessons*, 411.1, 2.

Here is another characteristic by which we can measure whether we are a wise or a foolish virgin--the foolish virgins cry "peace and safety!" Have we ever done this? Have

we ever cried "peace and safety"? That is what the churches do. The fallen churches cry "peace and safety." They say, "you will be saved" even though most of the people are not even born again. But have you ever cried peace and safety? What is the "peace and safety" cry? When and where is it manifested? The foolish virgins are satisfied with their present condition. This is the first point to consider. If we are satisfied with our present condition, we will automatically give a "peace and safety" message.

Another point is that they do not differentiate between wise and foolish virgins. In other words, if somebody shows some interest in the truth, that is sufficient for them. They say, "He may not be perfect, but neither am I!" This is what they say to others as well as to God: "I am a mere human and I cannot be perfect, so please accept me even though I am not perfect!" In the final analysis, they make no difference between wise and foolish virgins. They take a defensive attitude: "Please do not expect perfection from me!" Let everything be ok! Do not be so strict! Do not cut so sharp! Let us all go into the kingdom!"

In a recent meeting, I wrote a covenant of church discipline, which included some very tough specifications that we wanted to abide by. Then the covenant went on to say, "Those who do not sign this covenant will not be considered members of our church." When I gave it to the members to read, some said: "This is wonderful! It is exactly what we need." Others said: "I agree with the specifications, but I have difficulties with the conclusion!" What does this mean? It means: "Please do not expect me to follow the covenant! Let me stay as I am and still be a member of the church!" They see people coming to the meetings who are not so religious, but they are satisfied with the fact that they are coming! They think that is a good thing. They say, Let them come! Let them continue to slumber! This is the "peace and safety" cry. We cannot have this standard

in our church! If we see somebody sleeping in the church, it is our duty to wake him up!

It reminds me of the story of Christian in *Pilgrim's Progress*, on his journey to the city. At one point he met someone who was sleeping so he woke him up and said, "Come! You must wake up! It is time to go to the city." The man replied, "Do not worry, when the latter rain comes, I will wake up and then I will go with you!" A true Christian will never do this! Those who cry "peace and safety" are not the sinners' friends, but his worst enemies. It may seem very charitable to allow the sinner to sleep on. But please consider that if you let a person go on sleeping, you are actually his worst enemy. If a brother or sister's light is burning dim and you do nothing about it, you are their worst enemy. Can we be happy just because they still come to our meetings? If so you would not be their friend, but their worst enemy. You would give the "peace and safety" cry; and you would be a foolish virgin because of this.

But it does not stop there. Those who give the warning, those who cannot let the sinners slumber and sleep, those who are the true friends of the sinner, and who try to wake him up, are considered alarmists, and in some cases legalists. "Do not be so legalistic! Do not be so strict. Let the people accept the message themselves, in their own time and way! Give them the freedom they need! Give them room to breathe! Do not be so narrow-minded, so legalistic!" That is the "peace and safety" cry.

These people do not see reform as a continuous process. They do not see that it is not enough just to have stopped eating meat. They cease to advance, but demand freedom for themselves and for others. They do not press forward in the path of reformation. This too is the "peace and safety" cry.

And finally, they think that their need can be supplied later. They say, "It is true, I am not perfect yet, but when the latter rain comes, I will be perfect!" This is also the "peace and safety" cry. Remember, these are the foolish

virgins! Let us read this again. "This is the class that in time of peril are found crying peace and safety. They lull their hearts into security, and dream not of danger. When startled from their lethargy, they discern their destitution, and entreat others to supply their lack; but in spiritual things no man can make up another's deficiency." *Christ's Object Lessons*, 411.2

As we read this parable, it seems that the wise virgins are hard when they do not comply with the request to share their oil. Are they not selfish? Should they not rather share what they have? Or at least make some effort for the foolish virgins so that they can go in to the wedding? No, it is not possible! Their refusal is not an egoistic "No!" It stems from a deep understanding of God's purposes. If the wise virgins were to give of their oil, the purposes of God could not be fulfilled. It would not then be possible to lighten the way for Jesus to come, and consequently, it would be impossible for Him to come. The work could not be finished. The wise virgins do not think of themselves, but of the cause! That is why they say, "No, lest there should not be enough for us and you!" *Matthew 25:9*. They do not say, "No, lest we should not go in!" That is not the point. The point is, "No, there must be some virgins to accompany Jesus, and therefore we cannot give this oil away!" They have the cause of God uppermost in their minds, and this is more important to them than anything else. Some people think that saving others is the most important work. But actually it is only secondary. The most important work is to finish the great controversy, to reveal God's character. The salvation of men is only a by-product of this work. If we make the salvation of men our first priority, then we will be led into all kinds of errors.

One of these errors would be to try and give away our oil. However, the wise virgins cannot give away their oil, for it is essential to

them. We may think that we are wise virgins because we make room for foolish virgins in our church, but in reality we are foolish virgins ourselves. We weaken the whole church, and we hinder God's purposes. Therefore, for the sake of God's cause, we must say "No!" to those who have neglected to gather oil. Can we see this point? The most important thing for God's cause is that we do His bidding. This is more important than anything else.

When Jesus set off on His last journey from Galilee to Jerusalem, He knew very well that He would be crucified. He knew that He would only live for a few more days. During this time Satan tempted Him strongly: "Go and save these people! You cannot leave

them in the hands of Your disciples! They are not ready yet. They cannot do the job that You can do. You must go and heal the people and help them!" But Jesus steadfastly set His face to Jerusalem. He refused to listen to Satan's suggestions because He understood that the cause of God is more important than gathering in many souls. He said "No!" and we too must say "No!" In our next session we will continue to look at the characteristics of the foolish virgins and the "peace and safety" cry. We want to see whether we are a wise or a foolish virgin. It is really necessary for us to have a thorough understanding of this subject.

Study 2

In our first study, we looked into the thoughts about what makes a foolish virgin. Let us summarize everything from the first study, so that we can understand what the foolish virgins have and what they do not have. First, they have heard the message of present truth. Secondly, they have received the word with readiness. Thirdly, they wait confidently for Christ's second coming. The foolish virgins have a knowledge of the Scriptures, which means they know exactly where to find Bible texts when asked. They know how to reason from the Scriptures, they are not hypocrites, they have a regard for the truth, they have advocated the truth, and they are attracted to those who believe the truth. This is the fig leaf covering, preventing one from seeing the problem as it is, which the following points describe. They have not yielded to the Holy Spirit. They are destitute of the Holy Spirit, and they have not permitted their old natures to be broken up. These last two characteristics of the foolish virgin can mean one of the following: either they are not born again as Judas, or these points could mean that they are simply not progressing on the path of reformation. They have failed to assimilate the principles of truth. The influence of truth is not abiding in them. They are content with a superficial work. They do not know God. They have not held communion with Him. They do not know how to trust and how to believe. Their service

degenerates into a form. They are those who give a peace and safety cry.

Now what is the peace and safety cry? It is that the foolish virgins are fully satisfied with their present condition. They make no distinction between wise and foolish virgins. They let others continue to slumber. They are not the sinner's friends, but his worst enemies. Those who give the warning are called alarmists and legalists. Reform is not a continuous process with them, and they think their need can be supplied later. The final point is that they ask the wise virgins for oil, which is a part of the peace and safety cry, because by this they say it is still possible to receive the oil when in fact it is too late. They say, "Come, give us your oil, then we can be saved", but this is peace and safety when there is no peace and safety. Receiving any oil from the wise virgins could not save them. It would not be possible to be saved. Therefore, the wise virgins do not give it. However, if the wise virgins tried to give of their oil, they would be trying an impossibility and thereby spoil the work of God, which the wise virgins will not do.

The Peace and Safety Cry

- The foolish virgins are satisfied with their present condition
- They make no difference between wise and foolish virgins
- They let others continue to slumber
- They are not the sinner's friends, but his worst enemies
- Those who give the warning are called alarmists and legalists
- Reform is not a continuous process with them
- They think that our need can be supplied later

This is like Adam and Eve's experience. Eve, after her fall, appeared to Adam and said "Come, come, join me in my sin." Adam was supposed to stand firm, in order not to spoil the work of God. It would not have been selfishness on his part to refuse to join Eve in her sin. However, to join Eve in her sin *was* selfishness. Therefore, if for the sake of looking selfless we would give away our oil to others, we would really be selfish. In other words, those who give a peace and safety cry appear to be true lovers of mankind; but, in fact, they are not, and this point cannot be overemphasized, in that they are enemies of sinners. Unfortunately, we in our blindness do not see this point as we should. Yet how often do we look upon those whom God sends to give a stern warning as though they were loveless, too strict, too legalistic and so forth, which is not the case.

Now we want to better understand how we can distinguish between the wise and the foolish virgins, because, as I said before, there is a fig leaf that prevents us from discerning this. We need to know whether we are wise or foolish. We need to ask ourselves very important questions--Am I a wise or a foolish virgin? How can I know? We turn now to another statement from *Christ's Object Lessons*, 411.2.

"This is the class that in time of peril are found crying, Peace and safety. They lull their hearts into security, and dream not of danger. When startled from their lethargy, they discern their destitution, and entreat others to supply their lack; but in spiritual things, no man can make up another's deficiency. God has freely offered His grace to every soul. The message of the gospel has been heralded, 'Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.' Rev. 22:17. However, character is not transferable. No man can believe for another. No man can receive the Spirit for another. No man can impart to another the character which is the fruit of the Spirit's

working. 'Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it [the land], as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.' *Ezekiel* 14:20." This makes the point very clear, in that we can receive our character, the Spirit, etc. only from God and not from our fellow men. Let us now read the next paragraph from the same book. This is a very interesting one.

"It is in a crisis that character is revealed. When the earnest voice proclaimed at midnight, 'Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him,' and the sleeping virgins were roused from their slumbers, it was seen who had made preparation for the event. Both parties were taken unawares; but one was prepared for the emergency, and the other was found without preparation. So now, a sudden and unlooked-for calamity, something that brings the soul face to face with death, will show whether there is any real faith in the promises of God. It will show whether the soul is sustained by grace. The great final test comes at the close of human probation, when it will be too late for the soul's need to be supplied." *Christ's Object Lessons*, 412.1. So here in this statement is another reason why the wise virgins cannot give oil to the foolish virgins. The first reason mentioned already is that God is the giver of those virtues that we stand in need of, which we cannot receive from our fellow man. The second reason mentioned in this statement is that it is too late. In other words, the wise virgins send them to the right place when they say, "There is where you can get the oil. Go and quickly get it." The foolish virgins try, but it is too late, and this is not a real seeking for the oil anyway. God has to pronounce that it is too late, but He has to say this because of their condition. There comes a point when we cannot fill the lack anymore. This is not because of any arbitrary settings on God's part. Rather, it is the natural outworking of the obdurate heart.

Now when you think about this we want to ask the following question: What is it that reveals whether I am a wise or a foolish virgin? “It is in a crisis that character is revealed.” The thought may arise that at this stage it will be too late to do anything with the character. When a crisis comes, what good would this do me if the revelation of my character were that of a foolish virgin? Is it not too late? I cannot change it at that time. Let us read the sentence again, reading what it does not say. “It is in a final crisis that character is revealed.” On the other hand, we could say, “It is only in a final crisis that character is revealed.” When adding the words *final* and *only*, they give a false interpretation of this statement. It is in a crisis that we have a revelation of character, and this is the meaning of this statement from *Christ’s Object Lessons*. This statement means, though we have passed a crisis, it may take a future crisis to reveal the character. Indeed, we can expect crises before and apart from the final one, and this is an important fact. How deplorable would it be if only the final crisis revealed whether we were foolish

virgins, giving us no opportunity for change! We would earnestly strive to be a wise virgin, but would only be striving in vain. What is the kind of test that reveals character? It is a crisis, whatever the crisis, which reveals character. Therefore, we want to understand what a crisis is. Do you understand what a crisis is? To our understanding, a crisis is a calamity--if the economy would collapse, for example. In such a crisis, we cannot buy our necessary commodities, because we have lost our job, etc. We could list more, but this example is sufficient. However, a crisis that reveals character is more than this.

What is the test that reveals the character? It is light. Light is a test. Whenever God sends light, we are tested. Are you aware of this? Moreover, how are we tested? First, when the Lord gives the message through His appointed channel, the test comes immediately. We have our own preconceived ideas, we have our cherished sins in our hearts, and immediately the light clashes with these things. Now it depends on what our cherished sins are, or our preconceived ideas; it depends on these matters how strong

the test is. If our ideas are very wrong, then the test will be very great when light comes. Think for example of the Jews at the time of Christ. The light that Christ was giving was that the kingdom of God was at hand, but it was a spiritual kingdom that Christ was declaring, not a physical kingdom as they expected. Therefore, it was definitely a test when Christ was preaching the message to them. This was a crisis, a definite crisis in the Jewish economy.

The Test that Reveals Character

- Light is a test
 - Gospel order
 - Messages on reform
 - Messages on sentimentalism
- A crisis in our personal life is a test
- A crisis in the church is a test
- A crisis in the world is a test (final test)
 - Sunday laws

Now let us think of some tests that have come into our movement. Gospel order is an example. Was gospel order a test when it came? You know it was because many people could not bear this test; they went away from the truth. (Gospel order was first preached in 1989; this was the theme for the camp meetings worldwide for that year.). The principles of gospel order the worldwide church gladly accepted, except for New Zealand, and a few in Australia. Nevertheless, apart from these countries, most believers accepted the principles and this after previous crises that our Church went through. Now it took only one, two, or three years at the most, until many people who seemed to have accepted gospel order flatly rejected it. What does this tell us? That the crisis is not necessarily at the point of time when the message is first preached, but it could come later. For example, when I receive a message, it is clear and logical, and to my understanding, it is in harmony with the word of God. However, when I get home and I see the consequences of that light, see what needs to be changed, and see that my old habits are really in contradiction with it, I then begin to have second thoughts about that very light. Then the crisis comes home to me. Therefore, the crisis may come home to me immediately with the dawning of the message, or it may come later, but it is a crisis nevertheless.

The time of the presentation of the messages on reform is an example of this. In fact, a strong fear already existed in the hearts of many before the presentation of these principles, leading to a resistance to even listening to these truths. This was a definite crisis. It was a test. The after-reactions from the presentations on sentimentalism give us a further understanding of this point. Initially, the reactions were good. However, when the time came to actually apply these principles, especially amongst the youth on the question of relationships with the opposite gender, suddenly the message was distasteful. This

reaction was amongst not only the youth, but the parents as well. They considered the message cruel, in that they imagined and felt that all the young people would be sent to a cloister. It was a test. Light is a test.

We could list more examples in which one message after the other was a test, and, very often, some even left the movement just as the message was first preached to them. When you look over our membership today and compare it with many years ago, you will find that many have gone and others have come. When you compare it with the beginnings of the message you will find that hardly anyone--and I would even dare to say that no one--from that time is still among us. Some have died, of course. Nonetheless, many, or most I should say, have left us. Why is this so? In other words, on what grounds do they leave the movement? The answer is on the grounds of the crisis that comes with the preaching of light. So it is a risk, you may say, whenever light is presented in the church, but it is necessary. It is a necessary crisis by which the wise and the foolish virgins are clearly revealed. In addition, do not think that by accepting all the light that we have from the past, we are now wise virgins, and the testing time ceases. Firstly, light is constantly progressing. Secondly, we can count on continued testing on the light God has revealed thus far, because we will come into different circumstances and situations. Then this becomes our personal crisis. The light may have been presented and accepted several years ago; nevertheless it can still be a test, and light is the most important test.

However, there are other tests, and these other tests could be a crisis in the personal life. A crisis in the personal life can be a physical or material loss. Think of Job, for example, how he lost so much. It could also be a personal loss as far as the death of a dear one, or suffering oneself from a disease in which we face death. Also, it can be a spiritual crisis

as we have mentioned before, when we find that it is hard to accept light, or when a loved one leaves the truth, someone who is very close and suddenly turns against the message, or loses interest in the message, or whatever. During such a test, such a personal crisis, the faith of many weakens. Many even leave the message because it could be that their children have difficulties with the message. Such a crisis then leads one to turn against the light rather than to let things happen and let the children go. It is a crisis for many parents when their children become worldlier. Likewise, it is a crisis when to a husband his wife becomes more worldly and to the wife when her husband becomes worldlier. In such a situation, we have our personal tests that reveal whether we are a wise or a foolish virgin.

Apart from a personal crisis, we have another crisis that can reveal character, and it is a crisis in the church. The crisis may be in a local church or on an international level. Have we experienced crises in the past as a church? Think of your local church. Have you experienced a crisis there? Certainly. In most countries, when I look around, we have experienced crises--larger and smaller ones. The crisis comes, and every person is tested. Think of the disappointment of 1844. This was a definite crisis for God's church. Did this crisis reveal wise and foolish virgins? Certainly, and this was so apparent that only a few were wise virgins, while most were foolish virgins. Likewise, we have gone through several tests. In different countries, we have gone through several tests, and through these tests, we received a revelation of our personal standing. Let me ask a question here. What do you think of the disciples when they tried to crown Christ king after the feeding of the five thousand? Were they wise or were they foolish? This was a very foolish act. However, they did not see it

as such; they considered, to their understanding, their actions as wise and a very selfless undertaking. Christ dispersed the crowd, and sent the disciples away. On the lake, a terrible storm burst upon them. Then came a revelation of their foolishness. This was a crisis in their lives, which gave them a revelation of their standing. Of course Christ could heal them. He told them "O ye of little faith." (See *Matthew* 8:26.) Had the disciples drowned, they would have been lost, even though they were born again. Nevertheless, Christ did not allow them to drown; He saved them. However, it was essential that the disciples have their foolishness revealed to them, and so Christ suffered the storm to come. So likewise, let us thank the Lord when a personal crisis comes into our lives, or even in our church, for it is necessary that we receive a revelation of our characters.

A crisis is not something that should not happen--this point must be emphasized. It is something that we should welcome, because it must happen. Why is it such a blessing that a crisis comes? Because it reveals character. Why is it such a blessing that character is revealed? Because the opportunity still exists for a change, but when the final test comes, then a change will not be possible anymore; it will be too late to fill our vessels with oil, and you know the oil is the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, before the final test we still have the time of probation, wherein we can still do something about it. Therefore, when a crisis has come and this reveals our foolishness, let us thank the Lord, even though we may feel very foolish because we give our confessions before the whole church, and wonder how we could have been victims of deception! Nevertheless, let us be so thankful for these revelations, because in it the Lord has given us His grace. Therefore, a crisis is something we can welcome as an agency of help to deliver us out of our foolishness.

The final crisis is the crisis that will engulf the entire world, and I do not mean just a little economic crisis, or something like one war, or one local war, or something like this. It is the final test and this is the Sunday law. When this comes, then it will be too late to quickly make up lost ground. If we do not pass this test then we will go into the world forever. Therefore, before that test comes the Lord gives other tests. Sometimes we wish to

take away the tests, exclaiming, "Save the people from this or that test!" We may even pray, "Please save us from another crisis, we do not wish the crisis to come!" However, this way of thinking and praying is wrong, absolutely wrong. We must cherish the attitude that a crisis is a great blessing, and as the Lord allowed it, it is really something that we really need. Therefore, in the light of what we have discussed, we read the statement again. "It is in a crisis that character is revealed." Amen. "When the earnest voice proclaimed at midnight ...", and then Sister White talks about the last crisis, and we must always remember that many other crises precede the last crisis.

In the next part of this study, we want to investigate how we prepare ourselves for a crisis. How can we make sure that we are wise virgins? What is our part in the work of cleansing the vessel, so that there is a filling of our vessel with the oil? In other words, how do we fill ourselves with the Holy Spirit, because the oil is the Holy Spirit according to Zechariah? The answer is very clearly given in *Luke*. Do you know this text? We now turn

How do We Gather Oil in Our Vessels?

Luke 11: 9-13

Ask	Constant prayer creates ...
Seek	a constant desire of the mind, ...
Knock	which leads us to seek.

to this text. "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" *Luke 11:9-13*.

What is the main point that Jesus made in these verses? To summarize, it is the reception of the Holy Spirit. "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" Jesus did not mean by this that all parents are evil in the absolute sense. What He meant is that when compared with God, they are evil, because He is righteousness and infinitely loving. Our righteousness is like filthy rags, as the Bible reads, when we compare it with the wonderful, pure character of God. Now you

being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father give the Holy Spirit? And to whom does God give His Spirit? To those who ask! He does not give the Holy Spirit freely, but to those who ask. Yet in *Joel 2:28*, you read about the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh. This is a seeming apparent contradiction, in that to all flesh God gives of His Holy Spirit freely, without any distinction. This is not a contradiction of the principle of asking, as stated in *Luke Chapter 11*. Jesus makes it very clear that the Holy Spirit is given to those who ask, upon all flesh who ask.

Now we turn back to this verse. “I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.” We want now to meditate about these two verses. Did I really ask? Did I really seek? Did I really knock? Why is my vessel not filled? Why do we have so little of the Holy Spirit? The answer is very clear: because you do not ask, because you do not seek, because you do not knock. Therefore, these are the three points that Jesus made. First ask, second seek, and thirdly knock. This is our work, and so when you ask, you fulfill your part, then it is given unto you. When you seek, and that is your part, then the promise is sure. When you knock, and this is your part, then He will open the door for you.

Why does Jesus emphasize that what seems to be the same thing three times?

Actions of Seeking = Knocking

- Go to the Lord in prayer and ask verbally and specifically
- Look to His word for answers
- Ask the messenger through whom the Lord is communicating
- Ask fellow believers whom the Lord is leading
- Ask providence
- Ask nature

Seeking seems to be the same thing as asking, and knocking seems to be the same thing as asking and seeking. Why does He appear to repeat? He should just say, “Ask and you shall receive, and you shall find the door is opened,” period. If we stop there, then we will not find and the door is not opened to us. He says ask and you will receive, number two seek and you shall find. If we stop at this next point, the door is not opened unto us. We need to ask and seek and knock, and then we shall receive. We shall find and the door opens for us. In fact, when we neglect only one thing, we neglect all three. That is the truth. So, what then is the full meaning? To ask means to be constant in prayer. In fact, the translation of this verse from the New Living Translation highlights this point. “And so it is with prayer--keep on asking and you will keep on getting; keep on looking and you will keep on finding; knock and the door will be opened.” *Luke 11:9* (Living Bible).

In other words, Jesus does not imply that we ask once and He will give us everything. He did not say seeking once will make you find everything, and knocking once will open

all doors. What He said is only if you keep on asking, as a continuous process. In other words, if your prayers are constant, if they are not fickle, but constant, if your seeking is constant and your knocking, then these things will happen unto you. Therefore, a constant prayer will not only have the reward and receiving of what we pray for, but what else does it do? It creates a constant desire of the mind. In other words, the more we pray for things, the greater our desire will become for that very thing we pray for.

Elijah's experience on Mount Carmel illustrates this principle. He prayed one time and after he prayed one time, his desire to receive what he prayed for was even greater. And he prayed a second time, a third time, fourth time, fifth time, sixth time and then his desire was very great, and he prayed a seventh time, his desire for that very thing became greater and greater. That is seeking; seek and you will find. In other words, have a desire to really press forward in the work of reform. Do not stop here and say, "I have it and that is it." In fact, when meditating upon this point, what is the spirit that says I have enough and I do not need any more? This is the Laodicean spirit, and such a spirit is foolishness. Laodiceans are foolish virgins. If we want an increasing desire of the mind, then we must be constant in prayer, and this creates a deepening and increasing desire of the mind. What fruit will this bring forth? This will produce actions of true seeking.

So, what are actions of seeking and knocking? It is go to the Lord in prayer season and verbally and specifically ask Him, asking for the things that He has promised. In other words, do not just talk about, but do it. Go in your prayer chamber and verbally and specifically ask Him. Knock. This is something you physically have to do. You have to go in your closet and pray. You cannot do this in an imaginary sense, or just desiring to do it, or whatever.

Next, look to His Word for answers. Do not be satisfied that the church has all the answers, but diligently study for answers in His Word. Ask the messenger through whom the Lord is communicating. Do not think that you need to receive all answers personally, and in this, you do not need to ask anymore. Come and ask, if you have a question! Another vessel is the fellow believers, whom the Lord is leading. Do not fear to ask them, as though asking weakens you. Moreover, ask providence. What is providence? Mr. Providence, who is he? These are the circumstances of life as God forms them for us, or as God overrules them for us, because God does not always directly form the circumstances. Satan also has his hands in this. In addition, through our own mistakes, we sometimes shape our circumstances. However, God overrules these things and this is providence. Ask providence. Ask what God has done. How has He done it? What has He done? Ask and you shall get an answer, do not be satisfied to float on. Ask, What has the Lord done? Has He spoken to me through this or that event? What message did He want to convey to me? Ask it! Then ask nature. So many things you can see in nature speak what God wants to say. This is one of the reasons why we go in nature Sabbath afternoons, because we ask nature. We want to know what the Lord wants to tell me. Therefore, this is the true seeking spirit.

In fact, as God's people, if we hope to receive the latter rain, then we must become seekers, true seekers. To some extent I believe we have been prevented from becoming true seekers because of the way in which we receive the message. In other words, the history of this movement is that most of us come from an Adventist background, and because of this, we tended to view others as inferior because of our superior knowledge that we had then. Now, in the light of the fourth angel's message, we have an even

greater knowledge than before. Therefore, because of our tendency from the past, we say we know it all, we have it all, and we stopped being seekers. For instance, we may ask, What can nature teach us? We know much more about God's character than nature can ever teach us. We know much more about Armageddon than we find in nature, and so forth. This has been the secret attitude of our hearts. We may also ask, What can providence teach us? And our enemies, what can we learn from our enemies? They have inferior knowledge anyway. However, should we not learn from our enemies? In other words, our attitude when we present the message should be that even though it is so wonderful to our hearts, we can let friend and foe test it, no matter what their attitude is. Why not! What do we have to lose? Let the message be tested. Let them tear apart everything and try their strength on it, if this is their attitude. Let us be seekers, true seekers. If there is a flaw in the message, then it must be put away. If this is the case, then to be a true seeker means that I will not deny the truth that God has given because of the mistake. True seekers do not rashly deny the light of the past, though some seem to understand seekers as such.

We have very solid foundations, and because we trust these foundations, we can afford to let friend and/or foe test the message. Moreover, if we move forward, because truth is progressive and new light will come, let us not be fearful of the future tests. Remember; ask the fellow believers whom the Lord is leading, ask the messenger through whom the Lord is communicating, and look to His Word for answers. This we do spiritually, mentally, and even physically. Yes, it is a physical act, like knocking. Only when we have this spirit of a true seeker can the Lord bless us. This is the true spirit of Protestantism. I want to read this to you from *The Great Controversy*, in the Chapter "The Pilgrim Fathers."

"When first constrained to separate from the English Church, the Puritans had joined

themselves together by a solemn covenant, as the Lord's free people, 'to walk together in all His ways made known or to be made known to them.' —J. Brown, *The Pilgrim Fathers*, page 74." This is a very short sentence, but it contains much. "To walk together in all His ways made known or to be made known to them." But many believers, when we made a covenant--you know how it was--said "We cannot sign a covenant for things that are not made known to us. How can we sign a covenant? How can we promise to obey things if we do not even know today what these things are? Can we?" The pilgrims could. And this was the true spirit of reform. "The vital principle of Protestantism." That was the true spirit of reform. "It was with this purpose that the Pilgrims departed from Holland to find a home in the New World. John Robinson, their pastor, who was providentially prevented from accompanying them, in his farewell address to the exiles said: 'Brethren, we are now erelong to part asunder and the Lord knoweth whether I shall live ever to see your faces more. But whether the Lord hath appointed it or not, I charge you before God and His blessed angels to follow me no farther than I have followed Christ. If God should reveal anything to you by any other instrument of His, be as ready to receive it as ever you were to receive any truth of my ministry; for I am very confident the Lord hath more truth and light yet to break forth out of His holy word.'"—Martyn, vol. 5, p. 70." *The Great Controversy*, 291.3, 4.

Can you see this is the true spirit of Protestantism, the true spirit of reform? The spirit of reform is never satisfied with our present condition. It always presses forward, and this is what marks the wise virgins. Now let us contemplate about this a little bit because this is the very thing that Jesus said--ask. Keep on asking and it will be given. Keep on looking and you will find. Keep on knocking and the door will be opened unto you. May this be our spirit, especially during this camp meeting, so that the Lord can give us new light.

Study 3

How do we fill our vessels with oil? We want, in this study, to further look into this important question. When a crisis comes, especially when the final crisis comes, as we have previously studied, we definitely do not want to be found lacking oil in our vessels. We want our vessels filled with oil, so that we will be ready when the call comes to meet the bridegroom. In addition to this, we saw that light is a crisis, as described in *Matthew 25:6*, “And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’”

In the paragraph from *Christ Object Lessons*, which we read from in the previous study, Ellen White talks of the final crisis, which is not the Midnight Cry or the Loud Cry. Let us briefly look at this quotation again.

“It is in a crisis that character is revealed. When the earnest voice proclaimed at midnight, ‘Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him,’ and the sleeping virgins were roused from their slumbers, it was seen who had made preparation for the event. Both parties were taken unawares; but one was prepared for the emergency, and the other was found without preparation. So now, a sudden and unlooked-for calamity, something that brings the soul face to face with death, will show whether there is any real faith in the promises of God. It will show whether the soul is sustained by grace. The great final test comes at the close of human probation, when it will be too late for the soul’s need to be supplied.” *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 412.1.

Of course, we know that the Loud Cry, “Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him” is not the final test. The final test is when the Sunday law is enforced by a death decree. It is assumed that this subject is somewhat familiar to the reader; therefore, we

do not need to review this subject of Sunday enforcement.

However, any test could be a final test. Are we aware of this? Any test can be a final one, if we do not pass the crisis, and are thereby not cured. How many have left the truth because of the light that shone, never to come back? For these souls that left the truth, it was a final test. Therefore, and this is sure reasoning, the Loud Cry will be a final test for many.

In order to be ready for this test, or for any test, our vessels must be filled with oil. We have already asked how to fill our vessels with oil. Jesus answered this question by giving us the principle of learning to ask, seek, and knock, by which, if truly practiced, our vessels are filled. Therefore, keep on asking, and you will be given what you asked for. Keep on looking, and you find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened.

The last aspect we studied together is the principle of knocking, which really expresses the spirit of a true seeker. Knocking entails the following: praying earnestly, searching the Word, asking questions, making use of the divine and earthly agencies (church, messenger, etc.), providence, and history. When something happens to us, we want to have alertness and sensitivity to the occurrence. We do not want to be naive to these occurrences, by simply saying, “This is so.” We should say, “There is a message in this which I need to learn.” Furthermore, we will include the book of nature in our asking, in that we will have a seeking spirit during our nature walks, especially on Sabbaths!

Now we want to study into examples of seekers, in order to understand better what a true seeker is.

Mary

The first example we will look at is Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha. These three were special disciples of Jesus, with whom He felt so much at home. Was Mary a seeker? In many respects, she certainly was. Let us

Examples of “Seekers”

- Mary (*The Desire of Ages*, 558.4; 525.1)
- John (*The Desire of Ages*, 139.4)
- Children (*Matthew* 18:3)
- 12 Brethren (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 282 f)
- Cornelius (*Acts* 10)
- Bereans (*Acts* 17:11)
- The Prison Guard (*Acts* 16:30)
- The Disciples (*The Desire of Ages*, 250.1; *The Great Controversy*, 171.1)
- Peter (*The Desire of Ages*, 812.5)
- Moses (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 384.2)
- Sons of the Prophets (*Patriarch and Prophets*, 593.1)
- True Believers (*Testimonies to Ministers*, 30.1; 54.2)

read a quote from the book *The Desire of Ages*, in the chapter entitled “The Feast in Simon’s House”. This is where her inquiring spirit became very apparent.

“While this plotting was going on at Jerusalem, Jesus and His friends were invited to Simon’s feast. At the table the Saviour sat with Simon, whom He had cured of a loathsome disease, on one side, and Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead, on the other. Martha served at the table, but Mary was earnestly listening to every word from the lips of Jesus. In His mercy, Jesus had pardoned her sins, He had called forth her beloved brother from the grave, and Mary’s heart was filled with gratitude. She had heard Jesus speak of His approaching death, and in her deep love and sorrow she had longed to show Him honor. At great personal sacrifice she had purchased an alabaster box of ‘ointment of spikenard, very costly,’ with which to anoint His body. But now many were declaring that He was about to be crowned king. Her grief was turned to joy, and she was eager to be first in honoring her Lord. Breaking her box of ointment, she poured its contents upon the head and feet of Jesus; then,

as she knelt weeping, moistening them with her tears, she wiped His feet with her long, flowing hair.” *The Desire of Ages*, 558.4. Did Mary display an inquiring spirit?

“She had sought to avoid observation, and her movements might have passed unnoticed, but the ointment filled the room with its fragrance, and published her act to all present.” *The Desire of Ages*, 559.1. Jesus was very much encouraged in His ministry by Mary’s

actions. Since that day, down through the ages, many have been inspired by this revelation of what true reverence and true submission are. (We will study more into these principles later.) Mary probably never realized the extent that her actions would have, then and in all future generations, and with such a spirit and corresponding works, she was a true student in every respect.

It is unfortunate when we make a display of showing our *good* works to others, and in this, any good influence that may have been is lost. However, when we do our work because we love Jesus and love the work He sees fit to give us, then the sweet savor is there, and, if faithful in this, we will at last hear these words from Jesus, “Well done, faithful servant.” With such a spirit in our work, God is exalted.

A good student, a true seeker, is not someone who places himself in the foreground, but is one who is content to stay in the background, until duty calls. He performs his work faithfully, though often he is not recognized by others. Even unrecognized, he does a greater work than many realize. An example of this is the

mother of John the Baptist. She did not get recognition from the world for her work, but she raised a son who did such an important work for God! She is not mentioned much, but it was through her influence that John became what he was. Another similar example is the mother of Samuel. We can be sure that in his time a mother did not get much attention. Yet, it was through Hannah's influence that Israel received one of the greatest of all her judges. The mother of Moses is yet another example. Who was Jochebed? An ordinary woman, but she did a very important work. Therefore, you can look through history and find persons who are never especially mentioned or recognized by the world, yet who did such an important and weighty work.

Mary, the sister of Lazarus, was one of these students, a true seeker. She brought a little offering to Jesus, yet in His eyes it was a wonderful offering. Why was this so wonderful? Because Mary had an inquiring spirit. In other words, she did not seek recognition, did not want that anyone notice her act, nor did she desire to purposely fill the room with the fragrance from the ointment. In fact, she was embarrassed when everyone realized what was going on.

One who did notice and was most annoyed by Mary's actions was Judas. "Judas looked upon this act with great displeasure." *The Desire of Ages*, 559.1. He was not a student, not at all. He thought he knew exactly what was happening. He was soon disappointed, because he did not know.

Let us turn now to another chapter in the same book, which will give us a clearer understanding of why Mary was what she was. The main context of this chapter concerns the resurrection of Lazarus. However, the beginning of this chapter gives us a brief description of Lazarus and his two sisters. "As Christ gave His wonderful lessons, Mary sat at His feet, a reverent and devoted listener." *The Desire of Ages*, 525.1. Mary was such a reverent and devoted listener, a good student,

and she maintained this spirit. This was why she did what she did later, in pouring the costly oil on the head and feet of Jesus. The one who is the best student can do the greatest work for his Lord.

"On one occasion, Martha, perplexed with the care of preparing the meal, went to Christ, saying, 'Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.' This was the time of Christ's first visit to Bethany. The Saviour and His disciples had just made the toilsome journey on foot from Jericho. Martha was anxious to provide for their comfort, and in her anxiety she forgot the courtesy due to her Guest. Jesus answered her with mild and patient words, 'Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.'" What is this "good part"? She was a seeker; she had the spirit of a seeker. Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. This was Mary's spirit. "Mary was storing her mind with the precious words falling from the Saviour's lips, words that were more precious to her than earth's most costly jewels." *The Desire of Ages*, 525.1.

Think about this. What was it like when the message first came to you? Do you remember your first love experience? Unfortunately, it is common among most of our young people, that is those who have believing parents, to have never experience this first love fully. As a result, they do not really know what it is like. We as parents should cherish this first love, keeping it alive, so that our young people will know it. Our children are seriously hindered, and even deprived, of personally receiving this first love experience, when we fail in our work of keeping alive our first love experience.

What was the first love? How did it work? When we first heard the message, we did not want to let one word of truth pass by; we

made a sure work of listening to every sermon possible. For example, we thought it to be a wonderful time when the center in Germany and the then the worldwide center in Australia each got a fax machine. Now we could communicate in a way we could not before, and we did, making full use of this new mode of communication. Every two days, at least, there was a letter going one-way or the other, because we were so hungry and thirsty for new light. We would often inquire, "Is there new light?" We thought the Australian believers very privileged, as they were the first to hear any new message that came. We were a little envious, but in a good way. We had this first love in our hearts, to catch every ray of light and to grow thereby.

This was Mary's attitude, as a true student and seeker. "Mary was storing her mind with the precious words falling from the Saviour's lips, words that were more precious to her than earth's most costly jewels." How much do women like jewels? Of course, not all women like them so much, but most do, and for those who do, they are most happy when they receive jewelry. Mary was one who cared not for the costly jewels of this earth, but rather prized the words of Jesus much higher. This does not mean that Mary neglected her everyday duties, but she had a priority, and that was to be a seeker.

"The 'one thing' that Martha needed was a calm, devotional spirit, a deeper anxiety for knowledge concerning the future, immortal life, and the graces necessary for spiritual advancement. She needed less anxiety for the things which pass away, and more for those things which endure forever. Jesus would teach His children to seize every opportunity of gaining that knowledge which will make them wise unto salvation. The cause of Christ needs careful, energetic workers. There is a wide field for the Marthas, with their zeal in active religious work. But let them first sit with Mary at the feet of Jesus. Let diligence, promptness, and energy be sanctified by the

grace of Christ; then the life will be an unconquerable power for good." *The Desire of Ages*, 525.2. This is the fulfillment of the word of Jesus: "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." *Matthew 7:7*.

John

John the disciple is another example we want to study. Certainly, John the Baptist was a true seeker, and we could study his life as well. However, let us see the principles of a true seeker in the life of John the disciple.

Let us read something about John. This is only a small paragraph, but it contains so much about this man. "The disciple John was a man of earnest and deep affection, ardent, yet contemplative. He had begun to discern the glory of Christ,—not the worldly pomp and power for which he had been taught to hope, but 'the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.' John 1:14. He was absorbed in contemplation of the wondrous theme." *The Desire of Ages*, 139.4.

Can you see that he was a true seeker? John did not have superficiality in his studies. He did not just listen to a sermon without deep consideration and thought; he was absorbed in contemplation of wondrous themes. This experience must be our experience, in order to be honest students and true seekers, and this admonition is given especially to our young people. How old do you think John was when he heard Jesus for the first time? His exact age is not known, but we can guess that he was under twenty--maybe seventeen or eighteen, but not much older, because he was still alive in 100 A.D. In that year, John was an aged man, so he could not have been too old at the time when Jesus first called him. Therefore, he must have been under twenty or so.

Who of you is under twenty years of age? If you are, then do you have the same spirit as John the disciple? "The disciple John was a

man of earnest and deep affection, ardent, yet contemplative.” This means he contemplated the things he heard. He listened. “He had begun to discern the glory of Christ,—not the worldly pomp and power for which he had been taught to hope, but ‘the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.’ John 1:14. He was absorbed in contemplation of the wondrous theme.” *The Desire of Ages*, 139.4.

Of course, John the disciple was not free from natural weaknesses. We know he was one of the “sons of thunder” (See *Mark* 3:17), but a characteristic of John was that he always pressed very close to Jesus. Why? In part, unfortunately, for the sake of position, and he was later cleansed of this erroneous thinking and spirit. Though this was a part of his pressing close to Jesus, his overwhelming desire to be near his Lord was because he did not want to miss one word from the lips of Jesus, just as Mary. In this, John the disciple manifested a childlike spirit.

Children

So now, we come to the example of a true seeking spirit in children. What did Jesus say when He called the disciples together and put a child amongst them? “Unless you turn to God from your sins and become as little children, you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven.” *Matthew* 18:3.

What is an overwhelming characteristic of little children? They are teachable. They ask--they ask so much at times that sometimes you think, “When will they become weary of their asking? For example, they would ask, “Daddy, why is this? And why is that?” Moreover, when they receive an answer, they still inquire more! Either they ask about everything that is taken for granted by adults, or they ask about things that adults just do not think to ask. However, in their asking, this will sometimes make the adults start to ask questions too! Adults will say, “Yes, this child is right to ask why this is so.” It is a fact that often our children ask good questions. If parents really

love and seek to fulfill their role as a parent, they will want to learn from their children, even from the questions their children ask.

This is the principle that Jesus expressed to His disciples when He said to them to be like little children! In other words, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”

The Twelve Disciples in Ephesus

In *Acts* 19, we find the story about the twelve disciples who Paul met while traveling through Ephesus. “And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples he said to them, ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’ So they said to him, ‘We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.’ And he said to them, ‘Into what then were you baptized?’ So they said, ‘Into John’s baptism.’ Then Paul said, ‘John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.’ When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Now the men were about twelve in all.” *Acts* 19:1–7.

In order to better appreciate the spirit of these men, let us think about what these disciples of John the Baptist had to endure before their experience with Paul. Upon their arrival in Ephesus, after accepting the message from John the Baptist, they had to face opposition and difficulties. This is an unpleasant fact for a Christian, because when one accepts the truth as it is in Jesus, he or she will surely feel the ire of the enemy. In addition to this, as the truth grows brighter and the believer continues to accept and live it, this opposition and hatred will be felt more and more. Now in face of the opposition and

hatred that the disciples of John the Baptist experienced, they would have had to defend their faith repeatedly. In other words, they would have to stand for truth no matter what. Now came this individual to them, the great apostle Paul, and who was he, they could have thought, to ask such a question to them. Paul asked, "Have you heard of the Holy Spirit?" They could have responded by saying, "Of course we have heard of the Holy Spirit! We know of Him. He was the one who brooded over the world when it was created." The truth about the Holy Spirit was not something novel for them. Therefore, when they said that they did not know what Paul meant, this was not to say that they were completely ignorant. They probably knew about the Holy Spirit as many do today--maybe even as we do. So, in essence, when they remarked to Paul, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit", they were letting Paul know that they never heard about the Holy Spirit as he was now conveying to them. They had never heard that there was a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, nor did they understand the prophecies of *Joel* fully--that the Spirit would be poured out on all flesh. Therefore, they had a level of understanding the Holy Spirit and His work, but they did not know what Paul knew.

These very disciples, who, in times past, bravely defended the faith, now sat at the feet of Paul as teachable students. This is childlike; this is a teachable spirit. The fact that they said, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit" was not an expression of doubt; they were not saying, "No, no, such a thing does not exist." Their response was an invitation to Paul. In other words, they said to Paul, "We have not so much as heard. Please, tell us!" Knock and the door shall be opened to you. They were true seekers.

With an open invitation from these disciples, Paul continued with the question, "Into what were you baptized?" They responded, "Into John's baptism. Then Paul said, 'John indeed

baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.'" In other words, Paul said, "This is not sufficient. You must be baptized again." Would we accept these words, this admonition? These men did, because they had a teachable spirit. They were like children, and happy to accept and learn new light. Because of this, they received the Holy Spirit. This we really want to learn from these twelve disciples.

A good description of this story is given in the book *The Acts of the Apostles*. "On his arrival at Ephesus, Paul found twelve brethren, who, like Apollos, had been disciples of John the Baptist, and like him had gained some knowledge of the mission of Christ. They had not the ability of Apollos, but with the same sincerity and faith they were seeking to spread abroad the knowledge they had received.

"These brethren knew nothing of the mission of the Holy Spirit. When asked by Paul if they had received the Holy Ghost, they answered, 'We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.' 'Unto what then were ye baptized?' Paul inquired, and they said, 'Unto John's baptism.'

"Then the apostle set before them the great truths that are the foundation of the Christian's hope. He told them of Christ's life on this earth and of His cruel death of shame. He told them how the Lord of life had broken the barriers of the tomb and risen triumphant over death. He repeated the Saviour's commission to His disciples: 'All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' *Matthew* 28:18, 19. He told them also of Christ's promise to send the Comforter, through whose power mighty signs and wonders would be wrought, and he described how gloriously this promise had been fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost.

“With deep interest and grateful, wondering joy the brethren listened to Paul’s words. By faith they grasped the wonderful truth of Christ’s atoning sacrifice and received Him as their Redeemer. They were then baptized in the name of Jesus, and as Paul ‘laid his hands upon them,’ they received also the baptism of the Holy Spirit, by which they were enabled to speak the languages of other nations and to prophesy. Thus they were qualified to labor as missionaries in Ephesus and its vicinity and also to go forth to proclaim the gospel in Asia Minor.

“It was by cherishing a humble, teachable spirit that these men gained the experience that enabled them to go out as workers into the harvest field. Their example presents to Christians a lesson of great value. There are many who make but little progress in the divine life because they are too self-sufficient to occupy the position of learners. They are content with a superficial knowledge of God’s word. They do not wish to change their faith or practice and hence make no effort to obtain greater light.” *The Acts of the Apostles*, 282.1-283.2.

These are not true Protestants, but foolish virgins, who are too self-sufficient to occupy the position of learners. This, of course, prevents them from receiving the Holy Spirit. We must remember that we have our part in removing the hindrances, and a flood of healing virtue from Heaven above will come. When we give up the un-teachable spirit, we help pave the way for God to really bless us, as He blessed these twelve men, and there is no question about this fact.

Cornelius

Another wonderful story of a true seeker is the experience of Cornelius. In fact, the chapter that Ellen White wrote about him in *Acts of the Apostles* is headlined: “A Seeker for Truth”—a most significant headline. Let us read firstly the account given in the Bible.

“There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the

Italian Regiment, a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, ‘Cornelius!’ And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, ‘What is it, lord?’ So he said to him, ‘Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God.’” *Acts* 10:1-4. Is it not amazing that this Gentile was visited by an angel? He was neither a Christian nor a Jew, but a Gentile, yet he was a seeker for truth, and this is why God knew him and an angel appeared to him. Can you imagine in the world, in the fallen churches, or even in an atheistic surrounding, there is a soul whom a holy angel would visit? As we have read, this has happened, and will happen, because there are true seekers in this world of sin, no matter what their background.

The fact that Cornelius’ prayers and alms came up before God is not to say that he earned his righteousness. Rather, this was an expression of his true desire to know more. It was an expression that he was a true protestant; he was not satisfied with his present condition, but was seeking. This seeking spirit came up before God.

“Now send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter. He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you must do.” *Acts* 10:5, 6. This command by God through His angel is very interesting, as it contains the confirmation that Cornelius was a true seeker. In other words, God said to Cornelius, “You are a seeker, and I will bring you into contact with My instrument, through whom you can learn more.”

“And when the angel who spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier from among those who waited on him continually. So when he had explained all these things to them, he sent them to Joppa.” *Acts* 10:7, 8. What would the

servants of Cornelius have thought about their master after he had told them his experience, which would have seemed incredible to them? Cornelius was not worried about their reaction; he simply told them what had happened, and then they obeyed his command. If such a thing happened to us, would we tell our spouse, or our children, or whoever? Imagine telling them that an angel has appeared to me, now go and ... Can you imagine this? However, Cornelius showed no shyness or fear in relating to his servants his experience.

“The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. And a voice came to him, ‘Rise, Peter; kill and eat.’ But Peter said, ‘Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.’ And a voice spoke to him again the second time, ‘What God has cleansed you must not call common.’ This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again. Now while Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant, behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon’s house, and stood before the gate. And they called and asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there. While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, ‘Behold, three men are seeking you. Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them.’ Then Peter went down to the men who had been sent to him from Cornelius, and said, ‘Yes, I am he whom you seek. For what reason have you come?’ And they said, ‘Cornelius the centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good

reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you.’ Then he invited them in and lodged them. On the next day Peter went away with them, and some brethren from Joppa accompanied him. And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends. As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. But Peter lifted him up, saying, ‘Stand up; I myself am also a man.’” *Acts 10:9–26*.

This action on the part of Cornelius, of falling down and worshipping Peter, was it a great sin? Our answer to this question depends on how much we understand the spirit that infused Cornelius. Some exalt men above what their due is, in that these exalted individuals receive praise all the time. Was this the spirit of Cornelius? Certainly not. This was not the reason why he fell down. So why did he fall down? He appreciated the truth--it was an act of appreciation. It was an expression of his spirit of being a true seeker.

In the book of *Revelation*, we find another similar incident, when John fell down before the angel. However, this was done in the same spirit as Cornelius--not seeking to extol another created being, but rather to express appreciation. Again, this action had to be corrected, but looking at the root of this action, we see that it was an appreciation of truth, which needed to be directed into the right channel.

“And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together. Then he said to them, ‘You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation.’” Now Peter confronted them with the prevailing prejudice of those times. In this, Peter appeared to act as a “good” Jew--he said very correctly what a Jew would say under these circumstances, and how

offensive this was. “But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean.” In other words, Peter’s ideas were not in harmony with God’s, but He had bidden him to go, and so he obeyed. “Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?” *Acts 10:27–29*.

Peter’s disposition was not an offense whatsoever to Cornelius, or the others, because they were all true seekers. This is an important lesson for us to learn, because we want to win people to the truth, which is good, but we tend to treat these new interests like raw eggs. We are afraid that they might not be able to handle any mistreatment, in word or action, or anything in the message that they cannot understand yet. However, if they are true seekers they will run with the truth, no matter what. They will really want to follow truth, and this the Holy Spirit does, in that, He makes us true seekers.

“So Cornelius said, ‘Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. When he comes, he will speak to you.’ So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God.’” *Acts 10:30–33*. Cornelius, in other words, said to Peter that we are seekers and we are ready to hear the truth. We can learn from Peter’s disposition and methods, in this experience of his, as we go about, by God’s leading, in sharing the message with those who are seekers.

“Then Peter opened his mouth and said: ‘In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.’” Now he began to understand himself what was going on. “But in every nation whoever fears

Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all—that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree. Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead. To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.” The apostle *Luke*, who wrote this account, was a wonderful writer. He could comprise a long sermon in a few words. This is indeed a skill.

“While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, ‘Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?’ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.” *Acts 10:34–48*.

This experience of Peter is of special interest for us, because we also need to be prepared to minister to all people. In the past, we have learned a lot about gospel order, and we have learned about the extraordinary destiny of

God's people--that we are a special people that will do a special work. Now, in the light of present truth, we must be careful not to think that God's grace is limited just to us, for His grace is poured out also to souls who are not of the visible church yet.

Of course, God wants to unite all these elements, especially for the last battle. However, we need to have an open mind, so that we are ready for these seekers of truth when they come--to truly give them the gospel. We can do this only by being true seekers ourselves. If we come to them not as seekers, but as teachers and nothing more, then the whole purpose of them coming as seekers is nullified. In other words, God cannot send us to them, for there are many seekers in the world, but God can send only seekers to them. If He sent those who are not seekers, they

would hinder, or even extinguish, the spirit of seeking in those who are truly seeking, and this must not be. So let us be very thankful for this spirit of seeking and ask the Lord that we have it too.

In the Bible, there are many other stories that highlight these principles of a true seeker. For example, the Bereans, how they were true seekers. Another example was the prison guard in Philippi. What did he say? "What must I do to be saved?" Ask, and it shall be given to you. Other examples we will study into are the disciples, Peter, Moses, the students from the School of the Prophets, and lastly we will look into true believers, the result of being true seekers, which is described in two statements from the book *Testimonies to Ministers*.

Study 4

In our last study, we contemplated the experience of the ten virgins, especially the foolish virgins. We saw that a crisis reveals character, in which is revealed whether we are a wise or a foolish virgin. Many crises have come in our history as a church, and definitely more will come; not only within the church, but also in our personal lives. Any crisis is a blessing to us, because we need a revelation of ourselves. Without such a revelation, we would not know where we stand. We surely do not want to wait until the final test, the enforcement of the Sunday law, because if one fails at this point then it is too late to fill his lamp with oil. Moreover, as we confirmed from the Word of God, the oil is the Holy Spirit.

However, before this final test there are many tests, many crises. When God reveals light to His church, then the time of testing is come. In the summer of 1844, God sent a great light, which was called the Midnight Cry. When one studies into the history of this great event, reading the experiences of the believers, one will see that the Holy Spirit did a mighty work, in spite of the fact that these dear souls had a misconception that Christ would return to this earth at that time. Some of what was experienced during this mighty event is written in the book *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*. Loughborough, and other authors, also write about this event. Sister White does mention in her writings that these events will be repeated, in even greater power, during the time of the Loud Cry. This means there will be another "Midnight Cry", which will precede the second coming of Christ. In other words, before Christ comes, there will be a loud cry, "Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!" This will be a crisis, indeed a major crisis, though not necessarily the final crisis. It is not the final crisis from the

perspective that when one passes this crisis, he cannot say that he is sealed, but if one does not pass this crisis, then this will be the final crisis for him, because the light is so powerful. This brings to view an important principle, namely that the more powerful the light is, the more important and weighty it is to decide for truth. Whenever God sends light, it is a crisis. It is important for us to make the right choice, and not to procrastinate.

Therefore, when the Loud Cry starts, it will be a major crisis for God's people as a movement. Of course, many will not be participators in this great and mighty work, because of superficiality or neglect in the filling of their vessels with the heavenly oil. On the other hand, many others will participate, namely those who have that true seeking spirit, which means they were daily filling their vessels with the heavenly oil. Hence, in order to pass this crisis, and the many crises that will come before and after, we must fill our vessels according to the admonition given in the parable found in *Matthew 25*, because five were ready and five were not when the cry was heard--"Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him".

As already noted, when the cry, "Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him", comes, our vessels should already be filled with oil. However, some believe, with certainty, that we can fill our vessels with oil when the cry commences, because this is the time of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. However, this is not true. Those who believe this lie are like the man in Bunyan's allegory, whom faithful Pilgrim finds sleeping along the way. When awakened by Pilgrim, this sleepy man says, "Oh, do not bother me! I am on the right track, this is the way to the Celestial City, and it will go there. Anyway, when the latter rain comes, I will then wake up and go to the City". It is definitely too late to fill one's vessel when the cry is heard, and this admonition cannot be made any clearer

then this parable gives. Therefore, it is imperative to understand how to fill our vessels, and this is our great need. One important step in filling our vessel with the heavenly oil is to shake off this attitude of not being a seeker, of being a teacher rather a seeker. Included in this wrong spirit is the desire to escape, running away from the questions we should ask. We need to have and maintain the spirit of a true student, a true seeker, as Jesus said, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you.” *Matthew 7:7*. Therefore, in order to help us better understand how to become a true seeker and the depth thereof, we will continue to study into more examples from the Word of God. We want to do this so that we not only have an intellectual assent, but that our vessels are filled with the heavenly oil, and the latter point is the main purpose of our study.

The Bereans

The Bereans were true seekers. With such a spirit, they were daily filling their vessels with oil. “Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.” *Acts 17:10, 11*. The searching spirit they had was not prompted from a doubting disposition of what they had heard; rather it was the spirit of a true learner.

The above text from *Acts 17:11* also mentions that the Bereans were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica were. What does this mean, that the Bereans were more *fair-minded*? They had more of a *seeking spirit* than those in Thessalonica; the Bereans were true seekers. In other words, fair-minded is being a very simple seeker. They asked, and it was given to them, they sought, and they found, or rather they kept on asking, and they were given, they kept on seeking and they found, they kept on knocking and the door was opened, and all this in contrast to those in Thessalonica.

The Thessalonians also listened to the truth; they did not openly reject it. They did not say, “We will not listen to Paul.” However, the Thessalonians did not keep on asking! They listened once, they said fine, accepted it, and they went on with life. The Bereans, on the other hand, kept on asking, seeking, and knocking. Therefore, they received the word with all readiness and searched the Scriptures daily, which simply means there was not one day in which they would stop searching.

This experience of the Bereans is similar to the believers in Antioch. Let us now read from

Examples of “Seekers”

- Mary (*The Desire of Ages*, 558.4; 525.1)
- John (*The Desire of Ages*, 139.4)
- Children (*Matthew 18:3*)
- 12 Brethren (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 282 f)
- Cornelius (*Acts 10*)
- Bereans (*Acts 17:11*)
- The Prison Guard (*Acts 16:30*)
- The Disciples (*The Desire of Ages*, 250.1; *The Great Controversy*, 171.1)
- Peter (*The Desire of Ages*, 812.5)
- Moses (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 384.2)
- Sons of the Prophets (*Patriarch and Prophets*, 593.1)
- True Believers (*Testimonies to Ministers*, 30.1; 54.2)

the book *The Acts of the Apostles* about the experience of the believers in Antioch. This will help us to understand what a true seeker is, and what it means to keep on seeking.

“It was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians. The name was given them because Christ was the main theme of their preaching, their teaching, and their conversation. Continually they were recounting the incidents that had occurred during the days of His earthly ministry, when His disciples were blessed with His personal presence. Untiringly they dwelt upon His teachings and His miracles of healing. With quivering lips and tearful eyes they spoke of His agony in the garden, His betrayal, trial, and execution, the forbearance and humility with which He had endured the contumely and torture imposed upon Him by His enemies, and the Godlike pity with which He had prayed for those who persecuted Him. His resurrection and ascension, and His work in heaven as the Mediator for fallen man, were topics on which they rejoiced to dwell. Well might the heathen call them Christians, since they preached Christ and addressed their prayers to God through Him.” *The Acts of the Apostles*, 157.1.

Can you see that this is the spirit of a true seeker? They were never satisfied; they never grew tired of searching into the principles and life of Christ. This is an example for us to follow, for we can memorize the Bible, word for word, and still not know it.

This is to be our experience. Interestingly, we study, basically, the same subjects repeatedly, year after year, as most of you are aware of. However, we always see something new, and so this will always be throughout eternity. For the true seeker, the Bible will always be a book of new and fresh revelations; there is always more to learn, even with the more familiar and popular Bible stories. We should never think that these stories have no more to teach us, as if to “shelf” them. It is

important that we keep them alive. This was the spirit of the Bereans, in contrast with that of the Thessalonians.

The Prison Guard

The prison guard’s experience we find in the book of *Acts* is another example of a true seeker. The words of the prison guard, after he fell down trembling before Paul and Silas, are very significant. “But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. 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 chains were loosed. And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, ‘Do yourself no harm, for we are all here.’ Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. And he brought them out and said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’” *Acts* 16:25–30. In his lack of knowledge, the prison guard fell down before Paul and Silas, not to exalt them, but as an act of appreciation to God, realizing his utter unworthiness, and all this in the spirit of a true seeker. His burning desire was expressed in his question; “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” Let this be our question always.

12 Brethren

Let us now look at the experience of the disciples of Christ. We know that these disciples had their weaknesses, which caused serious mistakes during their time with Christ while He sojourned on this earth. However, we can study into their lives and draw courage, because when we see their weaknesses and mistakes, we can see our own, and how they,

except for Judas, were made perfect by Christ. So likewise there is hope for us.

How were they made perfect? What was the cause, which gave the desired effect? Eventually they received the Holy Spirit in the form of the early rain, but how did they come to this level? The answer to these questions is simple. Though they had their weaknesses, they were true seekers. We turn now to *The Desire of Ages*, 250.1, to read about this.

“Jesus chose unlearned fishermen because they had not been schooled in the traditions and erroneous customs of their time. They were men of native ability, and they were humble and teachable,—men whom He could educate for His work. In the common walks of life there is many a man patiently treading the round of daily toil, unconscious that he possesses powers which, if called into action, would raise him to an equality with the world’s most honored men. The touch of a skillful hand is needed to arouse those dormant faculties. It was such men that Jesus called to be His collaborators; and He gave them the advantage of association with Himself. Never had the world’s great men such a teacher. When the disciples came forth from the Saviour’s training, they were no longer ignorant and uncultured. They had become like Him in mind and character, and men took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.”

Their becoming like Christ in mind and character would not have been possible had they not had a teachable spirit. However, one amongst the twelve disciples was not teachable, and this was Judas. You will find a great contrast between Judas and John, for example. Judas always had his own opinion, and he stubbornly held to his own opinion, no matter what Jesus said. On the other hand, John wanted to learn, and every word that came from the lips of his Master he wanted to grasp.

Why did Jesus choose these disciples? Not because they were more talented, not because

they were more educated, but simply because they were teachable. Maybe some would say the qualifications were the opposite, that Jesus chose them because they were uncultured, untalented, and undereducated. It does not matter if we are cultured or uncultured, educated or uneducated, etc. What matters is whether we are seekers, and this is of the utmost importance. Therefore, in the end, the time of the Loud Cry, those who accept the message will be those who are true seekers. Others, as Judas did, will have an appearance of acceptance, but in the end, they will leave the message, of this we can be sure.

Let us read this again: “They were men of native ability, and they were humble and teachable,—men whom He could educate for His work.” The reason why young people are generally more promising than older people is that they are easier to mold. They are more teachable, and this is the criterion, even though they have less experience, less knowledge, less education. However, we can cherish and have such teachability even when we become old, and what a privilege it is for an older person to learn something. It is of the greatest importance to have a teachable spirit, and this is what God desires for us, and, if we are willing, He will in this manner make us true seekers.

When you look into the history of the reformers, the advent pioneers, and even in God’s present movement, you find that when He calls people they are usually young. Why is this so? Generally, they are teachable. For the most part, when older people came into the movement, they did so with their strong preconceived ideas, which they never fully gave up. When new light came they usually went away, and this we have witnessed repeatedly. It is not that this has to be like this, but, unfortunately, this is the pattern very often followed. Let us see that God gives all of us the possibility to be teachable, even when we became old, but we must cherish this spirit, in the absolute sense.

In *The Great Controversy*, 171.1, we read of this qualification of a true seeking spirit for the reformers, as well as for the disciples. “In the choice of instrumentalities for the reforming of the church, the same divine plan is seen as in that for the planting of the church. The heavenly Teacher passed by the great men of the earth, the titled and wealthy, who were accustomed to receive praise and homage as leaders of the people. They were so proud and self-confident in their boasted superiority that they could not be mold to sympathize with their fellow men and to become colaborers with the humble Man of Nazareth. To the unlearned, toiling fishermen of Galilee was the call addressed: ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.’ *Matthew* 4:19. These disciples were humble and teachable. The less they had been influenced by the false teaching of their time, the more successfully could Christ instruct and train them for His service. Likewise in the days of the Great Reformation, the leading Reformers were men from humble life—men who were most free of any of their time from pride of rank and from the influence of bigotry and priest craft. It is God’s plan to employ humble instruments to accomplish great results. Then the glory will not be given to men, but to Him who works through them to will and to do of His own good pleasure.”

Those who are true seekers will want to do God’s bidding, and in this, to always give the glory to God. This spirit can be seen, to some extent, in the church artists during the Middle Ages. These artists would not sign their artwork with their names. They wanted only that their artwork would glorify God. Today quite the opposite is true. The signature of the artists of modern artwork is considered more important than the artwork itself. The artwork of itself is nonsense, but the signature makes the money for the artist. This is not the spirit of the true seeker.

Peter

So let us now come to another example: the disciple Peter. Peter’s experience on the lake, when Jesus asked him the same question three times, is very interesting. His answers revealed a teachable and humble spirit in the now converted Peter.

“The first work that Christ entrusted to Peter on restoring him to the ministry was to feed the lambs. This was a work in which Peter had little experience. It would require great care and tenderness, much patience and perseverance. It called him to minister to those who were young in the faith, to teach the ignorant, to open the Scriptures to them, and to educate them for usefulness in Christ’s service. Heretofore Peter had not been fitted to do this, or even to understand its importance. But this was the work which Jesus now called upon him to do. For this work his own experience of suffering and repentance had prepared him.” *The Desire of Ages*, 812.4.

Peter’s denial of Christ was a crisis in his life, but it was very much needed. It really helped him to see how much he was in need of learning. Let us delve briefly into Peter’s experience before his denial, to see how the Lord cleansed Peter, and in this, how Peter became a true seeker.

Remember how Peter was somewhat discouraged by the imprisonment of John the Baptist, and how this made him wonder about the mission of Jesus? Peter thought that if the forerunner of Jesus received such treatment, what would become of his Master? These questions were not so wrong in themselves, but how did he handle these questions? Peter was wondering if he was on the right track. To get his mind off these concerns, he, along with his companions, decided to go back to his old trade of fishing, in which Peter figured he would meet with success. All night they toiled on the lake trying to catch fish, but their efforts were in vain. Now, even Peter’s old profession failed him, which made

matters even gloomier, and, in turn, he became depressed. Then Jesus met them at the lake in the early morning hours. Later, after His discourse with the people, He bid Peter to cast the net during the daylight hours, which were not favorable for fishing. Peter knew this, and could have responded to Jesus by saying that He was not a fisherman, what could He possibly know about fishing, for He was a carpenter. No, Peter did not respond like this. Instead, Peter and the others did as He, their Master, had said, though with reluctance. How surprised they were when they tried to pull up the net! The net was overflowing with fish! This incident, more than anything else, revealed to Peter how un-teachable he was. He felt like an absolute fool that he had doubted his Master, even for a moment. He had doubted that Christ was the Messiah, he had doubted that Christ would know something of fishing, and so forth. In this condition, Peter went to Jesus and said, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man," yet at the same time he clung to Him, like Jacob did. Peter was now a student, ready to learn. Jesus told him, Peter, you must be a student, always teachable. That is your problem and that is why you were discouraged: you stopped being a student.

Unfortunately, Peter tended to forget these lessons. Somewhat later, Peter had another opportunity to learn, to seek, and to proclaim the character of Christ. The collector of the temple revenue asked Peter why his Master did not pay the temple tax. Of course, Peter, in his hasty mannerism, let the collector know that his Master would pay the temple tax, for He was a just Man! However, Peter missed an opportunity to be submissive and to learn. He reacted in such a way, thinking to do something right and good, that revealed a lack of the spirit of a true seeker. This lack was the reason why he reacted the way he did. Not realizing his course of action, Peter brought Jesus into a dilemma. However, Jesus, through a miracle and by no arguments, resolved this dilemma. (See

Matthew 17:24-27.) Peter was again to appear a fool. However, he did not mind.

Later, Peter gave a wonderful confession about Jesus, when he said, "You are indeed the Son of God, the Son of the living God, Christ the Son of the living God." *Matthew* 16:16. Jesus responded to Peter by saying, "Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father which is in heaven." *Matthew* 16:17. In other words, Jesus told Peter: you are teachable, and how wonderful is this spirit! Then, in just the next moments after Jesus had shared with the disciples about His going to Jerusalem, His suffering and death, Peter showed an un-teachable spirit by declaring that none of these things would happen to Jesus. Peter then received one of Christ's sternest rebukes! (See *Matthew* 16:18-23.) Again, Jesus really made Peter look like a fool. However, Christ spoke this rebuke to help Peter. Christ wanted to bring Peter into a closer relationship with Him, in that Peter would have the spirit of the true seeker.

Peter's experience on the lake, when Jesus appeared to them as a ghost while he and his companions were in the mist of a terrible storm, was another good lesson for Peter. The disciples trembled when they saw what they thought to be a ghost walking on the lake's stormy surface. After realizing that it was Christ, Peter asked if he could come to Him, and Christ bid Peter to come, and so Peter walked on the storm-tossed lake. Unfortunately, Peter lost the spirit of a true seeker when he looked back to the disciples, and in that moment he sank. (See *Matthew* 14:24-30.) However, Jesus lifted Peter from the stormy billows. Peter went with Jesus into the boat, now a man who was a seeker again. The foolishness of the foolish virgin was burned out of him for a while at least. Likewise, the moment when we stop being seekers, we sink. We cannot render a proper service anymore.

During the foot washing, Peter again exhibited his un-teachable spirit. None of the disciples wanted to serve, to wash the feet of their fellow disciples, because they each wanted to be a teacher, and no one wished to occupy the place of a student. Jesus gladly took the place of a servant, and washed the disciples' feet. When He came to Peter to wash his feet, Peter at first declined the offer, but Christ let Peter know, if I do not wash your feet, you have no part of Me. After hearing this, Peter not only wanted his feet washed, but his head and hands too! Jesus explained to Peter that it is sufficient to wash the feet only. (See *John* 13:1-10).

After this experience in the upper room, Peter would soon face his most trying ordeal, which was his terrible denial of his Lord, through his own works and lack of a teachable spirit. How slow Peter was to learn! Peter confessed to God his great sin. (See *Matthew* 26:69-75.) Afterwards, he never forgot this experience. Peter was from that point a good student; he knew that he could not do anything without the Master. He knew that he needed to learn daily, as the noble Bereans did.

Later, after His resurrection, Jesus asked the converted Peter the question, "Do you love me?" Now Peter responded with the spirit of a seeker, a true student, humble and teachable. (See *John* 21:15-17.) However, Peter would still need to learn and unlearn much, as the following quote mentions. "The first work that Christ entrusted to Peter on restoring him to the ministry was to feed the lambs. This was a work in which Peter had little experience. It would require great care and tenderness, much patience and perseverance. It called him to minister to those who were young in the faith, to teach the ignorant, to open the Scriptures to them, and to educate them for usefulness in Christ's service. Heretofore Peter had not been fitted to do this, or even to understand its importance. But this was the work which Jesus now called upon him to do. For this work his own experience of suffering and repentance had prepared him. *The Desire of Ages*, 812.4.

"Before his fall, Peter was always speaking unadvisedly, from the impulse of the moment. He was always ready to correct others, and to express his mind, before he had a clear comprehension of himself or of what he had to say." *The Desire of Ages*, 812.4, 5. Is this our weakness? How often this has been the spirit of God's people! Our Lord is a very awesome and patient Saviour, in that He can still work for our salvation, in spite of our being like Peter before his denial of his Lord. Nevertheless, He has promised to do this work. He did this for His disciples while on this earth, and so He will do this for all who come as true seekers. "He was always ready to correct others, and to express his mind, before he had a clear comprehension of himself or of what he had to say. But the converted Peter was very different. He retained his former fervour, but the grace of Christ regulated his zeal. He was no longer impetuous, self-confident, and self-exalted, but calm, self-possessed, and teachable. He could then feed the lambs as well as the sheep of Christ's flock." *The Desire of Ages*, 812.5. Therefore, when we are teachable then we can feed the lambs.

Moses

Let us go to the next example, which is Moses. Was he teachable? Moses was the teacher of a million-plus people, so how could he be teachable, when he was the teacher? This was the very means that God had devised for Moses, so that he would always remain teachable!

During his sojourn with the Israelites through the wilderness, Moses encountered many opportunities wherein his teachable spirit was tested. One such opportunity, and this was quite a crisis, was when Aaron and Miriam questioned Moses' authority. They wanted Moses to learn from them, they were now the teachers, they thought, because God had spoken through them as well. In addition, they thought that Moses was trying to do everything by micromanaging. Aaron and Miriam wanted Moses to recognize them as

counselors too. How did Moses respond to this spirit? In uncomplaining silence, because Moses did not want to defend himself; he left this responsibility to God.

“When Zipporah rejoined her husband in the wilderness, she saw that his burdens were wearing away his strength, and she made known her fears to Jethro, who suggested measures for his relief. Here was the chief reason for Miriam’s antipathy to Zipporah. Smarting under the supposed neglect shown to herself and Aaron, she regarded the wife of Moses as the cause, concluding that her influence had prevented him from taking them into his counsels as formerly.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 384.1. Aaron and Miriam manifested a very childish spirit at this time, though both had previously exhibited a spiritual and mental maturity. However, even in their maturity, they had allowed themselves to become envious. Do we not manifest the same evil spirit at times, no matter how experienced we are in the message? How we can sometimes be childish, even the most spiritually matured. Moreover, we know there is no excuse for this.

Would Aaron and Miriam admit to this childish and envious spirit? These things are at times very apparent, as in the case of Aaron and Miriam, yet how blind they were then, and how blind we can be now! When rebuked for this evil, usually the reaction is to try to escape the rebuke by saying that there is nothing against the person, but only certain sins that need to be pointed out. This is usually the normal reaction, but it only serves to cover the sins of jealousy and envy. As Aaron had the duty then, so we today are called upon to not allow this sin to exist in God’s church. “Had Aaron stood up firmly for the right, he might have checked the evil; but instead of showing Miriam the sinfulness of her conduct, he sympathized with her, listened to her words of complaint, and thus came to share her jealousy.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 384.1.

“Their accusations were borne by Moses in uncomplaining silence. It was the experience gained during the years of toil and waiting in Midian—the spirit of humility and long-suffering there developed—that prepared Moses to meet with patience the unbelief and murmuring of the people and the pride and envy of those who should have been his unswerving helpers. Moses ‘was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth,’ and this is why he was granted divine wisdom and guidance above all others. Says the Scripture, ‘The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way.’ *Psalm 25:9*.” What is another word for “meek”? Seeker! “The meek are guided by the Lord, because they are teachable, willing to be instructed. They have a sincere desire to know and to do the will of God. The Saviour’s promise is, ‘If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.’ *John 7:17*. And He declares by the apostle James, ‘If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.’ *James 1:5*.” You know, this same James wrote in the same letter that one does not receive because one does not ask. When asking, the asking is amiss. (See *James 4:3*.) “But His promise is only to those who are willing to follow the Lord wholly. God does not force the will of any; hence He cannot lead those who are too proud to be taught, who are bent upon having their own way. Of the double-minded man—he who seeks to follow his own will, while professing to do the will of God—it is written, ‘Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.’ *James 1:7*.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 384.2.

The exemplification of the principles of a teachable spirit--of being a true seeker--in the life of Moses are summed up in the following text from *Numbers 12:3*: “Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.”

This text is of the greatest importance for us. Moses was humble, very humble, more

than all men on the face of the earth. Humility is not normally considered a virtue in this world, unless it is just an outward show of humility, which is of course regarded highly by this world. However, true humility is not considered a virtue by the standards of this sin-cursed world. For example, an individual has a burning desire to become president of his country, or company, etc. Yet, he does not want to show this to others, but wants that others *ask* and *urge* him to run for the presidency. In the understanding of false humility, what do you think his response would be when others finally approach him with the question of running for president? He would say something like this, “No, I do not want to, but if the people ask me, then I will fulfill my duty.” There is a show of humility, but this is not true humility. In reality, he wants the power and position. This was not the spirit of Moses. He was very different; he was very teachable and humble, a true student, and this is what the verse in *Numbers* is saying to us.

Sons of the Prophets

We turn now to another example, the sons of the prophets. This is in reference to the School of the Prophets, in which the students were under the tutelage of the prophets. The School of the Prophets originated with the prophet Samuel.

“Such was the training of Moses in the lowly cabin home in Goshen; of Samuel, by the faithful Hannah; of David, in the hill dwelling at Bethlehem; of Daniel, before the scenes of the captivity separated him from the home of his fathers. Such, too, was the early life of Christ at Nazareth; such the training by which the child Timothy learned from the lips of his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice (2 *Timothy* 1:5; 3:15), the truths of Holy Writ.

“Further provision was made for the instruction of the young, by the establishment of the schools of the prophets. If a youth desired to search deeper into the truths of the

Word of God and to seek wisdom from above, that he might become a teacher in Israel, these schools were open to him. The schools of the prophets were founded by Samuel to serve as a barrier against the widespread corruption, to provide for the moral and spiritual welfare of the youth, and to promote the future prosperity of the nation by furnishing it with men qualified to act in the fear of God as leaders and counselors. In the accomplishment of this object Samuel gathered companies of young men who were pious, intelligent, and studious. These were called the sons of the prophets. As they communed with God and studied His word and His works, wisdom from above was added to their natural endowments. The instructors were men not only well versed in divine truth, but those who had themselves enjoyed communion with God and had received the special endowment of His Spirit. They enjoyed the respect and confidence of the people, both for learning and piety.

“In Samuel’s day there were two of these schools—one at Ramah, the home of the prophet, and the other at Kirjath-jearim, where the ark then was. Others were established in later times.

“The pupils of these schools sustained themselves by their own labor in tilling the soil or in some mechanical employment. In Israel this was not thought strange or degrading; indeed, it was regarded a crime to allow children to grow up in ignorance of useful labor. By the command of God every child was taught some trade, even though he was to be educated for holy office. Many of the religious teachers supported themselves by manual labor. Even so late as the time of the apostles, Paul and Aquila were no less honored because they earned a livelihood by their trade of tentmaking.

“A spirit of devotion was cherished. Not only were students taught the duty of prayer, but they were taught how to pray, how to approach their Creator, how to exercise faith in Him, and how to understand and obey the

teachings of His Spirit.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 592.3 - 593.1-3, 594.1.

Again, we read--“If a youth desired to search deeper into the truths of the word of God and to seek wisdom from above, that he might become a teacher in Israel, these schools were open to him.” This is the main point. If a youth desired to

search deeper into the truth of the Word of God, and to seek wisdom from above that he might become a teacher, these schools were opened to him. Let us emphasize this point again. Under what condition were these schools opened to him? If he desired to search deeper into the truth, a teachable spirit, a true seeker.

Study 5

We want to continue to study the principles of a true seeker, so that our vessels are filled with oil.

In studying the example of Peter, we learned a lot about how to fill our vessels. How did Peter become a learner, a true student? How did Peter overcome his spirit of self-sufficiency? The loving patience of Jesus in His ministry to Peter is the answer to these questions. Jesus' ministry was in total cooperation with the circumstances of life, like during the storm on the lake. This is an assurance for us, in that Jesus will do the same for those who will submit. He will lead through different crises, the varied circumstances of life, so that we can have a revelation of our characters. These crises may put us to shame, but we will learn to become true seekers, and by this to maintain a teachable spirit.

Let us next consider the apostle Paul, who also was a learner, a true student. The following quote from *The Acts of the Apostles*, 200.2, clearly identifies the spirit that Paul had. "Notwithstanding the fact that Paul was personally taught by God, he had no strained ideas of individual responsibility. While looking to God for direct guidance, he was ever ready to recognize the authority vested in the body of believers united in church fellowship. He felt the need of counsel, and when matters of importance arose, he was glad to lay these before the church and to unite with his brethren in seeking God for wisdom to make right decisions. Even 'the spirits of the prophets,' he declared, 'are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.' 1 *Corinthians* 14:32, 33. With Peter, he taught that all united in church capacity should be 'subject one to another.' 1 *Peter* 5:5."

The fact that true seekers will be subject one to another, which is having a true submissive spirit, means that true seekers are unified with Christ and His Body. On the other hand, when we stop being true seekers, we can never be unified with Christ, or with His Body.

During the time of the Reformation there were many true seekers, yet what is puzzling is that there seemed to be an apparent disunity amongst the believers. Why were there so many movements? Why were there different movements in Switzerland, for instance, than in Germany? Why did Zwingli and Luther not agree, as Philip of Hesse desired? Why were there other movements like the Anabaptists? Why do we have the Presbyterian movement springing up in Geneva, and then in Scotland, and why were they not in agreement with other believers like the Congregationalists? Why were the Puritans spread throughout the different churches, such as the Baptists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and others? Why was there another church, the Methodists, springing up?

All this may seem a bit confusing. However, what we need to understand is the fact that the religious world was awakening from great spiritual darkness, which had permeated it for centuries prior to the great Reformation. God saw fit to have the different local districts each have their own leader, to work with their people and to deal with the various elements. For instance, it was not possible for one instrument like Martin Luther to carry on all of the work, especially since fanaticism, wars, and other situations abounded, against which Martin Luther also had to fight. When he did so, his mind was preoccupied, and the work of the Reformation suffered a bit. In other fields of labor, difficulties arose and so God placed workers there to do His bidding.

Visible problems existed everywhere during the time of the Reformation, but the real battles took place mainly in the minds of

the believers, where the difficulties start, and the disunity exists first. What was the spirit of the believer, teachable or not? If we today would be true learners, true seekers, and have this spirit within, then we would be truly unified. This is our weakness. In *Testimonies to Ministers*, 30.1, Sister White writes about this spirit, which can be named the spirit of individualism.

“Though we have an individual work and an individual responsibility before God, we are not to follow our own independent judgment, regardless of the opinions and feelings of our brethren; for this course would lead to disorder in the church. It is the duty of ministers to respect the judgment of their brethren; but their relations to one another, as well as the doctrines they teach, should be brought to the test of the law and the testimony; then, if hearts are teachable, there will be no divisions among us.”

The above statement is a reminder of the early Adventists’ experiences, after the great disappointment of 1844. The main Adventist body at that time split into three groups. One group gave up their faith altogether. Another group kept calculating dates as to when Jesus would come.

A third group, however, believed that God had led them, and they spent much of their time watching and praying. This group was trying to see wherein they had made a mistake--in other words, they were teachable; they were true seekers. Hiram Edson and O. R. L. Crosier, who were of this group, were seeking to understand God’s will for the movement, when God gave them new light; and then James and Ellen White, and others as well, received more truth, because all possessed a humble and teachable spirit.

Nevertheless, even amongst this group, there were controversies and difficulties; many things had to be settled because they came from so many different denominations. About forty per cent of those who made up the early Adventist movement were Methodists. Others came from

the Baptists, Congregationalists, United Brethren, Anglican Lutheran, and other denominations. All carried with them their opinions and ideas of how the work should go forward. Later, as the Adventist movement grew, they organized conferences to discuss the many issues. During these conferences, some would cling tenaciously to their ideas. Sister White commented about one of these meetings, in which she wrote about the spirit of some of the brethren, which caused her great grief because God was dishonored. However, as Sister White wrote, the Holy Spirit did come and dispel the darkness during this meeting. This was felt by all who attended, and they would again be teachable, willing to learn, and thus would become united again in Christ. (See *Life Sketches of James White and Ellen G. White (1880)*, 247.2, 248.1.)

Sister White understood the principle of how a teachable spirit goes hand in hand with true unity. “If hearts are teachable, there will be no divisions among us. Some are inclined to be disorderly, and are drifting away from the great landmarks of the faith; but God is moving upon His ministers to be one in doctrine and in spirit.” *Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White (1922)*, 203.1. How is God doing this? The answer is simple: by filling His people with a teachable spirit.

Let us turn to another statement from *Testimonies to Ministers*, 54.2. “God is not the author of confusion, but of peace. But Satan is a vigilant, unsleeping foe, ever at work upon human minds, seeking a soil in which he can sow his tares. If he finds any whom he can press into his service, he will suggest ideas and false theories, and make them zealous in advocating error. The truth not only converts, but works the purification of its receiver. Jesus has warned us to beware of false teachers. From the beginning of our work, men have arisen from time to time, advocating theories that were new and startling. But if those who claim to believe the truth would go to those who have had experience, would go to the

word of God in a teachable, humble spirit, and examine their theories in the light of truth and with the aid of the brethren who have been diligent Bible students, and at the same time make supplication unto God, asking, Is this the way of the Lord, or is it a false path in which Satan would lead me? they would receive light, and would escape out of the net of the fowler.”

When we separated from the Adventist church, or another fallen church, we did not do this with a light heart; we had the spirit of asking, which is why we asked the experienced brethren in the Adventist Church. To our dismay, we found that these experienced brethren were not the deep Bible students that we thought they were. They were satisfied with a set of doctrines, and in this, they could not be the light that would lead to Christ. This was a bitter disappointment to us, because we really sought counsel, and what a blessing it is to have the spirit of seeking counsel. This is what God wants us to do in order to be truly unified.

We have studied examples of many true seekers. It is important to stress in all of this that being a true seeker is the condition for

filling our vessels with oil. Let us do our part in removing all known hindrances, in seeking that which is truth.

There is an important distinction between being a seeker or a doubter. This is a solemn thought, because Satan has his deceptive counterfeit seeking spirit, which appears like a true seeking spirit, but is not. One may identify himself as a seeker, or demand that others be seekers as he is, but this person has not a true living understanding of seeking, and is in fact a doubter. An example is when Satan asked Eve in the garden, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” *Genesis 3:1*. He appeared to be a seeker after truth, but in reality was a doubter. In turn, when Eve went to the tree of knowledge, forbidden as she was, she did not go as a seeker, but as a doubter.

Therefore, it is vital that we make a distinction between the spirit of a seeker and the spirit of one who doubts. Let us make this distinction by going over a list of points by which we can see if we are a seeker or a doubter. The spirit of a seeker is that he is a learner. He seeks the truth at any cost to himself, and the costs are sometimes very high. He is pressing forward in the knowledge of truth. The word of God is the standard for him. He is edifying; he is encouraging to others. He inspires faith, and he inspires the spirit of seeking for truth. This is the spirit of true seeker.

In contrast to a seeker is the spirit of one who doubts. Firstly, he is not a learner, but is only curious, and there is a huge difference between being a learner and just

An Important Distinction

The Spirit of a Seeker

- Is a learner
- Seeks the truth at all costs
- Presses forward in the knowledge of truth
- The word of God is the standard for him
- Edifies others
- Inspires faith
- Inspires seeking for truth

The Spirit of One who Doubts

- Is curious
- Questions for the sake of questioning
- Questions the foundations
- Makes himself the standard
- Has a destructive effect
- Inspires doubt
- Inspires methodical doubt

being curious. If I am curious, I want to know; not in order to get nearer to God and to be a better instrument, but just to get more knowledge for the sake of self-glorification.

A true seeker seeks the truth at any cost to himself. What is a doubter? He questions for the sake of questioning. Is there a profit in this? There is no profit. Everything is methodical to the doubter; he uses questioning as a scientific method. He does not question in order to gain a greater knowledge to draw nearer to Christ, but simply in order to appear as a seeker.

A true seeker is pressing forward in the knowledge of truth. What about a doubter? He is not pressing forward, but questions the foundations. We must understand that there are solid foundations that God has given, and on these foundational truths, we stand. It would not be safe to question these, otherwise we would swim in an ocean of uncertainty.

A true seeker has the word of God as the standard to live and grow by. What does the doubter have for a standard? He makes himself the standard, the frail human being. This has a destructive effect and helps nobody.

The spirit of a seeker edifies and encourages. What effect does the spirit of a doubter have? He has a destructive effect.

The spirit of a seeker inspires faith, while the spirit of a doubter inspires doubt. Whenever the doubter goes faith is weakened, even destroyed.

Lastly, the spirit of a seeker inspires a seeking for truth and on the other hand, the spirit of a doubter inspires methodical doubt. In other words, he puts every-

thing into question, and this is a very serious problem.

All these points show the distinction between the spirit of a true seeker and that of a doubter. We want to guard against partaking of the spirit of a doubter, because once one is in this train of thought, it is difficult to get out of it. It is like being in a rut. Even if one has a strong faith to begin with, one can still fall into this evil spirit of doubting. For example, youth who are firm in the faith take a course in theology, or something like this. If they are not careful, the theology studies will mold their mind in such a way that they begin to doubt their faith in God's principles, in the foundations of truth. They are now in a prison of doubt, and it is very difficult to get out!

We want to continue our study on how we can gather oil in our vessels. While studying the spirit of the true seeker, we saw that it is very much connected with humility, and humility also has something to do with submission. Let us read a wonderful statement about this submissive spirit in the book *The Desire of Ages*, 671.4, 672.1.

How Do We Gather Oil in Our Vessels? (Part 2)

“We cannot use the Holy Spirit.
The Spirit is to use us.”

The Desire of Ages, 672.1; *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:72.1; *Testimonies to Ministers*, 299.2

“When He [the Spirit of truth] is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.’ The preaching of the word will be of no avail without the continual presence and aid of the Holy Spirit. This is the only effectual teacher of divine truth. Only when the truth is accompanied to the heart by the Spirit will it quicken the conscience or transform the life. One might be able to present the letter of the word of God, he might be familiar with all its commands and promises; but unless the Holy Spirit sets home the truth, no souls will fall on the Rock and be broken. No amount of education, no advantages, however great, can make one a channel of light without the co-operation of the Spirit of God. The sowing of the gospel seed will not be a success unless the seed is quickened into life by the dew of heaven. Before one book of the New Testament was written, before one gospel sermon had been preached after Christ’s ascension, the Holy Spirit came upon the praying apostles. Then the testimony of their enemies was, ‘Ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine.’ *Acts 5:28*.

“Christ has promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to His church, and the promise belongs to us as much as to the first disciples. But like every other promise, it is given on conditions. There are many who believe and profess to claim the Lord’s promise; they talk *about* Christ and *about* the Holy Spirit, yet receive no benefit. They do not surrender the soul to be guided and controlled by the divine agencies. We cannot use the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is to use us. Through the Spirit God works in His people ‘to will and to do of His good pleasure.’ *Philippians 2:13*. But many will not submit to this. They want to manage themselves. This is why they do not receive the heavenly gift. Only to those who wait humbly upon God, who watch for His guidance and grace, is the Spirit given. The power of God awaits their demand and reception. This promised blessing, claimed by faith, brings all other blessings in its train. It

is given according to the riches of the grace of Christ, and He is ready to supply every soul according to the capacity to receive.”

“Christ has promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to His church, and the promise belongs to us as much as to the first disciples.” In other words, time is not a factor for Christ. In the past, we have imagined that the early rain fell as a “great shower” upon the church, then the ingathering. Then, there was a very long spiritual drought, which will end when the latter rain falls on God’s people, again as a “great shower,” which is followed by a harvest as well. Is this how it happens in nature? No! How do the rains come in nature, in Palestine that is, where this parable is drawn from? The rainy season starts with the lighter rain and continues with even heavier showers. As the rainy season gradually comes to its end, the amount of rain falling decreases, until it stops completely. The rain does not start, then a drought, and then more rain! The early rain fell, with more rain, even heavier amounts, until the end of the season. It is important that we understand this in the spiritual realm, in order to have our vessel filled with heavenly oil. This is clearly portrayed in the yearly feasts of the Jewish dispensation, which were the typical, to give us an understanding of the anti-typical.

The Yearly Feasts

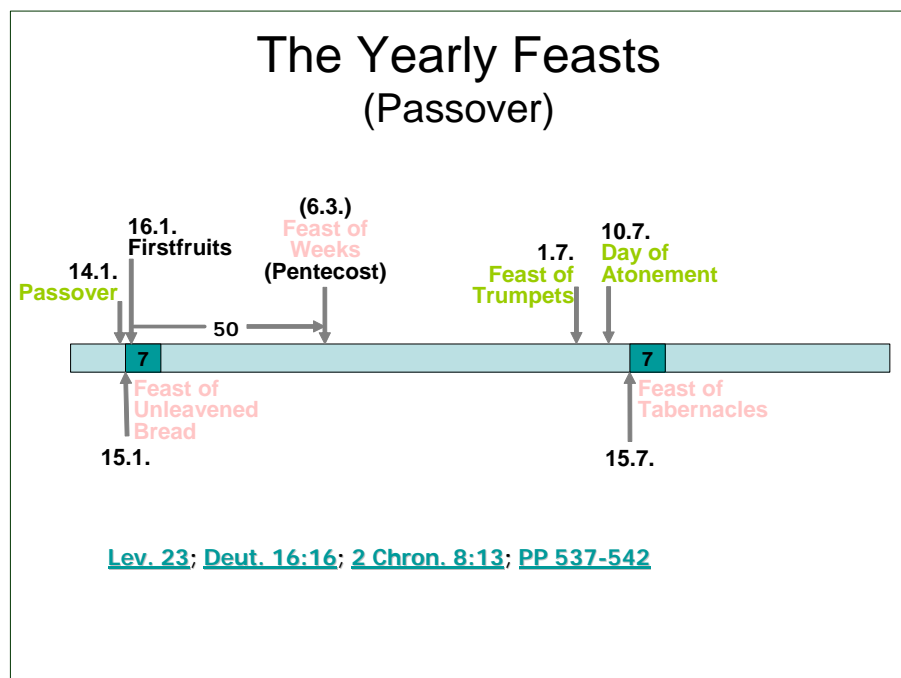
The yearly feasts began with the Passover and ended with the Feast of Tabernacles. The rain actually began around November. Just prior to the falling of the rain was the time for sowing. The first rain moistened the ground, so that the seed could take root. After the first rains, the farmer could count on more rain. In Palestine, statistically speaking, January has the greatest amount of rain. During the following months, the rains gradually decrease. April is the month when the rains would finally end. The rain at the beginning was called the early rain, and the

rain at the end was called the latter rain. However, there was no drought between the early and latter rainfalls. As in nature, so in grace. God's purpose for His people is that they daily fill their vessels with oil. There should be no drought between the early and latter rain. So we must ask the question, why is there not the outflow of the Holy Spirit since the outpouring of the early rain in Pentecostal power? Why is there so little of the Holy Spirit? This is not according to God's will. The reason is the hindrances that exist amongst God's people, namely the lack of a teachable and humble spirit, of being a true seeker. In other words, Christ has promised the Holy Spirit to us, but we must remove the obstacles that prevent Its outflow. Let us read this promise again, "Christ has promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to His church, and the promise belongs to us as much as to the first disciples."

God poured His Spirit in abundance upon the early Church, but nowhere in His Word does He even insinuate that He would afterward withhold it, like a spiritual drought, until the falling of the Latter Rain. The promised blessing belongs to us as much as to the first disciples, but like every other promise, it is given on condition. This is the reason why the rain has not come in its full power. Why? Because there are conditions, and we have yet to fulfill these conditions. The paragraph we read before from *The Desire of Ages* brings these conditions into view.

"There are many who believe and profess to claim the Lord's promise; They talk

about Christ and about the Holy Spirit, yet receive no benefit. They do not surrender the soul to be guided and controlled by the divine agencies." That is the reason. Let us ask ourselves; ask yourself and I will ask myself: Am I really willing to be guided and controlled by divine agencies? Am I really willing? "They do not surrender the soul to be guided and controlled by divine agencies." If we were truly willing, then we would see the Holy Spirit in its full power. It cannot be any other way because that is the condition. "We cannot use the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is to use us. Through the Spirit God works in His people 'to will and to do of His good pleasure.' *Philippians 2:13*. But many will not submit to this. They want to manage themselves." Please do not tell me to give up my sins right now; I will give them up next week. Then I will be ready. This is managing ourselves. When the Holy Spirit comes and says, this is a sin, give it up, then we must obey. But if we say, next week; then we manage ourselves. We take the reins into our own hands. "This is why they do not receive the heavenly gift. Only to those who wait humbly upon God, who watch for His guidance and grace, is the Spirit given.



The power of God awaits their demand and reception.” *The Desire of Ages*, 672.1.

Let us read some other statements that mention the same point about meeting the conditions, or, in other words, how to fill our vessels with oil.

“Never, never for the sake of gain stamp your life record in heaven, which is viewed by all the angelic host, and by your self-denying Redeemer, with avarice, penuriousness, selfishness, or false dealing. Such a course might bring you profit so far as this world views the matter; but, viewed in the light of heaven, it would prove an immense, an irreparable loss. ‘The Lord seeth not as man seeth.’ In trusting in God continually there is safety; there will not be a constant fear of future evil. This borrowed care and anxiety will cease. We have a heavenly Father who careth for His children, and will and does make His grace sufficient in every time of need. When we take into our own hands the management of things that concern us, and depend upon our own wisdom for success, we may well have anxiety and anticipate danger and loss, for it will most certainly come upon us.” *Testimonies for the Church II*, 72.1.

Why do we have anxiety for the future? The answer is very simple. Because “we take into our own hands the management of the things that concern us, and depend upon our own wisdom for success.” This may not be so readily understood and accepted by us, but this is what the Word of God tells us, and we have to accept it by faith.

Another statement, found in *Testimonies to Ministers*, 299.2, also underscores the importance of our meeting the conditions. “Let me tell you that the Lord will work in this last work in a manner very much out of the common order of things, and in a way that will be contrary to any human planning. There will be those among us who will always want to control the work of God, to dictate even what movements shall be made when the work goes forward under the direction of the angel who

joins the third angel in the message to be given to the world.”

This statement is very pleasing to those who move independently of their brethren, who are not true seekers. When they are rebuked for their independent spirit by one of the leading brethren, then they will accuse God’s Church of being under the rulership of a dictator. Their accusations are untrue, because when the messenger of God is called upon to reprove the sins of people, then this is not a control, not a dictatorship, but rather a blessing, to lead the soul back to Christ. A dictatorship, or a controlling of the work, is when a man thinks that everything has to go according to his thoughts. God’s way of leading His people is altogether different.

“There will be those among us who will always want to control the work of God, to dictate even what movements shall be made when the work goes forward under the direction of the angel who joins the third angel in the message to be given to the world. God will use ways and means by which it will be seen that He is taking the reins in His own hands. The workers will be surprised by the simple means that He will use to bring about and perfect His work of righteousness.” *Testimonies to Ministers*, 299.2

These statements prove that the work, both inwardly and outwardly, will not be finished if we are trying to use the Holy Spirit. In order for the work to be finished, the Holy Spirit is to use us; it cannot have a single thread of human devising. Success in the work of God is attainable only when it is the work of the Holy Spirit, and not of man. This is what we must seek for and desire. By submitting daily to the Holy Spirit, our vessels are filled with oil.

What about statements from the Word of God that declare the Spirit is subject to the human? In connection with this thought, let us read *I Corinthians* 14:32, “And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.” The prophets had their duty to keep order, in all the realms of life. It was their part, their duty. This

The Spirit is Subject to the Human Element

- “And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.”
1 Corinthians 14:32
- “The influence of the Spirit upon the human mind will regulate it after the divine order. But the Spirit does not work in a manner and power beyond the human agent's power of resistance. A man may refuse to hear the counsels and admonitions of God. He may choose to take the regulating of his conduct into his own hands; but when he does this, he is not made a vessel unto honor.” *Bible Commentary 4:1159.5*

is what Paul was referring to when he wrote this to the Corinthian believers. In other words, Paul said that the Holy Spirit is not so much in control that the prophets cannot do their part anymore.

In a quote from *S.D.A. Bible Commentary 4:1159*, Sister White states, “The influence of the Spirit upon the human mind will regulate it after the divine order. But the Spirit does not work in a manner and power beyond the human agent's power of resistance. A man may refuse to hear the counsels and admonitions of God. He may choose to take the regulating of his conduct into his own hands; but when he does this, he is not made a vessel unto honor.” Some have difficulties with this statement. They ask

themselves who is in control? Is it the Spirit or the prophet? We clearly see here in this statement that the Spirit is a servant, He does not control arbitrarily or dictatorially.

However, there are examples in the Bible that do not seem to be in agreement with this. Balaam, for example, wanted to control the Spirit, yet he was told before leaving that he would only speak what the Spirit gave him. He submitted to this, but only for the hope

of securing riches for himself, and because he hoped he could still control the Spirit. Did King Saul submit to the Spirit when he prophesied in his deep apostasy? Judas, when he was sent by Christ with the other disciples in their first missionary tour to heal the sick and preach the gospel, was he submissive to the

An Apparent Contradiction

We cannot use the Holy Spirit



The Spirit is Subject to the Prophets

The Spirit is to use us



Men can resist the spirit

Holy Spirit? Did the Holy Spirit force Himself upon these souls after their resisting for so long?

Let us clarify this seeming contradiction. The two statements we read were: "We cannot use the Holy Spirit," and "The Spirit is subject to the prophet." The other seeming contradiction is: "The Spirit is to use us," but "Men can resist the Spirit."

An apparent contradiction in God's Word will always bring the blessing of deeper understanding if one approaches it rightly. In this case, the solution to the seeming contradiction is that the Holy Spirit does not work through us until we submit to Him, even if it is only a low level of submission. In other words, there is a condition for receiving the Holy Spirit, and this is true submission, otherwise the Holy Spirit cannot work through us.

The second point is that submission is a continuous, voluntary act. To explain this, let us use the example of signing a church covenant. Some seem to think that once the covenant is signed, then the one who signed the covenant is now bound forever, which means that the voluntary aspect is now gone. However, this is not true, for some who signed the covenant have left! The voluntary aspect is still very much present, for one can leave any time he decides. Submission is a continuous, voluntary act. We make the choice daily to resist or to submit to the Holy Spirit, but whatever the choice, it is ours to make, continuously and voluntarily.

The Solution to the Apparent Contradiction

- The Holy Spirit does not work through us until we submit to him
- Submission is a continuous voluntary act
- God does not force us to fulfill the conditions
- God does not offer an alternative way

The third point is that God does not force us to fulfill the conditions. He will never say, "I will bring you into submission, whether you want it or not."

Finally, the last point is that God does not offer an alternative way. In other words, God does not say, "Well if you do not want to submit, then I will give you the Holy Spirit in another way." God does not do this, nor can He do this. God has no other alternative; when we resist the Holy Spirit, then we are lost, because there is not another way.

To summarize, let us remember that when we pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit does not work through us until we submit to Him. Submission is a continuous, voluntary act at any time--this must be ongoing. God does not force us to fulfill the conditions, and God does not offer an alternative way. Can we remember these principles? In the next study, we will look into more details about what true submission is, in heaven and on earth.

Study 6

We have learned that the Holy Spirit does not work through us until we submit to Him, and this submission is always continuous and voluntary. We also learned that God does not force us to fulfill the conditions, nor does He offer an alternative way. The lack of applying these four principles, as a whole, clearly explains why we do not receive more of the Holy Spirit. With God, there are no restrictions, no limitations, in fulfilling His promise of giving us the Holy Spirit; the problem is from our side. Our shortcoming is that we do not fulfill the conditions. We want to have the spirit of a true seeker. We want to learn to truly submit to the Holy Spirit. This is our desire. This is what we want to pray for--to hold firm to the arm of God and not let go.

What is true submission? It is gift from God, and we must pray earnestly for it. In order to pray for this gift, we need to understand what it is. Firstly, let us look at the submission that exists in heaven, which will give us an idea of what true submission is. Let us read from *Revelation 4:1-8*.

“After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, ‘Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.’ Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance

like an emerald. Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. And from the throne proceeded lightning, thundering, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: ‘Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!’”

Let us read again the last verse--“And they do not rest day or night, saying: ‘Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!’” In other words, their submission is continuous. Can you see submission in this expression? Let us continue to read from the book of *Revelation*, the same chapter.

What Is True Submission?

- Submission in heaven (*Revelation 4:1-11; 5:11-14*)
- As in heaven so on earth (*Matthew 6:10*)
- The submission of the disciples (*The Acts of the Apostles, 157.1*)
- The submission of Jesus (*John 5:19*)
- We praise God by true submission as Jesus did

“Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: ‘You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.’” Verses 9–11.

The twenty-four elders falling down before God in heaven give us a good picture of what true submission is. What other name can we give submission, as it described in these verses from *Revelation*? Maybe we could name it the spirit of worship, or glorification, or maybe thankfulness or appreciation. Let us use the word praise--giving praise to God. This is the most obvious choice, because when we read, “You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power,” the word praise comes to mind. The heavenly beings praise God in their songs and in their work--it is all-continuous; they never cease praising God. Some may ask, “Do they have nothing better to do than to praise God all the time?” This is their work, and they rejoice in it. We know so little of this work of praise; we cannot appreciate as they do, and I write this to our shame.

Let us turn to the next chapter in the book of *Revelation*.

“And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, ‘Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?’” *Revelation* 5:1, 2.

This angel knew exactly who was worthy to open the seals, but he still asked. Heaven communicates this way. For example, when Jesus came into heaven after His resurrection, angels asked the question, “Who is the King of glory? Lift up the doors. Who is the King of glory?” Of course, the answer came back with a resounding joy, “The Lord of hosts!”

(See *Psalms* 24:7-10.) In other words, the angels in heaven often speak to each other concerning the wonderful glory of God and the plan of salvation, even asking questions they already know the answer to, but never tire of hearing the words again. John the revelator did not fully understand this glorious mode of communication. Let us continue to read from the same chapter.

“And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. But one of the elders said to me, ‘Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.’ And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.’ Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!’ And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth

and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: 'Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!' Then the four living creatures said, Amen! And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever." *Revelation* 5:3–14.

This continual, back and forth dialog in heaven also reveals something else, and that is the seeking spirit. The heavenly beings want to know, because the depth of God's love is infinite. They have such intensity to seek more. This is definitely not curiosity; this is a real desire to know the truth. John was a seeker for truth, too. He needed to know the truth; he had such an intense desire to know that he wept, not because he felt left out, but for the sake of God's church.

The powerful praise that is ongoing in heaven is something that we should always dwell on. This praise is true submission. We want to have it here on earth. This is God's will for us. This principle of things being the same in heaven as they are on earth was clearly given by Jesus when He said, "Thy will be done on earth as in heaven." *Matthew* 6:10. In other words, the praise on earth shall be in the same way as it is in heaven. That is the aim. God wants us to submit to Him in the same way the heavenly angels submit. What we read from the book of *Revelation* is not just a couple of nice stories, for us to wonder at how nicely the angels praise God. Oh no! It is to be our living experience, to follow the example of the angels praising of God. That is the reason why we study this.

We can see the submissive spirit in the praise that the disciples had in their lives. Let us read from the book *The Acts of the Apostles*, 157.1.

"It was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians. The name was given them because Christ was the main theme of their preaching, their teaching, and their conversation. Continually they were recounting

the incidents that had occurred during the days of His earthly ministry, when His disciples were blessed with His personal presence. Untiringly they dwelt upon His teachings and His miracles of healing. With quivering lips and tearful eyes they spoke of His agony in the garden, His betrayal, trial, and execution, the forbearance and humility with which He had endured the contumely and torture imposed upon Him by His enemies, and the Godlike pity with which He had prayed for those who persecuted Him."

Sister White had a spirit of praise like the disciples. She, as we know, often saw Jesus in her visions, and was much acquainted with the past and future great controversy events. Her mind was always thinking upon these things, especially upon the love of Jesus. She praised Him always, and this joy she always expressed to others. For example, when she lived in Elmshaven, near San Francisco, California, Sister White would love to take a buggy ride with her secretary. Sister White would often visit, during these rides, the local vineyards. There, she would talk to the owners about Jesus; the conversation was about Jesus, this was the focus. After the death of Sister White, her neighbors remembered her as the little old lady who would always talk about the love of Jesus. This praise is impressive, because it flowed from within, and expressed itself to all.

This was in the disciples too. They were continually dwelling on the love of Jesus, and the events of His life. In fact, before the writing of the first gospel, they continually exchanged the words of Jesus in all the affairs of life. When someone quoted the words of Jesus concerning a certain issue, nothing more was needed to settle things. It was the law, so to speak. Unfortunately, false teachers would quote things that Jesus never said. Later, the church had the written form of the Gospels, which helped to combat these pretenders, and aided tremendously in spreading truth.

The thoughts of the disciples were constantly dwelling on these subjects, even years after the ascension of Christ and the outpouring of the early rain, and so they always spoke about Christ and His life. This is why they were called Christians. “With quivering lips and tearful eyes they spoke of His agony in the garden, His betrayal, trial, and execution, the forbearance and humility with which He had endured the contumely and torture imposed upon Him by His enemies.”

Have you ever read *The Desire of Ages* from cover to cover? It is an interesting and powerful book. You cannot read this book without being deeply impressed. I remember when I read this book from cover to cover back when I was first learning the message. I do not remember how much I understood at that time, but I was deeply impressed. I read most of the book while I was journeying on a train, traveling from south to north Germany. The reason for this journey was to visit some former acquaintances. Shortly after arriving to my destination, I met with my friends and immediately spoke to them about the life of Jesus; I was so full after reading *The Desire of Ages* that I bubbled over with His words. To my amazement, my friends, who were not religiously inclined, asked me to give them Bible studies! I sat down with them, and we talked about *The Desire of Ages*. This will be our experience when we are always meditating on Christ and His love. The mouth will express these thoughts.

This is how it was with the disciples. “His betrayal, trial, and execution, the forbearance and humility with which He had endured the contumely and torture imposed upon Him by His enemies, and the Godlike pity with which He had prayed for those who persecuted Him. His resurrection and ascension, and His work in heaven as the Mediator for fallen man, were topics on which they rejoiced to dwell. Well might the heathen call them Christians,

since they preached Christ and addressed their prayers to God through Him.” *The Acts of the Apostles*, 157.1. Do we rejoice to dwell on these topics? The disciples constantly thought of Him, they constantly talked about His great sacrifice and love, as Sister White did. In doing this, the disciples acquired the name Christian. This was true submission on their part, of mind and heart.

Let us look at the example that Jesus gave us. We will read from *John 5:19*. “Then Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.’” This is submission, which is to praise God in the truest sense. He does not make His own plans, but only does what He sees the Father do. God has given His Son, Jesus, as a powerful example of a life of submission. The life that Jesus lived while on this earth, and what He displays in heaven, gives us the best example of what true submission is.

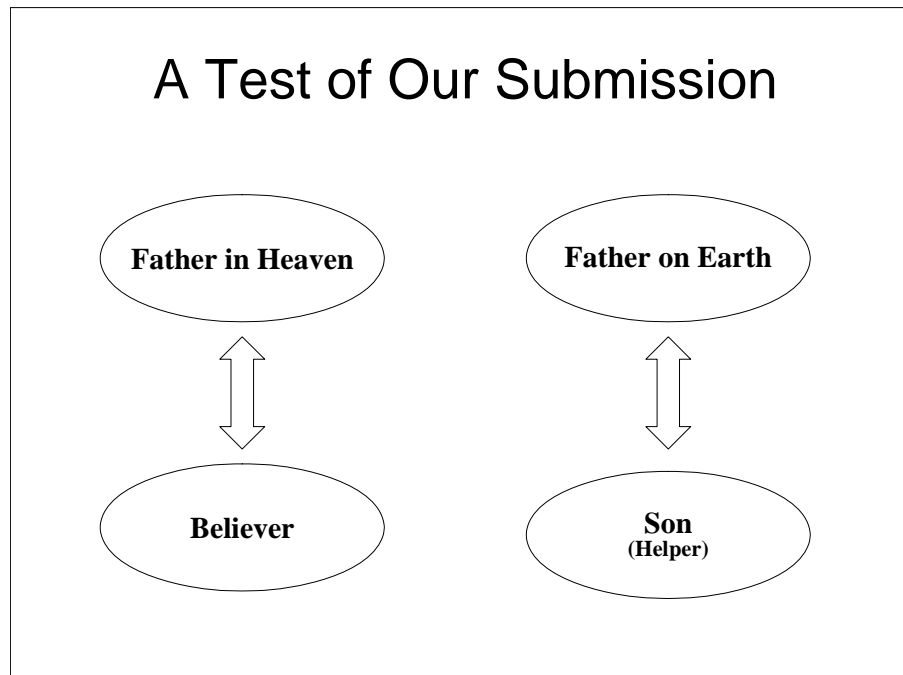
We praise God by true submission, as Jesus did. The heavenly angels give a wonderful example of true praise, and this is definitely not lip service! When we sing praises to God, very often it is nothing more than lip service. In other words, we praise God with our lips, but our thoughts and hearts go in another direction. This is not how it is with the angels in heaven. When they praise God, they do this with all their heart, with their entire mind, and with all their strength. How can we praise God when we disobey His commandments? How can we praise God when we do not live the message in everything that He gives us to do? Can we truly praise when we are disobedient, even in the least? True praise is manifested by the obedience that we give to our heavenly Father. True praise is true submission. True submission is true praise.

Is our submission tested, to see whether it is a true submission or not? Let us look into this.

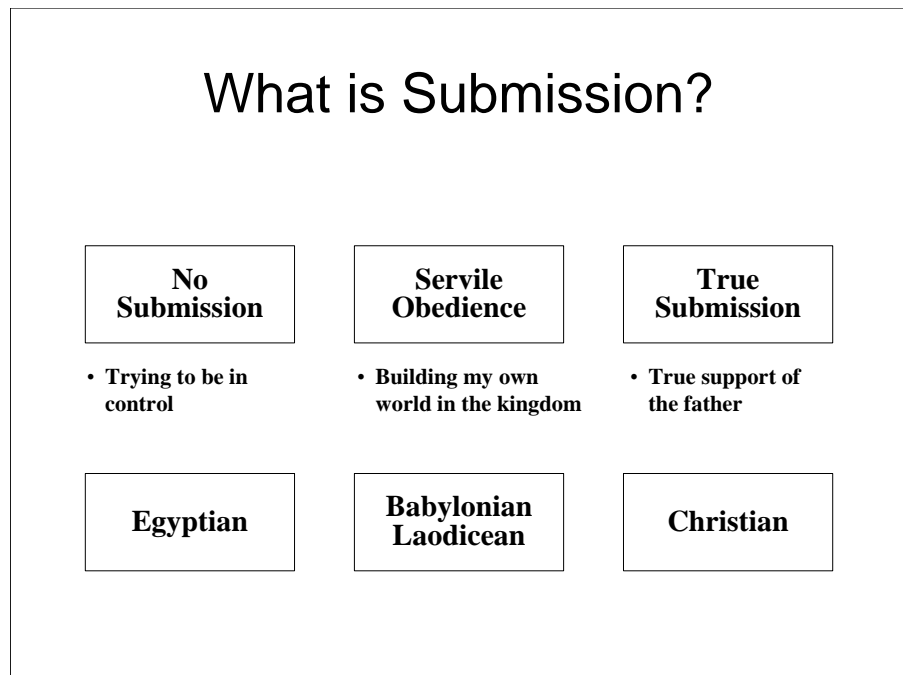
We have the Father in heaven and the believer, and the father on earth and the son (helper). Both of these circumstances will test our submission. What does John write in his first epistle? If we say that we love God, yet we hate our brother, then we lie. How can we love God when we hate our brother? (See *1 John 2*.) Many say they love God, but they do not love their families. With such a spirit, they show that they do not love God.

We learned about this principle when we studied into gospel order, especially when we studied into the experience of Lucifer. Lucifer could not endure and submit to the fact that all the messages were coming through just one Person, Jesus Christ. Yet he would gladly submit to God. Will we manifest the same spirit as Lucifer did in heaven when he rebelled? Can we really receive the messages coming through one person? God has allowed a testing period for us. If we pass this test, then we are fit for heaven.

Likewise, our submission to the earthly father reveals how we submit to our heavenly Father. The expression we are using, "earthly father," not only means our biological father, but it



can also mean our spiritual father, our guardian (mother, grandparent, etc.), our employer, and many others. Whatever the case, we should truly submit to our earthly father, since by this we are tested to see how much we submit to God. For example, as an



employee, I will not submit to my employer, always doing my work as I think it should be done, without consulting my employer. This wrong spirit reveals the fact that there must be difficulties in my submitting to the heavenly Father. Can you see this point? Somebody who really submits to the heavenly Father will be the best employee, because he really knows how to work as a helper. He really knows how to submit.

Our generation has great difficulties with true submission. We have a strong tendency to think that submission means slavery, and because of this, we want to manage ourselves. This is where God wants to be our Helper: He wants to teach us what true submission is, and to fill us with this spirit.

So, what is true submission? Let us look at the three possibilities of life. We must live out one of these, for there is no neutrality.

The first possibility is no submission. We all understand what no submission is. It is the spirit of trying to be in control, where we simply do not want to submit. For example, suppose that during a job interview, a prospective employee would tell the interviewer that he or she would love to be hired, but that he/she wants to control the firm. What would be the reaction of the interviewer? The answer is obvious; this firm would have no need to hire such a person! True submission, in whatever circumstance, means not trying to be in control, but that we gladly submit to others. Most of all, we need to give the control and gladly submit to the Holy Spirit. Generally, all will openly accept

this principle, but when it comes to the actual carrying out of it, then difficulties arise and the true spirit is seen.

The next possibility is servile obedience. This kind of submission is not an outflow from the heart. It is something that is, more or less, a forced obedience. The word servile means, in the light of what we are studying, attempting to build my own world in God's kingdom. There is no submission in servile obedience, though there is an outward appearance.

Finally, there is true submission. This is true support of the father, whoever the father may be. Of course, this submission would be to our heavenly Father first.

We want to be able to distinguish each kind of submission, so that we understand and can identify each. With such discernment, we can pray intelligently, so that we have the right kind of submission and will be a proper influence in our spheres.

The spiritual Egyptian represents no submission. He builds his own kingdom. He openly admits that he will not submit to God. He even exclaims who is God, that he should submit to Him.

No Submission

- “I am better than you”

(Testimonies for the Church 2:255.2)

- Judas

(The Desire of Ages, 649.1)

- Lucifer

(Patriarchs and Prophets, 40.1)

The Babylonian spirit represents servile obedience. He attempts to build his own world within the kingdom of God. This is Laodiceanism. We have seen last year that there is no real difference between a Babylonian and a Laodicean.

Finally, true submission is what a true Christian has, and he will faithfully manifest this. This is why they were named Christians: they truly submitted to Christ in everything, as Christ submits to His Father.

Let us look at examples of each to better distinguish them. Firstly, we will study no submission.

When the disciples, especially Judas, gathered around the table for the Lord's Supper, what kind of submission did they each have toward Christ and one another? They had the spirit of I am better than everyone; I can do things better. Let us read about this in the book *The Desire of Ages*, 643.4.

"They had placed their own estimate upon themselves and upon one another, and, instead of regarding their brethren as more worthy, they had placed themselves first. The request of James and John to sit on the right and left of Christ's throne had excited the indignation of the others. That the two brothers should presume to ask for the highest position so stirred the ten that alienation threatened. They felt that they were misjudged, that their fidelity and talents were not appreciated. Judas was the most severe upon James and John."

One can imagine how they must have looked around at each other. Judas, for example, looked at the others and thought that some were too soft, or others were too weak, or others cannot manage money affairs, etc. He thought himself invaluable to the cause. In the end, Judas would not submit. This is confirmed in the same book, *The Desire of Ages*, 649.1. "Jesus said to the disciples, 'Ye are clean, but not all.' He had washed the feet of Judas, but the heart had not been yielded to

Him. It was not purified. Judas had not submitted himself to Christ."

Judas always had his own opinion, and held stubbornly to it. There was no submission to anything that Christ said. However, one may ask the question, how could Judas cast out devils if he had not a submissive spirit? To answer this, we need to remember that many will come to Christ and say, have we not done this in Your name, and that in Your name, even the casting out of devils in Your name? What will Christ tell them? I do not know you. (See *Matthew 7:21-23*.) This means that regardless of how "great" our actions are, this is no guarantee that we will go to heaven, even if we did submit previously to the Holy Spirit for a length of time. If we have not a true submissive spirit we will not be saved, even if we are in the company of those who do and, because of this, feel something of the Holy Spirit's power. We must have a full submission, one that is continuous and growing; otherwise, it is not submission.

Judas always had his counter-opinion to that of Christ's. Judas seemed to always have a "but" to what Christ said. Unfortunately, we have experienced this today, because many former believers had this spirit of counter-opinion. We felt this spirit for some time before they left us. Usually it was hidden in its beginning stages, but eventually it would end in a terrible manifestation. This was the case of Judas. Judas did not have submission. God cannot afford to give the Holy Spirit to us unless there is a real and true submission.

Lucifer is also an example of one who could not submit. He received many warnings about this, but held tenaciously to his opinions. Let us now turn to *Patriarchs and Prophets* to read about Lucifer's experience. We will read from the chapter entitled "Why was Sin Permitted?"

"The angels joyfully acknowledged the supremacy of Christ, and prostrating themselves before Him, poured out their love and adoration. Lucifer bowed with them, but in his

heart there was a strange, fierce conflict. Truth, justice, and loyalty were struggling against envy and jealousy. The influence of the holy angels seemed for a time to carry him with them. As songs of praise ascended in melodious strains, swelled by thousands of glad voices, the spirit of evil seemed vanquished; unutterable love thrilled his entire being; his soul went out, in harmony with the sinless worshippers, in love to the Father and the Son. But again he was filled with pride in his own glory. His desire for supremacy returned, and envy of Christ was once more indulged.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 36.3.

Lucifer had a desire for supremacy, and with such a spirit, he would not submit. He actually thought that he would become a deluded slave if he submitted, as he thought the others who were truly submissive had become. He felt that he would be degraded, that his personality would be taken away from him. Of course, none of what he thought was true.

In the paragraph we read from *Patriarchs and Prophets*, it is interesting to see that Lucifer seemed to be filled with a submissive spirit again. The glory of the praise of the angels vanquished the evil spirit, and Lucifer was again in harmony with them. However, he had second thoughts. Has this been our experience? At a camp meeting or a blessed special meeting, many confessions come forth. After such confessions, some individuals seem to hold firm until they get back into the daily routines of life, and then they show where they really stand. Sometimes this may take years, but eventually the evil spirit will reveal itself.

“But again he was filled with pride in his own glory. His desire for supremacy returned, and envy of Christ was once more indulged. The high honors conferred upon Lucifer were not appreciated as God’s special gift, and therefore, called forth no gratitude to his Creator. He glorified in his brightness and exaltation and aspired to be equal with God. He was beloved and revered by the heavenly host, angels delighted to execute his

commands, and he was clothed with wisdom and glory above them all. Yet the Son of God was exalted above him, as one in power and authority with the Father. He shared the Father’s counsels, while Lucifer did not thus enter into the purposes of God. ‘Why,’ questioned this mighty angel, ‘should Christ have the supremacy? Why is He honored above Lucifer?’” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 36.3. The questions he asked were of curiosity, not of a true seeking spirit. He left this blessed meeting, diffusing a spirit of doubt. God gave Lucifer a grand opportunity to return, but he chose otherwise. Lucifer made a wrong choice, but God did not give up. Lucifer was again impressed that he was going in the wrong direction. Let us read about this in the same book.

“Lucifer was convinced that he was in the wrong. He saw that ‘the Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works’ (Psalm 145:17); that the divine statutes are just, and that he ought to acknowledge them as such before all heaven. Had he done this, he might have saved himself and many angels. He had not at that time fully cast off his allegiance to God. Though he had left his position as covering cherub, yet if he had been willing to return to God, acknowledging the Creator’s wisdom, and satisfied to fill the place appointed him in God’s great plan, he would have been reinstated in his office. The time had come for a final decision; he must fully yield to the divine sovereignty or place himself in open rebellion. He nearly reached the decision to return, but pride forbade him. It was too great a sacrifice for one who had been so highly honored to confess that he had been in error, that his imaginings were false, and to yield to the authority which he had been working to prove unjust.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 39.1.

Let us pray that this may never happen to us. We need to understand, and we need to avoid this spirit of no submission.

Do we understand clearly what servile submission is? He who gives a servile submission asks the following questions: What are my wages? How much do I earn when I work for you? This is not rendering a heart service. If one's concern from the start is only wages, then it is not a service of love. What are my rights? Can I go on strike? Can I do this? When can I leave? When is my job over? How much vacation time do I have, and how soon can I use my vacation time? If I have such work ethics, I manifest a servile submission to the work, and not a heart submission. It is the spirit of a hireling, and this spirit will never finish God's work on this earth.

Dependence upon others is another element in servile submission. "All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life

will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.

"As Christ lived the law in humanity, so we may do if we will take hold of the Strong for strength. But we are not to [give a servile submission] place the responsibility of our duty upon others, and wait for them to tell us what to do. We cannot depend for counsel upon humanity." *The Desire of Ages*, 668.3, 4.

Those who tend toward individual responsibility, towards individualism, quote this statement with delight. However, this statement from *The Desire of Ages* is not to be understood like this. It is simply, but clearly, stating that we cannot depend on counsel. On the other hand, it is not wrong to counsel with one another, but we cannot depend on it. In other words, if one never knows what to do unless he asks someone, if this is his attitude, then his submission is not a real one.

The difficulties I sometimes have with believers is that they are either not submissive, or they give a servile submission; they always vacillate between these two points. Either they will ask me to tell them what they should do next, or they do not ask anymore, which alerts me to the fact that they have chosen to go their own way. I wish that I would not be asked about every little thing, but that there be instead a true mutual counseling with one another, in which believers still know for themselves, because they have their own experience of where to go and what to do. My desire is harmony. I want to learn from them as well. "We

Servile Submission

- "What are my wages?" "What are my rights?" "When can I leave?"
- Dependence on others (*The Desire of Ages*, 668.4)
- Not having your own opinion

cannot depend for counsel upon humanity.” Of course, some believers are spiritually weak; they know very little of how to truly submit to Jesus Christ. They do not know what to do unless they ask. They need to pray more; they need to study about what true submission is so that they can come into harmony with Jesus.

“We cannot depend for counsel upon humanity. The Lord will teach us our duty just as willingly as He will teach somebody else. If we come to Him in faith, He will speak His mysteries to us personally. Our hearts will often burn within us as One draws nigh to commune with us as He did with Enoch. Those who decide to do nothing in any line that will displease God, will know, after presenting their case before Him, just what course to pursue. And they will receive not only wisdom, but strength. Power for obedience, for service, will be imparted to them, as Christ has promised.” *The Desire of Ages*, 668.4

When a member receives such instruction from Christ, he will not act in contradiction with his fellow believers. He will be in harmony with them. This is how we see whether there is true submission or not.

Another element of servile submission is not having my own opinion. This is not to say that one cannot have an opinion about something, but this must be of the person himself. True submission, true obedience

True Submission

- Is the work of the soul itself (*The Desire of Ages*, 466.4; 668)
- Not making my own plans (*The Desire of Ages*, 208.1, 2)
- “What is my father’s will?”
- “Does my father need me?”
- “How can I serve better?”
- “Is the work done as my father wishes?”

means that it is the work of the soul itself. The questions to always ask are: what is the will of the Father? Where does my Father need me? How can I serve efficiently? We will be safe from forming our own stubborn opinions or planning our own lives when we do this.

The spirit of submission amongst the young people that work here in Dickendorf encourages me. For example, when I arrive home late in the day after a long journey, the youth will ask me if I need any help, even though they are tired from a hard day’s work. I see in this a good spirit of submission. This will be the characteristic of a truly submissive employee. He never tires of rendering service. He loves service because it is in his heart. All true obedience comes from the heart, of the soul itself. It was heart work with Christ, so it may be with us. I desire that we truly learn this submission to the Holy Spirit, so that He can use us.

Study 7

(See Diagram Study 6: What is Submission?)

In our study of the parable of the ten virgins, we have seen that our main concern is how to fill our vessels with the heavenly oil. If our vessels are not filled with oil, then we are foolish virgins. We have also seen how Laodiceanism is foolishness.

The two principle factors that we have learned as well are that we need the spirit of a true seeker, and we need true submission. We have also learned what submission is not. It often helps to understand what something is when we look at what it is not. Again, an unsubmitive spirit is trying to be in control, or when we render a servile obedience, in which we attempt to build our own world in the kingdom of God. On the other hand, true submission means true support of our heavenly Father and earthly father (parent, employer, etc.). The ones who have no submission are the Egyptians, and those with servile obedience are the Babylonians or the Laodiceans. The true Christians are the ones with true submission.

(See Diagram Study 6: No Submission)

We looked at this attitude of “I am better than you” and the examples of Judas and Lucifer in our last study. Let us read more about Lucifer’s unsubmitive spirit, and see his argumentative spirit against true submission.

“Rejecting with disdain the arguments and entreaties of the loyal angels, he denounced them as deluded slaves. The preference shown to Christ he declared an act of injustice both to himself and to all the heavenly host.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 40.1.

What does rejecting with disdain mean? Simply, it means looking down on something or someone with a distasteful abhorrence. In other words, Lucifer rejected the arguments and entreaties of the loyal angels in their submission to Jesus with disdain, because he saw them as slaves, which leads us to the next point. Lucifer

not only denounced the loyal angels as slaves, but as deluded slaves. What did Lucifer mean when he called them deluded slaves? Firstly, Lucifer saw them as deceived, blind. Secondly, he saw the loyal angels as unable to do as they wanted to do; in other words, a slavish obedience. Lucifer would ask scornfully how such intelligent, experienced angels could submit to such slavery. Lucifer expressed the same spirit of disdain and disrespect in the Garden of Eden when he talked with Eve! In other words, it is unthinkable that you should submit to Christ! Those who do not want to submit express this same spirit today: they feel as though those who do submit to gospel order are in slavish obedience and that gospel order is a “one-man movement”. Unfortunately, they use these arguments repeatedly, and this only to their own destruction.

(See Diagram Study 6: Servile submission)

Very briefly, let us look again at what servile submission is. It is when we work just for wages, when we guard our own rights, and work when we want to work. It is asking, when will the end of my work come, or when can I go? This is the attitude of a hireling. What is a hireling? In *John* 10, we have a description of a hireling. Jesus talks of the good shepherd and shows the difference between the good shepherd and the hireling, the latter working only for wages. The good shepherd gives his life for his flock, but the hireling’s concern is only his wages, and he runs away when danger presents itself.

This was a prominent controversial issue when Roger Williams declared that the pastors of the established churches in the New England territory were hirelings. Why did he make such a bold allegation? It had become a common practice among the pastors in Roger Williams’ day to work only for wages. The pastors would ask how much the wages were, and this is what determined where they would work. Many would not go to the New World because of the lower wages. Some would even change their religion, for example going from

being a Congregationalist to Presbyterianism, because they would receive better wages. Unfortunately, with such a spirit, these so-called shepherds were more concerned about wages than faith. Roger Williams not only detested this hireling spirit, one of the great curses of the churches, but he also sought to do something about it. In those days, the state would control and pay the wages of the pastor of any church, and so Roger Williams pleaded for a separation between anyone holding a church office and payment from the state of such individuals.

Another point of an unsubmitive spirit, which we looked at in our last study, is dependence on others, as we have read about in the book *Desire of Ages*, 668.4. "We cannot depend for counsel upon humanity. The Lord will teach us our duty just as willingly as He will teach somebody else." Those who do not understand true submission will always ask what their duty is, thus giving an outward show of submission, but not really experiencing true submission within.

The last point we looked into about servile submission was those who never have their own opinion. This is not true submission; rather, it is standing on the wall. When the pressure is on and the question is asked who stands on the right side, souls who have this weak characteristic will not take a stand for Christ.

(See Diagram Study 6: True Submission)

True submission is the work of the soul itself. Let us read about this in the book *The Desire of Ages*, 466.3.

"Every soul that refuses to give himself to God is under the control of another power. He is not his own. He may talk of freedom, but he is in the most abject slavery. He is not allowed to see the beauty of truth, for his mind is under the control of Satan. While he flatters himself that he is following the dictates of his own judgment, he obeys the will of the prince of darkness. Christ came to break the shackles of sin-slavery from the soul. 'If the Son therefore

shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.' 'The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus' sets us 'free from the law of sin and death.' Rom. 8:2." Satan's reasoning when he was in heaven was that those who had true submission were deluded slaves, when, in fact, he and the others that rejected God's truth were the ones deluded and in slavery.

"In the work of redemption there is no compulsion. No external force is employed. Under the influence of the Spirit of God, man is left free to choose whom he will serve. In the change that takes place when the soul surrenders to Christ, there is the highest sense of freedom. The expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself." *The Desire of Ages*, 466.4.

Parents know how satisfying it is when their children make the right choice for themselves. Usually children do this when we tell them to make the right choice, which is good, but only until a certain age. When they reach a level of maturity at which they can make decisions, then it is most satisfactory for parents to see that they make the right ones. But will they always choose correctly when the parents are not around? Do they make the right choice only because the parents are in sight? Let us continue reading from the same paragraph.

"The expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself. True, we have no power to free ourselves from Satan's control; but when we desire to be set free from sin, and in our great need cry out for a power out of and above ourselves, the powers of the soul are imbued with the divine energy of the Holy Spirit, and they obey the dictates of the will in fulfilling the will of God." This is true submission, and we must not expect anything else but this. In other words, there should not be the least resistance in our hearts to love God, or to thank Him for His workings of providence. If there is, then we have not true submission; we are not able to render a true submission. The great controversy will be only finished when there is true submission in the people of God, and not before.

Let us now turn to the other statement on the diagram, found in same book, page 668.3. “All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.”

This statement clearly emphasizes that we separate from sin because sin becomes hateful to us; it is the work of the soul itself. No one has to tell us to hate sin. Of course, this does not exclude us from receiving further instruction in our continued growth. Unfortunately, some have come to this conclusion, believing that once one has true submission, one no longer needs instruction. This way of thinking is another one of Satan’s tricks, so that he can lure us away from true submission. The holy angels and the sinless hosts need continued instruction, because it is impossible for any creature to have all the knowledge of God. Throughout eternity, we will be students; forever we need a teachable spirit, forever needing and receiving instruction. Therefore, submission is the ability to follow instructions and this is of the soul itself, the will of the soul, or the act of the soul itself. “All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses.”

The above statement from *The Desire of Ages* is usually misunderstood, read in a way that the person does not come to a true understanding what true submission is. The

following is usually how this statement is understood: “When we carry out our own impulses we will do His will because God blends our hearts and minds into conformity to His will.” Can you see the difference? If not, then I will put it another way, but still heading in the same direction. “When we carry out our own impulses, then we do God’s will, because He blends our hearts and minds into conformity to His will.” Did you see the difference between the true and false? To put it yet another way, but with the same thought, “When we do our own will then automatically we do the will of God, always.” All three statements are saying the same thing, and this is how it is understood by most. In other words, first they set their own will, and then they say, because we are sanctified, when we do our will, we do the will of God. We do not need to ask any more questions, nor are we in need of instruction. Such a belief is in harmony with the holy flesh movement, who say they are holy. They say, we do not need any further instruction, for everything we do is right per definition. This is a very dangerous position to take.

Let us read the sentence again. How does the sentence start? The statement starts with the words, “If we consent.” This is the first work, if we consent, and this is an act of submission. This does take effort; for it is not always so quickly that we do consent, because of lack of knowledge or misguided zeal. Then comes the next part of the sentence, “He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will.” The point is not that God condescends in order to change His mind to our mind, His will to our will, but He lifts our thoughts so that our mind is in harmony with His mind. In other words, if we consent, He will so mold our minds that when we obey, we obey with our whole heart because we truly love to. This will not be a surface obedience--something we do automatically because we have to.

God is the parent and we are the children. And what have we learned in the past about obedience in a child? The first thing a child needs to learn is submission, and then comes understanding, and this principle applies for God's children. "If we consent," first there is submission, then comes understanding, but even more than just understanding. It is a molding of the mind and heart, to come into perfect harmony with Him.

We need to emphasize again the fact that this principle applies not only to a sinful environment, but also to a sinless environment. For example, remember how upset the angels were when they witnessed the terrible ordeal their dear Commander and King experienced just before His crucifixion, and wanted to immediately stop the abuse? They intended to do this when suddenly a tall, commanding angel intervened. What did this commanding angel do? He forbade them; he stopped them from carrying out their intentions, and they needed this intervention. If the heavenly angels always did the will of God, there would have been no need to stop them, as the commanding angel did. In other words, they needed to be stopped, because they needed instruction, and we know that they readily accepted this. The same is true about the angels who hold the four winds of strife. When these angels are about to loose the winds, suddenly an angel calls to them to hold the winds. This is another example that shows us that even in heaven there is first to be obedience before there is understanding.

The heavenly angels do not consent without joy. They consent with great joy, and this we will do throughout all eternity; we will have to submit first, but with joy. However, in this sinful environment and in our sinful flesh, it seems difficult to submit at first. One of the main reasons for this is that we have so educated ourselves in having our own way, and our own way seems so correct to us. God wanted something else from us, and this was always hard to consent to, because it always

went against what we loved to do. Nevertheless, by faith, and even though it is hard, we submit. Some will not submit, because they exclaim that the principle of submission is not in their hearts, and with this thought delay their consent. They will, in turn, make many mistakes, and fall into many grievous errors. Sometimes, in this sinful environment, we have to submit even before obedience is in our hearts. However, the more we become like Christ and, if faithful, deepen in this work of character building, then the more obedience will be a joy to us immediately when the command comes. In addition, even in this true submission, we still need instruction; we still need to consent to the instructions we will receive.

So let us read this sentence again, in the light of what we have learned: "And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses." The last part of this statement can be turned around by saying, "When carrying out our own impulses we are obeying Him". We know this is incorrect, because this entirely changes the meaning of what the sentence is saying. In other words, what are the most important words of this part of this statement? "When obeying Him," are the most important words and not the words, "our own impulses." This is a deception of Satan, in that he takes this very statement, or principle, and turns it around. He makes our "own impulses" of the utmost importance, but this is not, nor should it ever be, the case.

Let us read this sentence once more. "And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses." The Lord, if we allow Him, will blend our hearts that when we are obeying Him, we are carrying out our own impulses. Never let us be so

presumptuous as to think that our impulses, without His blending, will do His will. We need to have our will refined and sanctified. “The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.” *The Desire of Ages*, 668.3. This statement gives an explicit instruction of how to fill our vessels with the heavenly oil, and that is through true submission. We achieve this through an appreciation of the character of Christ, which we achieve through communion with God, which is to study His character by reading about His life in the inspired books. In the end, “sin will become hateful to us.”

The next paragraph, from the same book, reads, “As Christ lived the law in humanity, so we may do if we take hold of the Strong for strength. But we are not to place the responsibility of our duty upon others, and wait for them to tell us what to do. We cannot depend for counsel upon humanity.” *The Desire of Ages*, 668.4. How did Christ live the law? Let us read another statement from the same book. “These adversaries of Christ had no arguments with which to meet the truths He brought home to their consciences. They could only cite their customs and traditions, and these seemed weak and vapid when compared with the arguments Jesus had drawn from the word of God and the unceasing round of nature. Had the rabbis felt any desire to receive light, they would have been convinced that Jesus spoke the truth. But they evaded the points He made concerning the Sabbath, and sought to stir up anger against Him because He claimed to be equal with God. The fury of the rulers knew no bounds. Had they not feared the people, the priests and rabbis would have slain Jesus on the spot. But the popular sentiment in His favor was strong. Many recognized in Jesus the friend who had healed

their diseases and comforted their sorrows, and they justified His healing of the sufferer at Bethesda. So for the time the leaders were obliged to restrain their hatred.

“Jesus repelled the charge of blasphemy. My authority, He said, for doing the work of which you accuse Me, is that I am the Son of God, one with Him in nature, in will, and in purpose. In all His works of creation and providence, I co-operate with God. ‘The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do.’” *The Desire of Ages*, 208.1, 2. How do you understand this statement, “The Son of man can do nothing of Himself?” Was Christ, while walking on this earth, so incapable of doing anything of Himself? Was He like a little child, unable to do anything? This declaration by Christ, “The Son of man can do nothing,” are words that express true submission. For example, while in the wilderness, Christ could have easily made bread from the stones, and was sorely tempted to do this. In fact, Christ could have done anything, but He had such a spirit of a true seeker, needing instruction at every step, like a little child, that He said, “The Son of man can do nothing.”

Is this our attitude? Are we as little children needing instruction constantly? If so, then we have the spirit of a true seeker. If the opposite is true, in that we think we know everything and think we have to take control of everything, then we lack the spirit of a true seeker. Honestly, I too want to become more of a true seeker, and to always remain a true seeker. I do not want to feel like a helpless little child one moment, and then the next moment think I have everything under control. In fact, I find the more I think I have matters under control, the more failures and mistakes I make. Therefore, I wish to say, as Jesus did, “The Son can do nothing of Himself but what He seeth the Father do.”

“The priests and rabbis were taking the Son of God to task for the very work He had been sent into the world to do. By their sins they

had separated themselves from God, and in their pride were moving independently of Him. They felt sufficient in themselves for all things, and realized no need of a higher wisdom to direct their acts. But the Son of God was surrendered to the Father's will, and dependent upon His power. So utterly was Christ emptied of self that He made no plans for Himself. He accepted God's plans for Him, and day by day the Father unfolded His plans. So should we depend upon God, that our lives may be the simple outworking of His will." *The Desire of Ages*, 208.2. This paragraph defines what Christ meant when He said, I can do nothing of Myself. The Son of God surrendered to His Father's will, and this is true submission.

What does this mean, "And dependent upon His power?" During His earthly sojourn, Jesus executed many miracles, like stilling the storm, healing the sick, casting out demons, and even resurrecting the dead. Did Jesus do these miracles in His own power? Absolutely not. Could He have done these in His own power? Certainly, for He could have, for example, made bread from the stones during His wilderness experience. However, Christ was dependent upon God, and in this, He made no plans for Himself.

Let us read a statement from the same book about this point. "When Jesus was awakened to meet the storm, He was in perfect peace. There was no trace of fear in word or look, for no fear was in His heart. But He rested not in the possession of almighty power. It was not as the 'Master of earth and sea and sky' that He reposed in quiet. That power He had laid down, and He says, 'I can of Mine own self do nothing.' John 5:30. He trusted in the Father's might. It was in faith—faith in God's love and care—that Jesus rested, and the power of that word which stilled the storm was the power of God." *The Desire of Ages*, 336.1.

I am amazed how Jesus could do this, because He was God, after all, and as God, He

is omniscient and omnipotent. He could read hearts, work any miracle, He could have done anything, whenever and whatever He wished. Nevertheless, He came to be our example in all things; He depended exclusively on God. This may be a bit of a mystery to us, but we can grasp this by faith, and our understanding will increase. We can gain some understanding when we see this in our own lives. In other words, one can also do many things independent of God, at least seemingly. For instance, when I arise in the morning, I do not need to pray. I can brush my teeth, shower, and so forth, and then go to work. I do not need to have dependence on God, for I can do all this in my own strength, or can this be true? This would, of course, be utter foolishness, for I need to have absolute dependence on God. I should have a fear of not depending on God, and fear to take one step out of the house unless my Father leads me! Jesus depended solely on the Father. "I can of My own self do nothing." *John* 5:30. That power He had laid down. Can we lay down our powers as Jesus laid down His power? "He trusted in the Father's might. It was in faith—faith in God's love and care—that Jesus rested, and the power of that word which stilled the storm was the power of God."

Now let us read again this statement from *The Desire of Ages*, 208.2: "But the Son of God was surrendered to the Father's will, and dependent upon His power. So utterly was Christ emptied of self that He made no plans for Himself." Can we fully comprehend and grasp this? Jesus was God, as God He knew everything, and yet He made no plans for Himself; Christ had laid down His omniscient power. "He accepted God's plans for Him, and day by day the Father unfolded His plans." Day by day the Father unfolded His plans--do we understand this? This point is difficult to fathom. Did Jesus not know what would happen next year? Did He not know what would happen the day after tomorrow? Did He not know that He would meet the

Syrophenician woman? Would He not know all these things? Of course, as God, Christ knew precisely what would happen in every respect, but He had laid down this power, and so Christ waited for the Father to unfold His plans to Him day by day. Christ was a dependent receiver, and our example in all things.

We, too, need to be dependent receivers. The Father reveals the future through prophecies, giving us a general outline. For example, we know in the near future that church and state will unite, the image of the beast will be erected, the Sunday-law passed, enforced firstly by the buy and sell decree, and then the death decree, then the seven plagues, and so forth. We know about these future events, but the details how each will happen we are not sure of! Likewise, Jesus would know by the word of prophecy, contained in the book of *Daniel* and other books of the Bible, when He would die. The book of *Daniel* foretold this, even to the very year, in the mist of the seventieth week the Messiah would be cut off. (See *Daniel* 9:26, 27.) The year is given, but which month and which day? In the Passover service, it was foretold exactly when the Passover lamb was to be slain. This Jesus would certainly know from prophecy, just as we can know the same things today about future events. The details He received from His Father day by day, and this in spite of the fact that He was God. It would not have been necessary to unfold the plans to Jesus if He had not laid down His omniscient power. This is quite a mystery, as stated before, but it is how Christ lived. "Day by day the Father unfolded His plans," and so He showed us an example of true submission, and of a true seeking spirit. "So should we depend upon God, that our lives may be the simple outworking of His will." *The Desire of Ages*, 208.2.

"When Moses was about to build the sanctuary as a dwelling place for God, he was directed to make all things according to the

pattern shown him in the mount. Moses was full of zeal to do God's work; the most talented, skillful men were at hand to carry out his suggestions. Yet he was not to make a bell, a pomegranate, a tassel, a fringe, a curtain, or any vessel of the sanctuary, except according to the pattern shown him. God called him into the mount, and revealed to him the heavenly things. The Lord covered him with His own glory, that he might see the pattern, and according to it all things were made. So to Israel, whom He desired to make His dwelling place, He had revealed His glorious ideal of character. The pattern was shown them in the mount when the law was given from Sinai, and when the Lord passed by before Moses and proclaimed, 'The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.' Exodus 34:6, 7." *The Desire of Ages*, 208.3. The sanctuary gives us a pattern of what true submission is.

The questions of true submission will always be the following: What is the will of the Father? Where does my Father need me? There will be a constant readiness to listen to His voice. A good exemplification of this principle is the experience of Samuel, when he heard his name and responded immediately, "Here I am." He had thought Eli called him, but it was the Lord. Eli understood the situation, and so he gave Samuel instruction to respond to the Voice by saying, "Lord speak, thy servant listens." This response by Samuel is a true submissive spirit. Such a spirit will ask the following questions: "Where does my Father need me?" or, "How can I serve better?" or, "Is the work done as my father wishes?" These are the sentiments coming from those who have a true submissive spirit. There will never be contentment, never the thought that enough has already been done, or a satisfaction with one's accomplishments; there will be no neglect to seek a higher

experience. In other words, one can make an accurate account of all his or her good deeds, and woe if someone questions this account of good deeds! This person will then wonder how his or her account could be questioned or, worse still, not appreciated. This is not the right attitude. Our attitude must focus on how we can serve better and deepen this experience, and we will always ask if the work been done properly, as our Father wishes. This is true submission.

The result of a true seeking spirit is an understanding of the Scriptures. On the other hand, if one is not a true seeker, then he cannot truly understand the Scriptures. Sister White makes this point in *The Great Controversy*.

“Whenever the study of the Scriptures is entered upon without a prayerful, humble, teachable spirit, the plainest and simplest as well as the most difficult passages will be wrested from their true meaning. The papal leaders select such portions of Scripture as best serve their purpose, interpret to suit themselves, and then present these to the people, while they deny them the privilege of studying the Bible and understanding its sacred truths for themselves.” *The Great Controversy*, 521.2. Positively speaking, whenever the study of the Scriptures is entered upon, with a prayerful, humble, and teachable spirit, the plainest and simplest, as well as the most difficult passages, will be understood in their true meaning, and this is the promise.

We turn now to a similar statement in the same book. “We should exert all the powers of the mind in the study of the Scriptures and

What is the Result of Seeking?

- Only in this way can the Scriptures be understood (*The Great Controversy*, 521.2; 599.1)
- No limit to the attainments (*Education*, 124.3)

should task the understanding to comprehend, as far as mortals can, the deep things of God; yet we must not forget that the docility and submission of a child is the true spirit of the learner. Scriptural difficulties can never be mastered by the same methods that are employed in grappling with philosophical problems. We should not engage in the study of the Bible with that self-reliance with which so many enter the domains of science, but with a prayerful dependence upon God and a sincere desire to learn His will. We must come with a humble and teachable spirit to obtain knowledge from the great I AM. Otherwise, evil angels will so blind our minds and harden our hearts that we shall not be impressed by the truth.” *The Great Controversy*, 599.1

Finally, with a true seeking spirit, there are no limits to the attainments of such. Let us read a statement about this important point. It is found in *Education* 124.3. “And even greater is the power of the Bible in the development of the spiritual nature. Man, created for fellowship with God, can only in such fellowship find his real life and development. Created to find in God his highest joy, he can find in nothing else that

which can quiet the cravings of the heart, can satisfy the hunger and thirst of the soul. He who with sincere and teachable spirit studies God's word, seeking to comprehend its truths, will be brought in touch with its Author; and, except by his own choice, there is no limit to the possibilities of his development."

Do we believe this promise? In a true teachable spirit, in a true submissive spirit,

there is no limit. We want to read the Word not only for intellectual attainment, but more for the ability to serve better, to be more useful, simply because we love our Lord and Master and want to follow Him. We want to fill our vessels with oil, and drive out all foolishness from our hearts. This is my prayer for all of us. Amen.

Study 8

This evening I want to begin a history class. It is quite important because it helps us to be really prepared for the events that are coming in the last days. So, let me begin this subject now. In the next two studies we will consider the last events in the light of history. In other words, we will study history in order to understand the last events.

First we want to study the beast with the lamb-like horns. In the first verses of *Revelation 3*, we have a description of the beast. I will go over this very briefly. John stood beside the sea. He saw a beast rising up, and it looked like all of the four beasts of *Daniel* chapter 7 put together. It has the features of a lion, a bear, a leopard, and a dragon. Then he saw that one of the heads of this beast was mortally wounded. He described how this beast persecutes the saints. This is an important point to remember about the first beast: it especially persecutes God's people. It will persecute and destroy the saints. *Daniel 7* mentions this, but we see it particularly in *Revelation 13*. But now we come to the part that interests us the most, namely the fact that there was another beast that gave power to the first beast. Let us turn to verse 11.

"Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. He was granted power to give breath to the image of

the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666." *Revelation 13:11-18*.

Let us look at the different points of this text. Firstly, the beast comes out of the earth. Secondly, it has horns like a lamb. Thirdly, it speaks like a dragon. Fourthly, it exercises the authority of the first beast. Fifthly, it causes those who dwell on the earth to worship the first beast. It performs signs, even fire from heaven. That means that it works by deception. Then it tells those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the first beast. Next it gives breath to the Image Beast. We will call it the Image Beast, because the image itself becomes a living thing: it gets breath, it speaks, and causes others to be killed. So the image itself becomes a "person", so to speak. This lamb-like horned beast gives breath to the Image Beast, which speaks and causes those who do not worship it to be killed. This is the kind of breath it gets. Then the Image Beast causes everyone to receive a mark. No one who does not have this mark can buy or sell. Finally, the mark of the Image Beast is the number of its name, which is 666. So this is the brief summary of what we read here. What does this mean? First we are given a quick interpretation. Then our study will go into more detail about these points.

"Coming up out of the earth" means from an unoccupied country. All the other nations represented in prophecy come out of other nations. They come into existence by war and by conquest; therefore they are represented in prophecy as coming out of the troubled sea.

But this beast, this nation represented here comes up out of the land. In fact, the word “coming out” means something like “it grows up” like a natural plant. The nation of the United States grew up gradually in this manner. When it says that it comes from an unoccupied country, you may think that is not true because the Indians were already living there. That is true, but they were rather scattered. There were occasional encounters between the settlers and the Indians, but it would be highly exaggerated to describe these encounters as a conquest. It was rather an occupation of land with occasional wars with the Indians. But mostly there was simply an occupation. In many parts it was also a friendly occupation, even as far as the Indians were concerned, as we shall see later. For example, Roger Williams bought land from the Indians, as did others.

The horns like a lamb represent Republicanism and Protestantism. We will see this in more detail later. The beast speaks like a dragon. That means that what the United States speaks is in contrast to its appearance. Its appearance is like a lamb, because of its two horns, but its actions contradict this profession. These actions are the exercise of the legislative and judicial powers. And this is national apostasy, as Sister White calls it.

Then we come to the point that it exercises the authority of the first beast. This is definitely persecution! It causes the earth to worship the first beast. It enforces the act of giving homage to the Papacy. Then it performs signs. The signs are the mani-

festation of the false Holy Spirit. This is spiritualism. It tells those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the first beast. The fact that it “tells” the dwellers to make an image shows that the legislative powers rest with the people. The government will tell the people to make an image to the beast.

The first beast gives breath to the image of the beast. It speaks and causes those who do not worship it to be killed. It supports this system of state and religion. The Image Beast makes it so that everyone who does not receive the mark cannot buy or sell. This is an economy boycott. And finally, we have the number 666, which indicates slavery. Slavery is the character of the Image Beast. So, that is a very brief explanation and now we will go into more of the details.

Let us look at the lamb-like horns. What are these? These are Republicanism and Protestantism. And what are Republicanism and Protestantism? In short, Republicanism is civil liberty, and Protestantism is religious liberty. So you can describe the two horns as civil and religious liberty. These are the characteristics of that nation. Sister White

The Beast with Lamb-like Horns

- Comes up out of the earth
- Horns like a lamb
- Speaks like a dragon
- Exercises all the authority of the first beast
- Causes the earth to worship the first beast
- Performs signs, even fire from heaven (works by deception)
- Tells those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the first beast
- Gives breath to the image of the beast; speaks and causes those who do not worship it to be killed
- Causes all to receive a mark; those who do not have the mark cannot buy or sell
- The mark of the image beast is the number of his name: 666
- Unoccupied country (USA)
- Republicanism & Protestantism
- Actions of Legislative & Judicative powers = national apostasy
- Persecution
- Enforcing something that gives homage to the papacy
- False Holy Spirit (spiritualism)
- Legislative power rests with the people
- Supports this system of state & religion
- Economy boycott
- Slavery

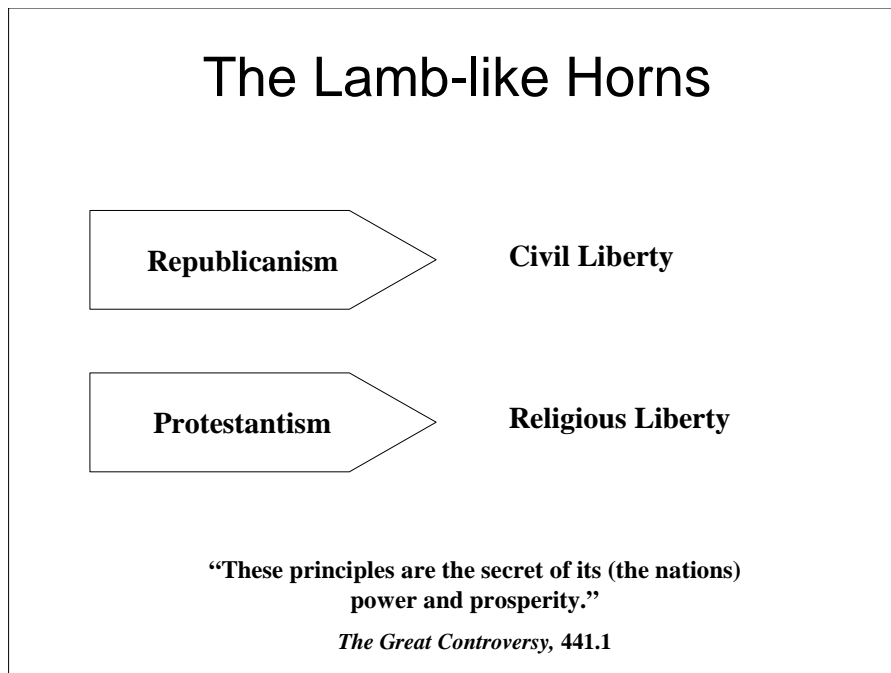
says that these two principles--Republicanism and Protestantism--are the secrets of the nation's power and prosperity. So we need to understand these things.

Let us read this statement in its context:

“What nation of the New World was in 1798 rising into power?”--1798 was the year the Papacy received the deadly wound--“What nation of the New World was in 1798 rising into power, giving promise of strength and greatness, and attracting the attention of the world? The application of the symbol admits of no question. One nation, and only one, meets the specifications of this prophecy; it points unmistakably to the United States of America. Again and again the thought, almost the exact words, of the sacred writer has been unconsciously employed by the orator and the historian in describing the rise and growth of this nation. The beast was seen ‘coming up out of the earth;’ and, according to the translators, the word here rendered ‘coming up’ literally signifies ‘to grow or spring up as a plant.’ And, as we have seen, the nation must arise in territory previously unoccupied. A prominent writer, describing the rise of the

United States, speaks of ‘the mystery of her coming forth from vacancy,’ and says: ‘Like a silent seed we grew into empire.’--G. A. Townsend, *The New World Compared With the Old*, page 462. A European journal in 1850 spoke of the United States as a wonderful empire, which was ‘emerging,’ and ‘amid the silence of the earth daily adding to its power and pride.’ -- *The Dublin Nation*. Edward Everett, in an oration on the Pilgrim founders of this nation, said: ‘Did they look for a retired spot, inoffensive for its obscurity, and safe in its remoteness, where the little church of Leyden might enjoy the freedom of conscience? Behold the mighty regions over which, in peaceful conquest, . . . they have borne the banners of the cross!’-- Speech delivered at Plymouth, Massachusetts, Dec. 22, 1824, page 11.

“‘And he had two horns like a lamb.’ The lamb-like horns indicate youth, innocence, and gentleness, fitly representing the character of the United States when presented to the prophet as ‘coming up’ in 1798. Among the Christian exiles who first fled to America and sought an asylum from royal oppression and priestly intolerance were many who determined to establish a government upon the broad foundation of civil and religious liberty. Their views found place in the Declaration of Independence, which sets forth the great truth that ‘all men are created equal’ and endowed with the inalienable right to ‘life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.’ And the Constitution guarantees to the people the right of



self-government, providing that representatives elected by the popular vote shall enact and administer the laws. Freedom of religious faith was also granted, every man being permitted to worship God according to the dictates of his conscience. Republicanism and Protestantism became the fundamental principles of the nation. These principles are the secret of its power and prosperity. The oppressed and downtrodden throughout Christendom have turned to this land with interest and hope. Millions have sought its shores, and the United States has risen to a place among the most powerful nations of the earth." *The Great Controversy*, 440.2–441.1.

Everybody today realizes that this is a true statement. Why has the United States risen to such greatness and power? What is the reason? The inspired word gives us the reason. Because of these two principles of Republicanism and Protestantism. So it is worthwhile to study these two things in order to understand what they are. Then let us ask the first question: What is Republicanism? Let us look at the Gettysburg Address given on November 19, 1863, by Abraham Lincoln, for a definition of Republicanism. I will explain why he gave this speech; the context is very interesting.

This was the time of the civil war in America. Maybe the civil war is a new thing to you. Its beginnings concerned the statehood of the United States. The United States had not been in existence for a long time, just a little over 50 years, and already some of the states did not want to remain united to the United States any longer. This caused an effort to secede. The outward reason for secession was slavery. The states in question wanted to keep their slaves, whereas the United States as a whole was going in the direction of abolition. They also wanted to have their own laws, and so they decided to secede, to separate, from the United States. Each state wanted to be its own nation. At that time, Abraham Lincoln felt an

obligation that this should not happen. Therefore, he presented an ultimatum to the states and endeavored to unify them by force. And this is what started the civil war in America in the middle of the 19th century.

Sister White has a lot to say about this civil war. I will not go into the details of it, but it is very interesting. She describes the actions of the angels during that war. They actually had a lot to do with it. Slavery was a big issue, but for Lincoln, at least, there were deeper issues than just slavery. These were issues of the "American experiment," as it was called. Jefferson first coined this term.

What is the "American experiment"? We must understand that up to this time, all of the nations had always existed as Autocracies, with a king, a dictator, or a priest as their head. There had never been a nation where the people ruled. There simply was none! All nations were governed by kings who were such, as they said, by divine right. God made them such and therefore they ruled. The people were granted freedom by permission, not by natural right. If they were granted freedom, it was not because they had the natural right to it, but because the king was so generous as to grant it to them. The English Charter granted some liberties to the people, but they were a grant from the king. It was not the natural right of the people.

America was basically the first nation built on different principles. As Lincoln stated, it was a government "of the people, by the people and for the people." That was a new thing that had not existed before; Jefferson called it the "American experiment" because all of the other nations were looking to America, a kingdom without a king--or let us say, a nation without a king, a church without a pope. And this was startling. Everyone was wondering how it could exist. A church without a pope; a nation without a king. That is impossible! Every nation must have a king, and every church must have a pope! But America started a new thing!

When the southern states wanted to secede

from the union, there was danger that the “American experiment” would be destroyed. There was danger that this example, set before the whole world, of a government “of the people, by the people and for the people” would be nullified. Abraham Lincoln understood this. The very continuation of the “American Experiment” was the deeper reason for him to stand against the secession of the southern states. Or, to say it even more clearly, he was a man who loved freedom for every person. He loved freedom not only for the black people, that is, for the African people, but for every person. He was a man who had the principles of freedom that led to the foundation of America as a nation in his heart. These were the principles of Republicanism, a government “of the people, by the people and for the people.”

When Lincoln gave this address, it was during the consecration of the battlefield in Gettysburg as a national cemetery. Six thousand soldiers had fallen in July of that same year, and now they were buried in that cemetery.

There was an orator named Edward Everett, who spoke at the ceremony right

before Abraham Lincoln did. Edward Everett, who was mentioned earlier in *The Great Controversy*, was a fantastic speaker. For his time he was considered the best speaker. He held a speech of two hours just before Lincoln. And when Lincoln stood up, everybody thought: “What will he say now, after such a good speech?”

And you know, Lincoln’s speech was very short, only one paragraph long. But it was so pointed that everybody was impressed. Later Everett wrote to Lincoln: “You said in your few words much more than I did in my two hours!” And so it was indeed! He gave principles! The thought that Lincoln saw and expressed in his speech was: “We had to fight this war, and these men here, who are dead, have helped to preserve the American experiment. They have helped to uphold before the world a nation that has a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. This shall not be destroyed.” That is basically what he said. This was the deeper reason for the whole matter, and this was the background of what he said. This is real self-government.

I want to explain now in fuller detail what it really means to be a government “of the people, by the people and for the people.” This will help us to understand what Republicanism is. At first this government seemed to be a matter of democracy, and we do not like this. We do not like a government “of the people, by the people and for the people.” We want a government of God. This is exactly what the churches said. But

What is Republicanism?

- A government of the people
 - Position: Governors and governed are equal
 - Before the law
 - Before God (by natural right)
- A government by the people
 - Legitimacy: The governors receive their legitimacy through the voluntary assent of the governed
- A government for the people
 - The governors serve the governed in order to protect their inalienable rights

here America was doing something different! They did not have a government of God, but a government “of the people, by the people and for the people.” This does not mean that God would be excluded, but simply that the king no longer had the right to rule by “divine right.”

What is a government “of the people”? What does this mean? Think about it! This speaks of position. It means that the governors and the governed are equal. A government “of the people,” of the same kind, of the same flesh and blood, therefore on the same level. In other nations, the government was never “of the people.” They were a different class, a higher class: they were the nobility, those who granted rights to the others--those who had the power to grant rights. But here, for the first time, there was a government that was exactly equal with the people. And this equality was expressed before the law and before God, or if the people did not believe in God, then at least by natural right. An equal position before the law means that the governor has to obey the law exactly as the least of his subjects. There is no difference; he should practice the same obedience to the law. Before God, they are equal by natural right.

What does it mean, a government “by the people”? That talks of legitimacy. That means that the governors receive their legitimacy through the voluntary assent of those who are governed. How this exactly happens is another question. Usually by elections. This is also what we read in the Great Controversy: “And the Constitution guarantees to the people the right of self-government, providing that representatives elected by the popular vote shall enact and administer the laws.” *The Great Controversy*, 441.1. That is how Sister White puts it. This speaks of the legitimacy of that government. The legitimacy is by the people. The people themselves made it.

And finally, a government “for the people.” And what does this mean? It governs for the

people, as it says. The governors serve the governed in order to protect their inalienable rights. To protect the governed, this and nothing else, is the task of the government.

In the past, the kings were not there for the people. They were there for themselves, and the people were there for them. In other words, they ruled and had thousands of servants, so that they could be high and on top. And this is exactly what God said about the kingdoms when Samuel and the people wanted to have a king. He said: “Beware once you choose a king. He wants to have so many chariots, he wants to have so many soldiers, he wants to have so many servants in his home, and he wants to have all this for himself. Be careful what you are choosing!” This is basically what a king is. They should have seen this all around them, because there were kingdoms all around them.

But here in the United States, for the first time, it was different. The government understood that it did not exist in order to receive service from the people, but in order to serve the people. It would be “for the people.” Now do you understand what a government “of the people,” a government “by the people,” and a government “for the people” is? This is what Republicanism is, basically. Sister White says it is one of the secrets of the prosperity of that nation. Now, in order to understand whether this is good or bad, we want to make a brief comparison between that form of government and God’s government. In other words, we want to ask the question: Is this God’s government? Is that how He governs? Think about this! Well, let us look at the model. First of all we have a wonderful description of that government in *Philippians*.

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in

appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” *Philippians* 2:5-8.

It is interesting to look into the history of the United States. The first president was George Washington; the second, John Adams; and the third, Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson was the one who helped form The Declaration of Independence and also The Constitution. John Adams was, in a certain sense, the antidote to Jefferson.

Adams was a man who liked kingly honors and kingly glory. The way that he dressed and the way that he behaved was almost as an aristocrat, even though he was the president of the United States. Jefferson feared that the United States would go back into a kingdom under John Adams. So he fought against him as much as he could, and for a time he was not successful. But finally he was voted to become the president in 1800. For eight years he was the president. One of his first actions was to go to the White House by foot, not in a coach. He did not wear the clothes of a distinguished president, but the ordinary clothes of a common man. He left the doors of the White House open and welcomed everyone to come in, regardless of who they were or what they wanted. That was his attitude. He said, I am equal with you; I am one of you, I am not an aristocrat. I am “of the people,” I am “by the people,” and I am “for the people.” These were his ideals. We are not saying that he was a perfect man, but he tried to convey these ideals.

Look at Jesus. He made himself of no reputation. That is the ideal; that is what we are looking for. “Taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” *Philippians* 2:7, 8.

Lincoln was also a man “of the people, by the people, and for the people,” until he was finally assassinated. If he had been more careful, more separate from the people,

maybe he could have avoided that fate.

Jesus was a man “of the people,” until he finally died the death of the cross. “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” *Philippians* 2:9-11.

Let us talk about the model, first of all. Is God’s government a government “of the people”? We just read it! Certainly! Christ has become one of us. That is his position. He made Himself of no reputation; he became equal with us, even taking the place of a bondservant. He is one of us before the law and He is one of us before God. What does it mean that He is one of us before the law? “But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” *Galatians* 4:4, 5.

Jesus placed himself under the law, so that He could be one with us, so that He could redeem us. He was equal to us, not only before the law, but even before God. “Wherefore in all things it behoved 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.” *Hebrews* 2:17.

Can you see that this idea of a government “of the people,” is really a divine idea? It did not originate with man. It originated in heaven. This is how God’s government functions. It is a government of the people.

Next: Is God’s government a government “by the people”? That is a difficult question. Think of the legitimacy! What is the legitimacy of a government? The governor rules with the voluntary assent of the governed. Does Christ rule with the voluntary assent of the governed? Certainly! This is what

The Model: The Divine Government (*Philippians 2:5-11*)

- A government of the people
 - Position: Christ has become one of us
 - Before the law (*Galatians 4:4*)
 - Before God (*Hebrews 2:17; 5:1*)
- A government by the people
 - Legitimacy: Christ governs with the voluntary assent of His subjects (*Revelation 5:9.10*)
- A government for the people
 - Christ governs in heaven in order to protect our inalienable rights (*Hebrews 2:18; 5:1*)

the legitimacy of his government is based upon. In other words, Christ will not take the kingdom unless it is with voluntary consent.

A very wonderful example of this is David. David was anointed king, even while Saul was still king. And during this time he always stayed in his own position. He never claimed the kingship, even though he was anointed. And finally, when Saul died in a war as a result of his own actions--not David's--what did David do? Did he rush to the kingdom? No, he waited. He waited for the people to call him. That is very interesting! By this he established his kingdom on a very solid foundation. And you know that David is an image, a shadow, a type of Christ.

So likewise, Christ does not rule until his enemies are put under his feet. They are only put under his feet by voluntary consent, never by force, because God's kingdom does not work by force. In *Revelation 5* we read how they praise the lamb: "You are worthy to take the scroll!" Or you could also say: "You are worthy to rule over us, and to open its seals; for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth." *Revelation 5:9*,

10. In other words: "You are worthy, because of your character, because you have done this!" There is a completely voluntary assent of his subjects, and this gives legitimacy to the governorship of Jesus.

Is the divine government a government "for the people"? This is easy to answer. Clearly yes! Christ governs in heaven in order to protect our inalienable rights. That is his work in heaven. "Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His

brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted." *Hebrews 2:17, 18*

He is working to help us now. That is why he is the high priest: "Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." *Hebrews 3:1*.

Christ is governing for us. That is the only reason why he governs--to serve us. So in every sense of the word, the Divine model is a government "of the people, by the people and for the people." Can you see this? And that is true Republicanism.

Let us look see whether the family government is a government "of the people, by the people and for the people." Is the family government a government "of the people"? Of course, the people in this case are the family members, not just any people. Is the father a government of the family members? Yes, of course! The father sees himself on an equal level with the wife and

children. He does not see himself as somebody who stands over them and grants them rights. He knows that he stands before the law and before God on the same level as the other family members--even the least one, even the youngest child.

This is wonderfully described in the life of the Patriarch Abraham. "Abraham's affection for his children and his household led him to guard their religious faith, to impart to them a knowledge of the divine statutes, as the most precious legacy he could transmit to them, and through them to the world. All were taught that they were under the rule of the God of heaven." That's interesting! All were taught that they were under the same rule. "There was to be no oppression on the part of parents and no disobedience on the part of children. God's law had appointed to each his duties, and only in obedience to it could any secure happiness or prosperity.

"His own example, the silent influence of his daily life, was a constant lesson. The unswerving integrity, the benevolence and unselfish courtesy, which had won the admiration of kings, were displayed in the home. There was a fragrance about the life, a nobility and loveliness of character, which revealed to all that he was connected with Heaven. He did not neglect the soul of the humblest servant. In his household there was not one law for the master and another for the servant; a royal way for the rich and another for the poor." That is how the nations had existed in the past, but not so in Republicanism. "All were treated with justice and compassion, as inheritors with him of the grace of life." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 142.1, 2.

So can you clearly see that, before God and before the law, the father sees himself on an equal level with his wife and children? This is a good government. This is how it functions.

Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address

Given on Thursday, November 19, 1863¹

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth.

1. The Battle of Gettysburg, one of the most noted battles of the Civil War, was fought on July 1–3, 1863. On Nov. 19, 1863, the field was dedicated as a national cemetery by President Lincoln, who delivered the brief speech that was to become immortal. At the time of its delivery the speech was relegated to the inside pages of the papers, while a two-hour address by Edward Everett, the leading orator of the time, caught the headlines.

Study 9

When we study government, we look at earthly governments. Naturally, we cannot find an ideal one. Even the government of the United States is not exactly like the divine model in Heaven. However, in its effort to put forth a good government it is more like the divine than the kingdoms of Europe were, and this is the point that we are making. I think you understand that. This is also the reason why we study the model, and the model is always the divine.

Jesus said, “With what can we liken the kingdom of Heaven?” (See *Mark* 4:30.) There was nothing that He could liken it with. This was especially so because in His time, the kingdoms were not by the people, for the people, and of the people, but against the people. The governors were ruling for their own aggrandizement. The lower classes existed only for the higher ones, as Sister White says in *The Desire of Ages* 550.2. That was the situation, and so America, in its effort to erect a government of the people, by the

people and for the people, was really going back to the divine ideal. We think this is a good thing; not that everything was ideal, but at least it was an effort in that direction. And we need to really understand what Republicanism is, in order to clearly discern what the present and the future events are, because when America leaves these principles, it will leave the source of its own prosperity. That is the crux of the matter, and that is why we study it.

So now, in studying a family government, we see that it is a government of the people. The father sees himself on an equal level with his children. We read this in *Patriarchs and Prophets* 142. Is the family government by the people, or in this case, not people, but family members? Is the father a governor by the family members? If it is a good family, then yes. The legitimacy of the father is that he holds his office with the voluntary consent of his wife and children. If a father has to mention every day, “I am the father, therefore you have to obey me,” then there is something wrong in that family. Either the family members do not understand what true obedience is, or he does

not understand what true rulership is. Either way, he does not have true headship of the house. He has gained true legitimacy when his wife and children gladly submit to him; then he is a good father, and then it is a good family. Of course you read this in *Ephesians* 5, where Paul compares the position of Christ in relation to the church with that of the father. Let us read a few verses from this chapter.

“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.” *Ephesians*

The Family Government

- A government of the people
 - Position: The father sees himself as being on an equal level with his wife and children
 - Before the law (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 142.1, 2)
 - Before God
- A government by the people
 - Legitimacy: The father holds his office with the voluntary assent of his wife and children (*Ephesians* 5:24)
- A government for the people
 - The father serves the family in order to protect their inalienable rights (*John* 10)

5:22. What is the important word here? “As.” In other words, the wives are to submit to their husbands in the same way as the church submits to Christ, and this is not a servile submission, but voluntary one. It is a work of the heart as we have seen and not a servile submission.

“For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is Head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.” This is the government for the people. Can you see this? As He gave Himself for her. This is a government for the people. “That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies.” *Ephesians* 5:23-28.

Well, in this case, he is not compared with Christ. (“He who loves his wife” and so forth.) So this is clearly a government by the

The People of Israel

- A government of the people
 - Position: Moses put himself at the same level as the people, including the foreigners
 - Before the law
 - Before God
- A government by the people
 - Legitimacy: Moses governed with the voluntary assent of the people
- A government for the people
 - Moses served the people in order to protect their inalienable rights

people, and as we have seen in this statement it is also a government for the people. The father serves the family in order to protect their inalienable rights. *John* 10 is also a wonderful chapter, about the good shepherd. This is the role of the husband. He is the good shepherd.

The Nation (United States)

- A government of the people
 - Position: Governors and governed are equal
 - Before the law
 - By natural right
- A government by the people
 - Legitimacy: The governors receive their legitimacy through the voluntary assent of the governed (by election)
- A government for the people
 - The governors serve the governed in order to protect their inalienable rights

Declaration of Independence

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

1776

He leads the way, treading down the thorns, making a path for them to follow. He is definitely for the people as the good shepherd is for the sheep. A family government works like this. The divine government works like this, so every earthly government that endeavors to follow this pattern is a good government. Every government that departs from this pattern, and in that measure that it departs from this pattern, is a bad government. And in any measure that it comes near to that government, it is a good government.

Let us very briefly look at the people of Israel. I will not take much time with this. Who was the governor in the wilderness? Moses was. Of course God was the real governor, but he governed through Moses. So was it a government of the people? The position of Moses was clearly on one level with the people, even with strangers. Even the strangers had rights in Israel, the same rights as everybody else. And this was the same as in the case of Abraham. You know the servants had the same rights as the other people, before the law and before God. Was this government by the people? Yes, it clearly was. The legitimacy was that Moses governed with the voluntary

assent of the people. And was this a government for the people? Yes, Moses served the people in order to protect their inalienable rights. How much did he serve them? He served them even to the point where he offered his own life for them. That, again, is the good shepherd, and this is a good government.

The United States, "The Nation" as Sister White puts it, has a government of the people; that is, the governors and the gov-

erned are equal before the law and by natural right. I will read the Declaration of Independence to you, which makes the point very clear. Before I read this, let me just say the following: this declaration holds true in theory, but whether this is the case in practice is another question, because we know that wherever we have human governments, we also have corruption and deviation from the ideals. Then is it a government by the people? Yes, as Sister White has put it, by representative votes. The legitimacy of this government is derived from the fact the governors receive it through voluntary assent of the governed, and that through representative elections. Is it a government for the people? Yes, and many presidents have followed this ideal very closely; for this reason I explained to you the experience of Jefferson, of Lincoln, and I could mention many other presidents as well. I think another very good American president was Jimmy Carter. He really understood his office as somebody who served the nation. But he was not thanked for it very much. Americans think he was a bad president, but that is

because he had good ideals in his life, and good ideals are not appreciated today. So the governors serve the governed in order to protect their inalienable rights.

Now let us briefly look at the Declaration of Independence. This was formulated mainly through the influence of Jefferson, who was the one that wrote it down. In 1776 it was ratified.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” The way that they understood the phrase “pursuit of happiness” was that each had a right to look for his own happiness. What does “all men are created equal” ultimately mean? All men, both the governors and every one of the governed, not just a portion of them, are equal. That means even the stranger who is in the country. That means that even the Africans, Chinese, Europeans, and everybody else are created equal. “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal”. This was the foundation of their separation.

Now the independence of the United States, and this is very important to note, was not like other nations that acquire independence simply because they want to rule themselves. For example, we have Yugoslavia, and you know that every little portion of Yugoslavia wants to be its own nation. Likewise we have other countries like the former Soviet Union, or Russia today, that have many parts that all want to rule themselves. Now why do they usually want to be independent? Because they want to govern. Why did the Czech Republic and Slovakia separate from each other? Because the Slovakian leader wanted to be president of his own country; he wanted to rule. That was his real reason, and it was obvious to everybody. And yet the people, because they were nationalistically minded, supported him in this. They have a dictator for

some time now. They cannot get rid of him that quickly, even though, officially speaking, he is not a dictator.

So the reason why nations usually separate is because they want to extol themselves. This was not so when the United States formed. The deeper reason why the United States separated from Europe was the American experiment. And this is clearly expressed in the Declaration of Independence. Why do we want to be independent? If we read this whole letter through it is quite interesting because it really shows that the freedom of man is the deeper reason. And why do we emphasize this so strongly? Because America separated on these grounds, it became the haven of many persecuted people from Europe. It was a haven of freedom. This would not have been the case if they had separated only for economic reasons, or for the purpose of self-exaltation. America separated on the grounds of freedom, and this is clearly expressed in these words. “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” In other words, we cannot have these rights if we do not separate, if we are not independent. We can only have this right once we separate from our mother country, which is England. And that is the same when the true church finally separates from an old church. They do not like to separate. They do not go away because they want to exalt themselves. If that is the case, then you can say that we have a wrong movement. But the true church will separate for other reasons. They will separate only when they cannot otherwise follow their freedom of conscience. They cannot worship God anymore as they see fit. The same was true of America. You see it was this drive for civil and religious freedom that made it independent.

That is the characteristic fitly represented in prophecy by the lamb-like horns of

What is Protestantism?

Where does the word come from?

- 1521 Diet of Worms
 - Luther's protest
 - The edict
- 1526 Diet of Spires
 - Tolerance
- 1529 Diet of Spires
 - Efforts to undo the edict of Spires
 - Majority vote on April 7
 - Protest of the evangelical Princes on April 19 (*The Great Controversy*, 201.1)
 - Common declaration sent to all the reformed countries on April 25
- 1530 Diet in Augsburg
 - Augsburg Confession

Republicanism and Protestantism. We have already considered what Republicanism is, and now we want to consider what Protestantism is. Before, we studied about civil liberty, and now we will study about religious liberty. Where does the word come from? Here again we must go into history of the reformation.

In 1521, there was a Diet of Worms. If we have the opportunity we can quickly go there. It is a place with interesting reformatory history. What happened there in this Diet? Luther was cited before the Diet in order to answer for his faith, or rather in order to recant as the emperor intended. But Luther protested. He said, "Here I stand, I can do no other, so help me God. Amen." That was his clear stand. So the emperor did not im-

mediately kill him because he had to fulfill his word to give him freedom for the time that he was before the Diet. But as soon as this time was over, he published an edict in which Luther was considered an outlaw and all of his followers were considered criminals. They were all subject to the very worst punishment. In other words, anybody that took Luther captive or killed him would get a reward from the emperor. That was the edict. So Luther

was under a ban after this. He was in great danger, and that is why Luther was put into the Wartburg Castle, a plan devised by Fredrick of Saxony, and a wise decision at that.

In 1526 there was another Diet in Spires. This was another very interesting event. In

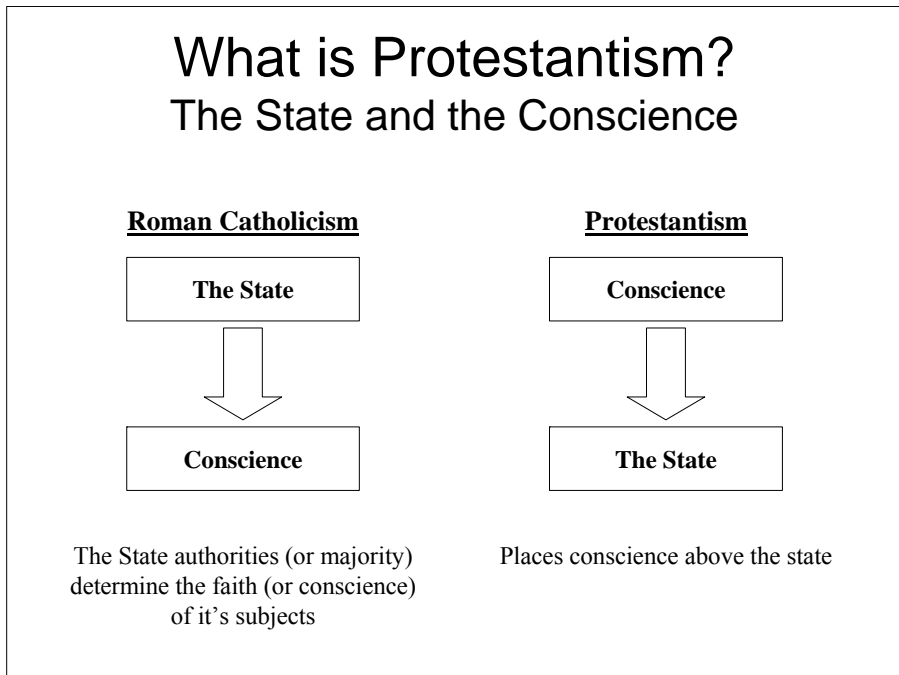
The Augsburg Confession, Article 28

XXVIII. Ecclesiastical Power

In former times there has been great controversy about the power of bishops, and some have improperly confused the power of the church with the power of the sword...

Inasmuch as the power of the church bestows eternal things and is exercised only through the ministry of the Word, it interferes with civil government as little as the art of singing interferes with civil government. For civil government is concerned with other things than the Gospel. The state protects not souls but bodies and goods from manifest harm, and constrains men with the sword and physical penalties, while the Gospel protects souls from heresies, the devil, and eternal death.

Therefore, ecclesiastical and civil power are not to be confused. The power of the church has its own commission to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments. Let it not invade the other's function,...



thought: “Maybe this will not work; since the Reformation is already so strong, if we try to enforce the edict now, we may have war. Can we not find a better way?” Then they came up with the idea to enforce the edict of 1521, but only in the countries that were Catholic, where there was no Protestantism and the Reformation had not taken root. They decided to let the Protestant countries be subject to the ecclesi-

astical powers, to the pope and to the bishops, and to suppress any further preaching of the message, but to let those who had it remain. This idea was promoted, and so they compromised and agreed, and they voted on this on the 7th of April 1529.

that time the pope was not on good terms with the emperor. In fact, they both were fighting against each other. Because of this feud, the emperor had no time to deal with the Protestant Reformation. He more or less left the German princes to decide for themselves. The German princes came to the conclusion, “We will let everyone believe as he wishes”. And that was tolerance. What a wonderful edict! The edict of Spires in 1526 gave everyone in Germany tolerance to believe as they wanted. That was religious freedom.

But it could not exist for long because neither the emperor nor the Pope had it in mind to allow this to happen. They soon united again in their battle against the Reformation and, in turn, there was another Diet in Spires in 1529. This time, because the Pope and the Emperor were united, the majority of the German princes were not so sure that tolerance was the best thing to pursue. In fact, they turned against it. There was a clear effort to recant the edict of Spires of 1526 and to return to the edict of 1521, which outlawed Luther and all his followers. Even with this effort, there was discussion going on amongst the princes, because they

astical powers, to the pope and to the bishops, and to suppress any further preaching of the message, but to let those who had it remain. This idea was promoted, and so they compromised and agreed, and they voted on this on the 7th of April 1529.

The Protestant princes, that is, those who were on the side of the Reformation, protested against this action on the 19th of April. It is from this protest against the undoing of the Diet of Spires and the reinstating of the Diet of Worms that Protestantism gets its name: from the “protest of the princes.” It happened on the 19th of April 1529 in an oral form--they only gave the protest by speaking. Later they wrote it down. They made a common declaration, and on the 25th of April they were ready with their papers. They sent their declaration to the emperor, before the other states, and then finally to all the countries. This is now known as the Declaration of the Protestants of the 25th of April. That is where the word Protestant comes from. What this protest really contained we will study in a minute. Maybe I should say for the moment that it contained the words “in matters of conscience the majority has no power,” and they let the

Catholics know that they rejected their decree. In other words, even though the majority voted on this issue, the princes refused to submit to their ruling. The reasoning for this refusal was that it was a matter of conscience. In matters of conscience the majority has no power. Therefore they rejected it. This was written down. This was a new thing, and it was startling that some people should appeal to their conscience against the majority. That was unknown, unheard of. It was a new element. That is the Protestant element. Protestantism is really putting conscience over the power of the state, and putting the Bible over the church.

This part we want to study in a minute. First of all, from that protest of Spire, where the name Protestantism comes from, we clearly see that conscience was put over the state. In 1530, one year later, there was a diet in Augsburg. By the way, Luther was neither in Spire nor in Augsburg. He was no longer at any diet, because he was an outlaw. In 1526, he could have been there without being killed, but this could not have been foreseen before the diet started. So he was at none of these diets, but he prayed for his fellows constantly.

Melanchthon, in particular, was present in 1529 and also in 1530.

The diet in Augsburg in 1530 is quite interesting. There again was a strong effort on the part of the emperor to suppress the evangelical faith and to force the Protestant princes into submission so that they would stamp out the reformation in their countries. Again they stood very clear on the grounds of their conscience. They even strengthened their position by giving the emperor and everyone else their confession, which they all signed. This is the famous Augsburg Confession. This confession is quite important because it is the foundation of later confessions of Protestant churches. The Lutheran churches now adhere mostly to the Augsburg Confession as the foundation of their faith. It was mainly formulated by Melanchthon and signed by all the other princes.

Let us now look at Luther's attitude towards Church and State. For reasons of faith Luther rejected the support by the state powers for the Reformation. He never depended on state powers in order to further the cause of the Reformation. He said, keep your swords to yourself. Without the permission of the elector, Luther left the Wartburg in order to go to Wittenberg. "In a letter to the elector, after stating his purpose to leave the Wartburg, Luther said: 'Be it known to your highness that I am going to Wittenberg under a protection far higher than that of princes and electors. I think not of soliciting your highness's support, and far from desiring your protection, I would rather

What is Protestantism?

Luther's attitude toward church and state

- For reasons of faith, Luther rejected the support of the Reformation by the state powers
- Without the permission of the elector, Luther left the Wartburg and went to Wittenberg
- Luther did not want a protestant military alliance and prevented it from happening
- "It is neither with the sword nor the musket that Christians fight, but with suffering and the cross."

protect you myself.” What a daring little monk he was. “If I knew that your highness could or would protect me, I would not go to Wittenberg at all. There is no sword that can further this cause. God alone must do everything, without the help or concurrence of man. He who has the greatest faith is he who is most able to protect.’—Ibid., b. 9, ch. 8.” *The Great Controversy* 188.4.

Can you see that that is Protestantism? That is faith. On this basis Luther rejected the princes’ help in furthering the cause. Luther wanted no military alliances, and he prevented the princes from allying for that reason. The princes said, “We have to form a league against the Catholics in order to defend ourselves.” Luther said, “No, no, no! Do not do this.” Because he was a respected patriarch, they did not do it, at least not during his life- time. Later they did. In this way a lot of bloodshed was avoided, at least during the time of Luther. Luther’s statement on this point was: “It is neither with the sword nor the musket that Christians fight, but with suffering and the cross.” Can you see that clearly speaks of separation of church and state?

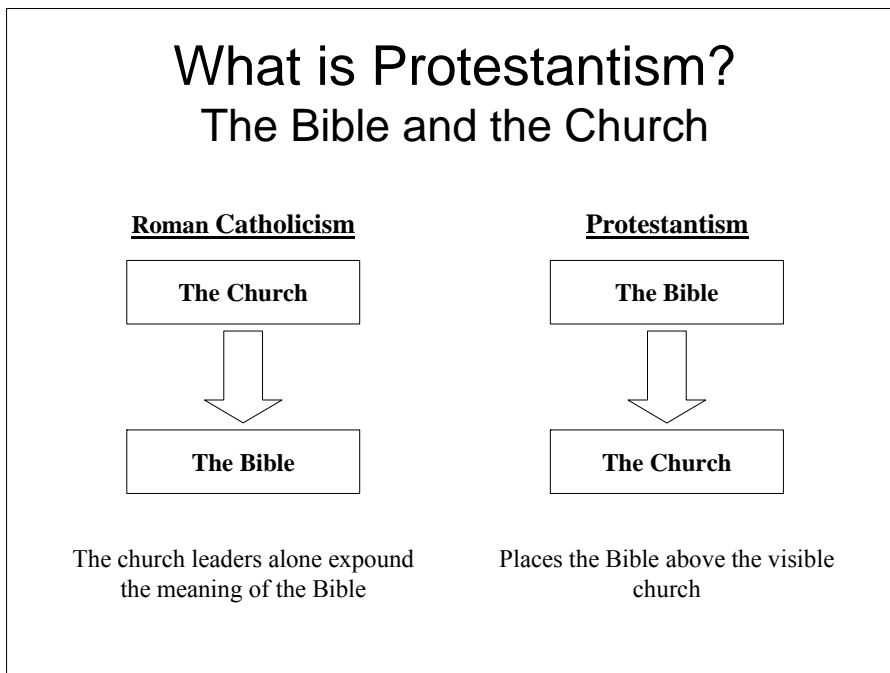
However, Luther was not as clear on other points. Let me quote the Augsburg Confession, article 28. This is an article that is headlined “Ecclesiastical Power.” It is a very long article. I cannot quote all of it here, but just a few lines.

“In former times there has been great controversy about the power of bishops, and some have improperly confused the power of the church with the power of the sword.” Quite interesting. Improperly confused these two powers, church and state. Can you see? And that was the Augsburg Confession of 1530.

“Inasmuch as the power of the church bestows eternal things and is exercised only through the ministry of the Word, it interferes with civil government as little as the art of singing interferes with civil government. For civil government is concerned with other things than the Gospel. The state protects not souls but bodies and goods from manifest harm, and constrains men with the sword and physical penalties, while the Gospel protects souls from heresies, the devil, and eternal death.

“Therefore, ecclesiastical and civil power are not to be confused. The power of the church has its own commission to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments. Let it not invade the other’s function.”

This is very clear. You may say, why did they not carry it out? What was lacking? Why did the world have to wait 200 more years, 250 more years in fact, until it was actually carried out in a country with the American experiment? The reason is the following.



First of all, let's look at the state and conscience, as we said before. The state has power over the conscience, according to Roman Catholicism. The state has to determine what you believe with the sword, with the power of the sword. That was clear Roman Catholicism. The state is above conscience. The state authorities (or majority) determine the faith (or conscience) of its subjects. Protestantism, on the other hand, puts conscience above the state. And this is made very clear by the Protest of the Princes, who said, "In matters of conscience, the majority has no power."

So what is Protestantism concerning the Bible and the Church? Roman Catholicism taught that the Church is above the Bible. Only the church leaders determine the understanding of the Bible. And Protestantism says that the Bible is above the Church. In other words, it places the Bible above the visible church. So these are the two main principles of Protestantism. It places conscience above the state and the Bible above the visible church.

Now let us look as Zwingli for a moment. What did he bring? When we look at Zwingli, we see that Luther, after his Wartburg experience, had a conflict with Iconoclasts. Do you know who Iconoclasts are? They are those who want to destroy all images in the churches. In German we call them "Bilderstörmer". In English you call them Iconoclasts. Let me explain this a little bit.

While Luther was at the Wartburg, the work in Wittenberg University continued to advance. Carlstadt was the director. Melancthon was a learned teacher and a supporter of the Reformation. The professors of Wittenberg were basically Lutheran, Protestant, or Evangelical--or whatever you may call them. And in this manner, they tried to continue the Reformation. Some with more ardor and zeal than others, who were a little bit slower: as you know Melancthon, he tended to be a little bit slower, whereas Carlstadt tended to be a little bit faster. Once there were some people who even were faster than "fast". These were some

people from Zwickau. One Mr. Storch came there and he said, "I had a vision last night, and God told me to preach to you." And the professor said, "Hmmm, that is interesting." And they had more and more visions, and they began to preach and preach, and even the elector said, "Hmmm, that is interesting, we have prophets in Zwickau who now preach in Wittenberg! It would be something if our country had prophets." But he was a bit cautious. Melancthon saw some of their points, but he did not like other points they made. Likewise, Carlstadt liked some points but not others. So there was some confusion. One thing that these prophets definitely did was to go into the churches with axes and sticks and cast down and destroy every image. And of course some people did not like it. Others said, "Hurrah! That is the right thing to do!" There was some confusion. The confusion came to the ears of the elector, who said, "Oh what is this order here? And what will be the end of it?" And the Catholics made the most of it. They said, "Look! This is the result of the reformation!" Luther, of course, could not stay at the Wartburg any longer. He jumped from one place to another, and then he wanted to go back to Wittenberg. He wanted to check these uncontrolled and disorderly elements. On the other hand, the elector did not give him permission, which is why Luther wrote the letter to the elector, in which he stated that he would go even without his protection. So he had problems with iconoclasts, with the prophets of Zwickau and with Carlstadt. (Luther himself did not agree with Carlstadt, who was the director of Wittenberg University at that time, on many points.)

So Luther, to some degree, stopped his reform. He did not stop it completely, but he did not go forward as quickly, and from that time on he was very cautious. In other words, the first thing he did was to have the people put all the images back into the churches. He gave some very strong sermons, and all the people agreed with it, and so they brought everything

back, and even introduced some ceremonies that he had laid off before. So from that point on, Luther was a very careful reformer. He made sure that the reform would only touch those things that were precisely forbidden in the Bible, and that which was not directly forbidden in the Bible he left intact. That is how the reformation continued.

Now let's go to Zwingli. Zwingli, on the other hand did not have this impediment, at least not in the beginning, so his reform was advancing somewhat more quickly than Luther's. Zwingli reformed everything except that which was expressly commanded in the Bible. In other words, he put everything out of the churches except that which was commanded in the Bible. So while he was also cautious not to destroy the images of the church, he would eventually agree to getting rid of them as well. But Zwingli soon had his controversy. It was with the Anabaptists, who began to rise in his area of Switzerland and southern Germany. These Anabaptists wanted to press forward very quickly, and some of them even more so in the reformation. And so

Zwingli also felt the responsibility to control the movement, not to let it run wild and uncontrolled. His solution was to give the whole jurisdiction of the question of faith over to the council of Zurich as the final word upon Bible doctrine. So the State was standing in the place of the Pope. Zwingli clearly rejected the pope, but he set up another pope, so to speak, and that was the council of Zurich, which had to decide from now on what was right faith and wrong faith. And of course the council of Zurich did not look with great favor on the Anabaptists, who believed that you should not baptize children, but only adults that can decide. So Zwingli was a churchman, but he involved himself to the point of becoming a statesman, and finally even a soldier. And so he died on the battlefield on the 11th of November 1531.

Let us now look at the Anabaptists. The Anabaptists, as we said before, had their beginnings in Switzerland and southern Germany, where they had their controversy with Zurich, the council of Zwingli, and even with Zwingli himself. Even though Zwingli was, to some extent, more friendly, he happily agreed to give power to the Council of Zurich in order to check uncontrolled reformation, as he believed it to be.

Now these believers had certain ideas, but before we mention their ideas, let us continue to look at their history. They spread, not only in Switzerland--and this in spite of all the persecution they endured--but also in Bohemia, Russia, and Holland. In Holland, there was a

Protestantism: Zwingli

- Luther (after leaving the Wartburg, the controversy with Iconoclasts, prophets of Zwickau, and Carlstadt): only the things that are forbidden in the Bible were reformed
- Zwingli: reformed everything that was not expressly commanded in the Bible
- Zwingli (after controversy with Anabaptists): the council of Zurich had the final word on Bible doctrine (the state instead of the pope)
- Zwingli: churchman, statesman, soldier—died on the battlefield November 11, 1531

Protestantism: The Anabaptists

- Began in Switzerland and South Germany (controversy with Zurich)
- Spread to Bohemia, Russia, Holland (Menno Simons → Mennonites (*The Great Controversy*, 238.3-239.2))
- Different groups—misunderstood by the majority
- Held to the principles of the Reformation; radically rejected everything that was not commanded in the Bible (child baptism, oaths, war, civil services, separation of church and state)
- Hutterites, Amish
- Mennonites, Baptists

not commanded in the Bible, so cut it off! Put it away! They were against oaths. They were especially against oaths in allegiance to the state. They said, we give our oath of allegiance only to God, so we cannot give it to the State. They were against war, and they were against civil services, which meant they did not want to hold a civil office, though some amongst the Anabaptists did agree to hold civil offices; however, they said, “We will make

former priest by the name of Menno Simons, who was an ardent Anabaptist. His followers were called Mennonites. This group exists today.

Now, there was a diversity of sects among the Anabaptists, and for this reason they were greatly misunderstood. Even when you read d’Aubigné’s book, you find very unfavorable judgment of the Anabaptist faith. The reason is because d’Aubigné did not distinguish between the sound Anabaptists and those who were fanatical, like the ones who said, “We do not want the Bible anymore. We burn the Bible because we have the ‘Spirit’.” There were those of Münster who promoted polygamy, and also a kingdom with the sword. It was called the Münster Kingdom, and was finally overcome by Protestant and Catholic forces. All this brought great disrepute to the Anabaptists. This is unfortunate, because some of them were very honest people. They were actually carrying the reform much further than either the Lutherans or the Zwinglians did. They held to all the principles of the reformation, but they were more radical in their reforms by cutting off everything that was not really in agreement with the Bible. So they rejected everything that was not commanded in the Bible, like child baptism. It is

sure that churchmen do not hold civil offices while they have church offices.” They found the confusion of these two offices to be a great problem, and were strong separators of church and state.

The Hutterites, the Amish, and the Mennonites came from the Anabaptists. D’Aubigné writes that the Mennonites have nothing to do with the Baptists, but they do. D’Aubigné was not properly informed. It was the Puritans who left England and found refuge in Holland. These Puritans later became the founding fathers of America. There were three groups of them, one of which eventually accepted adult baptism, but only after having contact with the Mennonites in Holland. So the Baptists came into existence when that group of Puritans accepted the doctrine of adult baptism, which had been brought to their attention by the Mennonites. Therefore, the Anabaptists are clearly connected with the Baptists, who were first in England and later in America. In fact, Roger Williams was the first one who founded a Baptist church in America. But here we have to close and finish the study this evening.

Study 10

Finding the Balance Between Church and State

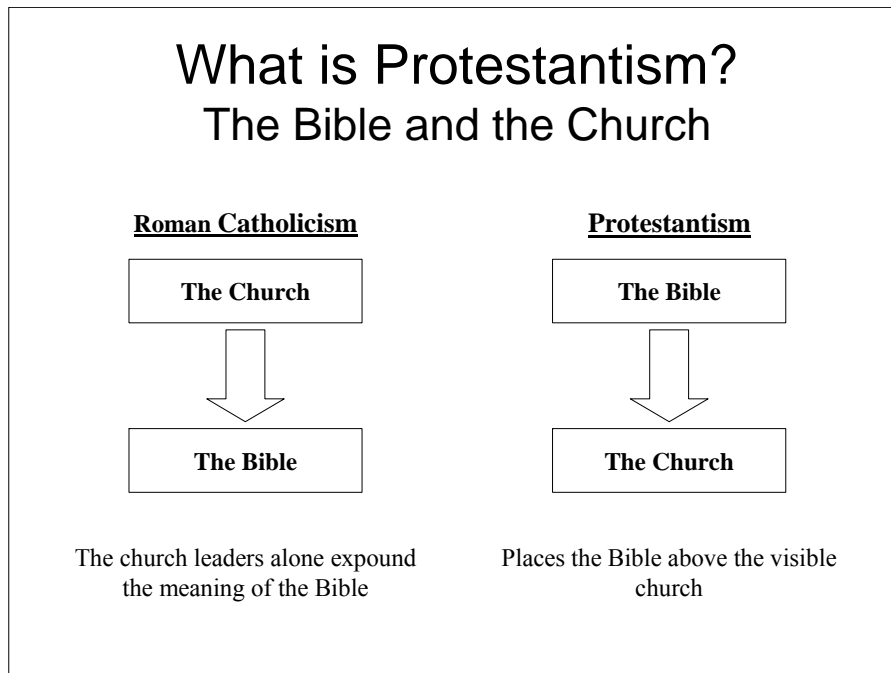
In our last study we saw that at the Diet at Spires, the princes protested against the restriction of freedom of conscience. This event in the year 1529 was a very important milestone in the true Protestant reformation. In fact, this is where the word Protestant comes from. As we have seen in our previous studies, Roman Catholicism placed the authority of the state above the conscience. That means that the state authorities (or the majority of them) could determine the faith of the people, forcing the conscience of their subjects. At Spires, for the first time, the evangelicals officially protested. They placed the conscience above the state. We should never forget their words: “Let us reject this decree,” said the princes. ‘In matters of conscience the majority has no power.’” *The Great Controversy*, 201.1. This is the key sentence, which really shows what the

Reformation is about, what Protestantism is about.

On the other hand, we saw that Luther strongly believed that the Reformation needed no other support besides the Bible. He said that it is not through force that Christians fight, but through suffering and the cross. (See *The Great Controversy*, 209.) And he steadfastly refused the alliance of the princes. Some historians say that Luther was short-sighted, that he was too slow in his thinking. But we view it from a different angle. We see that Luther had faith, and that is why he prevented this political alliance of the princes, which would have caused an earlier war. The Thirty Years’ War came later and literally destroyed Europe. This sad event would have taken place earlier if it was not for the faith of this first reformer.

What did Luther actually do when he began the Reformation? Previously, the church regarded itself as having sole authority to interpret the Bible. Only the leaders, the ecclesiastics, the clergy, could determine the understanding of the Word of God. They could determine which portions of the Bible were to

be read, and which portions were not to be read. They even said that it could only be read in Latin, not in the language of the people. It was too dangerous for an ordinary person to read the Bible. The interpretation of the Scriptures was clearly in the hands of the church. The church put itself above the Bible. Protestantism placed the Bible above the church. In other words, the church was now judged by the Word of God.



Zwingli had the same thoughts, and he went a little bit further than Luther. But after a while he handed the reform over to the Council of Zurich. As a result, the reform in Switzerland also slowed down considerably. Finally, Zwingli died on the battlefield.

The Anabaptists, with whom Zwingli had controversy, went even further. They were badly misjudged, not only by the Catholics, but also by the Lutheran and Swiss reformers.

Even today, when you read the history books of d'Aubigné, Wylie, or any of the Lutheran or Calvinist writers, you will find the Anabaptists written about in a very bad light. But when Sister White describes Menno Simons and what God did through him, it is not negative. The reason why the Protestant authors wrote so negatively about the Anabaptists is because they grouped all of them into one category. There were fanatics among them. There were the Munsterites, the prophets of Zwickau, and others who had extreme ideas.

But not all the Anabaptists were like this. There were some who held the banner of truth very high. The Baptists were a natural result of these Anabaptists. Today the Baptists make up the majority of the Protestant churches in the United States. At the time when the Advent movement took place, the Baptists also formed a large portion of it. In fact, they formed the second largest portion after the Methodists.

The Geneva Model

Let us look at the life of Calvin. It is also quite important. Like Luther and Zwingli, Calvin rejected the papacy. But he went even further than these reformers. Not only did he oppose the papacy, but he also rejected the influence of the magistrates in church matters. You may recall that Luther did not want the support of the princes for the gospel. At the same time he and his followers seemed to submit to them in many respects. Zwingli did this to an even greater degree and made

the Council of Zurich the last word in all matters of religion.

Calvin clearly rejected the state's influence, saying that the political body must not have any authority in church matters. He was very strong on this point. As Calvin reproved the immorality of the Genevan people, a party joined together in opposition to him. After a while, the majority of the Council of Geneva ruled in favor of this group, especially in regards to the Lord's Supper. The climax of the conflict came when Calvin refused to serve them communion, firmly stating that it was against principle, despite the Council's ruling. It was a real clash between the Council of Geneva and Calvin. Because he would not yield, Calvin was thrown out of Geneva and went to Strasburg for some time. But after a few years the people of Geneva asked him to return because they recognized that without him things did not go as well. Then he really established a church that the magistrates of the states would not meddle in. (See Wylie, *History of Protestantism*, 287; 301.)

On the other hand, Calvin did not fully understand the separation of church and state. He retained the idea that the church had to use the state for the betterment of society. That was the idea of the papacy from the beginning. The Catholic Church said, "The state needs the church, and the church must have an influence on the state so that it makes good laws." This is exactly what Calvin said as well. He even established a church state in Geneva. It was a state that was heavily influenced by church matters. The result was, similar to any combination of church and state, the persecution of other believers, in this case the Protestants. Catholics were not persecuted, but they left voluntarily. They did not find it very comfortable in Geneva. Some who stayed were left unmolested. But this was not the case with the Protestants. If someone was an Anabaptist, he must give up his faith or be heavily sentenced. Some people

were even drowned. One person was burned. His name was Servetus. And Calvin was the very one who sealed his sentence to be burned. (See Wylie, *History of Protestantism*, 338).

Of course, we need to understand that Calvin came out of a dark age. For this reason it is not surprising that he still had these ideas. The Geneva model, so to speak, was now a model for other countries. John Knox, who stayed in Geneva for quite some time, brought the Genevan reformation to Scotland. From there it went to England.

Maybe you remember the Covenanters who were in Scotland, and Presbyterianism, which was the exact form of church government that came from Geneva. Presbyter means elder, or bishop, and this system was founded on the idea that the bishops rule the church and state matters as well.

In principle, the Calvinist ideas were brought to New England by the Pilgrim Fathers. They were Congregationalists. Whereas the Presbyterians emphasized government of the church by elders and bishops, the Congregationalists said, "We are independent of any greater church government; each church rules its own affairs." These Congregationalists

separated from the body of the Anglicans, went to Holland, and became the Pilgrim Fathers who traveled to New England. So the New England Colonies consisted mostly of Congregationalists. What did Calvin believe? He believed in the erection of a church state. So what did these people do in New England? They also erected a church state.

Let us briefly summarize what we have studied so far. The Roman Catholics believed that the church ecclesiastics had the right to rule over the state. Luther and Zwingli saw that the church ecclesiastics were perverted and misused their power. Zwingli, more than Luther, believed that state governors had the right to rule over the church. They both turned away from the ecclesiastics and gave the power to state governors.

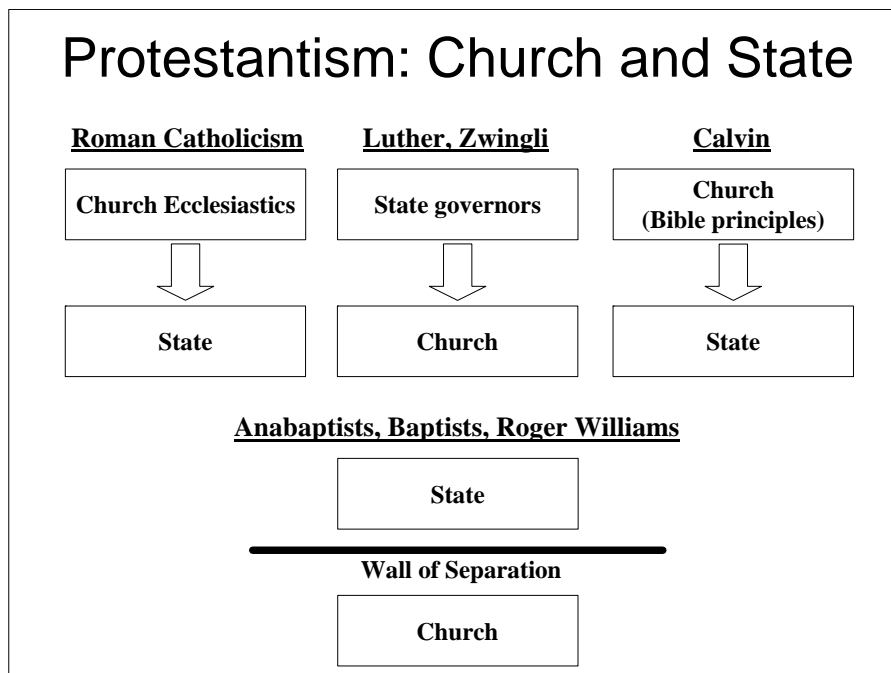
Calvin changed it around again. He placed the church powers above the state powers. But instead of church ecclesiastics, he emphasized Bible principles. That was his intent. And we can really say this was also the ideal of the Pilgrim Fathers. They did not necessarily want to erect a church government like the papacy, but they wanted Bible principles to rule the state. The state would enforce the Bible principles taught by the church. This was the form of government Calvin wanted to erect in Geneva, and which led to the persecution of other Protestants. This is the kind of church government that was erected in Scotland, in England, and finally in the United States.

The Anabaptists

In contrast to this we have the Anabaptists, the Baptists, and Roger Williams, who was a pioneer of religious freedom. They clearly

Protestantism: Calvin

- Rejected papacy, and the influence of the magistrates in church matters
- Retained, however, the idea that the church had to use the state for the betterment of the society
- Result was the persecution of other Protestants
- Model for Scotland, England (Knox—Covenanters, Presbyterianism), New England (Congregationalism—Pilgrim fathers)



These layers are all exposed. In the beginning, when the first church was erected in that place, the baptismal pool was large enough to baptize an adult person. Then, through the centuries, the baptismal pool became smaller and smaller. Every time, at every new stage, it became smaller, until it was finally just a little bowl for sprinkling children. It is evident that the Early Church, even in Europe, practiced adult baptism by immersion.

placed a wall of separation between the two elements of church and state. They said that church and state should have nothing to do with one another and must be kept separate. This was the foundation of the United States.

In fact, when we go back in the history of the Anabaptists, we could go back even further to the Early Church. They had the spirit of the Anabaptists because they baptized the adults, not the children. Child baptism would come much later.

When we visited Geneva, we were taken to a museum under the cathedral. There were excavations underneath, and a very ancient church was found there. In this ancient church they found several layers of archeological sites.

And then later it changed more and more to the practice of sprinkling. Baptists are a very ancient church if you look at it like this. There have always been those who practiced baptism in this way, who also believed in the separation of church and state. Some examples are the Waldenses and the Albigenses.

The more modern Anabaptists came into existence at about the time of the Reformation. Now we will watch a film that gives a more objective view of them. But let me emphasize again that when you look at the Anabaptists from the angle of the Lutherans, you will always get a wrong picture.

Study 11

We want to continue our subject on the ten virgins. One of the things we studied earlier was the fact that we need a questioning and submissive spirit in order to fill our vessels with oil. We have seen that there is a lack of submission on our part because we want to live in our own world. So, our subject will be leaving our own world.

We need to understand how to leave our own world in order to fill our vessels with oil. First we need to see what our own world is. What does this term mean? We need to understand its meaning.

What is my own world? It is building up my own kingdom. You may say we have studied this already. Babylon is building its own kingdom; Egypt is building its own kingdom. Or rather, Babylon tries to build God's kingdom man's way. But it is really building its own kingdom within The Kingdom. This is true; yet we want to look deeper into it, to apply it to our lives. It is withdrawing into my own castle so that I can escape duty. This castle may be many things. It can be a dream world; it can be pleasure seeking; but it can also be work.

Let me use an example. Perhaps I am given the job of sweeping a street, but I do not like sweeping. I like working on computers, and so I turn on the computer to work on spreadsheets instead of sweeping. Even though this is diligent work, I am still building my own world. It is an escape from duty, a lack of full submission.

We want to study the rich young ruler as an example. "Now behold, one came and said to Him, 'Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?' So He said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.' He said to Him, 'Which ones?' Jesus said, 'You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and your mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' The young man said to Him, 'All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?' Jesus said to him, 'If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.' But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.'" *Matthew 19:16-24.*

What is "My Own World"?

- Building my own kingdom
- Withdrawing into my own castle in order to escape duty
- Lack of full submission
- Example: The Rich Young Ruler
([Matthew 19:16-30](#); [The Desire of Ages, 518-523](#))

This man who “went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions” is an example of a person who is going into his own world. Because he is in his own world, he cannot follow Jesus; and because he cannot follow Jesus, he loses eternal life. Jesus was very sad about this, and the young man was sad as well. They were good friends. You could say they departed on good terms. And yet they departed. They went their different ways.

Sister White gives us a very serious warning in her comments on this interesting story. It is important for us to understand this in order to fully appreciate what building our own world is.

“The young man who asked this question was a ruler. He had great possessions, and occupied a position of responsibility. He saw the love that Christ manifested toward the children brought to Him; he saw how tenderly He received them, and took them up in His arms, and his heart kindled with love for the Saviour. He felt a desire to be His disciple. He was so deeply moved that as Christ was going on His way, he ran after Him, and kneeling at His feet, asked with sincerity and earnestness the question so important to his soul and to the soul of every human being, ‘Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?’” *The Desire of Ages*, 518.2.

What is the background of his question, “What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” He saw the love that Christ manifested toward the children; he saw how tenderly He received them; he felt a desire to be His disciple. These are the same characteristics of the foolish virgins. They sincerely want the truth; they desire to be in company with the believers; they advocate the truth; and they are not hypocrites. Do all of these apply to the rich young ruler? Certainly! At the same time, self was not fully broken. Does this apply to the rich young ruler? Yes! So what was he? He was a foolish virgin. Of course it is not stated like this, but it is very clear that he had all the marks of a foolish virgin. Let us continue.

“‘Why callest thou Me good?’ said Christ.” Here we can see how Jesus really makes every effort to deliver a person from being a foolish virgin. “Why callest thou Me good?” Why did He ask this question? He wanted the man think a little bit.

Yesterday we received a questionnaire. What was the purpose of this questionnaire? To make us think a little bit. It was not just an intellectual exercise, an academic questionnaire to see if we received good or bad marks. That was not the case. It was given to make us think about where we stand. This is also the purpose of the Sabbath School Lessons. And this is the reason why Jesus asked the question: “Why callest thou Me good? There is none good but One, that is, God.” In other words, Jesus gave him a puzzle; He gave him something with which to exercise his mind.

“Jesus desired to test the ruler’s sincerity, and to draw from him the way in which he regarded Him as good. Did he realize that the One to whom he was speaking was the Son of God? What was the true sentiment of his heart?”

“This ruler had a high estimate of his own righteousness. He did not really suppose that he was defective in anything, yet he was not altogether satisfied.” *The Desire of Ages*, 518.3, 4. This is interesting; the foolish virgin is described very well here. They do not really see that they are foolish virgins, and yet they are not altogether satisfied. “He felt the want of something that he did not possess. Could not Jesus bless him as He blessed the little children, and satisfy his soul want?”

“In reply to this question Jesus told him that obedience to the commandments of God was necessary if he would obtain eternal life; and He quoted several of the commandments which show man’s duty to his fellow men.” *The Desire of Ages*, 518.4, 5. You may question why Jesus said all this; He knew that the ruler’s answer would be, “I keep all this”. (See *Luke* 18:20, 21.) This was not a new message, as such. How could such an answer

deliver him from the Laodicean condition? There was a purpose behind this. As this young man meditated upon it, he would see that he really did not keep the commandments, because if you break one of them, you break them all. (See *James* 2:10.)

“The ruler’s answer was positive: ‘All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?’” *The Desire of Ages*, 518.5. Any lack has something to do with the commandments, but he did not see that. “Christ looked into the face of the young man, as if reading his life and searching his character. He loved him, and He hungered to give him that peace and grace and joy which would materially change his character. ‘One thing thou lackest,’ He said; ‘go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.’” *The Desire of Ages*, 519.1.

This seems like a contradiction. First Christ tells the ruler, “There is only one thing, one little thing missing;” and then He demands everything. The ruler would have expected it to be something small like a dollar; another piece of land; a goat; or something that can be taken care of quickly. But no, Christ said, “Go and sell everything.” It was a bit too much.

“Christ was drawn to this young man. He knew him to be sincere in his assertion, ‘All these things have I kept from my youth.’ The Redeemer longed to create in him that discernment which would enable him to see the necessity of heart devotion and Christian goodness. He longed to see in him a humble and contrite heart, conscious of the supreme love to be given to God, and hiding its lack in the perfection of Christ.” *The Desire of Ages*, 519.2.

The rich young man really thought that he had given everything. But in reality, he had given nothing. He lived in a world of his own, and somehow Jesus needed to show this to him. For this reason He said, “Give Me

everything, absolutely everything, and keep nothing.”

Jesus only asks us to give Him those things that work for our harm. The things the young ruler had were not sinful in themselves, but they were keeping him involved in a world which was separate from Christ’s. In order to prevent this, he needed to fully give up his own world.

Sometimes we even have to give up the good things in our lives. And then it takes a long time until God can give them back to us because our heart is still clinging to them in a wrong way. It may be that I have a weakness for certain things, and the Lord has to take these things away from me. It was forty years before God could give Moses his job back. But God does not really take these things away from us. He knows that even though they are not sinful in themselves, if they would stay there, they would keep us in our own world. Other calamities come over us where God seems to take things away from us, but this is for our own good because those things were building our own world. There is nothing we can really give to God, except He gives it back to us a hundredfold.

“Jesus saw in this ruler just the help He needed if the young man would become a co-laborer with Him in the work of salvation. If he would place himself under Christ’s guidance, he would be a power for good. In a marked degree the ruler could have represented Christ; for he possessed qualifications, which, if he were united with the Saviour, would enable him to become a divine force among men. Christ, seeing into his character, loved him. Love for Christ was awakening in the ruler’s heart; for love begets love. Jesus longed to see him a co-worker with Him. He longed to make him like Himself, a mirror in which the likeness of God would be reflected. He longed to develop the excellence of his character, and sanctify it to the Master’s use. If the ruler had then given himself to Christ, he would have grown in the

atmosphere of His presence. If he had made this choice, how different would have been his future!

“‘One thing thou lackest,’ Jesus said. ‘If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow Me.’ Christ read the ruler’s heart. Only one thing he lacked, but that was a vital principle. He needed the love of God in the soul. This lack, unless supplied, would prove fatal to him; his whole nature would become corrupted”. *The Desire of Ages*, 519.3, 4.

When we read of the love of God, we often have a wrong understanding of it. In our minds, the love of God is simply to have mercy on somebody else; to have sympathy with another person, and such things. But the love of God means to love Him so much that we give up everything for Him. It really means sacrifice. And very often those who exercise sympathy with a weak person are his worst enemies. Maybe this young ruler was such a person. In fact, Judas was like this. He felt that Jesus dealt too harshly with the young ruler. Judas thought it was not love. But it was love. And this ruler needed that love of God in his soul. This lack, unless supplied, would prove fatal to him--his whole nature would become corrupt.

“By indulgence, selfishness would strengthen. That he might receive the love of God, his supreme love of self must be surrendered.

“Christ gave this man a test. He called upon him to choose between the heavenly treasure and worldly greatness. The heavenly treasure was assured him if he would follow Christ. But self must yield; his will must be given into Christ’s control. The very holiness of God was offered to the young ruler. He had the privilege of becoming a son of God, and a coheir with Christ to the heavenly treasure. But he must take up the cross, and follow the Saviour in the path of self-denial.” *The Desire of Ages*, 519.4, 5.

When we look at the story, we think this man was foolish because he could exchange his temporal possessions with the eternal privilege of being Christ’s disciple. Our desire is to be a disciple of Christ. If Jesus was among us, you would want to walk with Him everyday and listen to His teaching personally. What a privilege that would be! But let us think about it more carefully. Maybe we would be as foolish as this young ruler. Remember, the young ruler was required to sell everything he had--everything. I do not know if he had a family, maybe he did. Maybe he had dependents to look after. What then? To sell everything meant to take away everything that gave him security, everything. And for what? For a spurious teacher.

At that time, Jesus did not appear as the glorious Messiah; he was a very normal man like everybody else. So what was to be gained by following after Him now? Who knows whether He would succeed or fail? There were many spiritual teachers in those days who stood up and preached something, but the next day they were nothing. Like stars shooting up, and shooting back down as fast as they came up. And why does it happen like this? Do not be too enthusiastic, but be more sober minded, be more thoughtful of your future. In other words, make sure that what you do is the right thing. What evidence do you have that this person is leading you the right way? In the end, when His mission fails, you will have sold everything and you’ll end up a beggar. Do you want that? Would we have sold everything? Ask yourself. Would we really have done so?

You may say, Jesus does not demand this from us today. That is only a story from the New Testament. We can study it as long as we wish. It does not mean that we have to sell everything. It is a good story. But that is the point of our own world. Here is something that the man clung to, and it was absolutely necessary.

Let us look at some other histories. Take Roger Williams, for example. He left his home, his place of safety, to travel into the wilderness. He did not plan his travels; he just followed God's guidance. When we think of others who left the cities and other comfortable places in order to follow the Lord, or for the sake of their children, we see that they really understood what it means to give up something.

The more we cling to things, the more dangerous it is. We can even cling to the work of God. Suppose we are ministers of a certain church, and we are very acquainted with these church members. We love them and they love us. There is a wonderful relationship, and we just love to be there. But the Lord calls us to go somewhere else--to a place where we do not know people, maybe to a place where there are no believers yet. Would we like to do this? You see, the point is that maybe we are clinging to our own world even within the church. Then Jesus has to send us to another place. You are becoming too selfish in the place where you are, even though you do not realize it. You love it too much. You must come out of there. Moses was a very good example. He had to leave everything because he was too attached to his foster mother.

We will continue in *The Desire of Ages*. "Christ's words were verily to the ruler the invitation, 'Choose you this day whom ye will serve.' Joshua 24:15. The choice was left with him. Jesus was yearning for his conversion. He had shown him the plague spot in his character, and with what deep interest He watched the issue as the young man weighed the question! If he decided to follow Christ, he must obey His words in everything. He must turn from his ambitious projects. With what earnest, anxious longing, what soul hunger, did the Saviour look at the young man, hoping that he would yield to the invitation of the Spirit of God!

"Christ made the only terms which could place the ruler where he would perfect a Christian character. His words were words of

wisdom, though they appeared severe and exacting. In accepting and obeying them was the ruler's only hope of salvation. His exalted position and his possessions were exerting a subtle influence for evil upon his character. If cherished, they would supplant God in his affections. To keep back little or much from God was to retain that which would lessen his moral strength and efficiency; for if the things of this world are cherished, however uncertain and unworthy they may be, they will become all-absorbing.

"The ruler was quick to discern all that Christ's words involved, and he became sad." *The Desire of Ages*, 520.1-3.

In fact, I tend to think it is healthy to be a little bit suspicious every time we begin to like something too much. Let us take food, for example. If we like sweet things too much, we should become suspicious. After a while we want it sweeter and sweeter and sweeter. Then we do not like normal food anymore.

Joseph Bates always became suspicious when he liked something too much. When he looked forward to having one grog per day, he became suspicious. He thought there must be something wrong with it if he was looking forward to it so much. So then he gave it up.

Perhaps you like tea too much. You are attached to it. Then you must let it go. Even the love of others toward us--if we like it too much, let us really ask ourselves if it should not be laid on the altar. Some things may not be sinful in themselves. Again there are things that are not sinful, that the Lord may not take away from us completely. It may be that He directs our mind in a totally different channel, in order to keep us from becoming too involved in our own world.

"He was a member of the honored council of the Jews." Was it wrong to be honored? Could the young ruler help it if he was honored, being a member of this council? No, but it was his own world. It was where he felt secure, where he liked to be, and where he

knew how to walk. "And Satan was tempting him with flattering prospects of the future." It can go on like this, he can become greater and greater. "He wanted the heavenly treasure, but he wanted also the temporal advantages his riches would bring him." He did not mind giving generously to the poor, but to give everything was something else. "He was sorry that such conditions existed; he desired eternal life, but he was not willing to make the sacrifice. The cost of eternal life seemed too great, and he went away sorrowful; 'for he had great possessions.'

"His claim that he had kept the law of God was a deception. He showed that riches were his idol. He could not keep the commandments of God while the world was first in his affections. He loved the gifts of God more than he loved the Giver. Christ had offered the young man fellowship with Himself. 'Follow Me,' He said. But the Saviour was not so much to him as his own name among men or his possessions. To give up his earthly treasure, that was seen, for the heavenly treasure, that was unseen, was too great a risk. He refused the offer of eternal life, and went away, and ever after the world was to receive his worship. Thousands are passing through this ordeal, weighing Christ against the world; and many choose the world. Like the young ruler, they turn from the Saviour, saying in their hearts, I will not have this Man as my leader.

"Christ's dealing with the young man is presented as an object lesson. God has given us the rule of conduct which every one of His servants must follow. It is obedience to His law, not merely a legal obedience, but an obedience which enters into the life, and is exemplified in the character. God has set His own standard of character for all who would become subjects of His kingdom. Only those who will become co-workers with Christ, only those who will say, Lord, all I have and all I am is Thine, will be acknowledged as sons and daughters of God. All should con-

sider what it means to desire heaven, and yet to turn away because of the conditions laid down. Think of what it means to say 'No' to Christ. The ruler said, No, I cannot give You all. Do we say the same? The Saviour offers to share with us the work God has given us to do. He offers to use the means God has given us, to carry forward His work in the world. Only in this way can He save us.

"The ruler's possessions were entrusted to him that he might prove himself a faithful steward; he was to dispense these goods for the blessing of those in need. So God now entrusts men with means, with talents and opportunities, that they may be His agents in helping the poor and the suffering. He who uses his entrusted gifts as God designs becomes a co-worker with the Saviour. He wins souls to Christ, because he is a representative of His character." *The Desire of Ages*, 520.3–523.2.

There seemed to be an illogical procedure in the suggestion of Jesus. If the ruler would sell everything that he had and give it to the poor, he would be deprived of giving to the poor in the future. It would be wiser to give as much as he could afford, and then give more later. Meanwhile, his money could accumulate in the bank. That would be the wise thing to do. The point is that this man would not have used that money that he had saved for God's cause, but for his own glorification. Even if we give to the poor we can exalt ourselves. Even if we give our service to Christ, we can do it in order to please ourselves, in order to build our own world.

How many individuals have given generously, only to exalt themselves? How many names do we find inscribed in the church books? "This church was dedicated by Mister so and so." Or: "This special place was dedicated by Mister so and so." Maybe you have seen this. This is not giving everything to Jesus. It is exalting one's own name.

One part of our world is to exalt ourselves, but that is not necessarily everything. It may

be that I give to Christ in order to be able to continue hiding my sins. I give Him something so that people do not ask questions, but I can continue with my sin. "He is a generous person! Everything he does is right. Do not ask questions, because he is a generous giver to the cause." Jesus never looked upon people like this.

We can even use service, any type of service, to build our own world. We may even build up our own church. If we move to an area and build a church there, when it becomes our church; our little pet, our world in which we live. It is our accomplishment. This is not giving everything for Christ.

"To those who, like the young ruler, are in high positions of trust and have great possessions, it may seem too great a sacrifice to give up all in order to follow Christ. But this is the rule of conduct for all who would become His disciples." *The Desire of Ages*, 523.3.

We have studied the history of the reformers. The reformers had a deep concern for the cause of God. In their deep concern, they sometimes made mistakes. I wonder a little bit where they still built up their own worlds in this. I do not want to judge their motives, because they were really servants of God; but if we fully give up our own world we can be used as mighty instruments today, but tomorrow we may be counted as nothing.

We can lay down our armor because Christ is in control. It is not our world that we have to defend. Can you see this? So if I cling to my life at all cost because next year I must do the work too, then I do not

understand the issue, and it is my world. It is not my book that I have to write. It is not my song; it is not my work that I have to build up, it is not my world. But if I consider it my world, then there is something wrong here. I must really give it up completely.

"Nothing short of obedience can be accepted. Self-surrender is the substance of the teachings of Christ. Often it is presented and enjoined in language that seems authoritative, because there is no other way to save man than to cut away those things which, if entertained, will demoralize the whole being.

"When Christ's followers give back to the Lord His own, they are accumulating treasure which will be given to them when they shall hear the words, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; ... enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' 'Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.' Matt. 25:23; Heb. 12:2. The joy of seeing souls redeemed, souls eternally saved, is the reward of all that put their feet in the footprints of Him who said, 'Follow Me.'" *The Desire of Ages*, 523.3, 4.

My Own World

The rich young ruler wanted to have ...

A good relationship with his fellow man

- A correct outward behaviour
- Desire for peace

A good relationship with God

- Love to Christ
- Desire to follow Christ

His own world

- His own standard of life
- His freedom

Matthew 19:16-30; *The Desire of Ages*, 518-523

By studying the life of the rich young ruler, we can begin to understand what building our own world is. Let us look at it again. What did the ruler want to have? What did he desire when he came to Jesus? He desired two things. He wanted a good relationship with his fellowmen; and that is natural, that is normal. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. That means he definitely wanted an outward reform, and he had a desire for peace. We can really recommend the man for wanting this. This is not wrong in itself.

Next, he wanted to have a good relationship with God also. He really wanted to love God. He was attracted to Jesus and wanted to follow Him. He desired to be His disciple. He had a love for Christ and desired to follow Him. Was this all? He wanted something else. He wanted his own world. In other words, he wanted to have all the good things, but he wanted to have his own world as well. He wanted his own standard of life, his freedom, his kingdom in The Kingdom.

It is as if someone comes to work in a firm, sets up his own office, organizes it as he pleases, and then does the work as he sees fit. Such a person is not very useful. He should rather run his own firm. Then he can do as he pleases. But when he works for another firm, he must really be very careful to work exactly as the other person wants. He may not even have his own office. If he has one, let it be the same standard as others in this firm and not how it pleases him. If everybody in the office has yellow furniture

and he wants red, he must adapt. He cannot have his own kingdom in the kingdom. And so likewise, when somebody comes into God's kingdom, he cannot set up his own standard there. He must ask, "Is this how things are done here? Is this right?" He must continuously work together with other people. He must continually submit. Submission is not a one-time act but a continuous one. In other words, he will constantly ask, "Is this how things are done?"

Even when I own my own firm, I must share the responsibility of other jobs. In other words, if I give a responsibility to someone else, I must give them room to do their job. If Daniel has the job of handling the computer and I would like to use it, I must ask him first. "Can I use it?" I cannot say, "Oh, it is mine, because everything belongs to me. I can use it whenever I want to." No, now he is in charge and I need to ask him. It is not my world. I am a part of a greater wealth. In the kingdom of God, this is very important. We really need to understand that we can never build our own world in the kingdom of God.

What are some other areas where I build my own world?

My Own World

- I and my family are the center of interest
- My freedom to live out the message as I please
- My sin is my private matter
- I can do what I want with my money
- I can organize my time as I want
- I serve God in my own way

My family and I; my freedom to live out the message as I please; my sin is my private matter; I can do whatever I want with my money; I can organize my time as I want; I can serve God in my own way, so please do

not tell me how to do it: Each of these can be building my own world. You can think of many other things. In the next study we will look at them in greater detail.

Study 12

Let us continue to look into my own world. What is my own world? It is when my family and I become the center. There are obviously two extremes in this field. The one extreme is when I do not get along with my family. If I do not get along with my wife or my husband, I would rather go to work than stay at home. I stay at my job as long as I can because home is not very comfortable for me. I do not like it there. Then this is my own world. What is my own world? My work. I escape duty.

On the other hand: it may be that I like to be with my family so much that I neglect my work. Then my family becomes my own world.

Again it may be that I do not like children. It is always a burden to stay with the children. So I stay away from them as long as possible. I find a job where they send me to the other side of the world. Then I do not have to deal with my children. My wife can do this. She can do it better than I. This is running away. And here again we build our own world somewhere else. How often do we make our family our own world? They are the center of our attention, of our mind and of everything.

We learned earlier that the family comes first in the message. Maybe there is a misunderstanding somewhere. Does the family come first or not? What comes first: God, or the family; the church, or the family? God, and then the family, and then the church?

If that were the case, it would have been proper for Eli to allow his sons to stay in the priesthood because the family comes first. But they were corrupt.

There is one way in which the family must come first. Some ministers seem to neglect their family because they give their all and everything to the cause, whereas others say: "I do not want to neglect my family for the cause. So therefore, I must minister to my family and not the church; that is my main

job. It takes all of my attention, so I cannot give much attention to the church for the moment. When my children are older, then I will give more attention to the church."

There is something wrong here; and that is that I am making my family my own world. It is true that the family comes first, but only in one sense, namely the sense that my family is my first missionary field. In other words, it is a duty for me to convert my children. It is not just something nice that I like to do. It is definitely a duty. The family is the first missionary field. That is made very clear by several statements. Paul says: "For if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?" *1 Timothy 3:5*. It is not possible. First he must be successful in the first missionary field, and then he can be successful in the church and in the world. However, many have excused themselves on these grounds, neglecting the duties of God and making their families their own world.

The cause of God was even more important to Abraham than the life of his son. He took his son Isaac to Mount Moriah to sacrifice him. We need to ask ourselves if the cause of God is more important to us than even the life of our family members. Ask yourself this question honestly. If the cause of God comes after my family members, then there is something wrong. Then my family members are not my first missionary field, they are my pets. They are my idols. This is something that we really need to understand. They are our first missionary field, yes, but not our idols. This means that sometimes we have to leave the family behind. We have to let them look after themselves; or rather, let God look after them if God calls us to something else. But that does not mean that we are neglecting this missionary field.

Sometimes we can over-shepherd a missionary field, too. For example: if an interested person comes to the church, he becomes our interested person. We have

brought him into the church, so we must look after him; and we must make sure that he gets the right explanations of everything that happens in the church; we will constantly sit next to him; we will constantly communicate with him. This is over-shepherding. It is really making him my own world.

This is how my family is sometimes made into my own world. In other words: Yes, I must give him this, and this, and this.

Sometimes you have to let children go. They have to make their own experiences. I am not talking of neglecting children. But if you are too negligent in doing this, you will not train them to be ministers for Christ; you will spoil them. You will refuse the school of life for them. My own world can really be my family.

What comes first? God; and then the cause of God, which is the church; and then comes my family. But it is a different matter in the sense of the missionary field.

Today everybody wants the right to individuality, the freedom to live out the message as they please, to act as they please. "Please do not look into my private area. That is my own world in which I live."

Last year and the year before we learned about breaking down the walls. We learned that it is essential for us to stand in mutual dependence upon one another. This means that we can sit down at the table and say: "Please, brother, can you tell me what I am lacking in the image of Christ?" But if I cannot do this I say: "No! It is my business how I live out the message!" Then I live out my own world. It is good to respect the area of another person. This is very good. So, unless I am invited, I will not tell my brother what he is lacking in the image of Christ. That is true. Or unless God really pushes me and sends me. But we need to invite each other. That is the point. Let us give up our own world, this living out the message as I please.

Again, when it comes to sin, there is a difference between public and private sin. I sin against you if I betray you; or if I talk bad about you; or if I steal something from you, or something like that. Then I am sinning against you. And this is public sin.

But there are many sins that are my private matter. You have nothing to do with it. I did not do any harm to you. Not at all. And yet they are not my private matters because every sin that is in my life is robbing the church of my service to some degree. It is spreading an influence that is not good, and it is marring the image of Christ in the church of God. For this reason it is not my private matter, even if it is a private sin. It must be considered as something for which I bear responsibility to the whole church.

That does not mean that I have to openly confess every private sin, but I must consider every private sin as though it was an open sin because it is burdening the whole church.

The next example of my own world is my money. Money is a very sensitive issue. I am quite amazed. What is money? A piece of paper, a piece of metal. It is nothing really. It gives us power. I can do something with it. I can go into a shop and lay it on the counter and get what I want. What a wonderful thing.

That is why people want to manage themselves. In fact, if a person has an addiction in this area, he cannot handle money anymore. If you ask him to give you his wallet, that is one of the hardest things for him to do. His wallet gives him security. Money in the pocket, that is security. No! It is not. In our days it is the credit card. But that is the same thing.

I can do whatever I want with my money, right? No! I really need to understand that I bear a responsibility even with my personal money. I must be very, very careful that I give an account to the Lord and can handle my money in a way so that everybody can actually see it and I would not be ashamed of how it is handled. It is a blessing when things

become open and you realize: I cannot do things under cover anymore.

When you have visitors at your home, they see things that go on there. When you live close together with somebody else, he sees what is going on, and that is a blessing. If you have children, then the children will openly tell what is happening secretly at home. You cannot hide it as well anymore. It is all a blessing because it teaches us that what we do is open. It is not our own world; it is not our private matter.

“I can organize my time as I want. Please do not tell me how to organize my time, and please do not organize my time for me!” This is, again, my own world. I serve God in my own way. “I serve God. You don’t see it, but let me do it as I please.”

We must overcome all of this in order to sell everything that we have and give it to the poor.

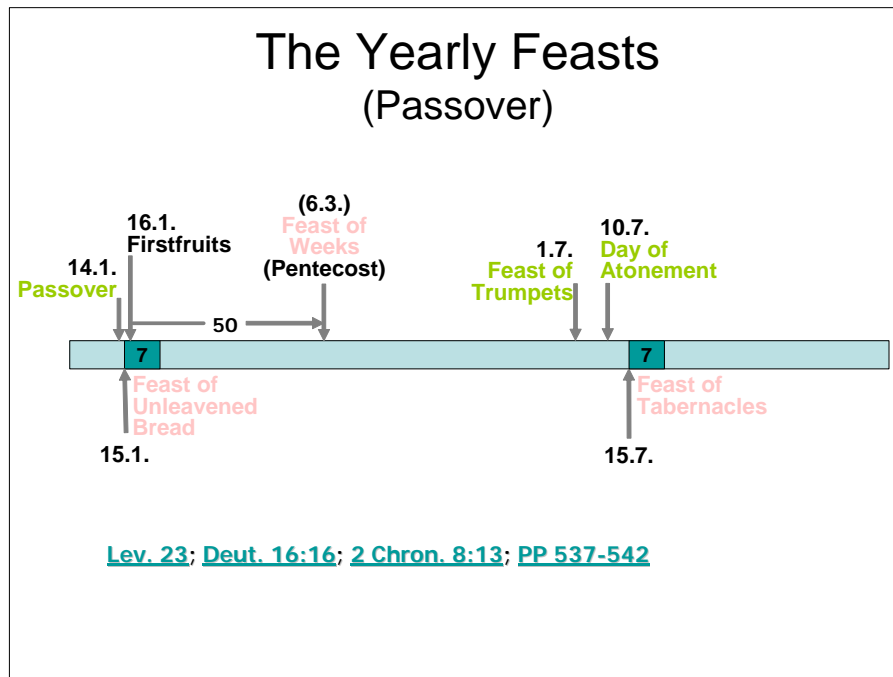
A question was asked during the break: What does it mean to give to the poor? Three or four similar answers were given. The answers were that the poor cannot repay you, the money is gone for good. If you give it to the rich, they will repay it someday. If you would give it to the cause, you can make a name for yourself. If you help to build a church, they will put your name on a nameplate, and so forth. You would be repaid. But if you give it to the poor, you will not get repaid. It is gone forever. Maybe when you give it to the cause it is also gone forever. In fact, if we give it into the treasury, we should understand that unless we definitely specify that this money is only loaned, we have given it away for good. Otherwise we should not give it. This is what it means to give to the poor. It is not an investment that we make from which we expect a return one day. Capitalists invest their money. They only do this to receive interest. This is not what we do. We really give ourselves completely with that money. Only in this way do we gather treasure in heaven.

Even the statement “to gather a treasure in heaven” is often misunderstood. In the past it was understood that if you gave your tithe, you will become materially rich. Many cases were recounted about people who gave their tithes and became very wealthy, materially. This was said in order to encourage them to give their tithe. But that is not what Jesus said. He said: give it to the poor. In other words: Give it away and come and follow me. Be poor yourself. That is the real meaning of it. Give up your own world.

We want to look at some incidences in the Old Testament where we can really see how God helped His people to overcome their own world. This shall help us to see where we can overcome our own world. The reason we need to understand this is because we want to fill our vessels with oil. There are empty vessels that need to be filled. We will study the yearly feasts.

The Jewish year consisted of twelve equal months. Sometimes there was a thirteenth month in order to catch up with the sun or to come into harmony with the sun again. But usually there were twelve months, and during these twelve months there were several feasts. These feasts all had important lessons. These lessons are for us. We should remember these lessons. They all have something to do with giving up our own world. Let us look at these feasts. We will find them described in the following texts: *Leviticus* 23, *Deuteronomy* 16, *2 Chronicles* 8, and *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 537-542.

Let us begin with *Leviticus*. That is where we find them described one by one: “Feasts of the Lord.” “And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: “The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts. Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings.”’” This was a general thing every week. It was



not a yearly feast. The yearly feasts begin in verse 4. “These are the feasts of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times. On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the LORD’S Passover.” *Leviticus* 23:1-5. The next feast is the Feast of Unleavened Bread in verses 6-8; and then comes the Feast of Firstfruits, which we will study later; then the Feast of Weeks, which in the Greek terminology is Pentecost. Then we have the Feast of Trumpets; the Feast of Atonement; and the Feast of Tabernacles. These were all the feasts of the year. We want to study them one by one and see what they have to do with “my own world.”

The word Passover in Hebrew is pasach. The Passover was held on the fourteenth day of the first month. That was the appointed time for it. That was the time when they were led out of Egypt. They kept this as a remembrance. The word Passover itself indicates this. It literally means pass over, from the Hebrew word. Why is the name pass over? Because the angel passed over. He did not smite the first born. They should ever remember this gracious provision of the Lord when they were delivered from Egypt. And the angel passed over,

therefore the name was pass over, or Passover, in short.

“And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; seven days you must eat unleavened bread.” From the next day onward after the fourteenth there was a seven day long feast, called the Feast of Unleavened Bread. What was special with it? “Seven days you must eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall have a holy

convocation; you shall do no customary work on it. But you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord for seven days. The seventh day shall be a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it.” *Leviticus* 23:6-8.

So there were two holy days within these seven days: the first and the seventh. They were not necessarily on the seventh day of the week, on the Sabbath. You can imagine the fourteenth of the first month sometimes was a Sabbath; sometimes a Friday; sometimes a Thursday; sometimes a Wednesday, and so forth. It depended from year to year on what day of the week it fell. Likewise, the fifteenth could fall on a Tuesday, like today, but it was definitely a holy day. So likewise, the seventh day after the first day of the unleavened bread. And the seventh day would be then the twenty-second of the first month, naturally.

“But you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD for seven days. The seventh day shall be a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it.” *Leviticus* 23:8

Now we come to the Feast of Firstfruits. “And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel, and say to

them: ‘When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. And you shall offer on that day, when you wave the sheaf, a male lamb of the first year, without blemish, as a burnt offering to the LORD. Its grain offering shall be two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering made by fire to the LORD, for a sweet aroma; and its drink offering shall be of wine, one-fourth of a hin. You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.’ *Leviticus 23:9–14*.

On which day should they have the Feast of Firstfruits? The day after the first Sabbath. In this case Sabbath means the holy convocation. This is on the sixteenth. They had the holy convocation on the fifteenth. It does not matter whether it was a real Sabbath or a ceremonial Sabbath. The fifteenth was always a Sabbath. And the day after, the sixteenth, was the day of the firstfruits. This is the law of the firstfruits.

Next we come to the Feast of Weeks. ‘And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed.’ *Leviticus 23:15*. How many days are seven Sabbaths? Forty nine and if you count the first and the last day, it would be fifty days.

‘Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the Lord. You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the firstfruits to the LORD. And you shall offer with the bread seven lambs of the first year, without blemish, one young bull, and two rams. They shall be as a burnt offering to

the LORD, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma to the LORD. Then you shall sacrifice one kid of the goats as a sin offering, and two male lambs of the first year as a sacrifice of a peace offering. The priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering before the Lord, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to the Lord for the priest. And you shall proclaim on the same day that it is a holy convocation to you. You shall do no customary work on it. It shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations. When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field when you reap, nor shall you gather any gleaning from your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I am the LORD your God.’ *Leviticus 23:16-22*.

They should count to fifty days after the firstfruit. This is Pentecost. In the Greek language it means fiftieth. On the fiftieth day was The Feasts of Weeks. If we counted, it would be the sixth day of the third month.

The Feast of Trumpets came next, and that was in the seventh month. On the first day they would blow the trumpets. The Day of Atonement followed this on the tenth day of the seventh month; and the Feast of Tabernacles followed this. ‘The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the LORD.’ *Leviticus 23:34*.

These were basically all the yearly feasts that the Israelites were commanded to observe. They were commemorative not only of past events, but they also pointed to future events. Each one was to give a spiritual lesson. The spiritual lesson was always how to give up my own world.

When you look at Palestine on a map, Jerusalem is in the center. That is where the feasts were kept; at least three of them. All of the male population of Israel was required to come to the center three times a year, to

celebrate the feasts. There were some exceptions to this such as the very old people, or the sick. In those days, however, there were not many who were sick, and the old ones were stronger. You would expect almost everybody to come three times. We have camp meeting one time a year, but they had three. Actually, sometimes we have three camps, too. We have the camp meeting, the international camp meeting, and the youth camp meeting, so we have three, also. Let us read this. "Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles." *Deuteronomy* 16:16.

When were they required to appear here? On the fifteenth of the first month. For that feast there were seven days; then for the Feast of Weeks which was only one day; and thirdly for the Feast of Tabernacles, again seven days. They had two camp meetings of seven days and one camp meeting of one day, basically.

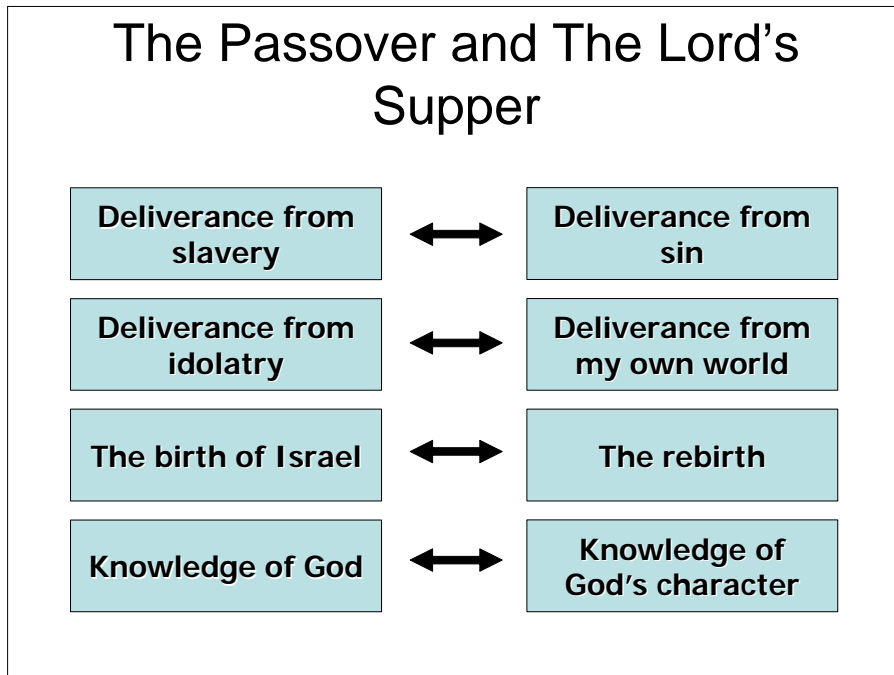
It was not as easy for them to travel as it is today. The distances were not as great in Palestine as they are in some countries, that is true; but they were far enough when you consider that they were traveling on foot. They probably needed a few days before and a few days after. And I suppose that if somebody came to Jerusalem, he would not arrive on the fifteenth; but rather, he would arrive before the fourteenth, because he wanted to be there for the Passover as well. He would try to arrive at least on the thirteenth of the first month. That means that he had to leave home on the eleventh, or by the latest on the twelfth, depending on how far away he lived. Then when everything was over, after the 22nd of the first month, he would travel home on the 23rd and maybe he would arrive home on the 24th or the 25th.

Can you imagine taking a vacation from the 11th to the 25th? That is quite a long time. At least two weeks. Then for the Feast of Weeks, again I would say it took at least a

week with preparation, going there and back. Would you arrive on the fourteenth for the Feast of Tabernacles? No, you would certainly want to be there on the Day of Atonement. So, you would arrive there before the tenth of the seventh month. Again that would mean more than two weeks vacation. That shows us how important the matter of religion was for an Israelite. It was the center of his life. It was not for his work, it was not to make money, but it was to worship God. In *2 Chronicles* 8 we read the same thing.

An interesting chapter in *Patriarchs and Prophets* concerning the three feasts is "The Annual Feasts". The first thing that Sister White points out is the dangers the Israelites could meet with on their journeys to Jerusalem. "The people were surrounded by fierce, warlike tribes, that were eager to seize upon their lands; yet three times every year all the able-bodied men and all the people who could make the journey were directed to leave their homes and repair to the place of assembly, near the center of the land. What was to hinder their enemies from sweeping down upon those unprotected households, to lay them waste with fire and sword? What was to prevent an invasion of the land, that would bring Israel into captivity to some foreign foe? God had promised to be the protector of His people. 'The angel of Jehovah encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them.' Psalm 34:7. While the Israelites went up to worship, divine power would place a restraint upon their enemies. God's promise was, 'I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the Lord thy God thrice in the year.' Exodus 34:24." *Patriarchs and Prophets* 537.2. What a wonderful promise. It is also for us today.

Can you see that such an exercise fostered the giving up of my own world? Definitely! If you clung to your own world, you would have had a lot of reasons to give it up because you could not have afforded this. You had to live in God's



does it mean to be delivered from idolatry? It means to be delivered from my own world; because wherever it is found, my idol is my own world. My idol can be my music; my school; my work; my family; it can even be my church. I need deliverance from this, and the people got deliverance from it.

The birth of Israel represents the rebirth for us. As we celebrate the Lord's Supper, it keeps the knowledge

world and not in your own world. That was the message right from the beginning in these feasts.

Let us compare the Passover and the Lord's Supper. The Passover was commemorative. In other words, it was an event that happened in the past, an event which they were always to think of with thankfulness, namely deliverance from slavery. As they were delivered from slavery, so we are delivered from sin. Israel's deliverance was not only deliverance from slavery, but from idolatry as well. We only tend to think about slavery, but they were also delivered from idolatry. Remember that when they made the golden calf, it did not happen by chance, but because they were used to this from their time spent in Egypt. God led them into a place where there were no idols so that they could be delivered from that terrible thing.

The Passover was also the birth of Israel as a nation. From that time onwards, Israel began to exist as a separate entity. They celebrated their birth as a nation, you can say. It was to keep the knowledge that God was the One who delivered them fresh in their minds.

How does this compare to the Lord's Supper? First of all, we are delivered from sin as they were delivered from slavery. What

of God's character alive in our memory. The Lord's Supper took the place of the Passover. These things are very important for us to remember. They deliver us from our own world.

We need to think about the areas in our lives where we have been delivered from our own world. Then the Lord's Supper becomes a feast of commemoration, a feast of remembrance. It also reveals other areas of our own world from which we need to be delivered.

Let us look further into what the Passover means. It means that in Egypt, the Israelites' enemy was their own world. But they were slaves; they did not want to be in Egypt. So how could they have had their own world in Egypt? That could not be their own world!

"Then the officers of the children of Israel came and cried out to Pharaoh, saying, 'Why are you dealing thus with your servants?'" *Exodus 5:15*. That was after Moses went to Pharaoh and told him: Let my people go. Pharaoh became so mad at the Hebrews that he gave them double work when they already had a lot of work. Then the people went to Pharaoh, not knowing that this command came from

Passover

- Their enemy was their own world in Egypt ([Ex. 5:21](#))
- The people had to leave their own world ([Num 11: 4-6](#))
- They had to die in order to leave their own world (Egypt's firstborn)
- Similar to Lot leaving Sodom
- Similar to leaving Babylon
- They were never to forget that they had left their own world

“Then, as they came out from Pharaoh, they met Moses and Aaron who stood there to meet them. And they said to them, ‘Let the Lord look on you and judge, because you have made us abhorrent in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to kill us.’” *Exodus 5: 18-21.*

What did they say to Moses? You made it worse for us! In other words, they frequently complained about their

him. They thought it was just their taskmasters who had made the duty harder. What did Pharaoh say? “‘There is no straw given to your servants, and they say to us, ‘Make brick!’ And indeed your servants are beaten, but the fault is in your own people.’” But he said, “You are idle! Idle! Therefore you say, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord.’”” *Exodus 5:16, 17.*

Ah! That was their problem. They were not the ones who said: Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord; Moses said this. “We did not say this, Moses said this. Did we send Moses? No! Moses told us that God sent him, and therefore he went. But it was not our idea to go to you. It was his idea. He brought these difficulties upon us.”

“‘Therefore go now and work; for no straw shall be given you, yet you shall deliver the quota of bricks.’ And the officers of the children of Israel saw that they were in trouble after it was said, ‘You shall not reduce any bricks from your daily quota.’

situation in Egypt, but they preferred to stay in Egypt rather than to be guided by God.

It is even more evident that they had their own world when they were in the wilderness. What did they complain about then? “Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: ‘Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt,...’” What might they just as well have said? They might just as well have said: we remember our own world in Egypt. “‘...the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!’” *Numbers 11:4-6.* Please give us back our own world. In their mind they still lived in their own world. When the health message comes it is an attack on our own world. Let us take a short break here.

Study 13

The memorial service of the Passover taught the Israelites that their real enemy in Egypt was their own world. This became apparent when they complained whenever any effort was put forth for their deliverance. They complained because they did not have the meat that they had in Egypt, or the vegetables that they had in Egypt, or the golden calf that they had in Egypt. They complained again and again. If they had not been clinging to their own world, they would have said: “We are so glad to have been delivered from Egypt that we will support every effort to become free of it.” But they could not show it. They were clinging to their own world. It shows that all they remembered of Egypt was their own world, and they wanted to have it back.

The death of the firstborn in Egypt was a symbol to the Israelites that they had to die in order to leave their own world. Lot had to learn the same lesson when he left Sodom. Was it difficult for Lot to leave Sodom? Was it difficult

for his family? What was his wife saying when she looked back? “Oh, if only ...” (See *Genesis* 19:26.) God told them not to look back. This looking back to her own world cost her life.

I remember when the Israelites left Babylon. It was the same thing all over again. Babylon was really a prison for them. At first they did not want to go to Babylon, but when they became comfortable there, they did not want to leave it anymore. They said: “This is our world now. How can we leave our homes? After seventeen years we are established. We want to stay here. Why should we go to a country when we do not know what awaits us there?” They should never have forgotten that they had left their own world. That would have been ideal.

But now we want to ask a question. Did they really leave their own world? When they were in Egypt, they were living in the world of Egypt. They had to build the world of Egypt, with its pyramids, its gods, its priestly systems, its religion, and everything. They were forced to do this. It was an unpleasant thing for their minds to dwell on. In their hearts they said: “Oh, if we could only be free from this situation.” Was the

world of Egypt the real problem? Their own world was the problem. Their own world existed in Egypt, too. The reason why they wanted to be free was not because they wanted the world of God, but because they wanted their own world.

God was offering His world to them. He said: “Come to me, you who are hungry and thirsty, I will give you another world altogether. Look at this Egyptian world.” The world of Egypt



should have been evidence of how bad their own world was. That is what it should have been. That is also how we should look at it, and how we should study these events.

God gave them the Passover. The first Passover was an actual deliverance. It was not a commemorative event, it was a real deliverance. When the angel passed over, they were delivered. What were they delivered from? God delivered them from their own world. But did they allow God to deliver them from their own world? They saw that they were delivered from Egypt, but now their own world blew up to bigger proportions, much bigger than before.

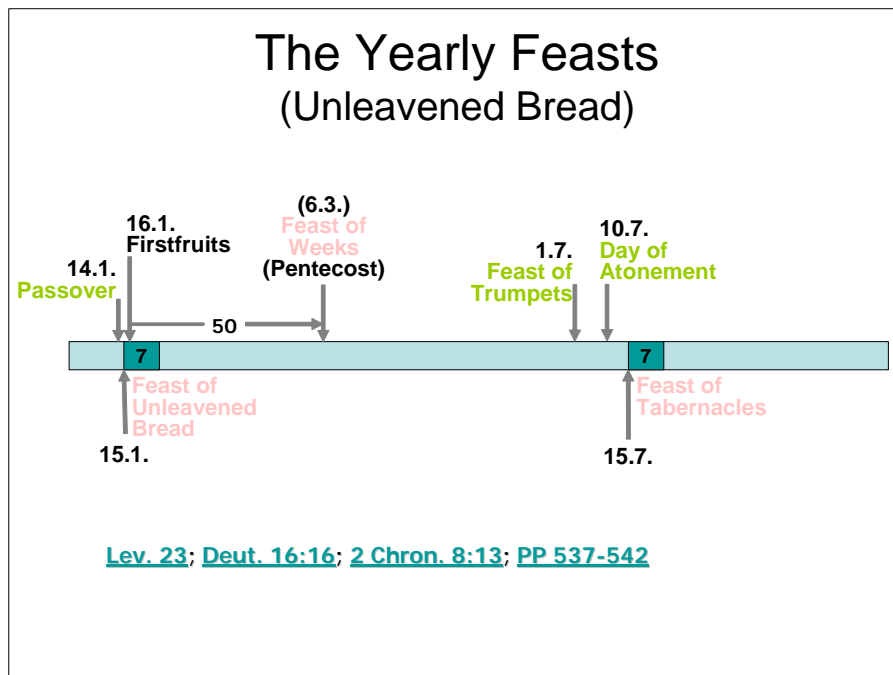
Their own world was suppressed by the Egyptians. The Egyptians did not allow them to have their Jewish customs, their own ideas, their own houses, their own free time, and all these things. But once this restraint was gone, their own world took the place of Egypt. And now God's world knocked at their door again, and said: "Come unto me, you who are thirsty and heavy laden, come unto me!" He knocked and He invited them.

Why is this story so interesting for us? What do we want to learn from this? You see, we are also living in an Egyptian world. As far as the message is concerned, we are definitely living in atheistic surroundings.

Maybe we are also living in Babylonian surroundings. Our children have to go to school, and we have to go to the hospital because that is what the law requires us to do. We have to do this, we have to do that, and we feel so restricted. But in all this we should see a symbol of our own world, and instead of hating others, we should hate ourselves. It shows us how evil our own world is. It is suppressive, it is a slave master. Let us really see this point very clearly.

Would we really walk in God's way if He delivered us from all these evil circumstances, and gave us what we desire so much: enough money, our own home, our free time? Our real problem is not the world of Egypt; our problem is our own world. We must always remember this. Of course it was necessary for God's people to be delivered from the world of Egypt so that they could see this. And for this reason, the deliverance from Egypt that Jesus gave them was not in vain. It was absolutely necessary.

In the chapter "The Law and the Covenants" of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, Sister White carefully explains how God led His people step by step. He led His people out into the wilderness for one reason: to reveal to them how big their own world was. They had not seen this in Egypt. They were blind to this. So when they were delivered, they began to see it.



This is what we need to learn when we think about the Passover today

What does it mean when the Lord delivers us from an unpleasant circumstance, like a disease, for instance? It means that God is placing a responsibility upon us to walk in the ways that He has revealed and will reveal. We cannot safely accept any deliverance without such a step. Otherwise Satan would definitely take advantage of us. If the deliverance was not real, one devil would be driven out and seven other devils would be driven in, as one person said. We need to understand that the real enemy is our own world within Egypt.

Let us go back to the Passover. What feast followed the Passover? The Feast of Unleavened Bread. This feast began on the fifteenth day of the month and lasted for seven days.

The significance of the Feast of Unleavened Bread stands in close connection to the Passover. First of all, the first and the seventh day were holy days. We studied this already, so we do not have to study it again. There is definitely a connection between the Feast of

Unleavened Bread and the Passover. I want to emphasize this connection. In *Ezekiel 45:21*, God said: “In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, you shall observe the Passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten.” Did we read this right? Was the Passover a feast of seven days? We thought that the Passover was only one day, and the seven days of unleavened bread came later. No; they are mentioned here in one and the same sentence. What does this show us? It shows us that God considers these two feasts as though they were one. And this is the reason that the Passover and the unleavened bread are under the same headline in *Leviticus 23*. It was sometimes considered one and the same feast, not two feasts.

One point that we should remember concerning the unleavened bread is that it was to be eaten in very great haste. That is why it was unleavened. It takes quite some time to make leavened bread. It has to rise, and that takes time. But you can make unleavened bread very quickly. If you want unleavened crackers in the morning, you can make them just half an hour before you want to eat them.

But you have to make leavened bread at least a day earlier because you should not eat it fresh. There is a lot of work and time involved, and they did not have this time. When the time came to leave, they had to go in haste. A lot of emphasis is placed on the question of haste.

Why was there such a hurry? Why such haste? Let us read about this in *Exodus 12:33, 39*. “And the Egyptians urged the people, that they might send them out of the

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

- The 1st and the 7th day were holy
[Lev. 23:7, 8](#); [Ex. 12:16](#)
- It was closely connected with the Passover
[Ez. 45:21](#)
- It is an expression of the haste in which deliverance must be grasped.
[Ex. 12:33, 39](#); [Deut. 16:3](#)
- There was to be no leaven in the house
[Ex. 12:15-20](#)
- The meaning of the leaven
[1 Cor. 5:8](#); [Matt. 16:6, 12](#); [23:13-36](#); [22:16-29](#); [Mark 3:6](#); [Gal. 5:9](#)

land in haste. For they said, ‘We shall all be dead.’” “And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought out of Egypt; for it was not leavened, because they were driven out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared provisions for themselves.” Why was there such a haste? The haste was because they did not know how long this door would be open.

When they launch a rocket into orbit there is a so-called time window in which they can launch it. If they cannot launch it within that window of time, they have to wait, sometimes for weeks, sometimes even for years. Have you heard about this? No? Well, let us suppose that they send a rocket to the space station up there, or even further, to another planet, like Mars. They can only launch it on this day when everything is calculated, so that everything gets the right trajectory and the right direction. But if it were launched at the wrong time, the rocket would fly in another direction altogether. So they have to shoot it within a certain timeframe and then they have to wait again until the earth has rotated enough and then it can be launched. So they call this a time window.

In spiritual things there is also a window of time. When opportunity comes, it only comes for a certain amount of time. If we do not accept the opportunity during this time, then it is gone forever. Recently a person said: “Well, I have not decided yet, I will tell you next week. Do I have that much time?” And my answer was: “I do not know how long your time window is. It may or may not be possible next week; God knows.” So you cannot calculate and say, “Next week I will decide for God.” That may not work. Maybe the time window is for today and not next week. You cannot say, “When I am old, then I will decide for God.” You do not know if you will ever grow old. There is a need of haste when the opportunity of deliverance is there. This was definitely the message of the unleavened bread.

Deuteronomy 16:3 says the same thing: “You shall eat no leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with it, that is, the bread of affliction (for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste), that you may remember the day in which you came out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life.” And again we think of the wife of Lot, how she was commanded to make haste. The angels hurried her, “Go, go, do not stay any longer!” They almost pushed them out. But when they left, Lot’s wife said, “Ah, there is one more thing I would like to get from there.” (See *Genesis* 19:15-17.)

During the war, when the army is ready, you can already hear the cannons shooting, and you have to run as far as you can to get away from them. If you would say, “Ah, I have to collect my CDs first. I really want to take them with me, let me get them”, then you may be lost forever with your CD collection. And Jesus would ask: “What is more important for you, life or that?”

So when the time window comes, when the opportunity for deliverance is there, we must make haste. We cannot afford to linger around. Today, when you hear His voice, do not harden your heart. That is the message. (See *Hebrews* 3:15, 4:7.)

During the feast you could not have any leaven in the house, absolutely none. Every corner had to be cleaned out. We read about this in *Exodus* 12:15-20. Verse 15 reads: “Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.” This is an important point here; “On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses.” This means the house had to be absolutely free of leaven. There could not be a piece or even a crumb. Why was the law so strict? Because leaven is a symbol for sin, and it is important to put every sin away. For seven days they put everything away.

How was the Feast of Unleavened Bread connected with the Passover? The Passover is deliverance. But after deliverance, there is a continuous process of keeping the house clean from leaven. If you start well, but let it come back, it becomes worse than before. When God delivers us from our own world, we must remain faithful. This is very important.

The meaning of leaven is explained in these verses, but we will not take time right now to read all of them. *1 Corinthians* 5 talks about the church being cleansed from an evil man, whom Paul compares with leaven. *Matthew* 16:6 is an object lesson about leaven, where Christ says, “Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.” The disciples did not understand this at first, and so Jesus explained it to them. *Matthew* Chapters 22 and 23 talk of the leaven of the Pharisees in particular. *Mark* 3:6 reveals the plotting by these men, which is leaven, and in *Galatians* 5:9 Paul talks about leaven as well.

The Passover was deliverance from my own world, and the unleavened bread is sanctification in the delivered life. Without

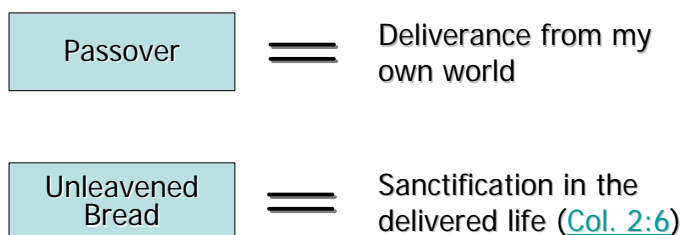
sanctification, the deliverance is of no avail. Let us turn to *Colossians* 2:6: “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.” “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.” In other words, make sure that this process continues.

Israel did not walk in Christ as they received Him. They received Jesus Christ when they were delivered from Egypt. They were delivered, they received at the Passover, but they failed to walk in Him. And as a result, their own world grew bigger and bigger until they perished in the wilderness.

This leads us to a better understanding of *Hebrews* 3 and 4, especially from verses seven and onward of the third chapter. “Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, and saw My works forty years. Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, “They always go astray in their heart, and they have not known My ways. So I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest.”’ Beware,

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 have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, while it is said: ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.’” In

The Relationship of the Passover to the Unleavened Bread



other words, continue to walk therein, continue to keep the leaven out of your heart. "For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." *Hebrews 3:7-19*. "Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: 'So I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest,' although the works were finished from the foundation of the world." *Hebrews 4:4-3*.

The unleavened bread was a seal to that which God gave them in the Passover. That was the purpose. God said: "Now walk in that deliverance with which I made you free." The Feast of the Unleavened Bread tells us that leaven is my own world. It pollutes the service imperceptibly, but constantly.

You know how leaven works. When you put leaven in the dough, soon all of the dough is absolutely permeated with it. You wonder how this happens because it is not liquid. Well, the bacteria work all through the dough to the least corner of it, and there is nothing that is untouched by this

leaven. It pollutes, just as our own world pollutes the service that we do. But you cannot see how leaven is permeating the bread; you do not see how it is constantly working. So, likewise, we do not see how our own world is polluting our services, but it does, imperceptibly yet constantly.

We must take the moment of deliverance with haste. We have no time for our own world, which is leaven. We must search our hearts in order to put away all leaven. As the people had to search their houses, we must search our hearts; that is something we need to do. Otherwise we are cut off, just as the people were cut off from Israel if they still had leaven in their houses and ate it. The bread is obviously Christ, and we do not want to mix it with our own world. That was the command, you see: "Do not put leaven in your bread." And so likewise, we must not mix the message, Christ, with our own world. Seven is the number of perfection. That means we must continue to do this work until perfection is fulfilled.

There was one more point. We will go back to *1 Corinthians 5*. "Your glorying is not

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

- Leaven is my own world. It imperceptively, but constantly pollutes service.
- We must use the moment when deliverance is available and make haste; we have no time for our own world (the leaven).
- We must search our hearts in order to put all leaven away.
- The bread is Christ. We must not try to mix Him with our own world.
- Seven is the number of perfection = continue this work until perfection is reached.

good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." *1 Corinthians 5:6–8*. In this case there was a sinner in the church, but you know the leaven can also represent sin in our own lives. First of all we have to search our own hearts, our own houses, and then we also have a common duty for the church, because we must speak out against sin in the same way the word of God speaks out against it. And how often does it happen that the church members feel very lenient toward those who persist in sin? As a result the whole lump, that is the whole church, is permeated by a Laodicean and weak spirit. We have seen this happen in some churches.

When there is an obvious sin we have to deal with it in the love of Christ and in a proper way. It is not that we are called upon to accuse and to condemn and so forth, but we are called upon to really make sure that the whole lump is not permeated by a Laodicean spirit. That means that we must search our own hearts and that we must also make sure that those who are in our reach are dealt with in a proper way, especially our own children. I really need to emphasize this, because parents often have a tendency to cover the sins of their children, and this is especially evil in our times. Because we are living in a time when there is a second generation coming up, we seem to tolerate many things that we did not tolerate earlier. This really means that more of the leaven of Laodiceanism gets into the church. We must prevent this under all circumstances. Again that does not mean we are to be judgmental – that is clear. We have to be open and polite, but very direct. That is a part of the Feast of

the Unleavened Bread. The question to ask now is, do we really keep it?

In *Matthew 16:6* we read the following: "Then Jesus said to them, 'Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.'" What was this leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees? The disciples did not understand this. They said, "Does this mean that we should not go shopping with them? Should we shop with other people instead of them?" What did Jesus mean by the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees? "Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up?" "How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees." *Matthew 16:9, 11, 12*.

What is this doctrine of which we have to beware, that is working imperceptibly and yet very thoroughly? It is when we teach others yet do not live out the truth in our lives. It is also legalism. The doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees is much more than just a theoretical doctrine. It is like the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, or the doctrine of Balaam. God is not concerned about theoretical philosophies, for there are many doctrines in the world. He is more concerned with the spirit that is behind the doctrine. You see, people teach certain doctrines because they have a certain spirit. That is how it is. If somebody wants to cling to sin, he will make a doctrine that fits his needs very well. If somebody wants to become famous, he will make a doctrine that makes him famous, and so forth. There is a spirit behind everything, and a legalistic doctrine has a legalistic spirit behind it. Jesus said, Beware of it!

Why is it so dangerous to go to medical schools, other worldly schools, and especially theological schools? Why is it so dangerous?

It is not just because of what they teach – you could laugh that off. I mean, they can teach what they want: evolution, philosophy, or whatever. You can just disregard that. That is not the problem. The problem is that there is a certain spirit that goes with the teaching. Our young students sit in class and listen to the professor. He has a lot of knowledge and understands many things that we do not understand or even begin to understand. We admire him for that, and we really follow what he is saying. We do not realize that little by little, he is leading our mind away from the true faith and into subtle doubt. There is a certain way in which science is exercised. There is a certain way behind it. It is the way of faith, or it is the way of doubt? It is the way of cooperating with divine agencies or of working independently of them? That is why we have to beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees. And we have to clean our houses of this leaven. As a people of God we have to be very careful here. That is our own world, in the end.

“But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisees, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones, and all uncleanness. Even so you also

outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.” *Matthew 23:13, 23-28.*

That is the reason why Jesus did not attend the schools of the Pharisees and why John the Baptist was not sent there – because leaven was being taught in their schools. And John the Baptist and Jesus were truly keeping the feast of the unleavened bread. Not just once a year, but during their whole lifetime.

In *Matthew 22* we also read of the Pharisees and Sadducees. And in *Mark 3:6* we read the following: “Then the Pharisees went out, and immediately plotted with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.” Plotting means they were doing it in secret. This is the work of a clique. And in a clique you always have leaven working, imperceptibly but constantly, until it permeates the whole clique, until everybody thinks like the other in opposition to the truth.

The best description of a clique that I can find is in *Psalms 2:1-3*, which reads, “Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands in pieces, and cast away their cords from us.” In other words, we do not want to be put under the law. We do not like this legalism. We do not like these reforms, and so forth. Let us break their bands in pieces and cut away their cords. We will do what we want. And how does God react to this? How should we react to this? Should we be nervous? Should we feel personally attacked? No! “He who sits in heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision. Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure: Yet I have set My king on My holy hill of Zion.” *Psalms 2:4-6.* God just continues His work as normal. He is not nervous because of these things. But why do they plot these things? It is in vain anyway, so why do they do it? “I will declare the decree: the LORD has said to Me,

‘You are My Son, today I have begotten you. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.’ Now therefore, be wise, O kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.” *Psalm 2:7-12*.

Let us see very clearly that we must put the leaven out of our own houses. If other people do not do this, they will be cut off; they will be dashed in pieces regardless of what they plot.

Do you understand what a clique is? It is a group of people who plot together against the

truth. That is the point. Can you see that leaven permeates a whole clique? A clique is a lump and there is leaven in it. You do not know where it comes from, you do not even know its origin, but it permeates the whole thing. The leaven is the idea of that clique. Now, if, for example, I find myself in opposition to the truth, I will only communicate with those who have the same mindset as I, who have the same opposition. Then I am in a clique. For example, Lucifer would not consult with Jesus about his doubts, but he consulted with his fellow angels about his doubts. That was a clique. Can you see this? That is what it is.

“Why do the nations plot together?” That is a wonderful question.

Study 14

Let us turn back again to the study of history. The reason why we will consider history is that we want to better evaluate present events, and thereby understand how the last events will be ushered in.

Now as we look back to Protestantism and how it related to church and state, we see that it was a progressive step out of Babylon. Babylon, of course, was Roman Catholicism, in which the church ecclesiastics (namely the church governors: first the pope, then the bishops, and everyone on down the line) ruled over the state; perhaps not nominally, but in fact. The state governors, in fact, had so much respect for these ecclesiastical authorities that they dared not do anything against them. At one time King Sigismund wanted to fulfill his vow of safe conduct towards Huss when he came to Constance, and the ecclesiastical authorities told Sigismund that he did not need to keep it, because he did not need to keep his word to heretics. The king, however, argued that he was still bound by his word. But a single word was all that was needed to change his mind: the church threatened to excommunicate him if he continued. And that was the end. From that time onwards he did absolutely everything they wanted; he gave them Huss to be condemned, and he carried out, not personally, but as the state authority, the sentence that the church had pronounced. Thus the church ecclesiastics ruled over the state.

That was Roman Catholicism. Luther, in contrast, showed much more respect to the state governors, and Zwingli even more so. But they erred in letting the state decide in church matters, which Calvin saw was wrong and worked against. Calvin brought authority back into the church, but as Bible principles, not as church ecclesiastics. However, in practice it was still ecclesiastics who ruled, even though they ruled more sensibly than the pope or the bishops, and according to Bible principles. So, Geneva was a little papacy. Better perhaps, but still the same thing, owing to the combination of church and state.

At that time, there were the Anabaptists and later the Baptists. We will now come to Roger Williams, who really saw that there must be a separation between church and state. Maybe the Anabaptists could not formulate it so well, but in practice they were actually separated from the state. The Baptists later continued this tradition. And now we come to the Pilgrim Fathers.

Roger Williams was born in 1603 and lived until 1683. He came to New England in the year 1631. When he came, it was with the

The Pilgrim Fathers

- Roger Williams (1603-1683): came to New England in 1631; had to flee in 1636; founded the colony of Rhode Island in the same year
- Roger Williams was open for new light
- He considered himself a seeker, and had joined the Baptists some time ago
- He tolerated all those with a different faith (even the heathen Indians) and treated them with respect
- He believed in the separation of church and state
- “The state would pollute the church and the church is abusing state power.” (Rape)
- His principles became the principles of the US American constitution (*The Great Controversy*, 295.1)

opinion that in the New World there would be no persecution as in Old England. New England, of course, was the name of the colonies, which later became the United States. So you can say that America was colonized by the English, French, and Spanish, but it was mainly the English colonies that later formed the United States of America.

Roger Williams came to Massachusetts Bay, which is where the pilgrim fathers had landed just eleven years before. And he was very much welcomed. In fact, they immediately offered him a post as a preacher in Boston, a little colony south of Salem. And there he wanted to put his ideas about separation into practice, but he felt that the congregation was too closely united with the Anglican Church of England to do that. Roger Williams himself took a very firm stand as a separatist. He refused to be the pastor of the apostate church in Boston, some of whose members were very much connected with the state. Then he was invited by another church, the church at Salem, which was another little settlement. He did become pastor there, though not for very long. Soon his ideas were a little bit suspicious, because he questioned the right of the colonists to actually occupy land that belonged to the Indians. They just got permission from England for this land. All they had to ask was, "Can I have this land?" Then the king would give them a paper saying that they could have the land, and then it was their land. But Roger Williams argued that the land belonged to the Indians and should be bought from them. The fact that he, Roger Williams, dared to question the authority of the charter was a so-called "dead sin" for a colonist, because in so doing he was questioning the entire legal system.

Another question he brought up was whether it was right to make everyone in the state go to church. "Is it right that we all have to be a part of a congregational church here?"

he asked. "Should this not be a voluntary matter?" Of course it should, and Roger Williams began to see the evil that was creeping into the church because people like Calvin were trying to make a "Geneva" out of New England--that is, a place where the church actually ruled over the state affairs.

Finally things became so bad that he had to flee. In fact, they wanted to deport him to England, but governor Winthrop was friendly to him. The governor warned him to quickly make himself invisible, so Roger Williams fled from the colony. He fled in January 1636, in the bitter cold and snow, but he did make it. Many people would have starved or frozen to death in such circumstances, but God protected him. Finally, he landed in what is Rhode Island today, or, more precisely, Providence. There in Providence, he bought land from the Indians. Then he began to call friends and sympathizers together, and they began a little colony called Providence. Soon other people came and wanted to settle there who did not have Williams' convictions, but were also persecuted--like the Quakers, Freethinkers, and Antinomians (these were people who were against every law, against every authority, against every government, etc.). Soon this little colony around Providence was considered the rubbish bin of New England. In other words, every person or group who were having problems moved there. Roger Williams welcomed them all, giving them freedom to believe in whatever they wanted. However, he got his problems too as a result of this. Order had to be maintained, and Roger Williams firmly believed, of course, in civil order and government. He was also not in agreement with the Quakers, and had quite a number of discussions with them. But all this did not shake the island. Then finally some confusion came in, because there were claims from the other colonies over their territory that he had brought from the Indians. So he went to England, and at that time Cromwell was

ruling in England, and he was a Puritan, a Separatist, a Congregationalist, and very tolerant. So Roger Williams found an open door in England; he had many friends there. Through this, he got charter from the Parliament that would officially and legally, by English law, give the territory known as Rhode Island to him and make him governor over it. He did not want to be governor, but he was for three years. He was the influential figure, the founding father of this colony.

So, for the moment, this colony was saved from the claims from the other colonies--Massachusetts, Connecticut, Plymouth--all of which wanted a portion of Rhode Island. But eventually another person appeared in Rhode Island who also secured a charter. And these two charters conflicted with each other. There was a state within a state now, literally. Roger Williams had to do something about this disorder. So he went to England a second time, and this time he had to struggle for a long time. Meanwhile, Cromwell died and his son ruled, but only for a short time. After his death, they had a king again, and so England was once more a monarchy. This time the king was Charles II, and he was not sympathetic toward the separatists. But despite this the king was tolerant enough to actually decree a charter that overruled and overrode the second charter made by the rebel. Rhode Island was one state again. And now it really became the haven for many persecuted people, like the Baptists, Quakers, etc. So Rhode Island was a real blessing. Williams was always open for new light as we have seen. He founded the Baptist Church in America, and later, during the latter part of his life, he actually did not call himself a Baptist, but a seeker. Nonetheless he maintained a cordial and friendly relationship with the Baptists and other Protestant denominations, especially the Separatists, of course.

He considered himself a seeker, and, having been with the Baptists for some time,

he tolerated those who differed in faith, especially the heathen Indians, and even respected them. Very often he quoted the Indians. In addition, he would often tell his Christian friends--when they were in the wrong about something--that the Indians would not even do what they were doing. He believed in the separation of church and state, and he made that very clear. As an illustration, he used the following metaphor: the state is the wilderness and the church is a garden, and there must be a high wall between both. If you break down the wall, you will spoil the garden. The wilderness will come into the garden. In other words, when the state, with its clumsy fingers, tries to control church matters, it will always make a mess. On the other hand, the church must never interfere with state matters; there must be a clear separation. So he was very clear on this point. And to our understanding, he was the first one who formulated these principles so clearly, which later played a part of the formulation of the Declaration of Independence, of the Bill of Rights of Virginia, the Bill of Rights of the United States, and even the Constitution of the United States. All these papers, written by Jefferson, Madison, etc., were first clearly formulated during Williams' time. The Anabaptists had these principles, but they could not formulate them as well. It was Williams who coined the phrase "separation of church and state".

This really needs to be emphasized because many people say today that the term "separation of church and state" was never in the legal papers and can neither be found in the Constitution nor in the Amendments or any of the founding legal documents. But the meaning is there, and Jefferson stated it personally in one letter. They agree with this, but say that since it was only stated in one letter, which was not a legal document, there was no real mention of separation between church and state. But Roger Williams clearly

talks about it, and these very ideas were incorporated into the United States. I really need to emphasize this because people today cut Roger Williams out altogether, as though he never existed; they do not talk about him, they do not know him. If you talk to an average American today, and ask him who Roger Williams was, he probably will not know. If you ask him who Jefferson was, he most likely would know--or Washington, or Madison. But most people would not likely even know Roger Williams existed. That is really how it is. Therefore, to really understand that at that time, one hundred and fifty years before the Constitution was made, there was a man who actually clearly formulated these principles, is very important. Because Rhode Island became the pattern, it clearly became the foundation on which America was built. This is partly denied by historians today, but that is only because they do not really understand that separation between church and state is a religious principle. They think it a rationalistic principle, a principle that is a product of the mind. But it is not; it is a product of revelation. Roger Williams was the messenger through whom this light was brought to the earth. In actual fact, the Anabaptists brought this before, but Roger Williams was the one through whom it was expressed so clearly. He plainly said that the state would pollute the church and that the church was abusing state power, and he used the word rape in to describe the situation. When you try to enforce a church religion on a whole people, he said, this is rape, because it is as though you would force a woman to marry a man.

His principles became the principles of the United States Constitution. Let us read how Sister White puts this, and this formulation is very important for us. "Making his way at last, after months of change and wandering, to the shores of Narragansett Bay, he there laid the foundation of the first state of modern times that in the fullest sense recognized the

right of religious freedom. The fundamental principle of Roger Williams's colony was 'that every man should have liberty to worship God according to the light of his own conscience.'--Ibid., vol. 5, p. 354. His little state, Rhode Island, became the asylum of the oppressed, and it increased and prospered until its foundation principles--civil and religious liberty--became the cornerstones of the American Republic." *The Great Controversy*, 295.1. And do you remember how these two principles are the secret of the prosperity of the nation? That is why we are studying this here. "Until its foundation principles--civil and religious liberty," the two horns of the lamb-like beast, "became the cornerstones of the American Republic."

So let us now look at the United States Constitution. Roger Williams was the basis for it, or I should say God through Roger Williams; and it was by revelation, not by rationalism, that this took place. Then in 1776, the constitution of Virginia was formulated. Virginia was one of the most advanced of the states, after Rhode Island, which actually exercised religious freedom and put that in its constitution. So here we have the first constitution where it was actually formulated. There was an actual Bill of Rights in the state of Virginia, and I really recommend that you look for it and read it through one time; it is very interesting to read. Jefferson and Madison were the real driving force behind it. Both approached the matter from rationalistic reasons, but they would never have done so had there not been a pattern beforehand. That pattern was Rhode Island. Those who supported them were the Baptists, the Quakers, and the Presbyterians, and their opponents were the Episcopalians and Methodists. The Episcopalians, of course, were the other branch of the Church of England, simply called by a different name in America. And the Methodists were also very slow in really understanding the separation of church and state matters, at least in the state of Virginia.

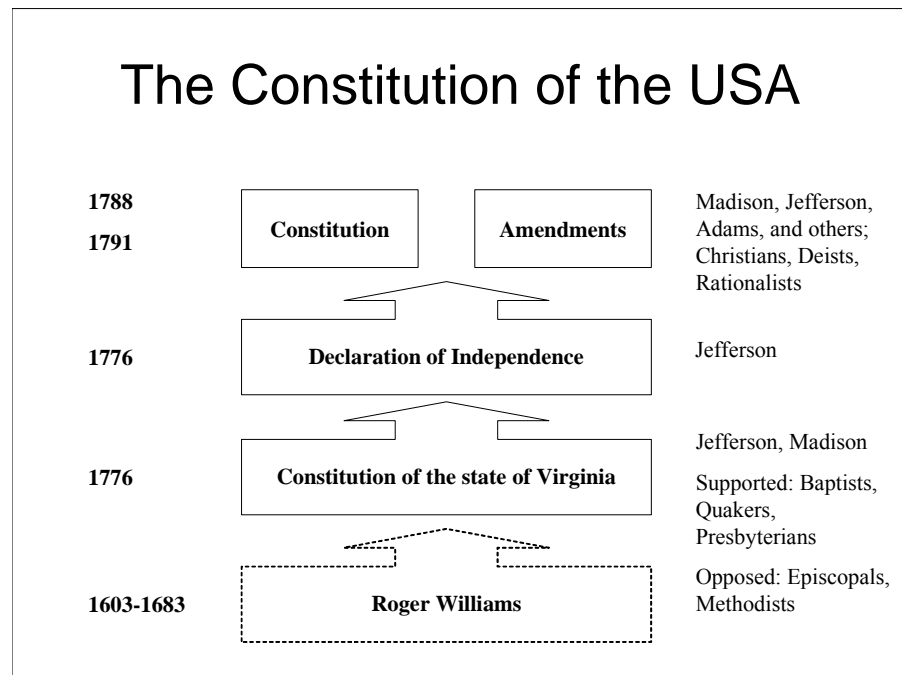
So, that was in the year 1776. The Declaration of Independence was formulated in the same year, almost entirely by Jefferson himself. He probably used some pre-formulation in other works, but he was mainly responsible for the final text, which was accepted and ratified by those in responsible positions. As we already stated before, the Declaration of Independence was not simply of independence; it was a declaration of the natural rights of man, a declaration of his inalienable rights. You can also call it a declaration of the inalienable rights of man, and the beginning of the American experiment.

Then, in 1788, the United States Constitution was ratified, and three years later in 1791 the amendments were added to the Constitution. Madison, Jefferson, and others were formulating it. They were Christians, Deists, and rationalists. Do you know what these mean? You know what a Christian is. Do you know what a Deist is? Let me briefly explain this. There is a belief that God created everything, He was the First cause of everything, but then He left everything to run by itself. God does not interfere with the actions of man, which means that there is no revelation. Deists do not believe that the Bible is revealed; they do not believe that God's providence is here in this world. They think that everything runs by itself because God started it at the beginning. They talk of God, but they do not see God's actual working. However, when you read some of the formulations of Jefferson,

and even Madison, you wonder whether they were really Deists because of the way they used the term God. It is more personal than what Deists would express. But this is a question of personal belief, which is always difficult to determine.

Rationalists, on the other hand, do not believe in God at all. They only believe in reason, and they do everything because reason tells them to do it. And for them, reason is God, and this belief in the god of reason was the basis for the French Revolution.

Where is the foundation of liberty of conscience, and what is it like? First of all, we have liberty of faith and conscience. And this liberty of faith and conscience has two pillars. What are these two pillars? They are the two horns, the two lamb-like horns. These principles are the secret of the prosperity of the United States. And what are these? Protestantism and Republicanism. In other words, a government of the people, by the people, and for the people, which is Republicanism, and separation of church and state, which is Protestantism. Now, these two pillars stand, so is this all that a building



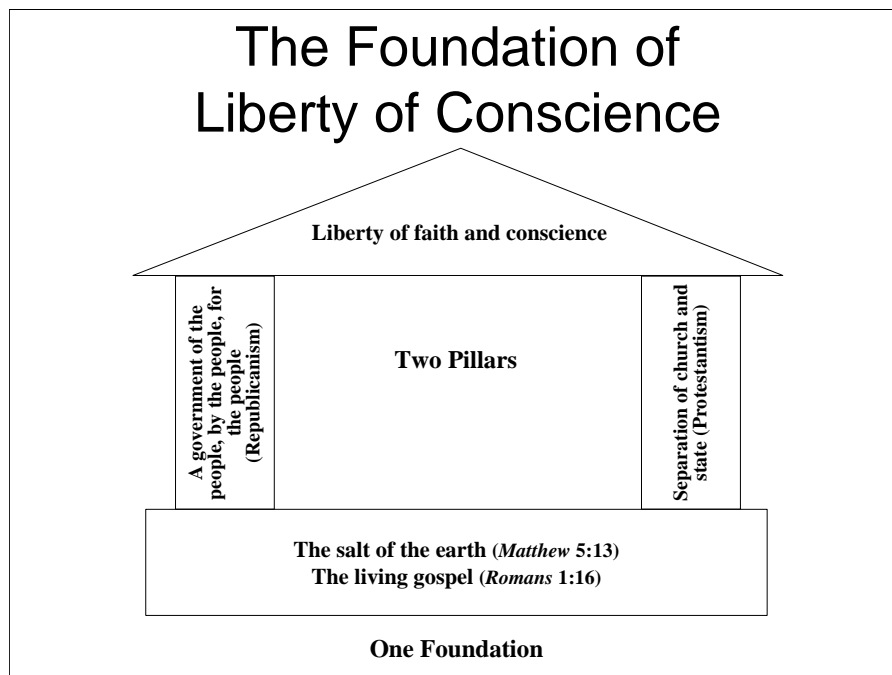
needs? We have the roof and two pillars, so what is missing? A foundation. We need a foundation. What is the foundation? The foundation is the people, a people that is the salt of the earth. Jesus said, you are the salt of the earth. If the earth becomes powerless, wherewith shall we salt it? (See *Matthew 5:13*.) The people must have the living gospel, which is living in the lives of believers.

When you study the republic of Rome, and also the United States today, what you see is that they functioned very well in the beginning, but after a while, they became more and more corrupt. In Rome, for example, after a while, people who wished to be voted into office began to buy votes; they actually bought votes with money. They would simply tell the voter: "If you vote for me, you will receive money from me." They had to pay many people, because they had to have many votes (and this process of buying votes was done openly, by the way, not secretly). And the people, after realizing that the votes were needed, tried to get as much money for their votes as they could. Money

was the big issue here, not honesty. Because of this, the system became more and more corrupt, as you can imagine, until it became so unmanageable that it needed a strong hand, which was Caesar. Now we see the same today in America. In the beginning, this nation had the great blessing of powerful spiritual revival. There was a very powerful revival in the middle of the 18th century. Maybe you have heard of Whitfield, the great Methodist preacher. This individual had a great influence. This was a powerful revival, which led to a real boost of the morals in America. (When I talk of morals, I talk of the Ten Commandments, not nationalistic morals.) In other words, crime was not very high. People were honest, and you could leave your doors unlocked. Lincoln, for example, was so free that he invited anyone into the White House. So if you, as a visitor from Germany, wanted to visit Lincoln, all you would have to do is approach Lincoln with this inquiry, and he would gladly let you in. No problem. Would the president of the USA do this today? Certainly not. One cannot even come near the president today, and why?

Because the situation is not that way anymore.

So the people had been very honest and religious, and this was the real foundation. On this foundation the two pillars stood--separation of church and state and a government for the people, by the people, through the people. As this trend continued, there was the Advent revival in the first half of the nineteenth century, which gave another mighty boost. What a blessing this



country received! No wonder America has become so prosperous and so powerful. This is the real reason. It is because it had a very good foundation and had two very strong pillars.

Now, as you can see, the foundation is eroding, more and more so as time passes. There is no question about it: everyone sees this. The question now is, what is the solution?

The efforts that are now taking place are actually taking away the pillars of civil and religious liberty. And both are put into question at the moment--the civil liberties because of terrorism, and the religious liberties because there is an effort towards unification of church and state. Both are very clearly there. And we must keep our eyes open, because these things are happening before our very eyes. People see them, and they are clearly and openly reported.

So, let us look at the Constitution of the United States. The first amendment to the Constitution states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." That is the basis.

Now let us look at the attacks on the Constitution. First of

Separation of Church and State

First Amendment to the US Constitution:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.

all, let us look at this statement. "Here in America you have a country blessed specially by Providence in the fertility of field and the liberty of its Constitution. [Loud applause.] Here you have a country which will repay all efforts [loud and prolonged applause] not

Attacks on the Constitution

"Here in America you have a country blessed specially by Providence in the fertility of field and the liberty of its Constitution. [Loud applause.] Here you have a country which will repay all efforts [loud and prolonged applause] not merely tenfold, but aye a hundredfold. And this no one understands better than the immortal Leo. And he charges me, his delegate, to speak out to America words of hope and blessings, words of joy. Go forward! in one hand bearing the book of Christian truth—the Bible—and in the other the Constitution of the United States." [Tremendous applause, the people rising to their feet.] Satolli, Papal legate Sept. 5, 1893.

The decisions of the Court during the 1980s seem to reaffirm, to the delight of some and the dismay of others, that the "wall of separation" is, in the words of former Chief Justice Warren E. Burger, "a blurred, indistinct and variable barrier." Reid, D. G., Linder, R. D., Shelley, B. L., & Stout, H. S. (1990). *Dictionary of Christianity in America*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

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I quoted here from a book called *Dictionary of Christianity in America* that was published about 1990, so it is a very recent work. In it some court decisions concerning the matter of separation of church and state are discussed. In summary, it says here, “The decisions of the Court during the 1980s seem to reaffirm, to the delight of some and the dismay of others, that the ‘wall of separation’ is, in the words of former Chief Justice Warren E. Burger, ‘a blurred, indistinct and variable barrier.’” Reid,

D. G., Linder, R. D., Shelley, B. L., & Stout, H. S. (1990). *Dictionary of Christianity in America*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press. What do you say to this statement? In other words, they say that separation of church and state was never formulated in the Constitution. It is “a blurred, indistinct and variable barrier.” In other words, we can move it where we want. Now that shows very clearly that the Constitution does not need to be changed in order to bring religious persecution to America, because the separation between church and state is, in the words of Chief Justice Warren E. Burger, “a blurred, indistinct and variable barrier.”

Today there is a very strong movement originating from Christians who want no barrier between church and state, and we need to be aware of this. The stage is set, and as the people of God, let us really pray that we are ready for this event. Let us pray that we will not be caught unawares when the first Sunday laws come. We do not know how quickly this will happen, we do not know how long the pillars of power will hold during the next months or years, but it can tip at any moment.

Study 15

Yesterday we considered filling our vessels with oil. The problem is that these vessels contain another oil, which is the oil of our own world. We must get rid of our own oil in order to fit ourselves for the divine oil. We must be determined to get rid of it at any cost. Our own world is very subtle. We need to be suspicious of everything that we like too much, even though we want to like God's kingdom, of course. Sometimes we get used to certain things, and we get into a rut. Then it may be that the Lord will call us to go somewhere else.

Maybe you recall the experience of the prophet Elijah. God raised him to be a very tough man. He had to fight against the apostasy of the whole nation. He had to pray a lot. Last year we studied his prayer life. He had to endure persecution, but he had an especially tough school during his last years. The Lord never left him in one place for a long time. He was really hurried from place to place.

Sometimes we travel too much. We get tired of traveling--tired of living out of a suitcase, tired of having to change from climate to climate, tired of seeing different people again and again. It is very tough to be on the road, so to speak. Even as a young person, I remember when we traveled to Eastern Europe. We had to travel all day, and in the evening we came to visit some people to give them a Bible study. This took our last strength, because we were very tired, but we gave them a Bible study. Of course, then the body would be going as the conversation went on, and then it got late. Then the next day we would have to travel and give studies again, and so forth. That is not easy.

But that is exactly what Elijah needed. He was hurried from place to place. He never got rest. He was never allowed to settle down. And why? What was the purpose of it? The

Lord wanted to translate him to heaven, and it was absolutely essential for Elijah that he would not have anything of his own world in this world; he really needed to be completely separated from it, so as to be prepared for heaven.

And what should we expect as the people of God? If we find it difficult to leave our native country in order to go to a missionary field somewhere, if we find that we cannot do this, or if we feel that we have to go back home again as soon as we are somewhere else because we really want to be somewhere else, then there is something wrong. Again, be suspicious of everything you like too much. That is the rule. Be truly prepared to be driven, literally driven, from place to place in order to be prepared for heaven.

We cannot afford to settle down too long on this earth. In the Adventist Church, it is customary for congregations to change ministers every two or three years, more or less, depending on the country. I still remember when I was a boy in the Adventist church, and there was a minister whom the church liked very much. He liked the church very much, too. And then the superiors told him that he had to leave and go somewhere else. And you know he had a struggle, a real struggle. He did not want to go. Maybe he wanted to go, but the church did not want to let him go. So they complained to the superiors and there was a constant struggle going on, to and fro. And finally, it was the task of this minister to really explain to the church why he had to go. It was a very unpleasant task. And back then, as a child, I did not understand why they were so unjust to this minister, why they forced him to go somewhere else when the church wanted him to stay.

In the Protestant churches, it is customary for the churches to determine for themselves who their pastor will be, but that is not so in the Adventist Church. It is always the superiors' role. But today I see that there is

real wisdom behind it, because you are too much in danger of getting into a rut. I am not saying that you have to do this in a fixed way, every two or three years. You have to do the Lord's will, but you have to be ready for it, and that is the point. If we want to be prepared for heaven, we have to really be more on the go.

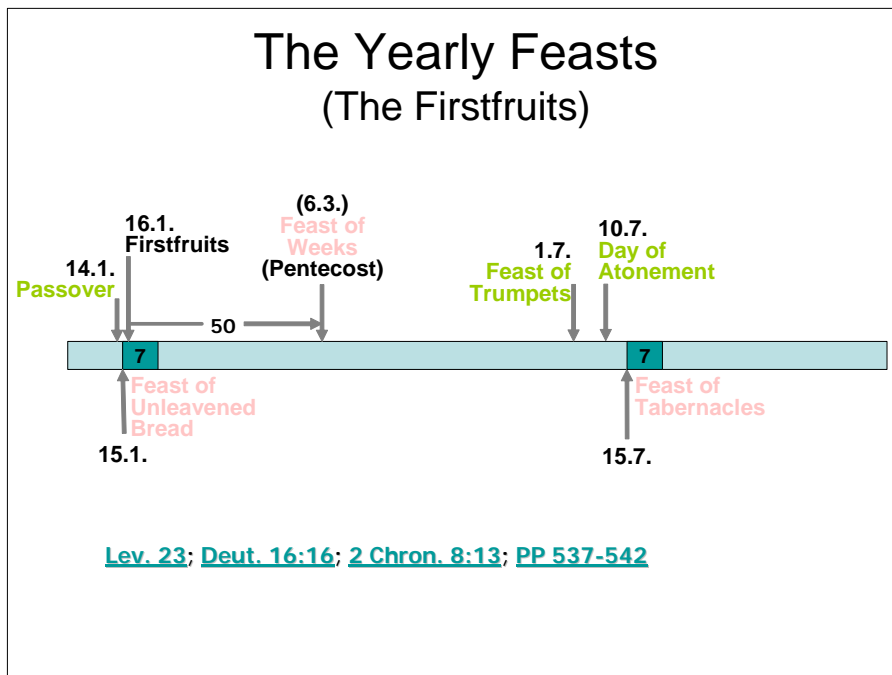
Our own world presses very subtly upon us. When the Israelites left Egypt, the Lord did not lead them directly into Canaan. They had too much of their own world in themselves, and He knew that they would build their own world again. They were taught to leave it behind. The Lord revealed this to them by leading them into the wilderness; by letting them hunger, by letting them thirst. And there it became very obvious, very apparent, where in their hearts their own world was. But He also gave them the yearly feasts as a constant reminder, and a constant school. If they had celebrated these feasts in the right spirit, the Lord would have delivered them from their own world.

So let us continue to look at the line of feasts. The first one we considered was the

Passover. The first Passover was an experience of deliverance from their own world. They really had to make haste, they had to leave Egypt behind, and God wanted them to leave their own world behind too, even though they were not ready to do this yet. So first the Lord delivered them from physical bondage in order to deliver them from spiritual bondage later. The Feast of Unleavened Bread began on the next day. They had to really search their houses for any leaven, and to put it away. Then came the offering of the firstfruits. What does that mean? What is the meaning of the firstfruits? This is the next thing that we want to study.

By offering the firstfruits, the farmer confirmed that everything belonged to God. Maybe you recall the law of the firstfruits. It said that the wave sheaf, that is, a little portion of the first crop of the harvest, had to be offered before you could harvest the rest of the crop. There were several harvests in Palestine. For example, there was the grape harvest, or the fruit harvest, like the pomegranates or figs. These were harvested later in the Autumn, sometime around September. But the grain

harvest was in the month of April. The barley was the first grain that really became ripe. A little portion had to be collected and brought to the sanctuary, and there it was offered as a so-called wave sheaf. It was called this because it was "waved" before the altar. Only once this was done could the farmer go back and harvest the rest of his field. If he did not bring the firstfruits, then the whole harvest could not be gathered in.



This wave sheaf was a symbolical act that pointed forward to Christ, and also to the 144,000. But it was more than this. It was a school, a living school. And before we can actually become the firstfruits, as the 144,000, we must understand this principle of the firstfruit offering in our own lives.

So, when the farmer offered the firstfruits, he was saying that everything belonged to God, everything, all of his harvest, not just the portion he gave. There is nothing of my own world, he said, and I give everything away with this firstfruit. It was a full submission; with this I submit everything to You.

Let us look at a picture of the firstfruits. First of all, the firstfruit existed long before the ceremonial law at Mount Sinai. In fact it existed from the beginning of mankind. Let us turn to *Genesis 4*. "Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, 'I have acquired a man from the Lord.' Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought

The Firstfruits

- When the farmer offered his firstfruits he acknowledged that everything belonged to God
- My own world has no part in it
- Full submission

an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering." *Genesis 4:1-4*.

What did these brothers bring to the altar? Both Cain and Abel brought firstfruits. It does

The Picture of the Firstfruits

- In the beginning: [Gen 4:3.4](#); [PP 71.2](#)
- The eldest son: [Gen 49:3](#)
- In the sanctuary: [PP 526.2](#)
- Jericho: [PP 491.2](#); [496.1](#)

not specifically say that Cain brought firstfruits; it simply reads that he brought an offering of the fruit of the ground. In *Patriarchs and Prophets* it becomes clear that it was a firstfruit offering. “Without the shedding of blood there could be no remission of sin; and they were to show their faith in the blood of Christ as the promised atonement by offering the firstlings of the flock in sacrifice. Besides this, the firstfruits of the earth were to be presented before the Lord as a thank offering.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 71.2. So this paragraph makes it very clear that both Abel and Cain brought firstfruits.

But did they really both bring firstfruits? “And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat.” *Genesis* 4:3, 4. We do not read anything here about the first fruit of the fields, and there is a good reason for it. What Cain brought was not truly firstfruits. He brought it as a first-fruit offering, but it was not so. Of course the Word also indicates that the first one was intended to be a firstfruit, but in reality it was not. And for this reason we read--“The Lord respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering.” *Genesis* 4:4, 5.

What was the difference? Why did God respect Abel’s offering, but not Cain’s? The reason was the spirit of the two brothers. Abel was truly grateful for what the Lord had done. He really appreciated every provision made for their salvation. He appreciated even the thorns and thistles of the ground. He also appreciated the fact that they could bring a sacrifice, that they could bring their firstfruits to the Lord. All this was done with a grateful heart.

But the case of Cain was very different. He murmured right from the beginning--why should we have this? And why should we have that? But, outwardly he fulfilled his

vows, or duty. He brought the firstfruits of the field. There was nothing wrong with it, as such. The point that he refused to bring a lamb as well is another matter. Maybe he could have done that later. But even before this, the Lord did not respect the offering of Cain. And why? Because of the spirit that was living in him. He gave the firstfruits as something that he had to give. He said: “It is my duty, so I will give it, but now I can keep the rest for myself.” In other words, he gave a stinted offering. He did not give his all, and that is the reason why it could not be accepted. So when there is evil in our hearts, then it is not an offering of firstfruits.

The eldest son was also considered a firstfruit. This is made clear by several scriptures, but especially in the book of *Genesis*. “Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power.” *Genesis* 49:3. So the firstborn was the firstfruit in a special way; he was to be given over to God.

Now in the case of Isaac, we know that he actually had to be offered as a sacrifice. We know that God does not require the killing of men. He does not require this. But He does require our complete sacrifice, our first born, our firstfruit. It belongs to Him; it does not belong to us.

But do we give everything to God? All the rest of our children as well? Do we really understand what it means to give God our firstfruit, our firstborn? When the first child is born to a family, it is a special gift. The parents are happier about their first child than they are about the children that come later. Why? Because it is something new, something special, and it initiates them into parenthood.

This happiness is also a danger, because we tend to look at our children as our possession. They belong to me. Often situations come up where others want to give them counsel, because the parents are very young, they are

inexperienced, or they have never had children before. So they struggle along with the first one. And when well meaning people come along, grandparents, or parents of other children, and they receive a lot of counsel, what do the young parents do? They say, "Do not tell me what to do, I will figure it out myself." They put a wall of protection around themselves, in order to protect against this intrusion of their privacy. It is their child, so how can the other parents try to meddle in their business?

This attitude of protectiveness really shows that they are defending their own world. This first child was not really given to God completely. We want to study the example of Hannah. Hannah had no children for a long time. Because of this, she desired one so much that she promised to consecrate it to God completely. When this child came, she kept her promise to the very letter, to the point even where she gave that child away--it belonged to the sanctuary. This is giving the firstfruit; this is the meaning. Are we ready to give our children away like this? We can only win them if we can give them away first. In other words, Jesus said that what we give away we win back, but if we cling to it we will lose it. (See *Matthew* 16:25, 26.) And we lose our children because we cling to them. That is the deeper reason for this loss: we were not truly willing to give them away. We were not willing to give them fully to the sanctuary. So the deeper reason for not being able to give away my firstfruit is my own world. We see this very clearly in the case of the eldest son.

The wave sheaf was brought to the sanctuary, of course. But other offerings were given as the firstfruit. In fact, even the offerings of the Feast of Weeks were called firstfruits, but we will study this later. Let us read from *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

"The tithe was to be exclusively devoted to the use of the Levites..." We understand tithing. We do not need to repeat this. And

because we understand tithing, we tend to say, "Yes, we give our tithes." But do we see that there is a further obligation than just giving our tithes? "...The tribe that had been set apart for the service of the sanctuary. But this was by no means the limit of the contributions for religious purposes. The tabernacle, and afterward the temple, was erected wholly by freewill offerings. and to provide for necessary repairs and other expenses, Moses directed that as often as the people were numbered, each should contribute a half shekel for 'the service of the tabernacle.' In the time of Nehemiah a contribution was made yearly for this purpose. See Exodus 30:12-16; 2 Kings 12:4, 5; 2 Chronicles 24:4-13; Nehemiah 10:32, 33. From time to time sin offerings and thank offerings were brought to God. These were presented in great numbers at the annual feasts, and the most liberal provision was made for the poor.

"Even before the tithe could be reserved there had been an acknowledgment of the claims of God. The first that ripened of every product of the land was consecrated to Him. The first of the wool when the sheep were shorn, of the grain when the wheat was threshed, the first of the oil and the wine, was set apart for God. So also were the first-born of all animals; and a redemption price was paid for the first-born son. The firstfruits were to be presented before the Lord at the sanctuary, and were then devoted to the use of the priests." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 526.1, 2.

The firstfruits were not just the wave sheaf. It was giving everything. Think of the things that we receive for the first time. Do we consider that they belong to the Lord? It is not just the oldest child, the oldest son. What else do we get for the first time? Our first wages, our first pension, our first present, or anything that we get for the first time.

Young people often discuss what they will buy with their first wages. "The first thing I

will save for is a car. The first thing I will get is a motorbike. The first thing I will get is a bike. The first thing I will get is a computer.” When they receive their first wages, it is a special joy for them to buy something for themselves for the first time. But have we considered that it is a joy to give the first things to the Lord? I would like to hear young people say, “My first wages will go to the cause of God! I will give my first wages to the cause so that a printing press can be bought.” What a different attitude this would be. That would really show that we give everything. And even if we only receive very little, let us remember that the first of everything belongs to God, and not to ourselves.

Jericho is a very interesting picture of the firstfruits. You know that Jericho was the first fruit of the land of Canaan. We tend to overlook the question of what the first fruit really is. To give God our firstfruits really means that we separate from our own world. It means that we have nothing for ourselves, nothing of our own world. This is what God wanted to teach Israel. For that reason He commanded them to give Jericho as a firstfruit. That means that everything in that city belonged to the Lord, absolutely everything. They should not keep any of the spoils, not even one little piece, for themselves. Everything was to be used as God directed. (See *Joshua* 6:17-19.) But the Israelites had their difficulties with this.

Let us read here from the chapter “The Fall of Jericho” from *Patriarchs and Prophets*. “The Israelites had not gained the victory by their own power; the conquest had been wholly the Lord’s; and as the firstfruits of the land, the city, with all that it contained, was to be devoted as a sacrifice to God. It was to be impressed upon Israel that in the conquest of Canaan they were not to fight for themselves, but simply as instruments to execute the will of God; not to seek for riches or self-exaltation, but the glory of Jehovah their

King. Before the capture the command had been given, ‘The city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein.’ ‘Keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed . . . and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it.’” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 491.2.

Did they keep themselves from the accursed thing? Only one man took something. Can we say that they did not obey because of only one man? The problem was that all of the people of Israel shared in the spirit of Achan. Maybe not to the same extent, but to some extent. They looked upon the spoil of Jericho and were a little bit sorry they could not pick it up. They were not absolutely happy that they had to give it away. This was the situation of Cain. This was the kind of offering Cain brought. He brought it, yes, but he was not really happy that he could bring it.

Do you remember what David said when he brought his offering to the temple? He said, “Lord, who am I? And who is my people that we are privileged to bring such a sacrifice to You?” (See *1 Chronicles* 29:1-14.) They saw a great privilege in bringing this offering; it was not a burden for them at all. It was a real privilege.

Do we see the privilege of giving our firstfruit? Or do we feel a little bit sorry that we have to give it away, that we have to give it to the cause? What is our feeling in this matter? We will see what our spirit is by the use of the rest of our property. If we gave the firstfruit in a legalistic spirit, because we had to do it, because someone told us to do it, but not because our whole heart was in the matter, then the rest of our possessions will be used in a very different way. They will be used for our self-pleasure, for our self-aggrandizement, for our pride, and for building our own world. And this was what God wanted to save them from. For this reason He did not allow their wrong spirit to remain unchecked. He gave them an opportunity to wake up, and this was

the defeat at Ai. Of course, the special occasion was Achan, but when they stoned Achan, they stoned their own sins as well, and that was very clear.

Let us ask ourselves why Achan was stoned in the end. Why did they not convert him? Was he converted when he finally confessed? No! He was not converted, because the confession came too late and it was too little. It is important to see this.

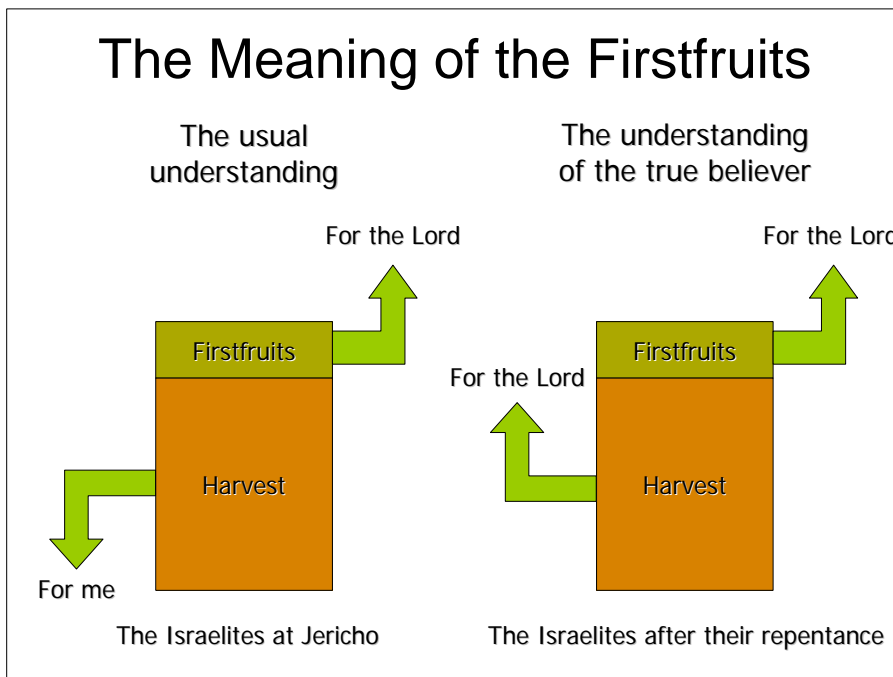
We tend to think that if someone makes a confession, then we must accept it. But some confessions are not confessions, because they are given as a last resort. When it is for someone's own profit to say something, and it would be worse not to say anything, then it is not a real confession, it is not a real offering. Some people find separation so hard that they say, "I would rather say something here than say nothing." We really need to see that the confession of Achan was not a real confession. How can we tell? Because when he confessed, he called it a "goodly Babylonish garment." Let us read this.

"Of the millions of Israel there was but one man who, in that solemn hour of triumph

and of judgment, had dared to transgress the command of God. Achan's covetousness was excited by the sight of that costly robe of Shinar; even when it had brought him face to face with death he called it 'a goodly Babylonish garment.'" What should he have called it? A curse, an evil. "One sin had led to another, and he appropriated the gold and silver devoted to the treasury of the Lord—he robbed God of the first fruits of the land of Canaan." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 496.1.

That was a stunted confession. Sister White talks of "unqualified confessions." What does unqualified mean in this context? It means an unreserved confession, something that brings everything out. Anything less than this is a stunted confession, and does not really help to show where the person stands. In fact, when we still justify our past course, or when we furnish our confessions with the word "but" or with an admonishment to other people, then this is not a true confession. You might say: "Yes, I have done this and this, but you must not do it either"; or, "you must forgive me now", or "maybe I was wrong", or, "maybe it was not right; I guess it could be that what I did was wrong". If

such things come out, it is not a confession, and it is not a sacrifice of the firstfruit. The Lord cannot respect such stunted offerings. He could not respect the offering of Cain. We must be aware of these things. I am a little bit burdened, because sometimes it becomes a fashion to confess. But unless it is an unqualified confession, it is not accepted by the Lord, as with the offering of Cain.



The Meaning of the Firstfruits

- ap-arche = From the beginning (firstfruits)
- The firstfruits sanctify the whole harvest
[Rom. 11:16](#)
- The firstfruits can also spoil the whole harvest.
[1 Cor. 5:6](#)
- Christ is the firstfruits of the creation
[John 1:1-3](#); [Rev. 3:14](#)
- Christ is the beginning and the end
[Rev. 21:6](#); [Phil. 1:6](#)
- Christ is the firstfruits of the resurrection
[1 Cor. 15:20](#)
- The 144000 are firstfruits
[Rev. 14:1-5](#)

ἀπαρχή. This means from the beginning. That is the literal meaning. It means to give the Lord everything right from the beginning, without hesitation. If you give it later, then the whole thing will be spoiled. That is the meaning of the firstfruit, from the beginning.

The first fruit sanctifies the whole harvest; it really sets the pace. It sets the idea of what the whole thing is. Paul makes this clear in *Romans*

Giving our all is an offering to the Lord. He says “Come, come, please bring your firstfruits fully; bring your confessions fully to the Lord, so that the old leaven, that is, your own world, can be fully purged out.” That is His plea, and this is the reason He gave us the law of the firstfruits.

Let us look deeper into the meaning of the firstfruits. The usual understanding is that the firstfruit belongs to God. It is for the Lord. And this was the understanding of the Israelites. They gave their firstfruits from Jericho to the Lord, except for Achan. So the rest of the harvest, that is, the rest of the cities of Canaan, belonged to them. In other words, if I have fulfilled my obligations to the Lord, then I can feast on my own spoil. This was the attitude of the Israelites at Jericho. Is this the meaning of the firstfruits? Certainly not. The understanding of the true believer is that yes, the first fruit belongs to the Lord, but the rest of the harvest belongs to the Lord as well. The first fruit is only given as a token, but the rest belongs to Him just as much. That was the condition of the true Israelites after their repentance.

Let us look further into the meaning of firstfruits. The Greek word for firstfruit is

11:16: “For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches.” What an important thing, to start aright. How often have we experienced this! The way in which a country is started in the message will determined the path it takes. If, for example, the work started as a lively gospel demonstration, then this country is usually a very strong country as far as the faith of the believers is concerned. If it started with a lot of difficulties, especially in a legalistic sense, then there will be difficulties from there on. So the beginning is quite important. When we bring the gospel to a new field, the way we bring it is very important. It really sets the pace.

Very often, when we come into a new field, we meet with preconceived ideas and formal opinions. Then it is very important to know how to deal with these preconceived ideas. Of course no one wishes to confront the new believers immediately with a lot of controversies. We do not want to say, you do this wrong, you do that wrong, etc. At the same time, we must be careful to really point out where the Adventist Laodicean spirit is still

prevalent. If we do not do this, then we will not bring a proper firstfruit. The firstfruit is very important.

Let me say this again: very often when we come into a new field where there are Adventists, we come to legalistic minds. Not that all Adventists are legalistic, but some are. Then we have to stand bravely for the right, even if these souls reject the gospel. I do not mean that we have to confront them with every error that they believe right from the beginning. This is not the case. We have to give them the gospel first.

Sometimes we have to be quiet and to suffer wrong practices and wrong ideas. Sometimes people say, "Well, we believe in everything Sister White says," but their habits are very contrary to this. They do not eat good food, they do not wear proper clothing, and so forth. We may have to wait for some time, because the gospel has to do its work, like leaven. But when we begin to allow these things to happen, if we do not have a clear stand on this ourselves, then we really create problems. Can you see this? We must have a clear stand. The firstfruit is very important, for it makes the lump. That is the reason why, whenever God chose a movement, there were usually very dedicated men at the beginning of that movement--people who really had the gospel in a very pure form.

The same principle applies when we visit people who depend on the law as their healer. Again it may be good if we are quiet in the beginning, because we cannot drive out all the devils at one time. But if we do not have a clear stand on these questions ourselves, then we will spoil the cause. In other words, the firstfruit will not really be holy, and therefore the lump will not be holy. The other people will be won by these first converts, and they will get a wrong idea of what the message really is.

It is for this reason that I am very grateful when the message is rather tough at the beginning. For example, the health message was so tough that those who practiced healing by the law could not stand it. The clinic in Palmwoods was closed, and people left the message as a result. Now some people say that this was not necessary, because these people could have been won by a more lenient spirit. But that is not the case. The firstfruit must be holy; otherwise the lump is not holy. If we had allowed that to happen, then the whole message would have gone a different direction.

Today we must make sure that the firstfruit is holy also, so that the lump is holy. If we make the school of medicine, or experimental hygiene, or medicine our firstfruit, where will the lump be? You see, it must be very clear. The firstfruit must be clear, so that the lump is holy. This is what the Lord really wants to teach us.

The firstfruit can also spoil the harvest. We read this in *1 Corinthians 5:6* "Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?" So the whole lump can either be sanctified by a proper firstfruit, or it can be spoiled by an improper firstfruit. That is the reason that God did not respect the offering of Cain. He did not commend him for bringing the first-fruit of the field in the proper way. He could have said: "Well, Cain, it is true, you did not bring a sacrifice. I will explain it to you later, then you can bring this, too. But for the moment, what you did was the right thing." God did not do this. He simply did not respect it. It was necessary; it was the only help for Cain. Because this leaven eventually leavened the whole lump, it really destroyed him completely. So our work must really be thorough and proper in the beginning, so that God can really bless the whole lump.

Study 16

Let us come back again to the meaning of the firstfruit. We have learned that the firstfruit can either sanctify or spoil the whole harvest. It is very important to know what the firstfruit is and to present it with the right spirit. It might not be a perfect gift as such, because all of our gifts are imperfect, coming through the human channel and through beclouded understanding, but if it is given with the right spirit, then it will be made perfect through the merits of Christ. We must really give our best. We are to give our first love to Christ. Then our walk with Christ can be honest. Our first love as husbands and wives can be given to God, so that our whole marriage is sanctified. The first believers in a country bear the special responsibility of setting the pace for the rest of the believers in that country. The real meaning of the firstfruit is that we really declare that we keep nothing of our own world.

A question was asked about the lump sum, and I thought about the story of the young ruler. What did Jesus want from him? He wanted the lump sum! He asked him for everything. We also have to give our all to Christ. That does not mean that we do not care about ourselves anymore; but we are to lay our lives on the altar, to be ready for the call to give it away.

We will look at a statement about houses from the book *Early Writings*. "Houses and lands will be of no use to the saints in the time of trouble, for they will then have to flee before infuriated mobs, and at that time their possessions cannot be disposed of to advance the cause of present truth. I was shown that it is the will of God that the saints should cut loose from every encumbrance before the time of trouble comes, and make a covenant with God through sacrifice. If they have their property on the altar and earnestly inquire of God for duty, He will teach them when to

dispose of these things. Then they will be free in the time of trouble and have no clogs to weigh them down." *Early Writings*, 56.3.

Our problem is that we know all these things, and we say, "Yes, we put this on the altar," but it is our own world. It is the same spirit that Cain had. We must be aware of this. Let us ask the Lord to search our hearts, so that our spirit may be like that of Abel. Let us give ourselves completely, so that we do not say, "Yes I give it to the Lord, but I use it as I see fit" Or, "Yes it belongs to the Lord, but I am still the beneficiary of it." Or, "Yes I give my house to Lord, but I live in it, yes I give my family to the Lord, but it is my family," and so forth. That is lip service. When we give something to the Lord, we have to give it completely. That is the true meaning of the firstfruit. That is the only way the whole harvest can be sanctified.

We know that Christ is the firstfruit of creation and of redemption as well. In *John* 1:1 it states, "In the beginning was the Word." What is another word for "In the beginning"? Firstfruit. What is the Greek word for firstfruit? It is *ἀπαρχή*. "In the beginning (the firstfruit) was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." In other words, because Christ is the firstfruit of the creation of this world, therefore the world is sanctified. Therefore, the world is a good one, except that it was spoiled by Satan, of course. "He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." *John* 1:2-5. That means all things were made through Him; He was the beginning of the whole creation.

This is also made clear in *Revelation* 3:14. "And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God.'" Or, the

firstfruit of the creation of God. God sanctified the creation through Jesus Christ. But Christ is not only the beginning. He is the beginning and He is the end. So the firstfruit is not just giving the first, it is giving all.

There is an interesting meaning of the word "end," which is not conveyed in either English or German. The word "end" in Greek is Kelos. It does not simply mean end, it means completion, perfection. It means full maturity. So, Christ is the beginning and He is the completion, the perfection, bringing it to the end, because He is the Beginning. He is the One who brings it to the end. "And He said to me, 'It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End.'" *Revelation 21:6*. End or Kelos, the completion, the perfection, I am the Firstfruit and the Completion, because I am the Firstfruit, I am the Completion. So, the more complete the firstfruit is, the better the firstfruit is, the more complete it is. "I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts."

Can we really give ourselves as firstfruits to the cause? If we can give our first love completely to God, then we shall be the ones through whom God ends the work. Then He will bring it to completion, to a Kelos, to perfection. But if our firstfruit is not complete, we will not be the ones who will end it. Christ is our example. In *Philippians 1:6* we read, "Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ". So, the more we separate ourselves from our own world, the more complete our work will be. It will lead to the desired end. God has nothing of His own world, He lives only for others, He has begun a good work. He will definitely complete it in the day of Jesus Christ.

Christ is the firstfruit of the resurrection. Because of His perfect sacrifice, He has opened the door for others as well. But now Christ is risen from the dead and has become the firstfruit of those who have fallen asleep.

The 144,000 are the firstfruits. What does this mean? "Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of a loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand, who were redeemed from the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God." *Revelation 14:1-5*.

We know that the 144,000 are actually the last of the Christian generation. If they are the last Christian generation, then how can they be called firstfruit? The firstfruit is the first thing to be harvested. Why is it the last thing here? The point is that they are the first. They are the first of those who are dead; but not only that, they are the first ones who live in the sight of a Holy God without a mediator. They are the first ones who have perfected their Christian characters. They are the first who have experienced victory in the battle with the image of the beast. They are the first ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes, apart from Christ of course, who is also the Firstfruit. They are the first ones in whose mouth is found no guile, the first who have the Father's name written in their foreheads, and so forth. They are the first in these things.

They are redeemed from among men for the specific purpose of living a perfect life. Therefore, they are the firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. In their mouth was found no deceit. They are without fault before the throne of God. These are indeed the firstfruit.

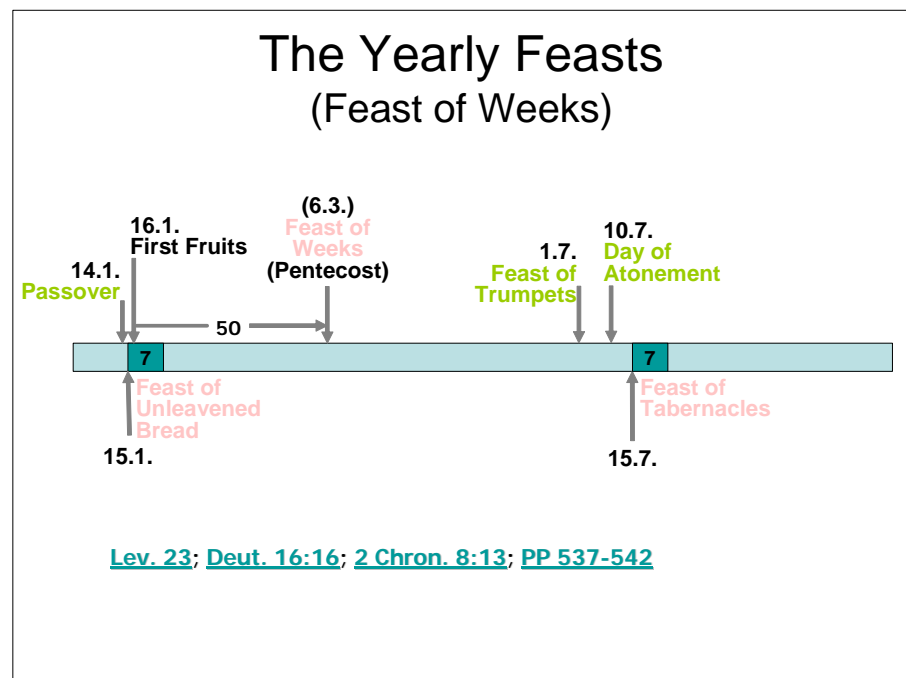
They are the first generation that lives like this; therefore, they will finish the work. The first who live that life will be the first who will finish the work. Those who begin it will finish it, the Alpha and the Omega, which is what Christ was. So let us see that the firstfruit means to be free from our own world. When we are free from our own world, the victory is better and our discipleship more complete.

Let us come back to the rich young ruler for a moment. What did the Lord desire from him? He desired a true firstfruit. If he had given everything, he would have given his firstfruit. It would not have been the last time the rich young ruler would have had the opportunity to give himself away. Judas and the other disciples always had opportunities to deny themselves again and again. This would have been the case with the rich young ruler as well. Giving away his material possessions would have just been the beginning of self-denial. It was the firstfruit. But because it was so hard for him, such a big thing, if he had really given it in the right spirit, it would have truly been the firstfruit. Bringing a true firstfruit would have made him one of the best disciples that Jesus had. He would have been a leading disciple for sure, one of those who could have really finished the work. You might say, "Jesus already had twelve disciples. If He had accepted this one, they would have been more than twelve." I do not know how to solve that problem. But one thing is sure: this rich young ruler would

have given a very good work, because that would have been a true firstfruit. It was a sad thing that he could not let go of his own world.

We must become like Elijah because as the 144,000, we are really called upon to give away our own world. That means to be driven from place to place. Our provisional and temporal situations on this earth are a great blessing. We may not have a settled home, we may not have a settled family, a settled job, a settled career, or otherwise. We may not have these things, but if this is the case, then it is a blessing. Why? Because as humans, we settle into our own world too quickly. We must really let it go under all circumstances.

Now let us come to the next feast, the feast of weeks. Our diagram shows us that the feast of weeks comes fifty days after the firstfruit. It had a connection with the firstfruit. The sacrifice that was brought during the feast of weeks was even called the firstfruit as well. It was one of the larger feasts, when everyone was required to be present. Everyone was required to attend the feast of the unleavened bread and the feast of tabernacles as well.



Now what happened in those fifty days? That was the time of the grain harvest: of the barley, the wheat, and other grains as well. All these were harvested during these fifty days. And during the feast of weeks, the grain harvest was brought in. It was finished; it was complete. So during this time the people did not just bring the wave sheaf; they also brought a baked loaf of bread. It was baked with leaven. In this case the leaven did not symbolize sin or their own world, but rather the whole work that was now completed. They brought it out of gratefulness. It was not only for the harvest that God had given them, but also for what God made out of the harvest, namely living bread.

When was this feast celebrated? On the fiftieth day after the wave sheaf. Let us look at *Leviticus 23:15-19*. “And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be complete. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD. You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the firstfruits to the LORD.” The firstfruit is mentioned again. “And you shall offer with the bread seven lambs of the first year, without blemish, and one young bull, and two rams. They shall be as a burnt offering to the LORD, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma to

the LORD. Then you shall sacrifice one kid of the goats as a sin offering, and two male lambs of the first year as a sacrifice of peace offering.” This happened fifty days after the wave sheaf. In Greek it is called Pentecoste.

The Old Testament was written in Greek. Originally, it was written in Hebrew. When the Greeks conquered the world, everyone began to speak in Greek everywhere. At that point some of the learned Jews thought they would make the Bible available in Greek also. Hebrew was not the common language anymore, Greek was. They called this the “Hellenization” of the world. It happened 200 years before Christ came. That is the reason why the New Testament was also written in Greek.

By about 100 B.C. these learned people had translated the Bible. The Greek Bible was used by Jesus and the disciples. It was their standard Bible. They did not use the Hebrew; they had a few copies in the synagogue, but their daily Bible was the Greek version. So, when Paul quoted out of the Bible, he was actually quoting the Greek version called the *ceptor quint*. *Leviticus 23* had also been

When was the Feast of Weeks celebrated?

- On the 50th day after the wave sheaf ([Lev. 23:15, 16](#))
- pentekoste = Pentecost = fiftieth (See [Acts 2:1](#))
- When the grain harvest was brought in. Therefore it was also called the “feast of harvest” ([Ex. 23:16](#))

translated into Greek, so the feast of weeks was already translated and known as Pentecoste during that time. The rabbis, naturally, would still have called it the feast of weeks, but the common term was Pentecoste. This was the exact day upon which the Holy Spirit was given to the disciples. We read in *Acts 2:1*: “When the Day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.” What day had fully come? Pentecost.

Before I understood all these things about the feasts, I was wondering if the day of Pentecost was a prophecy. I could not find anything about the day of Pentecost in the Old Testament or in my concordance. And why? Because it was called the feast of weeks. As the bringing of the Passover lamb was a prophecy for Jesus Christ, so the feast of Pentecost was a prophecy of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the early rain. The prophecy is a ceremonial action.

Therefore it reads, “When the Day of Pentecost (the feast of weeks) was fully come (that is after the fifty days), they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” *Acts 2:1-4*.

Since it marked the gathering in of the grain harvest, it was also called the feast

of harvest. What does the grain harvest have to do with the Holy Spirit? Is there a connection between the two? Think about this a little bit. And the bread? The Holy Spirit brings the harvest to completion, to full maturity. The bread, baked with the leaven, represents a harvest that is fully matured, it was ready for bread.

Just as the first fruit was an expression that everything belonged to the Lord, there was a special relationship to the wave sheaf. Let us read this in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 540.1: “Fifty days from the offering of firstfruits, came the Pentecost, called also the feast of harvest and the feast of weeks. As an expression of gratitude for the grain prepared as food, two loaves baked with leaven were presented before God. The Pentecost occupied but one day, which was devoted to religious service.” This is all the information we get here. It is a bit meager. I wish that the Spirit of Prophecy could say a bit more about this important event of the Holy Spirit and make some connection here. But let us read this carefully, shall we? We often overlook the little things.

Pentecost (Feast of Weeks)

- Like the firstfruits, it expressed that everything belonged to the Lord. Therefore, it was especially connected with the wave sheaf ([PP 540.1](#))
- Offered in the right spirit, it declared that the giver had no world of his own
- It was a constant reminder that everything belongs to the Lord and that the giver had no world of his own
- We must remember that we cannot use the Holy Spirit, but that the Spirit is to use us
- This can happen only if we give up our own world

“Fifty days from the offering of firstfruits, came the Pentecost, called also the feast of harvest and the feast of weeks. As an expression of gratitude for the grain prepared as food, two loaves baked with leaven were presented before God.” What was presented before God? Two loaves baked with leaven. What was the purpose of two loaves baked with leaven? It was an expression of gratitude for the grain prepared as food. It was not just a matter of presenting grain, like the wave sheaf offering on the first day. Now the grain was prepared as food. The grain had to be fully ripened and needed man’s cooperation to prepare it as food. It needed a process. First you add the leaven, then you mix it, then you let it bake. Then it is bread. It was a complete process to present the grain as food. I find the terminology very interesting here. Sister White could have said: “As an expression of gratitude for *the bread*,” but no, she says, for the grain prepared as food. That shows the whole maturity, the whole process, until it is ready to be eaten.

When the Holy Spirit is poured out in its fullness, then we will be ready, for we will be the bread. We are the ones who must be matured, fully matured, fully ripened, and fully ready. We must be the grain fully prepared as food, and we must be eaten during the time of trouble and in the last struggle. That is our destiny. We are to give ourselves completely to the cause, so that the cause of God can be fed, that the cause can win victory. For this reason, it is very important that we have the Holy Spirit. In other words, it was very appropriate that the Holy Spirit came on the exact day (*Acts 2:1*). It showed that without the Holy Spirit this completion could have never taken place. We must understand this too. Without the Holy Spirit, we will never be the bread that is presented before God. We will never be the grain prepared as food. We can never be eaten; we will be still an inedible lump. We are an inedible lump at the moment. The

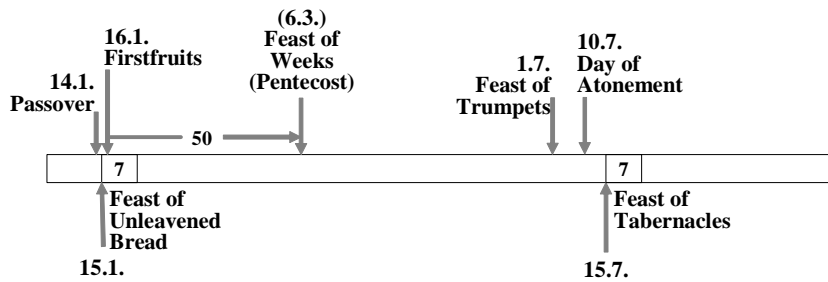
cause of God would have a stomachache if we were eaten now. We must really be ready, and that is the reason we need the Holy Spirit.

I can clearly see the connection between the firstfruit, where the beginning is made, and the completed grain, which is the Omega. We have the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. We have the *ἀπαρχή*, the beginning, and we have the Kelos, the completion, the fulfillment. These are the people of God. In fact, the generation that received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost could have been the one who finished the work, if there was not another delay in the work.

When our character is completely matured, it will declare that we no longer have our own world. Our offering will be made in the right spirit. It will reveal that everything belongs to the Lord. Remember that we cannot use the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is to use us. This can only happen if we give up our own world. Pentecost is speaking to us. Are we looking forward to another Pentecost? Are we looking forward to receiving the Holy Spirit? Then we really need to see that this is what must happen--our vessels must be emptied of our own world.

Next we come to the Feast of Trumpets. This took place on the first day of the seventh month. It sounds like a strange thing that trumpet-blowing should be a feast, but it was. The statement in *Leviticus 23* is rather short about this feast. Let us read it: “Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel, saying, “In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath-rest, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work on it; and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD.”’” *Leviticus 23:23-25*. They kept a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. The trumpets were really blown. What does this represent? When were the trumpets blown, and what was the purpose for it? Here in *Leviticus 23*, we see that it was for

The Yearly Feasts (The Feasts of Trumpets)



Leviticus 23; Deuteronomy 16:16; 2 Chronicles 8:13;

Patriarchs and Prophets, 537-542

the preparation for the Day of Atonement. It was given to arouse the people for that preparation.

Let us look at some statements that will tell us about the blowing of trumpets, and that will help us a little bit. “Blow the trumpet in Zion, and

day is coming! It is time to wake up! Be prepared! They are sleeping, but they need to get ready. They had to rise up and stand up.

Sometimes on a hot day, when the message is preached, after many hours the people get tired. Then suddenly the trumpet will blow and we will all wake up. This is how the Midnight Cry happened, like an electric shock to the people. It was really a trumpet sound, not through the loudness of the speaker, but through the content of the message.

Let us turn to *Joel* 2:15-17. “Blow the trumpet in Zion, consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children and nursing

The Feast of Trumpets: The Meaning

- Trumpets = Preparation for the Day of Atonement
- Arousing the people to make preparation (*Joel* 2:1, 15; *Jeremiah* 4:5; *Ezekiel* 33:3-6)
- The First Angel’s Message (*Revelation* 14:6, 7)
 - Fear God
 - Give glory to Him
 - *The hour of His judgment has come*
 - Worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water

babes: let the bridegroom go out from his chamber, and the bride from her dressing room. Let the priests, who minister to the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar; let them say, 'Spare Your people, O LORD, and do not give Your heritage to reproach, that the nations should rule over them, Why should they say among the peoples, "Where is their God?"'" So again, the trumpet is blowing to arouse the people.

Let us read *Jeremiah* 4:5. "Declare in Judah, and proclaim in Jerusalem, and say: Blow the trumpet in the land; cry, 'Gather together,' and say, 'Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the fortified cities.'" Whenever there was danger or a special task, the trumpets were blown.

So likewise in *Ezekiel* 33:1-5 we read, "Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'Son of man, speak to the children of your people, and say to them, "When I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from their territory and make him a watchman, when he sees the sword coming upon the land, if he blows the trumpet and warns the people, then whosoever hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, if the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be on his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, but did not take warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he who takes warning will save his life.'"

The trumpet was blown again. Why was the trumpet blown? Because the enemy was coming. It was warning the people to prepare themselves for the enemy. If the watchman saw the sword and did not blow the trumpet, the people would not be warned. Then the sword would come and destroy the people. Do you know why it was important to blow the trumpet? To warn the people of a coming danger. What was that danger? The danger was that they were not ready for the Day of Atonement. They were not ready for the

judgment that would take place on the Day of Atonement. It was a warning: Be careful!

When was the actual fulfillment of this prophecy, as a warning judgment? In 1844, the First Angel's message. "Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth--to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people--saying with a loud voice (this was the trumpet, the Feast of Trumpets), 'Fear God, and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea, and springs of waters.'" *Revelation* 14:6, 7. The first angel is really the trumpet. And what is the trumpet blowing? "Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment has come." And what is the Day of Atonement? That is the hour of His judgment. And the hour of judgment is come, in the very moment the trumpet is blowing. That happened on the first day of the seventh month, or in this case it happened in 1844. So what is the content of the First Angel's message? First, fear God; second, give glory to Him; and thirdly, the hour of His judgment has come. And that makes Him the trumpet angel, that very message. And finally "worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea, and springs of waters." Very often the First Angel's message is also called the "Judgment Hour Message," because of this. The hour of His judgment has come.

Let us go through the First Angel's message point by point. First of all there is a trumpet announcing the hour of judgment. That is a call to leave our own world. It is time to leave our own world, because when the judgment comes it will be too late. So first of all, the trumpet blows and says "Fear God." Why should I fear God? Let us read *Philippians* 2:12, 13: "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is

God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” What is Paul telling us here? He says be careful. And why should we be careful if God is working out our salvation? He is doing the job, we can just depend on Him and that is it. No, be careful! Why shall we be careful? Why should we fear? We must fear lest we take the work of God into our own hands. We must fear lest we cling to our own world--lest we say yes to Jesus, yet still cling to our own world. This is what we need to fear.

So the message of the trumpet is very clear. Fear! Make sure you work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who works in you both to will and to do His good pleasure. There can be nothing of your own world in you if you want to be saved in the end. Therefore fear! Fear God, and secondly give glory to Him. What does this mean? It means that we give glory to Him and not to our own world. We will continue this later.

Study 17

The First Angel's message was a message of deliverance from our own world. It was a trumpet, announcing the hour of judgment. There are several elements in that call. First of all 'Fear God!', which means to fear my own world. The texts we mentioned in this context are *Philippians* 2:12, 13, and *Christ's Object Lessons*, 161.1. Next it means to give glory to God, and not to my own world.

The next text I want to mention in this connection is in *1 Corinthians* 1. This is the great letter that Paul wrote. Here he lays down the principle that the foolishness of the cross is wiser than the wisdom of the world. And he writes about the base things of the world and the things which are despised. "But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to

bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—that, as it is written, 'He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.'" *1 Corinthians* 1:27–31.

Another statement in the Old Testament says: "Thus says the Lord: 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom [own world], let not the mighty man glory in his might [own world], nor let the rich man glory in his riches [own world]; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,' says the Lord." *Jeremiah* 9:23, 24.

This is one of the clearest texts that show what glory means. It means not to depend on my wisdom, my might, my riches, or my understanding; but to depend fully on God. That is glory, that is giving praise to Him. Paul makes the point that God wants to destroy the wisdom of man, the might of man, the glory of man. How will He do this? By giving His wisdom to those who are not considered the great, the honorable, and so forth.

God does not use the most expensive instrument to play a melody on, but rather the most humble one. He brings out the most beautiful melody, thereby showing where the real glory lies. It lies in Him and not in men.

That is the glory that we are to give to Him, not to our own world. Our wisdom, our mind, and our riches are our

The First Angel's Message

- Trumpet, announcing the hour of judgment
- A call to leave my own world
 - Fear God = Fear of my own world (*Philippians* 2:12, 13; *Christ's Object Lessons*, 161.1)
 - Give glory to God = To Him, and not to my own world (*1 Corinthians* 1:29-31)
 - The hour of His judgment is come = It will be too late then to leave my own world (*Matthew* 25: 1- 13)
 - Worship Him = To give up my own world (*Matthew* 22:37)
- The gospel (the power of God) alone can deliver us from our own world

own world. So, let not the wise men glory in their own world. Let not the mighty men glory in their own world, nor let the rich men glory in their own world; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me. Let him glory in the world of God. That is the real purpose of the text in *Jeremiah 9:23*.

The next message is, “The hour of his judgment is come!” What does this mean? When the judgment comes, it will be too late to leave my own world. This is the point that Jesus makes again and again in the object lessons. In *Matthew 25*, for example, He clearly says: it is too late to gather oil when the call comes, “The bridegroom is coming! Go ye out to meet him”. You have to have the oil before the call comes. When this cry comes, we must be ready. When the judgment comes, we must be ready. Therefore the warning is given very clearly. Of course you may say: But the trumpet is the warning sound. How can it be too late already when the trumpet is sounding? Well, those who are sounding the trumpet must have oil in their vessels before they can give the trumpet sound. But for those who hear it, it will not be too late, because they need to be warned. They need to be roused and they need to get ready. So the hour of judgment has definitely come and we need to make haste to get rid of our own world. That is the message of the parable of the ten virgins, very clearly. And that is why we are studying it here.

To “worship him, who has made the earth, the sea and the fountains!” also means to give up our own world. This is the true worship of Jesus. Let us read this text in *Matthew*. “Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment.” *Matthew 22:37, 38*.

What is the first and great commandment? You shall love your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. Serve him with everything that you have,

unreservedly, giving yourself completely. Do not keep living in your own world.

The gospel is the final point of the First Angel’s message. The power of God alone can deliver us from our own world. John saw a mighty angel having the everlasting gospel. And this everlasting gospel delivers us from our own world. Therefore the message can confidently be said: “Fear God, give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment is come and worship Him, who made the earth and the sea and the springs!” This is the meaning of the trumpet.

The Day of Atonement is the judgment day; it is the investigative judgment. It was announced by the trumpets. And what is the meaning of that? In the time of the Old Testament, all the people were called together once a year by the blowing of the trumpets. They came together on the Day of Atonement to search their hearts and to fast. They were to rest from every labor. The day was spent entirely and completely in searching their hearts.

If they found any sin against their neighbor, or against God; against their people, or in any way, they had to confess it and put it away. If they did not do this, if they persisted in their sin, and the Day of Atonement was over, they were cut off from the people. So the Day of Atonement was really their last opportunity to bring their sins into the sanctuary.

On that day the sanctuary was actually cleansed from the sins that were brought there during the whole year. And once it was cleansed, the records were closed, and it was too late to bring any more sin into it. Therefore, it was really essential to search for sin in their own hearts on that day, because it was the Day of Judgment.

As it was in the shadow service, so it is likewise in the fulfillment. Everything is a prophecy, so this is a prophecy too. The Adventists understood very clearly that this work is going on in the heavenly sanctuary. This is described in *The Great Controversy*.

This time in which we live is the last days in which we can bring our sins into the heavenly sanctuary. This is a very solemn time, a time of searching of the records. We cannot really overestimate how earnest and how solemn this time is.

In order to get some idea of it, I want to look at the details as given by Sister White, where she talks about this Day of Atonement or Judgment. It is found in *Testimonies for the Church* 4. "On the morning of October 23, 1879, about two o'clock, the Spirit of the Lord rested upon me, and I beheld scenes in the coming judgment. Language fails me in which to give an adequate description of the things which passed before me and of the effect they had upon my mind.

"The great day of the execution of God's judgment seemed to have come. Ten thousand times ten thousand were assembled before a large throne, upon which was seated a person of majestic appearance. Several books were before Him, and upon the covers of each was written in letters of gold, which seemed like a burning flame of fire: 'Ledger of Heaven.' One of these books, containing the names of those who claim to believe the truth, was then opened. Immediately I lost sight of the countless millions about the throne, and only those who were professedly children of the light and of the truth engaged my attention. As these persons were named, one by one, and their good deeds mentioned, their countenances would light up with a holy joy that was reflected in every direction. But this did not seem to rest upon my mind with the greatest force.

"Another book was opened, wherein were recorded the sins of those who profess the truth. Under the general heading of selfishness came every other sin. There were also headings over every column, and underneath these, opposite each name, were recorded, in their respective columns, the lesser sins.

"Under covetousness came falsehood, theft, robbery, fraud, and avarice; under ambition

came pride and extravagance; jealousy stood at the head of malice, envy, and hatred; and intemperance headed a long list of fearful crimes, such as lasciviousness, adultery, indulgence of animal passions, etc. As I beheld I was filled with inexpressible anguish and exclaimed: 'Who can be saved? who will stand justified before God? whose robes are spotless? who are faultless in the sight of a pure and holy God?'

"As the Holy One upon the throne slowly turned the leaves of the ledger, and His eyes rested for a moment upon individuals, His glance seemed to burn into their very souls, and at the same moment every word and action of their lives passed before their minds as clearly as though traced before their vision in letters of fire. Trembling seized them, and their faces turned pale. Their first appearance when around the throne was that of careless indifference. But how changed their appearance now! The feeling of security is gone, and in its place is a nameless terror. A dread is upon every soul, lest he shall be found among those who are wanting. Every eye is riveted upon the face of the One upon the throne; and as His solemn, searching eye sweeps over that company, there is a quaking of heart; for they are self-condemned without one word being uttered. In anguish of soul each declares his own guilt and with terrible vividness sees that by sinning he has thrown away the precious boon of eternal life.

"One class were registered as cumberers of the ground. As the piercing eye of the Judge rested upon these, their sins of neglect were distinctly revealed. With pale, quivering lips they acknowledged that they had been traitors to their holy trust. They had had warnings and privileges, but they had not heeded nor improved them. They could now see that they had presumed too much upon the mercy of God. True, they had not such confessions to make as had the vile and basely corrupt; but, like the fig tree, they were cursed because

they bore no fruit, because they had not put to use the talents entrusted to them.

“This class had made self supreme, laboring only for selfish interests. They were not rich toward God, not having responded to His claims upon them. Although professing to be servants of Christ, they brought no souls to Him. Had the cause of God been dependent on their efforts, it would have languished; for they not only withheld the means lent them of God, but they withheld themselves. But these could now see and feel that in occupying an irresponsible position in reference to the work and cause of God they had placed themselves on the left hand. They had had opportunity, but would not do the work that they could and should have done.

“The names of all who profess the truth were mentioned. Some were reprov'd for their unbelief, others for having been slothful servants. They had allowed others to do the work in the Master’s vineyard, and to bear the heaviest responsibilities, while they were selfishly serving their own temporal interests. Had they cultivated the abilities God had given them, they could have been reliable burden bearers, working for the interest of the Master. Said the Judge: ‘All will be justified by their faith and judged by their works.’ How vividly then appeared their neglect, and how wise the arrangement of God in giving to every man a work to do to promote the cause and save his fellow men. Each was to demonstrate a living faith in his family and in his neighborhood, by showing kindness to the poor, sympathizing with the afflicted, engaging in missionary labor, and by aiding the cause of God with his means. But, like Meroz, the curse of God rested upon them for what they had not done. They had loved that work which would bring the greatest profit in this life; and opposite their names in the ledger devoted to good works there was a mournful blank.

“The words spoken to these were most solemn: ‘You are weighed in the balances,

and found wanting. You have neglected spiritual responsibilities because of busy activity in temporal matters, while your very position of trust made it necessary that you should have more than human wisdom and greater than finite judgment. This you needed in order to perform even the mechanical part of your labor; and when you disconnected God and His glory from your business, you turned from His blessing.” I find it interesting, even for the mechanical part of your labor, mowing the lawn or repairing a pipe or laying some bricks or whatever is a mechanical part, or washing an elderly person is a mechanical thing, but even in this you need it more than human wisdom, even in this you need the guiding hand of the Lord and this shows that nothing is unimportant in the work of God, even it is a seeming little work, even it is building something.

“The question was then asked: ‘Why have you not washed your robes of character and made them white in the blood of the Lamb? God sent His Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that through Him it might be saved. My love for you has been more self-denying than a mother’s love. It was that I might blot out your dark record of iniquity, and put the cup of salvation to your lips, that I suffered the death of the cross, bearing the weight and curse of your guilt. The pangs of death, and the horrors of the darkness of the tomb, I endured, that I might conquer him who had the power of death, unbar the prison house, and open for you the gates of life. I submitted to shame and agony because I loved you with an infinite love, and would bring back my wayward, wandering sheep to the paradise of God, to the tree of life. That life of bliss which I purchased for you at such a cost, you have disregarded. Shame, reproach, and ignominy, such as your Master bore for you, you have shunned. The privileges He died to bring within your reach have not been appreciated. You would not be partaker of His sufferings, and you cannot

now be partaker with Him of His glory.’ Then were uttered these solemn words: ‘He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.’ The book then closed, and the mantle fell from the Person on the throne, revealing the terrible glory of the Son of God.

“The scene then passed away, and I found myself still upon the earth, inexpressibly grateful that the day of God had not yet come, and that precious probationary time is still granted us in which to prepare for eternity.” *Testimonies for the Church* 4:384.1-387.2.

What an urgency there is behind this great Day of Atonement. Can you see that we cannot simply afford to live in our own worlds? We would definitely not make it. In *The Great Controversy* we have a whole chapter about this. Sister White refers to *Daniel 7*, and she also speaks about the fact that the scenes connected with the Day of Atonement are most solemn.

“Every man’s work passes in review before God and is registered for faithfulness or unfaithfulness. Opposite each name in the books of heaven is entered with terrible exactness every wrong word, every selfish act, every unfulfilled duty, and every secret sin, with every artful dissembling. Heaven-sent warnings or reproofs neglected, wasted moments, unimproved opportunities, the influence exerted for good or for evil, with its far-reaching results, all are chronicled by the recording angel.

“As the books of record are opened in the judgment, the lives of all who have believed on Jesus come in review before God. Beginning with those who first lived upon the earth, our Advocate presents the cases of each successive generation, and closes with the living. Every name is mentioned, every case closely investigated. Names are accepted, names rejected. When any have sins remaining upon the books of record, unrepentant of and

unforgiving, their names will be blotted out of the book of life, and the record of their good deeds will be erased from the book of God’s remembrance. The Lord declared to Moses: ‘Whosoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book.’ Exodus 32:33. And says the prophet Ezekiel: ‘When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, ... all his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned.’ Ezekiel 18:24.

“The deepest interest manifested among men in the decisions of earthly tribunals but faintly represents the interest evinced in the heavenly courts when the names entered in the book of life come up in review before the Judge of all the earth. The divine Intercessor presents the plea that all who have overcome through faith in His blood be forgiven their transgressions, that they be restored to their Eden home, and crowned as joint heirs with Himself to ‘the first dominion.’ Micah 4:8. Satan in his efforts to deceive and tempt our race had thought to frustrate the divine plan in man’s creation; but Christ now asks that this plan be carried into effect as if man had never fallen. He asks for His people not only pardon and justification, full and complete, but a share in His glory and a seat upon His throne.

“Sins that have not been repented of and forsaken will not be pardoned and blotted out of the books of record, but will stand to witness against the sinner in the day of God. He may have committed his evil deeds in the light of day or in the darkness of night; but they were open and manifest before Him with whom we have to do. Angels of God witnessed each sin and registered it in the unerring records. Sin may be concealed, denied, covered up from father, mother, wife, children, and associates; no one but the guilty actors may cherish the least suspicion of the wrong; but it is laid bare before the intelligences of heaven. The darkness of the darkest night, the secrecy of all deceptive arts, is not sufficient to veil one thought

from the knowledge of the Eternal. God has an exact record of every unjust account and every unfair dealing. He is not deceived by appearances of piety. He makes no mistakes in His estimation of character. Men may be deceived by those who are corrupt in heart, but God pierces all disguises and reads the inner life.

“How solemn is the thought! Day after day, passing into eternity, bears its burden of records for the books of heaven. Words once spoken, deeds once done, can never be recalled. Angels have registered both the good and the evil. The mightiest conqueror upon the earth cannot call back the record of even a single day. Our acts, our words, even our most secret motives, all have their weight in deciding our destiny for weal or woe. Though they may be forgotten by us, they will bear their testimony to justify or condemn.

“In the judgment the use made of every talent will be scrutinized. How have we employed the capital lent us of Heaven? Will the Lord at His coming receive His own with usury? Have we improved the powers entrusted us, in hand and heart and brain, to the glory of God and the blessing of the world? How have we used our time, our pen, our voice, our money, our influence? What have we done for Christ, in the person of the poor, the afflicted, the orphan, or the widow? God has made us the depositaries of His holy word; what have we done with the light and truth given us to make men wise unto salvation? No value is attached to a mere profession of faith in Christ; only the love which is shown by works is counted genuine. Yet it is love alone which in the sight of Heaven makes any act of value. Whatever is done from love, however small it may appear in the estimation of men, is accepted and rewarded of God.

“We are now living in the great day of atonement. In the typical service, while the high priest was making the atonement for

Israel, all were required to afflict their souls by repentance of sin and humiliation before the Lord, lest they be cut off from among the people. In like manner, all who would have their names retained in the book of life should now, in the few remaining days of their probation, afflict their souls before God by sorrow for sin and true repentance. There must be deep, faithful searching of heart. The light, frivolous spirit indulged by so many professed Christians must be put away. There is earnest warfare before all who would subdue the evil tendencies that strive for the mastery. The work of preparation is an individual work. We are not saved in groups. The purity and devotion of one will not offset the want of these qualities in another. Though all nations are to pass in judgment before God, yet He will examine the case of each individual with as close and searching scrutiny as if there were not another being upon the earth. Everyone must be tested and found without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.” *The Great Controversy*, 482.1, 483.1, 3, 486.2, 3, 487.2, 489.3.

The whole chapter is of great interest. What else can we learn? Our world will be investigated, whether we build this world or the other world. The problem is that the foolish virgins come before the judgment with a totally different attitude.

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in

prison and you came to Me.’ Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’” *Matthew 25:31–40*.

The believers will do this work in a very unobtrusive way. And now comes the next part. “Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’” Verse 41.

Sister White saw those who were careless, at first, in a vision. But they were not careless anymore, when they met the eyes of Jesus. “For I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’ Then they also will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?’ Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” *Matthew 25:41–46*.

So this is basically the lesson of the Day of Atonement. We could go into more detail in this chapter “Facing Life’s Record”, but I will leave this up to you. It really tells us the urgency of leaving our own world.

Let us come now to the last feast, and that is the Feast of Tabernacles. It is important to know that tabernacles are temporal shelters. They were not like the tents we have today. They were not tents made of cloth, they were booths made of branches from trees. They lived

in these to commemorate their wilderness wanderings. This feast is described in *Leviticus*.

“Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel, saying: “The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the Lord. On the first day there shall be a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work on it. For seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation, and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord. It is a sacred assembly, and you shall do no customary work on it. These are the feasts of the Lord which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire to the Lord, a burnt offering and a grain offering, a sacrifice and drink offerings, everything on its day—besides the Sabbaths of the Lord, besides your gifts, besides all your vows, and besides all your freewill offerings which you give to the Lord. Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you shall keep the feast of the Lord for seven days.”’” *Leviticus 23:33–39*.

This was not the grain harvest which they brought in April. For this harvest they brought the fruit of the land in the seventh month of the year. “On the first day there shall be a Sabbath rest, and on the eighth day a Sabbath rest. And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days. You shall keep it as a feast to the Lord for seven days in the year. It shall be a statute forever in your generations. You shall celebrate it in the seventh month. You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land

of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.” *Leviticus* 23:39–43.

The meaning of this feast that Moses declared to Israel was: We are only pilgrims in this world; that is why we live in tabernacles, in booths. We are not settled here.

Elijah was driven from place to place and could not settle down in one place. This is the thought that is expressed by living in temporary booths. If we build our own homes and furnish them very well, as though they would last for another hundred years, then there is something wrong in our understanding, in our thinking. Buying our own homes may be more economical than renting, but we should not keep these things in our hearts. If something were to happen to our home, and we find ourselves unable to accept it, this is our own world. Our house can be our own world.

The Israelites were required to live in tabernacles from time to time in order to really remember that God led them in the wilderness and that they were only pilgrims in this world. We are not here in this world to build our own world. We should remember what the Lord has done. Count your blessings! The Israelites were to remember what God had done for them. They were to remember what God did for them in the sanctuary, but they were also to rejoice for all the harvest they had gathered in during that time. The harvest was really the result of God’s blessing. It was also a thanksgiving feast, not just something to remember their journey in the wilderness by.

In other words, we only deserve to live in booths; that is all we deserve.

I recently read a story in a little paper. It was about some American prisoners who were captured by the Taliban in Guantanamo Bay in Cuba. You know, they only had a very little space to live in, very narrow. They had to go to the toilet there, and sleep there. They were often together with other prisoners, who did not understand their language and whose language they did not understand. They had no shelter from the sun and from the rain. They were treated rather cruelly. Just recently some prisons were built for them, so that they had some shelter, but for months they stayed like this with absolutely no prospects. They did not know how long they would be held, or why they were being held--nothing. Some of them became so mad that they tried to kill themselves. And this is the situation that we deserve. We are strangers here. This is what we deserve and yet we live in such nice houses. We are so blessed, so we should thank the Lord for this. At the same time, we should never forget and ever remember that we are only pilgrims, and if the Lord should us put back in a situation where we have no definite shelter over the heads, where we have to live in huts, so to speak, then let us thank the Lord. That makes us feel less at home in this world. And now we should sing this song: *This World Is Not My Home, I am just passing through.* That is what is in our hearts. Amen.

Study 18

Religious Liberty in Prophecy

We now want to study the dawning of those events which will take place in the final controversy. We will briefly study the beast, the beast with the lamb-like horns, and the image of the beast, as described in *Revelation 13*.

I will give a brief outline of the things we read about in *Revelation 13*. The first verses describe the beast's deadly wound. This wound, however, was healed. After this, the rise of the beast with lamb-like horns is described. This beast speaks like a dragon. It makes an image to, and exercises the power of, the first beast. This prophecy also describes how the worship of the image is enforced.

We can see the fulfillment of this prophecy in many events. We understand that the French Revolution was one of the events which gave the deadly wound to the beast. Republicanism in America also helped to give a fatal blow to that beast. Another factor was Protestantism, especially as it unfolded in America.

In modern times we see the fall of the iron curtain, which was quite significant because it led to the fall of communism. There were also two gulf wars, which are of importance. Through these wars a new direction was brought to the battles between the King of the North and the King of the South.

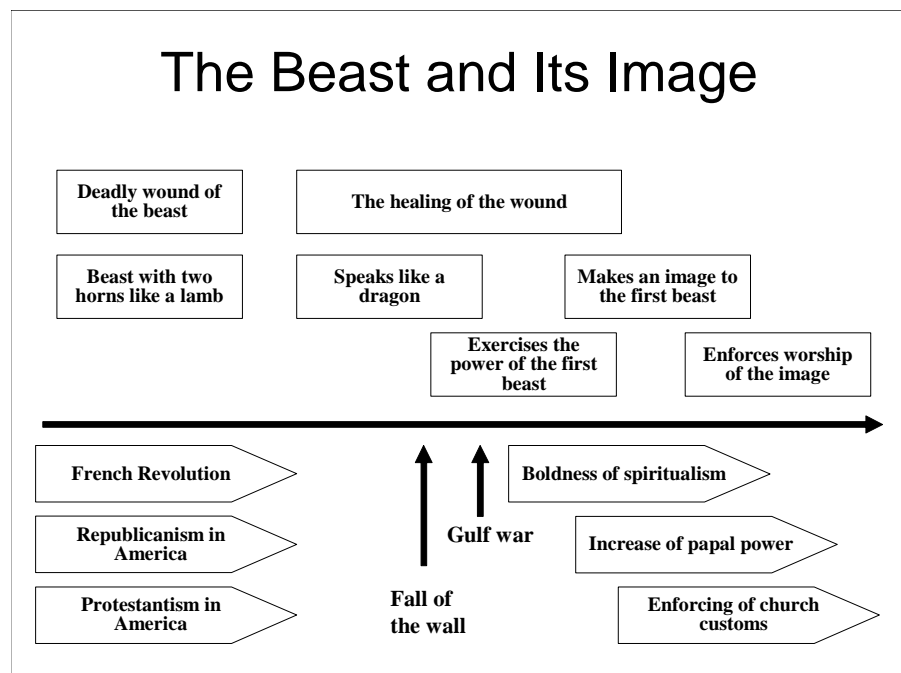
Next we find the boldness of spiritualism, the increase of papal power, and lastly the

enforcement of church customs. This final event is still future, but we expect it as the next step.

As you see, many of these events have already happened, and we wonder where we are standing today. We want to now explore these things briefly.

What are the foundations of our freedom? What are the secrets to the success of the United States? They are found in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and especially in the Bill of Rights. These laws, which are essentially Republicanism and Protestantism, guarantee civil and religious liberty to the nation. Civil liberty is freedom of conscience from any government. Religious liberty is the freedom to believe and practice religion, the freedom to worship the Creator according to the dictates of conscience.

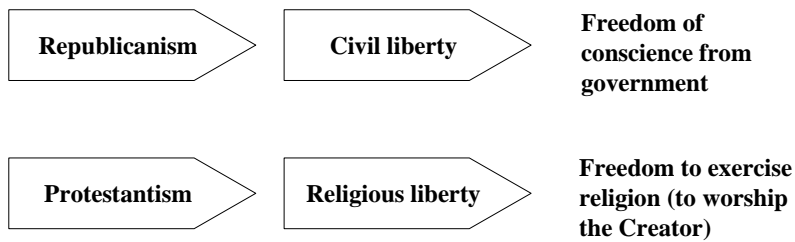
What do the First Amendment to the Constitution and the first paragraph of the Bill of Rights say? (We should know it by heart). "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." This is a very important law in America. It guarantees religious freedom. What is the



Foundations of Freedom

Declaration of Independence

The Constitution (Bill of Rights)



of exercising any religion, provided that those exercises would not harm other citizens. But if, for example, the exercise of my religion would require me to kill other people, then of course the state would step in. The first clause also prevents government from supporting and financing churches. This is an important point.

Let us now look at what Sister White says. "... National apostasy will be followed by national

meaning of this law? There are two clauses. The first clause prohibits Congress from establishing laws concerning religion. The second clause prevents Congress from making laws that would hinder anyone from freely carrying out their religion. Both are important and essential. "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion ...". If the law ended here, it would not be complete. Laws could be made by Congress that would suppress the free exercise of religion. But this is what the second clause prevents. "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." This law is the reason why the United States citizens have the possibility

ruin." *S.D.A. Bible Commentary 7:977.2*. What was her meaning when she talked of "national apostasy"? When Sister White speaks of national apostasy, she is always describing the acts of the government--specifically, of legislative and judicial powers.

Speaks Like a Dragon

National Apostasy

Actions of government:

- Executive
- Legislative
- Judicative

National Ruin

The consequences of apostasy:

- increasing immorality
- increasing criminality
- natural catastrophes
- poverty, famine
- increasing difference between the rich and poor
- social unrest
- insecurity, fear
- terrorism

The legislative powers are those which make laws--the parliament. This branch only acts on behalf of the people. The citizens vote representatives into office to make laws. The judicial powers are those which interpret the laws--the judges. The executive powers are carried out by the president and his ministers--the police forces. So we have these three powers: those who make the laws (the parliament); those who interpret the laws (the judges); and those who carry out the laws (the president).

Even though Sister White does not mention the executive branch, she includes it when she talks about the American government. It is definitely a part of the government.

These three branches will be responsible for the national apostasy.

We read that the beast with the lamb-like horns will cause those who live on the earth to make an image to the beast. "And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast." *Revelation* 13:14.

"Here is clearly presented a form of government in which the legislative power rests with the people." *The Great Controversy* 442.3. This means that the government of the United States will tell the legislative branch to make an image to the beast.

What are the consequences of this apostasy? Sister White says that it is national ruin, but can we describe this in greater detail? What is national ruin? It is increasing

immorality; it is increasing criminality; it is natural catastrophes; it is poverty and hunger; it is a greater difference between poor and rich; it is social unrest; it is insecurity; it is fear; and it is terrorism. All these problems are consequences of the actions of the government. "... National apostasy will lead to national ruin." More and more, the people are losing their hold on morality. Immorality is becoming greater and greater.

The government tries to prevent national ruin, yet it fosters this very ruin through its own actions. Who will be blamed for this national ruin, which is increasing more and more?

The people of God will be held responsible, just as they were in the times of ancient Rome. In Rome, Christians were called atheists because they did not worship the heathen gods. For this reason, they were held responsible for catastrophes, social unrest, and every other calamity. This is the reason that the Christians were persecuted. This will happen again. But who is really responsible for the national ruin? The government is responsible, through its own actions.

National Apostasy

- Impatience
- Dishonesty
- Disregard of international treaties
- Giving up of old principles

Leads to

Let us look at national apostasy. Can we see it today? Can we see the leaven of national apostasy working? The ultimate apostasy has not yet happened. It will happen when the actions of the government form the image of the beast. But this will not happen all at once. There is a process to it. What is this process?

It is impatience. When those who are in responsible positions do not exercise prudence and patience anymore, there will be trouble.

This impatience can clearly be seen in words and actions today. Can you see this? The war had to happen quickly. There was no room for patience. This impatience is a human weakness, but when it is seen in government, it is a dangerous thing.

We also see dishonesty. This dishonesty is very apparent. At the present time there is a great discussion about the reasons given for the war in Iraq. Dishonest practices are behind this. As I recall, for example, the English government published a report about the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. It was discovered soon after this that the report was copied from a student's paper written ten years ago. Even the spelling and punctuation mistakes were copied. It was also found out that many reports from secret services were unduly exaggerated. It is embarrassing, but they still insist that what they said was the truth. This dishonesty, so openly displayed, takes away all credibility of the government. That is national apostasy.

Today there is a disregard for international treaties. In the past, America's presidents bound the nation to international treaties, but

National Ruin

- Increasing terrorism
- Treaties no longer kept
- Social unrest: demonstrations, strikes
- Mistrust, Unreliability

Leads to

what does the present government do? It openly brushes them off. We did not make these treaties and therefore they are invalid, they say. Such policy is very dangerous and disastrous. Former governments of the United States acted very differently. As I remember, one president who had the option of either rejecting a former treaty or honoring it at great disadvantage to the nation chose the latter. He declared: "We will keep this contract, because the greatest asset that we have as the United States is the keeping of our word." Is this the attitude of the present government? Certainly not! Instead, there is a disregard for international treaties.

In addition, there is a giving up of old principles. America always held to the principle of not meddling in the internal affairs of other countries. If there were a dictator in a country and the people of that country appealed to America for help to get rid of him, America would respond that it was the task of the people in their nation. The nation took this stand because it firmly believed that the government was "of the people, by the people, and for the people." That was the principal for which America always officially stood,

although we know, of course, that at times there was secretly another policy.

I was very impressed by an action of the former president Bush during the first Gulf War. He stopped the armies as they marched toward Baghdad. In a short time they could have toppled the government, but the president stopped it. I think many people were surprised that he did that. Why did he stop the armies when the task seemed only half-

finished? It was because it was officially a policy of the United States to let the people choose to maintain or depose their own government.

And what is the situation today? The old principal that the people themselves choose their government is put aside, and this is done shamelessly. The official reason for the Iraq war was that Iraq was invaded in order to depose its government. And now it is difficult to instate a new government. This does not work properly without the co-operation of the people.

If this principle is not regarded anymore, what is happening with other principles? Where does this national apostasy lead to? It leads to national ruin.

This means increased terrorism, broken treaties, social unrest, demonstrations, strikes, and increased distrust between nations. There will be unreliability in this relationship. And what does this lead to?

It will lead to human problem solving. This means the limitation of civil liberties, first of all. This is what is happening at the present time. Maybe we do not notice it that much,

Problem Solving

- Limitation of civil liberties
- Looking to the churches for help
- Religious intolerance
- Sunday laws

besides a few restrictions for traveling and more background checks. But there are restrictions of a more serious nature. These things have not happened before.

The worst thing is the actual transgression of the principles of the Constitution. One principle describes the “due process act” concerning prisoners. Every prisoner has a right to “due process.” This means that anyone who is charged has some minimal rights. These rights were obviously not given to the prisoners from Afghanistan who were taken to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The case was brought to court in America, but the judges decided that they would do nothing about it because it did not happen in America. In other words, the American Constitution is valid only on American territory. In practical terms, the government can do anything as long as it does not happen on American soil.

But even in America, these rights are not always regarded. And why is this so? The government claims that the war against terrorism brings a state of emergency to the country, and in such an emergency some of the constitutional liberties cannot be granted. Is this really proper? You can see how the

stage is already set for the final events of the great controversy. Liberties are no longer granted under a guise of national interest.

Another method of human problem solving is to look to the churches for help. Help is sought there to deal with the increased crime

and other social problems. Next comes religious intolerance. This will increase more and more. The final solution will be the Sunday laws.

With this brief outline of events we want to conclude our history studies.

Study 19

We want to start a new subject called the school of life. This subject is connected with our studies thus far. We have seen that the foolish virgins do not have oil in their vessels, and it is our quest to understand how to get oil into our vessels. We have seen that our vessels are filled with our own oil and that we need to be delivered from this. Our own oil can be called self-pity. God has given us the school of life to cleanse our vessels in order to be filled with His holy oil. It is an antidote for self-pity. An antidote is a remedy to counteract the effects of poison. For example, if you are bitten by a snake, you take an antidote to kill the poison in the body. The school of life is God's antidote for self-pity.

We need to know what self-pity is. We need to understand it in order to understand the antidote against it. First of all, self-pity is a spiritual disease. It must be understood as a

disease. It is not a single sin that we commit here or there. It is a state of mind. It is often both a spiritual disease and a mental disease. They are closely linked together.

Sister White mentions self-pity in that context. She writes: "Your self-pity is an injury to you; you sympathize with yourself, feel that you are not esteemed as you should be that your work is altogether too hard, and your best efforts are unappreciated. These feelings are the result of a spiritual disease,..." *Sons and Daughters of God*, 298.2. "These feelings are the result of a spiritual disease." It is important for us to understand that it is a disease. When we understand the problem, then we can apply the cure. If we only look at self-pity as something that is burdening other people or that just happens to us occasionally, then we do not understand that it is a real problem. It is a disease, and it is more common than we think.

When I became aware of this disease in my life, I must say that I was quite shocked, but I was very grateful that the Lord showed it to me. And I am very grateful now for the cure that He gives. I can even thank Him for the things that I cursed before.

In order to get healed, in order to fill our vessels with oil, we really need to understand that there is a disease that besets us. That is the reason why we do not have the Holy Spirit. Again, it is more common than we think. Let us search our hearts very closely as we study this to see where this disease is in our own lives.

Self-pity—What is It?

- A spiritual disease (*Sons and Daughters of God*, 298.2-4)
- Sympathizing with self (*Sons and Daughters of God*, 298.2-4)
- Thinking about self—self-centeredness (poverty, unrighteousness) (*Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery, and Divorce*, 58.1)
- Worry (*Manuscript Releases* 7:396.2)
- Wounded pride (*Gospel Workers* 92, 367.2)
- Feelings: not being appreciated; work is too hard; not esteemed enough (*The Ministry of Healing*, 476.2)
- Striving for recognition; a call for attention
- Striving for the highest place (*The Ministry of Healing*, 476.2)
- Blaming circumstances/others for my own predicament (*Medical Ministry*, 177.3)
- Foolishness
- Foolish virgin

Self-pity is called sympathizing with self. We have quoted this from *Sons and Daughters of God*, but let us look at it again: "Your self-pity is an injury to you; you sympathize with yourself." We know what it means to have sympathy for or with somebody. To have sympathy for somebody would mean feeling sorry for him. To have sympathy with somebody means to identify myself with him. It means to have the same concepts, to have the same views of the matter as he has. That is sympathy with somebody. When I have sympathy with myself, I have the same view as myself. In other words, I am rather self-centered. I am not able to look at myself from another person's angle; I just look at myself from my own angle and nothing else. "You sympathize with yourself; feel that you are not esteemed as you should be."

What do we think about ourselves? We can think about ourselves in the context of poverty--that we are poor, for instance. This may not only be in a material sense, but also in a spiritual sense. "Poor me, nobody talks with me. Poor me, everybody is accusing me. Poor me, I am part of the lower class instead of the upper class. Poor me, I am always together with strict people who hassle me. Poor me, I am living in a country with a dictatorship. Poor me."

This poor me attitude is a spiritual disease. It could be that I feel I have been treated unfairly. I could say, "They have done this and that and that to me." We should not think that because we are Christians, we are necessarily better about this. Sometimes we are even worse. As Christians we are persecuted, and then we have a sad lot, and we dwell on it. Then we become self-centered about the unrighteous behavior that happens to us. This is a disease, and I must recognize it as such. It may be true that injustice has been done to me. It may not be true. It may be that I am exaggerating, that I make mountains out of molehills. But whatever it is, it is still self-centeredness. It is self-pity.

Let us finish the first statement before we go to the next one: "Your self-pity is an injury to you; you sympathize with yourself, feel that you are not esteemed as you should be that your work is altogether too hard, and your best efforts are unappreciated. These feelings are the result of a spiritual disease, which can be cured only through faith in Christ. The temptation seizes you when you are weary or perplexed; but when the first symptoms appear, and the enemy works to make you grumble and murmur, look unto Jesus, trust in your Saviour. This is the only cure for this spiritual malaria" Here again we have the word malaria which we studied about in earlier years. "If you allow your mind to be occupied with these things, the enemy will see that you are kept busy. He puts his magnifying glass before your eyes, and mole hills of difficulty are made to appear as mountains. . . . You need to understand how to repose in God. A wise heart, molded by the Holy Spirit, it is your privilege to have; and this is the foundation of all true happiness. . . ." *Sons and Daughters of God*, 298.2.

This self-centeredness is also described in *Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery, and Divorce*. "I say, put your trust in God. Your mind has been perplexed and occupied with this matter regarding your wife. Now in the name of Jesus lay this matter down; leave your case with the Lord. Let your experience humble you. Christ is with the weak and the tempted and forsaken, to give them His divine sympathy and rest. You need rest of mind. Give up Laura and fasten your affections on God. He will give you relief. Time is short; you have no time to stop and pity yourself; go to work for the Master. Do your duty to the very best of your ability; do not give up to discouragement; walk humbly with God; seek communion with God. Do not let your disappointment make you self-centered, to think of yourself, talk of yourself. . . . Live for God. Be kind, be courteous. Let not this

disappointment ruin you. Cast off your melancholy. God will help you if you will be true to Him. Remember, the eye of God is upon you, searching the depths of your soul. . . .” *Testimonies on Sexual Behavior*, 58.1.

Melancholy is another word described here. Maybe we would call it depression today. But the word melancholy is very interesting. What does it mean? In Greek it means black and bile. Bile is very bitter. And black also means bleak. In other words, Melancholy is very dark, very depressing. This is the same as self-pity. It is depression.

When you are self-centered, you think about yourself, you talk about yourself. You find that when you are in an especially bad situation you have a great desire to talk about it. You can talk about it with everybody. You want everybody to know how badly you were treated. This is a natural byproduct of this disease. In other words, we become self-centered. We think of ourselves, we talk of ourselves.

It would be wise, in such a situation, to tell our burdens to God. He would direct our thoughts to something else. This is where He wants us to have our mind, to direct it away from ourselves so that we do not think and talk of ourselves. Then we are not self-centered.

Worry is also self-pity. We know the statement: “Worry is blind and cannot discern the future.” Worry is blind. If we are only asking “What will happen to me?”, then that is self-pity. Let’s read about this in *Manuscript Releases* Volume 7. “When you get so weary that you feel full of care and worry and self-pity, just go apart and rest awhile. Do not worry yourself out of the arms of Jesus.—Letter 187, 1901, pp. 2, 3. (To S. N. Haskell and wife, December 29, 1901.)” *Manuscript Releases* 7:396.2. Sister White wrote this to S. N. Haskell and his wife. It is very interesting, because even though he was a great advent pioneer, even he was warned

against self-pity. That shows how common this disease is.

Another manifestation of self-pity is wounded pride. Everybody has certain pride, and when this is wounded, it really cuts into one’s dignity. Sister White describes it in the following way: “The reason why you fail to appreciate that which comes to you in warnings and reproofs from the word of God, is chiefly owing to your own self. You are inclined to self-importance, and your pride is wounded frequently...” *Gospel Workers* (1892), 367.2. For example, if I am standing with a group of people and somebody rebukes me in front of these people, it is difficult to bear. Some people can bear this easily, for they do not have this pride in their lives. But if pride is in my life, then I will be wounded, even though I may not necessarily show it.

When Judas was rebuked, he was severely wounded. “You are inclined to self-importance, and your pride is wounded frequently because you have not the meekness of character to bow at the foot of the cross. If you call to mind the Author and Finisher of your faith, and realize what he has suffered,— that he went without the camp, bearing reproach that you might be saved,— then you will think that you are suffering nothing. What you want is the spirit of Jesus. You need to cherish it continually; and then when difficulties shall arise, you will be hid in Christ, and will manifest his spirit. You should not encourage a feeling of sympathy and pity for yourself. Self should be hid in Jesus, and then you will feel such sincere sorrow and pity for the souls who do not know what is for their best good, that you will forget all about your being misused.” *Gospel Workers* (1892), 367.2. Often the terminology is used: “I was verbally abused. I was abused, not physically, but verbally.” Often this is said simply because there is self-pity, or wounded pride.

Self-pity has to do with feelings of not being appreciated. The work is too hard and

we are not esteemed as we ought to be. Let us look at *The Ministry of Healing*: “Let those who feel that their work is not appreciated, and who crave a position of greater responsibility, consider that ‘promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the Judge: He putteth down one, and setteth up another.’ Psalm 75:6, 7. Every man has his place in the eternal plan of heaven. Whether we fill that place depends upon our own faithfulness in co-operating with God.

“We need to beware of self-pity. Never indulge the feeling that you are not esteemed as you should be, that your efforts are not appreciated, that your work is too difficult. Let the memory of what Christ has endured for us silence every murmuring thought. We are treated better than was our Lord. ‘Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not.’ Jeremiah 45:5. The Lord has no place in His work for those who have a greater desire to win the crown than to bear the cross. He wants men who are more intent upon doing their duty than upon receiving their reward—men who are more solicitous for principle than for promotion.” *The Ministry of Healing*, 476.1, 2.

So never indulge the feeling, that you are not esteemed as you ought to be. I could say: “Well, people always concentrate on the negative aspects of my character, but I also have positive characteristics. They should dwell on these.” The thought that the people dwell on the negative points of my character is self-pity. “We need to beware of self-pity. Never indulge the feeling that you are not esteemed as you should be...”

It is a temptation to indulge in your feelings. But the question is; shall we indulge in them, shall we cherish them, shall we allow our thoughts to dwell on them? “Never indulge the feeling that you are not esteemed as you should be, that your efforts are not appreciated, that your work is too difficult.”

Self-pity strives for recognition. It is a call for attention. We may not be aware of this,

but that is what it is. We look for recognition. “Please recognize me. I want attention.” It is really striving for the highest place. It is blaming others, or circumstances, for my own predicaments. “If this circumstance had not happened.... Poor me, but you know, it’s because they have done this and they have done that. Yes, it was the serpent that you created. It is the woman you made.” We always blame others for our situation. That is self-pity; it is a symptom of self-pity.

This was the disciples’ problem. When they were on the lake, they were very depressed. They were rowing along trying to catch some fish and they could not. They were full of self-pity at that moment. Why? Because they had a wrong concept of the kingdom. They wanted the highest place in the kingdom of Christ.

Let us consider this point: “By their actions those connected with our institutions give proof of the worth, or worthlessness, of their judgment. Those who enter the service of the institution with a spirit of unwillingness to help, who do their allotted tasks with a feeling of compulsion, in sullen submission, who act as if they would gladly escape from the drudgery of the necessary daily duties which someone must do, are very little help to the institution. A mechanical obedience may hide the smoldering fire of rebellion, but it is ready to break out at any time against restraint. In the service of such there is no peace or light or love. The atmosphere surrounding their souls is not fragrant. The influence of their words and actions is felt by others, and this influence is harm even to those who are trying to do their best in any position in which they are placed. Self-pity is deteriorating to the characters of those who cherish it, and it exerts an influence that spoils the happiness of others.” *Medical Ministry*, 177.3

When we cherish self-pity, we only harm ourselves. That is all that we achieve by cherishing self-pity. It is foolish to blame

The Rod Drives Out Self-pity

- “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.” *Proverbs 22:15*

What is the rod? **The school of life. *Psalm 23***

What is foolishness? **The tendency to seek an easy way. *Prophets and Kings, 612.2***

- “Seeking the easy way is bound in the heart of a child; but the school of life shall drive it far from him.”

others for my situation. That is a foolish virgin. That is the foolishness of the foolish virgins. That is why we do not have the oil of the Holy Spirit.

Now that we understand the problem of self-pity better, we want to look at the cure for it. For this we will turn to a scripture in the Old Testament that talks about the rod which drives out self-pity. The text is in *Proverbs 22:15*. “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.” This Bible text can be misunderstood very easily.

There have been many discussions about this Bible text in the context of corporal punishment. The rod here mentioned is understood as the rod with which children are beaten. I remember when I was still in school, we had a very strict schoolmaster. Whenever we did something wrong, we had to stretch out our hands and he would hit us with his rod. It hurt quite a bit, and we feared this. So we were a bit careful not to do anything wrong, because we knew what would happen. I remember being hit once. I think almost everybody in the school felt it at least once because of something. And of course people like that

would use such texts as this one: “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child.” The schoolmaster would have said: “Yes, that is a very good text. Foolishness is bound in the hearts of my students. But the rod of correction, my rod here, will drive it far from them.” Actually, this rod did not drive foolishness far from me—maybe it was too small.

Let us understand what the rod is, and what foolishness is.

These are the two terms used here. We can understand the text better when we understand these two terms. The rod must be studied in the context of the whole Bible. The rod is frequently used as a symbol. Where is this symbol used in our everyday life? A shepherd used a rod. He used a rod to lean on. But it also had a round hook on the end and he could use this to catch the sheep easily, to draw them to himself. And maybe at times he would also use it to disciple them to some degree.

The rod is also used as a weapon. In *Psalms* it says, He will dash them into pieces with an iron rod. (See *Psalm 2:9*.) But it is also used as a sign of authority. We know that a rod was used by Moses in order to show that he was sent of God; and Aaron had a budding rod which showed that God had appointed him. We also know that a scepter is in the hand of kings. This scepter is nothing but a rod. Even today you might see this in a picture. When a king holds this rod in his hand, it is a sign of his authority.

The rod is actually the school of life. As evidence of this, I want to consider *Psalm 23*.

This shepherd's rod is the rod of correction. "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." *Psalms* 23:1-4. The first picture here is of a shepherd. This shepherd is somebody who cares. The good shepherd described in *John* 10 gives his life for his sheep. He leads, and the sheep follow him. He treads down the thorns for them. This is the good shepherd. "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake."

This all sounds very wonderful, as though the life of the Christian were only sunshine and nothing else. But then there is an opposite scene in Verse 4. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death." Does this have anything to do with green pastures and still waters and paths of righteousness? Yet, it does, for even in the valley of the shadow of death we find green pastures, still waters, and paths of righteousness.

There is a concept in the minds of many of us that when God leads us, there will be no hindrances in our lives. There will be no trouble, no difficulty. Everything will go smoothly. That is not so. And the *Psalms* reveal this very clearly. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death." When I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I see death face to face. Then I am in a very straight place. It could be actual physical death, or it could also be that I am in such a bad situation that I wish to die rather than to live on. That is the valley of the

shadow of death. It is the worst situation that I can be in.

Even though I walk through this valley, I will fear no evil. Why do I fear no evil? "For you are with me." The good Shepherd is with me. "Your rod and Your staff they comfort me." In other words, the rod that is driving foolishness out of the child is the same one that comforts me, especially when I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. That means that the situation of my life is such that I am in the valley of the shadow of death, but that is where the rod and staff comfort me. That is the school of life. In other words, He not only leads me in sunny situations, but He also leads me in the valley of the shadow of death. That is a school, that is the rod, and it comforts me. When I understand that the circumstances of my life are a blessing, then I have accepted the school of life. Then this school comforts me. But if I fight against it as my enemy all the time, it does not comfort me, for it cannot.

If somebody does not find comfort in His staff, he can never say, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." He can only say this if the rod and the staff is a comfort to him.

When is it foolishness if the rod is the school of life? When we have self-pity. Let me formulate this a little differently: foolishness is the tendency to look for the easiest way. This exists in the heart of every child. We tend to think that this text in *Proverbs* 22:15 only applies to a child that is not born again. We tend to think that a child that is not born again needs beatings. But it applies to all children. The tendency to seek an easy way is found even in those who are born again. Therefore, even those who are born again need the rod. They need the school of life. You will see this very clearly as we go on. So do not say, this text does not apply to me. It does apply to me, and it also applies to my children. The tendency to seek an easy way is always there.

When the Jews were called out of Babylon, many did not follow the call. Why? Because it was now easier to stay in Babylon than to go back to Palestine, where there were no houses, no protection, where the land was not as fertile as it was in the land of Shinar, and so forth. So the tendency to seek the easiest way prevented them from following the call of God. And that was foolishness, because great persecution broke out soon after in the time of Queen Esther. This was the cause of great trouble for the people. It is always foolishness to look for the easy way--always. So we can translate the words like this: "Seeking the easy way is bound in the heart of a child; but the School of Life will drive it far from him." This is what we want to learn here. "Seeking the easy way is bound in the heart of a child; but the School of Life will drive it far from him." We can also say: "Self-Pity is bound in the heart of a child; but the School of Life will drive it far from him." Maybe seeking the easy way is a general term. Self-pity is more specific.

The school of life is the circumstances of life overruled by the hand of the Almighty. Another word for it is divine providence. When the Spirit of Prophecy mentions divine providence, you know it is talking about the school of life.

You know, often the circumstances that surround us are self-made. Why are the circumstances such? Because we make them that way ourselves. But if we are responsible for making the problem ourselves, then how can we rest in God? God can overrule all circumstances, and He can even overrule

our mistakes, provided we rest in Him. In other words, even the circumstances that are the result of our own mistakes are overruled by the hand of the Almighty, and therefore they are a school of life for us.

"Trial is part of the education given in the school of Christ," which is another word for the school of life. "Trial is part of the education given in the school of Christ to purify God's children from the dross of earthliness. It is because God is leading His children that trying experiences come to them. Trials and obstacles are His chosen methods of discipline, and His appointed conditions of success. He who reads the hearts of men knows their weaknesses better than they themselves can know them. He sees that some have qualifications which, if rightly directed, could be used in the advancement of His work. In His providence He brings these souls into different positions and varied circumstances, that they may discover the defects that are concealed from their own knowledge. He gives them opportunity to overcome these defects and to fit themselves for service. Often He permits the fires of

What is the School of Life?

The circumstances of life overruled by the hand of the Almighty

The Acts of the Apostles, 524.2

Divine providence

The Desire of Ages, 313.3

The "Rod of Correction (Discipline)."

affliction to burn, that they may be purified.”
Acts of the Apostles, 524.2

Here we see that the school of life is a trial that is given as a part of the education in the school of Christ. Divine providence is also a part of this, of course. This is mentioned in many places. One place is in *The Desire of Ages*, 313.3: “All who choose Christ’s kingdom of love and righteousness and peace, making its interest paramount to all other, are linked to the world above, and every blessing needed for this life is theirs. In the book of God’s providence, the volume of life, we are each given a page. That page contains every particular of our history; even the hairs of the head are numbered. God’s children are never absent from His mind.” That is a wonderful story. In other words, Your rod and Your staff they comfort me. When we know that this is God’s providence, then we will have great comfort in these things. That is the rod of correction. *Proverbs 22:15* is only one text in which the rod is mentioned as a measure of discipline. There are many other texts as well. When you look in the concordance, you will find that the rod is often described in the connection with disciplining children. It is also called the rod of correction.

Let us ask again what the school of life is and how it works. First of all, it works

through the parents. They are the first ones who administer the school of life to their children. Next comes the school . When the children go to school, they also experience the school of life. Do not get confused; both are called school. The one is where the pupil sits, and the other we call the school of life. Children have the school of life in school. And the third is the circumstances of life. Of course everything is a circumstance, but we are talking about other circumstances of life apart from parents and school. So the school increases as it goes along. It starts small with the parents, then with the school, and finally with circumstances. So the school of life is the circumstances of life, which educate me to overcome my selfishness.

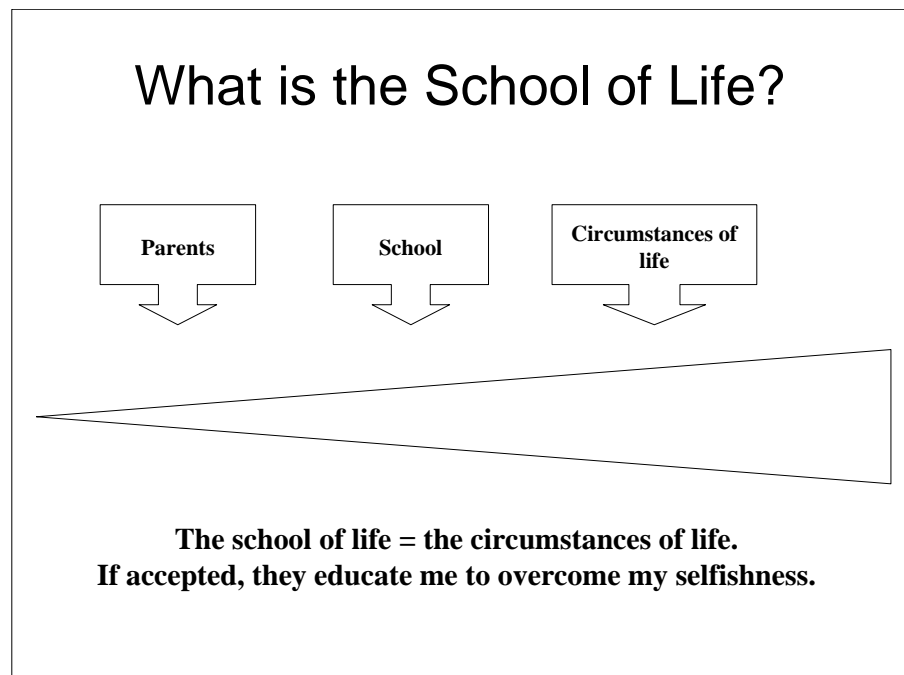
The school of life is given to overcome self-centeredness, to overcome my self-pity, and to help me to seek the right way and not the easy way--to seek the way that God has chosen for me. In our next study we will look at this discipline or at this rod in detail. We want to see how parents are to apply the rod, how the school applies the rod, and finally how circumstances apply the rod to our life in order to overcome self-pity. You can think about this a little bit, and in the next session we want to look into the details.

Study 20

We will continue our study about the school of life. We have learned that the circumstances of life are overruled by the hand of the Almighty, by divine providence. A question came up during the break: "Are these two different things, or are they one and the same thing?" Let me read me a statement to you that should make us think a little bit. It is found in the book *Christian Education*, 182.1. "For generations the prevailing system of education has been destructive to health, and even to life itself. Many parents and teachers fail to understand that in the child's early years the greatest attention needs to be given to the physical constitution, that a healthy condition of body and brain may be secured. It has been the custom to encourage sending children to school when they were mere babies, needing a mother's care. In many instances the little ones are crowded into ill-ventilated schoolrooms, where they sit in improper positions, upon poorly constructed benches, and as the result, the young and tender frames often become deformed. Little children, whose limbs and muscles are not strong, and whose brains are undeveloped, are kept confined, to their injury. Many have but a slight hold on life to begin with, and confinement in school from day to day makes them nervous, and they become diseased. Their bodies are dwarfed in consequence of the exhausted condition of the nervous system. Yet when the lamp of life goes out, parents and teachers do not realize

that they were in any way responsible for quenching the vital spark. Standing by the grave of their child, the afflicted parents look upon their bereavement as a special dispensation of Providence, when it was their own inexcusable, ignorant course that destroyed the young life. Under such circumstances, to charge the death to Providence, savors of blasphemy."

In other words, every circumstance of life does not happen because of divine providence. God may overrule even the death of children. He may do this as a lesson for us. But that does not mean that He planned it that way. Sometimes it happens because of our own foolishness. The parents' neglect to acquire knowledge caused the death of the children in this case. An even more grievous sin could cause harm to ourselves or to others. But to call this divine providence is blasphemy. In other words, God did not plan this, but He has planned for it. There is a difference here that we need to understand. Sometimes circumstances are especially formed and allowed by God's hand for our blessing, but other times He can do nothing



The Various Phases of the School of Life

- As a child:
actions of the parents
- At school:
the circumstances of life,
and the help of the parents
- As an adult:
God's providence

example, when a child wants to touch a hot oven, the parent will stop him from touching it because he does not understand that this will hurt him. When the child goes to the brink of an abyss, the parents will firmly take the child's hand. They act directly. They interpose by direct actions in order to prevent harm to the child.

They may also do something else like giving him a smack when he does something wrong. And you

more than to make provision for these circumstances. In both cases we speak of the school of life. In both cases we need to accept the circumstances as they are. In both cases we need to understand that it is a rod of correction, a rod of discipline. And why? Because in both cases God is the Helper. God is the Teacher, He is the Master Teacher in spite of the fact that our own foolishness has caused many of the providences. That is the point we want to make here.

Let us come back to the different phases in the school of life. First are the parents. When parents are cooperating with God, we can call this divine providence. Then comes the school. We have seen in the statement we just read that what happens in school is not always providence. But it may be if it is a good school. Finally, we have the circumstances of life. The school of life is the circumstances of life, which educate me to overcome my selfishness.

Let us think about the school of life in different areas. When the child is young, the school of life is the action of the parents. An action of the parent is a very direct thing. For

know, a little smack can work wonders, because it signals the child that what it did was not in order, that it should not happen. I do not mean physically abusing the child; that is another thing. A little smack and abuse are two different things. But a little smack is a signal from the parent that the child is in the wrong, that what he has done is not in order.

You can correct a child with words, but when a child is young, he cannot understand words unless they are spoken in a very stern voice. That may also be an action of the parents. A stern voice, a little smack, a firm hand or a loose hand; these are actions of the parents and these are circumstances of life. When a child is older and goes to school, the parents do not have as much control. They do not smack the child anymore, because you do not smack an older child. It would not work anyway. You cannot prevent him from harming himself because when he is at school, he is not under your jurisdiction; he does things for himself. When he comes home, the parents need to know how to deal wisely. They need to help the child accept his circumstances as a school of life. This is the

role of the parents during that time. And when we become adults, then we need to accept God's providence and other circumstances as a school of life. Then we can come to God and ask Him to interpret these things.

The point is that parents need to learn to apply the rod in the case of their children. It does not help to say: "My child is too tender, I will not do that. Instead of taking my child firmly, I will simply never take him to the mountains where there is an abyss. Instead of taking my child away from the hot oven, I will not use an oven while he is a small child. Or instead of giving him a little smack, I will speak softly and tenderly to him, and if he does not obey me I will keep talking to him again and again until he obeys." If I prevent the rod at that age, if I neglect discipline at that age, what will happen when he goes to school? He will experience the rod, and his parents cannot prevent it. It will be very hard for the child--much harder than it would have been if he had been disciplined at home.

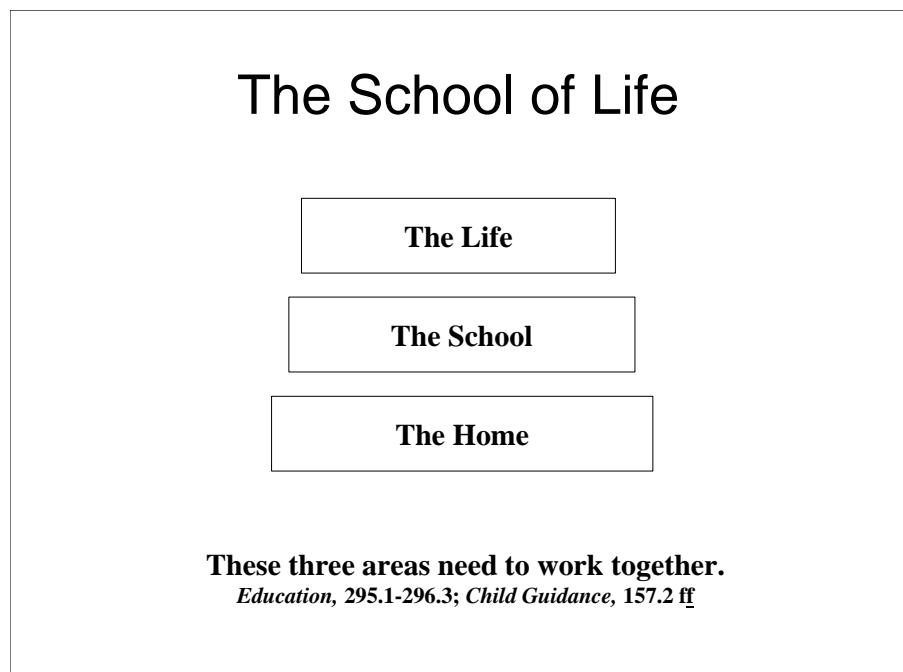
Just imagine that a tenderly educated child would be drafted into the military. How would he feel when he would have to go through drills? He would really suffer, he would feel displaced. Can you imagine that? It would be much harder for him because he never experienced any discipline at home.

Discipline in school is much harder. But even at school, the rod is sometimes spared. Some parents home-school their children. Not that I am saying that home-schooling is necessarily bad, but

often this is done for no other reason than to prevent the school of life. And then when the child is older, when he comes into the school of life, it will be much harder. The longer we delay the rod, the harder it will become later, and the more difficult it will be to bear it.

Why do we have so much self-pity? Why is it so difficult for us to face life's realities? It is because we were educated this way. Think about your own education. Think about your childhood. Then you will understand many things. You will understand why it is so difficult for you to really accept the rod of life or the school of life in different areas.

Let us look at some more details about the rod of life for young children. The diagram shows the three phases of the school of life: first in the home, then in the school, and then in life. This is the order in which the school of life is applied. The reason why it is harder to accept the school of life when you are older is because these three areas need to work together. It is like passing the baton from one stage to the other. First the parents apply it, knowing full well that when children are older, they will



have to face life's reality when they go to school.

The Waldenses understood these principles very well. Before they sent their children out, they prepared them for the rod that would face them when they were sent out. The Waldensian children were not weaklings or softies. They were really stern people who knew how to face the school of life. Let us read a statement from *Education*.

"Beyond the discipline of the home and the school, all have to meet the stern discipline of life. How to meet this wisely is a lesson that should be made plain to every child and to every youth. It is true that God loves us, that He is working for our happiness, and that, if His law had always been obeyed, we should never have known suffering; and it is no less true that, in this world, as the result of sin, suffering, trouble, burdens come to every life. We may do the children and the youth a lifelong good by teaching them to meet bravely these troubles and burdens. While we should give them sympathy, let it never be such as to foster self-pity." *Education*, 295.1.

It is true that God loves us; He is working for our happiness. But this love is not so indulgent that it prevents the school of life--rather the opposite. Because He loves us, He allows the school of life. "It is no less true that, in this world, as the result of sin, suffering, trouble, burdens, come to every life. We may do the children and the youth a lifelong good by teaching them to meet bravely these troubles and burdens." So do not tell them that God's love will only lead you through green pastures. "While we should give them sympathy, let it never be such as to foster self-pity. What they need is that which stimulates and strengthens rather than weakens. They should be taught that this world is not a parade ground, but a battlefield." *Education*, 295.1, 2.

What is a parade ground? It is a place of show. When we have to apply the message at

home, that is the real battlefield. That is where we are tested; that is where we can know how we are accepting the light. Not on the parade ground. The parade ground also has some tests, but they are more academic. The real tests are on the battlefield. "All are called to endure hardness, as good soldiers. They are to be strong and quit themselves like men. Let them be taught that the true test of character is found in the willingness to bear burdens, to take the hard place, to do the work that needs to be done, though it bring no earthly recognition or reward.

"The true way of dealing with trial is not by seeking to escape it, but by transforming it." *Education* 295.2, 3. There is another word for looking for an easier way, and this word is escapism. Escapism is the tendency to run away, to avoid life's duties. "The true way of dealing with trial is not by seeking to escape it, but by transforming it. This applies to all discipline, the earlier as well as the later. The neglect of the child's earliest training, and the consequent strengthening of wrong tendencies, makes his after education more difficult, and causes discipline to be too often a painful process. Painful it must be to the lower nature, crossing, as it does, the natural desires and inclinations; but the pain may be lost sight of in a higher joy. Let the child and the youth be taught that every mistake, every fault, every difficulty, conquered, becomes a stepping-stone to better and higher things." *Education*, 295.3, 296.1.

Sometimes when I faced a difficult situation, Fred would tell me, "Be comforted, it will only become worse". It will become a stepping stone to higher things. In other words, harder circumstances will come because of higher development. "It is through such experiences that all who have ever made life worth the living have achieved success. 'The heights by great men reached and kept were not attained by sudden flight, but they, while their companions slept, were toiling upward in the night. We rise by things that

are under our feet; by what we have mastered of good and gain; by the pride deposed and the passion slain, and the vanquished ills that we hourly meet. All common things, each day's events, that with the hour begin and end, our pleasures and our discontents, are rounds by which we may ascend.' We are to 'look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen

are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.' 2 *Corinthians* 4:18. The exchange we make in the denial of selfish desires and inclinations is an exchange of the worthless and transitory for the precious and enduring. This is not sacrifice, but infinite gain." *Education*, 296.1, 2. When we truly accept God's providence--or the circumstances that we have created through our own failures--when we really accept these as a school of life, then we will gain something better.

"Something better' is the watchword of education, the law of all true living. Whatever Christ asks us to renounce, He offers in its stead something better. Often the youth cherish objects, pursuits, and pleasures that may not appear to be evil, but that fall short of the highest good. They divert the life from its noblest aim. Arbitrary measures or direct denunciation may not avail in leading these youth to relinquish that which they hold dear. Let them be directed to something better than display, ambition, or self-indulgence. Bring them in contact with truer beauty, with loftier principles, and with nobler lives. Lead them

The Parents are the First School of Life (Direct actions of the parents)

Food	Order	Clothing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularity • Contentment • Health Conscientiousness <u>Foolishness:</u> • Craving for food at irregular times • Craving for other kinds of food • Appetite is in control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obedience • Cleanliness • Punctuality <u>Foolishness:</u> • Love of ease • Laziness • A selfish will <small>(The Review and Herald, Sep. 19, 1854.9)</small> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modesty • Contentment • Cleanliness <u>Foolishness:</u> • Fashion • Extravagance • Carelessness

to behold the One 'altogether lovely.' When once the gaze is fixed upon Him, the life finds its center. The enthusiasm, the generous devotion, the passionate ardour, of the youth find here their true object. Duty becomes a delight and sacrifice a pleasure. To honour Christ, to become like Him, to work for Him, is the life's highest ambition and its greatest joy. 'The love of Christ constraineth'. 2 *Corinthians* 5:14." *Education*, 296.3, 297.1. When we accept the school of life, this will be a true experience. It is really wonderful when our children have this experience.

How are the direct actions of parents the first school of life in a practical way? There are three areas in which the parents can really give the rod to their children. These three areas are food, order, and clothing. Let us begin with food. There are certain lessons that can be learned from the beginning in the area of food. They are regularity, contentment, and health-consciousness. How do we learn regularity in the area of food? Now you know that the foolishness in the child desires food at irregular times. He craves food anytime, unless he has been properly educated from his early moments. But even then, sometimes

there are temptations, because foolishness is in the heart of the child. He wants food whenever he feels like it. That is the situation. Can you see that this is foolishness? We look at a child and we see that yes, this is foolishness.

Often a child is not content with his food. When the table is spread with certain things, children tend to pick out the things they like, while they leave those which they do not like as well. That is foolishness. The children do not know what is good for them. But some parents disregard it and give the child what he wants. If he wants candy all day, they give him candy. Many parents literally do this. They never learn. They avoid the rod. The rod is not giving the child what he wants. It is giving him regularity, and not what he craves.

Health-consciousness is very important. We, as parents, should be very careful with our habits even when our children are small. We should only place those foods which are in harmony with God's word and the Spirit of Prophecy on the table. If we are careful and do not give them those things that our appetite craves, we will develop health-consciousness in our children. If, on the other hand, we make compromises at home, and only occasionally put good food on the table, then how can our children develop conscientiousness in the area of health? It is not possible. And if this food is the most attractive food on the table, it becomes sinful. You know that wine bottles are the most attractive bottles in the shop. They appear to be very special. Chocolate is also packed in the most beautiful package; it appears to be very special, and yet it is the worst rubbish. The wine in these bottles is spoiled, and the chocolate makes holes in your teeth, and so forth. The world turns all of these values around, and parents do too. They turn values around, thereby preventing health-consciousness in children. That is the children's education from the beginning.

Foolishness is craving food at irregular times; it is craving other food; and it is when the appetite is in control. Sister White says

that we must be guided in what we eat by reason and not just appetite. This does not mean that the food had to taste bad. But if the appetite is in control, then we are really in the ways of foolishness. So can we say that this is in the heart of the child? Certainly! And the rod of correction will drive it out. The parents can act very directly in this area. Our children would not have difficulties with sinful habits if parents would have been good about applying the rod from the beginning. Why is it that children like chewing gum, and candy, and chocolate, and things like that? Why do they like this--why do they love this? Because there is no health-consciousness. Very simply put, the parents have spared the rod.

The next thing we want to look at is order. How do we apply the rod in the field of order? We have obedience, cleanliness, and punctuality. These are matters of order. Where is foolishness in this regard? It is the love of ease, as far as cleanliness and punctuality are concerned. Let us use showers as an example of cleanliness. Do we say: "Oh, it is too much trouble to take a shower again"? Or: "It is much easier to dress quickly instead of taking a shower"?

When you have the habit of taking a shower every day, you do not feel well if you have to miss your shower. But if taking a shower was never a habit, then you will not miss it. When I was in boarding school at age twelve, I had to take a shower once a week, and it was too much. For me it was not a very pleasant exercise. You need to scratch a little bit of dirt off the skin. But apart from this why should you waste your time? I mean, in the morning it was sufficient to wash my face. That was fine. Today I would not feel right without a shower. And when I was sixteen or seventeen, I still only took a shower once a week. One doctor told me that I needed to take a shower every day. I thought, "Maybe that is a healthy thing. Maybe I should consider this too." And then I began to take showers more regularly. It was

love of ease, nothing else. And that is foolishness. That was in my heart. Sometimes Uta still has to tell me to take a shower. I am still a child in this regard, and love ease.

Punctuality is the same thing. We want to linger a little bit longer, and so forth. It is laziness, really. It is staying behind. And we have a selfish will to overcome by obedience. It is a matter of order.

What do you think about the will of a child? Should we break it or not? Sister White says we should not break the will of a child, but Sister White also says that we shall break the will of the child. Let us read about this in *The Review and Herald*, September 19, 1854, paragraph 9.

“It certainly must bring God’s displeasure upon parents when they leave him to do what he has left, and commanded them to do. God corrects us when we disobey; and go astray from him; and parents are bound by the word of God to correct their children when they disobey them, and show evil temper.” You know when a child is manifesting an evil temper, he pounds his feet on the floor, he throws his hands in the air, and his face turns red. “Check the very first manifestation of passion.” That is a clear word. “Check the very first manifestation of passion. Break the will, and your children will be far happier for it, and you will be happier.” There is a part of this sentence that I did not read. “But do it with feelings of tenderness, and with discretion,” in other words, do not break the will by beating it until it is half dead. That would drive one devil out and seven devils would enter in. That is not the way it is to be done.

We break the will by checking the first manifestation of passion. When it is manifested at first, it is not so hard to check as it is after it has been manifested again and again. If the child is in the habit of manifesting an evil passion, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to check. You just have to let him cool down, and when he has cooled down, then you can

deal with it. It is best to check it immediately, the first time it comes up. Do not let it run its course. Take the child very seriously in hand. You may even have to administer a stern punishment. But do it with discretion and with tenderness. Pray first, to make sure that you are not manifesting your own passion while breaking the will of the child. Make sure that it is not a power struggle between two wills. If that were the case, you would drive seven devils in. Make sure, that when you administer the stern discipline, you only do it as an instrument through which God’s hand can help your child. “Do it with feelings of tenderness and with discretion and your children will be far happier for it, and you will be happier.”

What is the difference between breaking the will and not breaking the will? We are talking of two wills here. The one is self-will, and the other is a manifestation of passion. When an evil temper arises, it needs to be broken. But we must not break the personality of the child. The child needs to develop a strong personality, so that he can fight against sin in life. This is the difference between breaking the will and not breaking the will. Is this clear? One is the child’s own will, which is an evil temper, and the other is the personality of the child. The personality of the child is its own will power, the power to decide, to choose between right and wrong. The selfish will must be broken, the expression of evil anger, the evil temper.

The rod needs to be applied in the area of order from the beginning, so that obedience, cleanliness, and punctuality are trained. This discipline helps the child to become happier and to face the school of life in later years. When I look back on my life, I must say that I needed more discipline in this field. Many of us needed more discipline in this field.

What can the parents do in the area of clothing? This is a fantastic field in which the rod can be applied. Clothing is a fantastic field. Sister White writes a lot about clothing for little children. She writes about spending

hours and hours upon little fancies for children, which are nothing but fashion. Parents sometimes take little thought for the clothing of their children. Sometimes parents think that when children are still small, it does not matter what they wear. What does it matter if the skirt is a little bit too short? It is just a little child. But this is the way it grows up. This is the rod. This is discipline. So modesty can be learned right from the beginning.

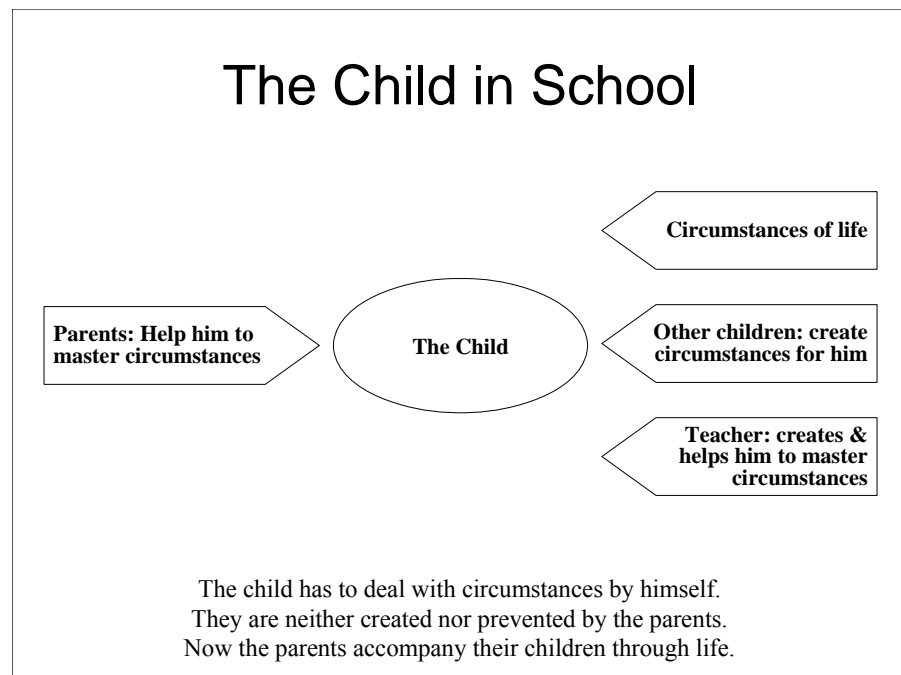
Even a baby can be dressed in a modest way or an immodest way. Contentment is a very important point. I am quite surprised at how they dress little children today, and how they cut and style their hair. It is as though parents want to make a fashion competition. That is how they style their little children. And the children do not learn contentment in this way. Cleanliness is another area that is learned through the clothing. Do we change our clothing? Of course you can learn more through clothing. You can learn order, too. For example can you learn that you need one style of clothing for Sabbath school and another style to go out in the forest. It is order.

What is foolishness in the area of clothing? Fashion is foolishness. Let us look at the fashion shows. Look at the people when they develop a new fashion. It is absolute nonsense, it is so silly that people in everyday life do not wear it. Yet some people do try to wear it, and I feel sorry for them. Sometimes, in the streets or at the airport, you see poor people with strange hairstyles and earrings on every part of their body. I feel so sorry for them. They are slaves; they are slaves

to fashion. And that is because they never experienced the rod in their life. Extravagance is foolishness, and so is carelessness. Some people are careless. They do not care what they wear. This carelessness must be overcome. It must be driven out.

Parents are given the rod in their hand when their children are small. They are given the rod to drive out fashion, extravagance, and carelessness. They are given the rod of order in their hand to drive out love of ease, laziness, and the selfish will. They are given the rod of food in their hand to drive out the craving for food at irregular times, the craving for foods that are unhealthful, and the control of appetite. So the direct actions of the parents are the first school for the child. The parents bear a special responsibility, and they cannot blame anyone else but themselves if their children do not live according to the schools of life.

What is the school of life for a child when he begins school? The child will not be at home all the time anymore. He will go out and associate with other children at the school. He will have other teachers. These are



different circumstances in his life. The other school kids create circumstances for him. Sometimes the other children are not nice; children can be very cruel. And the teacher also creates circumstances. Sometimes he helps the child to master circumstances, but other times he creates more difficult circumstances for the child than he helps to master. It depends on the teacher. But whatever it is, it is the school of life.

And then we have the parent. It is the task of the parent to help the child master circumstances. In other words, the parents accompany the child. The child faces the circumstances himself. They are neither created nor prevented by good parents. Bad parents can create more circumstances for the child than he receives through nature by preventing the circumstances of life. But good parents neither create nor prevent them. They allow them to happen as naturally as God allows them to happen. And they do not create more, because God will do this.

The parents accompany their children through life; they go along with them. And when the children come home, the parents tell them how to face the discipline they received. This is how you should face this, and that is how you should deal with that, and so forth. Sometimes they also do things together with the children, but very often the child goes out and comes back and reports.

That reminds me a little bit of the disciples. Jesus sent them out two by two, and then they came back and reported: "Yes, devils are subject to us." And Jesus had to explain to them: "Do not rejoice too much because of this, but rejoice that your names are written in the books of heaven." (See *Luke* 10:1-20.) In other words, He warned them, He really helped them to come through life. He was a good parent to His disciples. This is what parents should be.

So by the time school age is reached in the school of life, the children tell us many things. They come home and say: "The teacher rebuked me." If your children do not go to school, well then they might say: "The Sabbath school teacher rebuked me," or, "my uncle rebuked me," or whatever. How do you deal with that? What do you tell you child when he receives a rebuke? How do many parents deal with it? Many parents do not help the child to overcome this circumstance, to accept the school. It does not matter whether he was rightly or wrongly rebuked, it needs to be accepted. It is a school, it is a school of life. If he was rightly rebuked, of course, he must learn to humbly accept it and be changed. And if he was wrongly rebuked, then he must learn how to bravely withstand injustice. This is what we need to learn. We want to study more about this later, but for now we want to close.

Study 21

We are considering the school of life when you reach school age.

One of the things that children say when they come home from school, is: "The teacher rebuked me. He rebuked me, and I did not deserve it. Help me do something about it." Maybe his pride is wounded, or he fears the teacher, or whatever. And what else do children say when they come home?

"The teacher is unfair. He gives good grades to everybody but me. He is partial." Did you think that the teacher was partial when you were in school? I thought so. I definitely thought so. Whether this was real or not, I do not know, but I thought so. "The teacher demands too much." Have you heard this? That the teacher demands too much?

"The teacher is evil. He is always saying bad things." Some teachers, of course, are not Christians, and some even use foul language. And when our children come home and say this, how do we deal with it? How do our children deal with it? Sometimes we do not allow our children to deal with it, we deal with it ourselves instead. We have to have a talk with the teacher. He cannot do this kind of thing. We need to do something about it. Not only for the sake of our child, but also for the sake of the other students.

And then the child says: "Please do not tell the teacher that I told you that. He will know that I said it. So, please, do not do this." The parent might say: "Do not worry. We will go

to the principal and tell him." So the parents of the student go to the principal and tell him to tell the teacher, anonymously, which the principal will do. How will the teacher feel about it? He will feel betrayed.

"I have to take part in a school trip." The reason why I am going over all of these things is because we need to understand all the mechanisms of escapism, of this running away from the school of life. It is really important to see this in our own lives.

Where is it found? I have tried, of course to find as real a situation as possible, but I cannot cover all of the situations in all countries. When I come to America and use these examples, almost nothing applies because they are all home-schooled. They do not have a teacher there. So I have to think of different examples.

You know, sometimes our children have to go on a school trip. It is not always very nice, because of the influences and so forth. So they might tell you: "I have to take part in a school trip."

"I have to take part in a religion class. I have to study the stupid theories about

The School of Life at School

- > **The teacher rebuked me.**
- > **The teacher is unfair.**
- > **The teacher demands too much from me.**
- > **The teacher is evil. He is always saying bad things.**
- > **I have to take part in a school trip.**
- > **I have to take part in the religious studies class.**
- > **I have to study stupid theories about evolution.**
- > **My classmates tease me.**
- > **He hit me!**
- > **The others say bad things about me.**
- > **Someone repeated something bad about me.**
- > **They always complain about me.**
- > **They always pick on the weak ones.**
- > **They are so strict.**
- > **They always interfere in my personal things.**
- > **I am not accepted.**
- > **I was ignored.**
- > **The world is so evil.**

evolution. And I will even be tested on it. My classmates tease me. He hit me!”

The children tell you many self-centered things: “The others are saying bad things about me. Someone said something bad about me. They are always complaining about me.” You see? The whole thing is self-centered. Again, and again, everything centers around me.

“They always pick on the weak ones. Of course, I am a weak one, too. They are so strict. They always interfere with my personal business. I am not accepted. I was ignored. The world is so evil.” The last words may not be directly about me, but I am still the center, somehow. This is often hidden. Often, for the sake of righteousness, we make a crusade. But in reality, the only person we are defending is ourselves. These are some of the mechanisms.

Think about yourself and the situations that you faced when you were a student at school. I can see myself in many of these things. I often had such complaints as are mentioned here in my heart.

So, how is the school of life taken away?

First of all by a lack of discipline at home, as we have seen in studying the situations with little children. Secondly, by protecting the child from the circumstances of life. That means we try to make it as soft as possible for the child. We put a lot of cushions under him so that he does not hurt himself. That is taking away the school of life.

As I said before: If for example, the parents say: “Well, I have to talk with the teacher,” and then the child says: “But then teacher will know that I have talked with you.” “Okay then

we will talk with the principal.” This is nothing but taking away the school of life. Those are all mechanisms to prevent it from happening. And what would be the right answer? What would be the right position for the parents? Well, if the teacher uses foul language, you must stand firm, first of all. You must, through your proper language, let your light shine. And if you can help your teacher, then help him.

Maybe the next time there is a parents’ meeting with the teacher, this could be addressed in a tactful manner. But do not protect your child. Make it clear that you have nothing more in mind than the salvation of this teacher, and not the protection of your child. That is the real point. So: showing wrong sympathy toward the child is definitely taking away the school of the child.

Another example is the complaint that the child is treated too harshly. I find it quite interesting, because very often, when the message is brought home to the people, then almost inevitably somebody will stand up and say: “But you must not overemphasize this. You must not be extreme,” and so forth. What is this? It is all an effort to cushion the

How is the School of Life Avoided?

- A lack of discipline at home
- Protecting the child from the circumstances of life
- Showing wrong sympathy (with the child)
- Speaking to the teacher
- Speaking to the principal
- Showing that I am offended
- Making sure that the child does not have to take part
- Speaking to the other children
- Speaking to their parents
- Bringing justice into the matter
- Taking the coals out of the fire
- “Don’t worry! I will do that for you.”
- “I will look for a good school / job for you.”

sharpness of the message a little bit. To make sure that I have a loophole where I can slip out, if necessary. Can you see this point?

I remember how in an assembly just lately, I presented a statement about the spirit of independence. I had a real burden for this church. There were some people who had this spirit of independence, and I quoted that statement. Then somebody stood up and said, "Yes, that is all good, but I have an opposite statement." Then the statement was read that some people try to control other people, that there must not be an arbitrary control of the leaders over the others. In other words: Yes, yes, we must, but we must not have an arbitrary control. In other words, allow us a little bit of independence. Do not be too strict. That was really the message. It is all taking away the school of life. When the message comes, let it work first. Let it work. Let it have its full power. And let it really point with its sharp arrow to my sin, instead of taking away the school of life.

Speaking with the teacher, of course, is taking away the school of life instead of letting the child stand for himself. When he has to go on a school trip, why should we speak with the teacher? Let the child stand for himself. Of course it depends a little bit on his age. When a child is very young, he still needs assistance. But, some parents do things for their children even when they are grown up. Let them do it for themselves. Let them speak for themselves. That will make them strong and brave.

Speaking of this principle: showing offense also takes away the school of life. I find it very interesting because when I react to an offense done to me, this is really a taking away of the school of life. If I am offended, that is like a school. And it is my portion to accept it bravely. But if I react in a passionate way, I kill that school. Let me use an example.

On September 11th the two towers of the World Trade Center were destroyed, and

about 3,000 people died. This was really a shock. It was a sad situation that men could do such a thing. And, of course, there was great sympathy for the people who had died. But people were also angry. They thirsted for revenge. They had the attitude that "we must hit back."

Now a true Christian would not look at the situation like this. Instead he would ask: "Well, why did this happen to us? What was the cause for it? What have we done to cause such a thing?" As you know, the real answer was foretold in the prophecies. Sister White foretold fire in these tall buildings. (See *Testimonies for the Church* 9:11.1–13.2.) So why did it happen? Because men depended on their pride. It was because of the pride of men that these things happened. This could have been an opportunity to learn something that would have led to real repentance, to real reformation.

What happened there was a school. But people did not like the school. And in order to prevent the school, their feelings of revenge covered it completely. They took away the school of life. Therefore, many, many other people had to die, guilty and innocent alike. I would estimate that for the 3,000 men who died there, at least 10,000 to 20,000 people died on the other side. This is how the school of life was really taken away. And even now they are not satisfied. This is most definitely taking away the school of life. And that is our culture. That is our whole situation.

Another way to take away the school of life is that when the child has to take part in something, I make sure that it does not have to take part. Let the child stand for itself. The child cannot always do this; sometimes the parents have to assist it. We must also make sure that we do not place a burden on the child that is too heavy. But we tend to err on the other side; especially in our western world, we tend to make it too soft.

When there is a controversy between our children and other children, and when our

children are beaten, we speak sternly with the other children. I remember once I was driving a car along the road. I was not driving fast, really, but the mother thought I was driving fast. And she had her children there, and she made a rude gesture. I felt quite embarrassed for a little while, and then I thought: "Well, she just wanted to protect her children. That is our society, you know? Absolute panic for their own children.

There must be a doubly thick cushion surrounding them.

When a school bus stops in America, all of the other cars must stop as well, both those that are behind the bus and those that are coming from the other directions. That is the absolute law. And, I mean, there is a reason for this, because the children can walk behind the bus, or in front of the bus, and so forth. I see this point. But there is an over-protectiveness. There is a real cushion for everything, and that is taking away the school of life.

When we feel like our children are treated unjustly, we feel like we need to speak to the parents of the other children. "Why are your children like this? What have they done to my children?" We feel as if we must bring justice into the matter. "Well, we are not taking sides for our children; we just want to bring justice into the matter." Why should the children not rather bear the injustice than have such strong defendants?

When children have done something wrong, we take the coals out of the fire. We say: "Okay, I will pay for it." Or: "Do not worry, I will do that for you." In some cases,

Sparing the Rod

- "He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly." *Proverbs 13:24*

What does it mean to spare the rod?

Lack of discipline

Protection from the school of life

What does it mean to hate the child?

To choose evil for the child

- "He that takes the school of life away from the child ruins him."

the parents do everything for their children, even when they are adults. The children do not know how to fill out papers or do the ordinary things in their lives because their parents always did it for them. That is taking away the school of life.

These are just some examples, and again, you have to look at your own life to see where these things apply, and especially try to remember where, in your own life, the school of life was taken away from you.

I find it interesting that in a way, communism had a good side. It was instrumental in giving the school of life, because people were not so spoiled. On the other hand, there was a taking away of the school of life, because the state was doing everything for the people, things the people should have done for themselves. "I will look for a good school or a good job for you. I will do this. You do not need to handle that matter." This is how the school of life is taken away.

That means sparing the rod. "He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly." *Proverbs 13,24*. Sparing the rod means preventing the school of life, or taking the school of life

... hates his son.

- “Oh, how often those who think themselves the friends of a good man, and who are eager to show their fidelity to him, prove to be his most dangerous enemies! How often, instead of strengthening his faith, their words depress and dishearten!” *The Desire of Ages*, 215.1

What does it mean to spare the rod? It means to prevent the school of life; it is a lack of discipline. It is a protection from the school of life. But what does it mean to hate the child? It means to choose evil for the child. In other words, to hate the child does not mean that the parents necessarily have a feeling of anger towards the child. This hatred is more the result of their action, of their overall doing. It is hating the

away. And he who does this hates his son. Can you really see that he hates his son? It does not look like it. It looks as though somebody who is making it softer for the child, who takes away the school of life, is doing it out of love. And certainly he will claim motives of love and compassion for the child. But he hates him. How can that be? The Bible says that he hates him when he loves him.

Some parents are lazy. They do not want to be bothered to take the time or effort to let their children go through the school of life. They have to explain what happened, and then to accompany them in that school. It takes more effort than it does to prevent the school of life. And because parents look for the easier way, they would rather prevent the school of life. This reveals that they hate their children, because they love themselves more than their children.

We can understand this. But some parents take special effort to prevent the school of life for their children. And they make a lot of sacrifices to prevent it. How can the Bible say that they hate their child?

child by choosing evil. And parents are not aware of this. But the Bible tells them, and so they need to be aware of it. Are you aware that when you take the rod away, when you spare the rod, that you really hate your children? Either takes the school of life away from the child, ruins the child, that is how we can read it, too. “But he who loves him disciplines him promptly.” *Proverbs* 13:24.

Let us look at a statement in connection with John the Baptist that explains how someone “hates his son”. “Oh, how often those who think themselves the friends of a good man, and who are eager to show their fidelity to him, prove to be his most dangerous enemies! How often, instead of strengthening his faith, their words depress and dishearten!” *The Desire of Ages*, 215. This was the case with the disciples of John.

How often do parents who think that they are the best friends of their good children, who are eager to show their love to them, prove to be their most dangerous enemies! How often, instead of strengthening their children, do they depress them and dishearten them! In fact, in some cases it would be better

Results of a Wrong Education

- Self-pity
- Selfishness
- Unreasonable behavior
- Talking badly about others
- Seeing yourself as the victim
- Lack of self-reliance
- “Passing the buck” to someone else (Putting the blame on someone else)
- A childish adult (Lack of self-control)
- Looking for a strong person to help (Looking for encouragement)
- Not making decisions (or making decisions with great difficulties)
- Not taking responsibilities

if the parents would send their children to a place where they could be well-disciplined. In some cases the grandparents still exercise discipline, and if this is the case, it is like a holiday for the children. The children love to be with their grandparents, even though they are stricter, because they see love in the rod that the grandparents use.

What are the results of a wrong education? First of all self-pity, and secondly selfishness, which is really the same thing. Very often people behave unreasonably. You wonder why people do this or that. The only reason is because of self-pity. Wrong education took away the school of life. Unreasonable behavior is an effort to escape the school of life, even as an adult.

Some people are constantly defensive, they see themselves as the victim, and they talk badly about others. They lack self-reliance. They “pass the buck” to someone else. They place the responsibility of their actions on somebody else. They blame others. For example, the question is asked: “Who said that we will have a meeting at 11:00?” “I did not say this, you said it.” You see? That is “passing the buck” to somebody else. But we must take

responsibility. Maybe I did not ask properly. Maybe I did say something like 11:00, but really meant 12:00. But you did not ask. Do you know what I mean? There is always the tendency to find somebody else to blame. That is the result of a wrong education.

Sometimes an adult will behave like a child. That is the result of this wrong education. He is always searching for a strong person’s help.

This is often the case in the relationship of husband and wife. Sometimes the husband never speaks up; he always goes to his wife first, and she speaks for him. Or vice versa: the wife never takes a stand; rather, she hides behind her husband, and she stimulates her husband to really give a stern defense on behalf of their offended family. She quickly hides behind him. He takes up the sword on her behalf. That is a result of a wrong education, the result of taking away the school of life. The woman cannot face the situation herself, so she looks for a strong ally who does it for her, who wields the sword for her. And it can happen the other way around sometimes, too.

Our whole society is like this. They look for somebody who is strong. The church will finally look to the state for the strong person’s help. Why will it do this? Because it does not have the strength itself. It does not have the school of life in its life experience.

When we want to avoid making decisions, it is another result of this wrong education. We want to leave all the doors open and never make a decision. We do not want to take

responsibility. We want to let someone else take it. These are the results of this wrong education, especially during our years as schoolchildren.

Let us see how the school of life works for the adult. He has the circumstances of life, but these are even harder on him. His fellow believers can create problems for him, or circumstances for him, but sometimes they also help him to understand these circumstances. And there are other people apart from the believers who can create some problems as well. These are some of the circumstances of the adult. How can an adult understand the school he is in? Christ helps him master the circumstances. He is the helper. He does it often in a very unexpected way. He does it by talking to us: "Be brave, accept it now. Do not fight against it." And this is very unpalatable, not very tasty. You know, we do not like it very much, but that is exactly what we need.

A man must face the circumstances of life himself. "Be a man!" Even the sisters have to "be a man!" We must face the circumstances of life ourselves. Often we do not have the explanations of others. Sometimes we have the help of fellow believers, but not always. We definitely need to ask God to explain the circumstances to us, even our good experiences. Let us ask the Lord to really explain them to us. We need to see these things in His light. And that will help us to really learn from the school of life.

If we really experience this as children and young people, it will be a wonderful school and we can

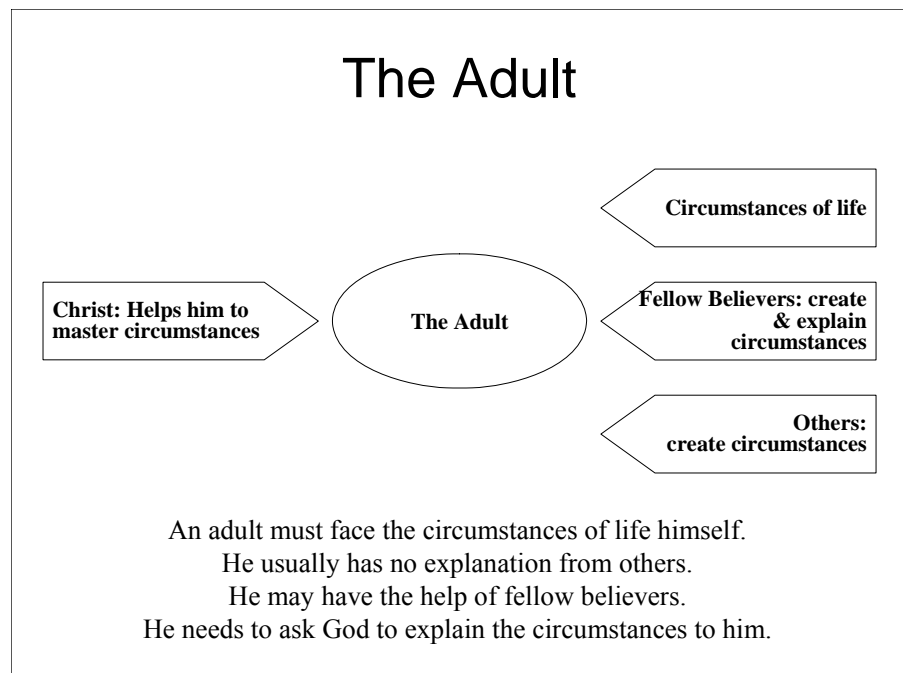
accept it gladly. If we do not learn, it will often be rough and tough. But as we learn to truly accept it and love it, then it will not be as hard. What I say sounds very gloomy. The school of life is a very tough school, but it can be very enjoyable if we really accept it. It is a good school, and once we accept it, it becomes easier, much easier. We welcome it, because we know this is the way that God talks to us. This is the way that He trains us to a higher service. Would He use any effort on worthless material? He wants to make us jewels, He wants to make us the people who fight the last battle. For that reason we need to go through some tough schools. Let us really accept them. This will be a blessing for us.

So, as adults, we are still in the school of life.

Now we want to look at some examples. This will take quite a few studies.

We do not learn everything in the school of life at once, we have to learn it in portions.

Our first example will be Ellen White. *The Early Years* is a book written by her grandson, Arthur White, and many of the



things that we read here are to be found in *Life Sketches*. Some of it is also in *Spiritual gifts*, and some is in *The Review and Herald*. Now, these statements explain a little bit of what Sister White experienced. In addition to these we find some comments from her grandson who, of course, must have listened to his grandmother as she related these experiences.

Ellen White went through the school of life in her life. And I really must emphasize that she experienced this in order to be a good prophetess. If she had not experienced the things as she did, she would not have been the prophetess that she was. We can be very grateful because Sister White could have often despaired. She could have run away many times. Remember, there were other prophets who were also called before her. Their names were Hazen Foss and William Foy. These two people refused to take the office. What was their reason? William Foy was a mulatto. He felt that because his skin was a little bit darker, the people would not accept him. For that reason he refused. And Hazen Foss felt that the people would never accept the message, so for that reason it was too hard for him. He ran away from the school. He had this attitude of escapism.

But Sister White stood firm, even when tests and trials came. Let us see how the Lord trained her from the beginning. I want to read this with you from the second chapter of the book *The Early Years*, entitled "Abrupt Changes in Ellen's life":

"It was midafternoon and school was out. The 9-year-old twins, Ellen and Elizabeth, were on their way home, along with a classmate. As the three girls crossed the park they noticed that an older girl who also attended the Brackett Street School was following them. She shouted some angry words and was closing the gap between them. The Harmon children had been taught never to retaliate, never to engage in a fight with anyone, but rather if there was trouble to

hurry home. This the girls were intent on doing. Ellen later wrote of what happened next: "We were doing this, running towards home, but the girl was following us with a stone in her hand. I turned to see how far she was behind me, and as I turned, the stone hit me on my nose. I fell senseless. When I revived, I found myself in a merchant's store, the blood streaming from my nose, my garments covered with blood, and a large stream of blood on the floor.

A customer in the store, a total stranger to the Harmon girls, offered to take Ellen home in his carriage, but the little girl, fearing that she would soil his carriage with her blood, refused the offer." *The Early Years* 1:28.1-3

That is interesting. When children see blood they usually cry. Well, that is mild. With some it is worse. They not only scream, but when they see blood they cannot bear it. Especially their own blood. It is very, very difficult for them to bear. But at that moment, Ellen Harmon did not think of herself. What did she think about? She thought: "Here is this nice man's carriage, and if he drives drive me home, I will make it dirty." Now this shows that she was not a softy. She was really educated to not think of herself. That is a very good testimony of her education, and of the education that her mother and father gave her.

"Little did she realize the severity of her injury or how weak she was. With her two companions she started for home on foot, but soon grew faint. Dizziness overtook her, and then she collapsed to the ground. Her twin sister and her schoolmate carried her the block or two to her home. She later recounted:

"I have no recollection of anything for some time after the accident. My mother says that I noticed nothing, but lay in a stupid state [a coma] for three weeks. No one thought I would live except my mother. For some reason she felt that I would not die.

“The description of her symptoms would lead to the opinion that she suffered a concussion. The physician who was called offered no hope of her making a recovery, nor had he any treatment to recommend. These were times of great ignorance in the medical world. One of the neighbors, certain that Ellen could not live, asked if she might buy a burial robe for her. ‘Not yet’ was Eunice Harmon’s reply, for something told her that Ellen would live.” *The Early Years* 1:28.3–29.1.

If I am not mistaken, either in *Life Sketches* or in *Spiritual Gifts* she says that she overheard this conversation. And it must have been quite a shock to hear.

“As the little girl regained consciousness she was totally ignorant of the cause of her illness. It seemed to her she had been in a long sleep. She had no memory of the accident; all she knew was that she lay on her cot in great weakness. Then one day on hearing a visiting neighbor say, ‘What a pity! I should not know her,’ her curiosity was aroused. She asked for a mirror, only to be shocked at what the glass reflected. Of this she wrote:

“Every feature of my face seemed changed. The sight was more than I could bear. The bone of my nose proved to be broken. The idea of carrying my misfortune through life was insupportable. I could see no pleasure in my life. I did not wish to live, and I dared not die, for I was not prepared.

“As Ellen’s father was in Georgia on business, the mother carried the burden created by the accident. Friends who visited advised Ellen’s mother to prosecute the father of the girl who, as they said, ‘ruined’ her. But her mother was for peace, and she replied that if such a course could bring Ellen back to health and natural looks, there would be something gained, but as that was impossible, it was best not to make enemies.” *The Early Years* 1:29.2–4.

I find this little incident quite interesting because the normal reaction would be to

prevent the school of life. The normal reaction would be to say: “You should prosecute the parents of that girl.” In fact, in American society today, they would say: “Prosecute the girl!” And if Ellen had died, they would have said: “Send her to prison, or give her the death sentence.”

You have probably heard about the two serial killers who shot several people in America. One was a juvenile, and the other an older man. The Ministry of Justice made sure that their case was tried in a state where it was possible to execute a juvenile. Different states have different laws. Some laws forbid a person under the age of 18 to be executed. They might give him a long prison sentence, but never execution. But The Ministry of Justice made sure that they were tried in a state that allowed for this death sentence. There is a strong urge in people to kill other people. And why? Because this is their way of dealing with problems, instead of facing the problems. Instead of accepting the circumstances of life, they have to do something about it. This is nothing but running away. It is escapism.

Ellen’s mother, Eunice Harmon, did not have this attitude. Not at all. She really said: “No, I do not want to make enemies.” In fact, she wanted to keep a good relationship with these neighbors. No revenge was in her heart. That may be difficult for some people to understand; but that is a strong personality. That is somebody who accepts the school of life.

“Physicians were consulted. One thought that a silver wire might be put in her nose to hold it in shape, but doing so would have been excruciatingly painful, for anesthetics were not known in those days, and the doctor thought it would be of little use. Since she had lost so much blood it was considered doubtful that she could sustain the shock of surgery.” *The Early Years* 1:29.5.

Then a crushing experience happened, which we want to study about in our next session. Let us really look at this incident as a

school of life for Ellen. Here we can say that in God's providence, He allowed this to happen for her best, for her strength, so that she could be a blessing to others. And when

things like this happen to us or to our children, then let us accept it bravely, as Eunice and Ellen Harmon did.

Study 22

We are studying the school of life. This is the school God uses in order to really bring us into harmony with Him, in order to free us from self-pity, which is such a common disease. This is such a terrible disease that it prevents us from being filled with the holy oil. We are striving to be wise virgins, but he who is engrossed in self-pity is a foolish virgin because self-pity is foolishness.

If we reject the school of life, then foolishness prevails in us. We have also seen that foolishness is in the heart of every child. We are not just talking about children who are not born again. Foolishness needs to be cast far away from the child. When something is cast far away, that means that it will not come back again. The rod of correction drives it far. This rod is the school of life.

Now we want to look at some examples of the school. For this purpose we will look at the interesting experiences of Ellen G. White, whose name was Ellen Harmon at the time.

Let us turn back to *The Early Years*, which we began to study yesterday morning. We will study a few paragraphs in order to understand the context again.

“As Ellen’s father was in Georgia on business, the mother carried the burden created by the accident. Friends who visited advised Ellen’s mother to prosecute the father of the girl who, as they said, ‘ruined’ her.” *The Early Years* 1:29.4.

Now sheer logic tells us that nothing will be gained by prosecution. The girl would not become better. But it gives people a feeling of satisfaction, of avenging the guilt, when they prosecute another person. This law of revenge is the ruin of so many in the world today. But why does mankind look for revenge? Because it wants to escape from the burden of reality. In this case, reality is that the girl is mutilated. She is marred for life, and nothing can change that. And that is it, period! Prosecution only makes it worse. This would be logical thinking, but people do not think logically. Ellen’s mother did, however, which shows that she really understood something of accepting the school of life.

Jesus required quite a lot from His followers. I would like to read a text this morning in which Jesus said: “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.” *Matthew* 5:10, 11. We could say: “Okay, Jesus said: Blessed are you.” It is a bit strange because

Examples

- **Ellen G. White** (*The Early Years*, 28-31)
- **John the Baptist** (*John* 3:22-36; *The Desire of Ages*, 214-224)
- **Adam, Cain** (*Genesis* 3:16-24; *Genesis* 4:1-15)
- **Jacob** (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 204.3 – 205.3)
- **Isaiah** (*Isaiah* 6; *The S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, 4:1139.1)
- **Joseph** (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 208ff)
- **Jesus** (*Hebrews* 2:10; *Hebrews* 12:2; *Revelation* 21:6; *Revelation* 22:13; *Matthew* 4:1-11; *The Desire of Ages*, 117.3; *The S.D.A Bible Commentary*, 5:1080.1; 1081.6)

if Jesus had said, "It is a normal thing for people to persecute you for righteousness. Do not fight against it, do not be upset because of it", then we would understand that. But He goes a step further than that and says: "Not only accept it, but you are blessed." What he says in verse 12 seems to really be the climax: "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad." Can you express this any more strongly? If Jesus were to say, "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad because you will be saved from all persecution, and because your persecutors will come before judgment" and so forth, then, as humans, we would perhaps understand it. But no! He says: "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad." For what? For that very persecution. "For great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." *Matthew 5:12*.

There is a possible misunderstanding here. The reward in heaven is not, as some people think, that we have the satisfaction of seeing our persecutors burning in the lake of fire. That is not the reward. The reward is that we are fitted for service. The reward for going through this school of life is that by this we gain an experience that enables us to talk of the Saviour's matchless love in all eternity. This is a great reward. Do you want this? Do you really want this? Rejoice and be exceedingly glad.

I would not necessarily say that Ellen Harmon or her mother fully understood how to be exceedingly glad because of this, but at least they were refraining from any action of revenge. This showed that they already had the Christian maturity that so many are lacking today. But her mother wanted peace, and she replied that if such a course could bring back Ellen's health and natural looks, then something could be gained. But as that was impossible, it was best not to make enemies.

There is one more thing to this. It was best not to make enemies. Does this mean that we live in peace and just in peace, but that apart

from that, we carry grumbings in our hearts? No, it means more than that. It means to really have a forgiving spirit. This is what we need to ask ourselves when are treated unjustly by any other person: do we have the spirit of forgiveness? I need to ask myself if I can really forgive my worst enemies to the point where I do not hold it against them if they have done something to me.

"Physicians were consulted. One thought that a silver wire might be put in her nose to hold it in shape, but doing so would have been excruciatingly painful, for anaesthetics were not known in those days, and the doctor thought it would be of little use. Since she had lost so much blood it was considered doubtful that she could sustain the shock of surgery.

"This was followed by a crushing experience of which she wrote:

"At the time of my misfortune my father was absent in Georgia. When he returned, he spoke to my brother and sisters, and inquired for me. . . . It was hard to make him believe that I was his Ellen. This cut me to the heart; yet I tried to put on an appearance of cheerfulness, when my heart ached." *The Early Years* 1:29. 5, 6.

It was a shock that her own father could not recognize her face. It is humanly natural to understand that it was cutting. But she tried to be brave. What does this tell you? This little sentence: "Yet I tried to put on an appearance of cheerfulness, when my heart ached."

She definitely fought against self-pity. But she did not have the victory yet. She tried hard, but she was still fighting in her own strength because her heart ached. Now humanly speaking, this is understandable. It was a temptation for her. And what would we counsel her in that situation? What would you tell Ellen if you had met her as a girl? What would most people do? Most people would show sympathy and would feel sorry for her, and would express this. Would that make it easier for her to

overcome self-pity? Certainly not! Maybe that would give her some comfort, but it would not really give her the victory over self-pity.

Let us see what happened in her life. “By sad experience she soon learned the difference one’s personal appearance makes in the treatment received from others, especially among children.” You know, if you are a good-looking boy or girl, you have a lot of friends. If not, then you have very few friends. “Slowly she gained her strength, but as she was able to join in play with young friends, she found that they spurned her. She was almost crushed by this experience.” *The Early Years* 1:30.1. Again, this was a temptation to self-pity.

She wrote: “My life was often miserable, for my feelings were keenly sensitive. I could not, like my twin sister, weep out my feelings. My heart seemed so heavy, and ached as though it would break, yet I could not shed a tear. . . . Others would pity and sympathize with me.” That is what most people do, they pity and sympathize. This seems to have good results, as it says: “And that weight, like a stone upon my heart, would be gone.” *The Early Years* 1:30.2. It was gone for the moment, but it would come back.

This pity did not give her the ultimate victory. What gave her the ultimate victory? We will see in a minute. “How vain and empty the pleasures of earth looked to me. How changeable the friendship of my young companions. A pretty face, dress, or good looks, are thought much of. But let misfortune take some of these away, and the friendship is broken.

“But I began to turn to my Saviour where I found comfort.” *The Early Years* 1:30.3, 4. This gave her the victory.

What would we do if we met a person in this situation? What should we do? Exactly that which gave Ellen the victory, namely to turn their attention to the Saviour, to her

Saviour, and to my Saviour. That is the solution. Be exceedingly glad. Rejoice. This is what Jesus said as a comfort in order to give us the victory over our self-pity. “I sought the Lord earnestly, and received consolation. I believed that Jesus did love even me.” *The Early Years* 1:30.4. Of course, from *Life Sketches* we know that she had difficulties believing this at first, but she finally took firm hold of it.

“Some fifty years later, on a visit to Portland, Maine, she had an opportunity to ponder in retrospect.” *The Early Years* 1:30.5. She finally got the victory. She returned to the same spot fifty years later when she was a mature woman. “I visited . . . the spot where I met with the accident. . . . this misfortune, which for a time seemed so bitter and was so hard to bear, has proved to be a blessing in disguise.” Now a comforter could come to her and tell her: “This is a blessing in disguise.” You can be sure this is the comforter that was needed. But it does not help to just say: “Oh you poor girl, what an injustice was done to you! This other girl should be prosecuted”, and so forth. It would only have strengthened her self-pity. And the feelings of revenge, or giving expression to feelings of revenge, only strengthens self-pity, nothing more. “The cruel blow which blighted the joys of earth, was the means of turning my eyes to heaven. I might never have known Jesus, had not the sorrow that clouded my early years led me to seek comfort in Him.”

“She added:

“I have read of a little bird that while his cage is full of light never sings the songs his master would teach him. He will listen, and learn a snatch of this, a trill of that, but never a separate and entire melody.

“But the master covers his cage, and then, in the dark, he listens to the one song he is to sing. He tries and tries again to sing that song, until it is learned, and he breaks forth in perfect melody; and then the cage is

uncovered, and ever after he can sing it in the light.”

“Thus God deals with His creatures. He has a song to teach us, and when we have learned it amid the deep shadows of affliction, we can sing it ever afterward.” *The Early Years* 1:30.6–31.2.

Rejoice and be exceedingly happy because, then you will be able to sing a song which you could not sing before. This is the message we need in order to overcome self-pity. In other words, Jesus lovingly comes to us and says: “My friend, accept this school; accept it, because it contains a great blessing. Through it you will learn the song that you have not been able to sing until now.”

By the way, you would not think that with such a disfigurement, Ellen would still find a marriage partner; in fact, however, she found the best one. So if you should have such a misfortune, do not think for one moment that you will not be able to live a normal life, because God can overrule everything. And had Ellen not been as disfigured as she was, she may have married a different husband, one who was not as good to her. Perhaps a handsome young man would have courted her and won her heart, and then her life would have been very different.

James White was exactly the right husband for Ellen--the one who could support her in her life work. In her union with him she could really be a blessing to the people of God. This is what every young person should remember if he is not regarded as highly as other young people because of his looks, or because of his size, or because of his beliefs, or because of whatever his situation may be.

John the Baptist

Another example is John the Baptist. He is a very interesting character. We want to look at the story from *John* 3. It is very remarkable because it shows how mature the faith of John the Baptist was. First let us begin with *Luke* 1. There we read about the birth of John. Zechariah's experience in the temple is very

significant. It revealed that John the Baptist was to be a very special person. “Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, ‘Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, “to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,” and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.’” *Luke* 1:11–17.

This mission of John was foretold in the Old Testament. It was foretold to Israel that “A prophet like Elijah will be sent to you.” (See *Malachi* 4:5.) So, the special instruction given to Zacharias from the beginning showed that he was to be a man who could not afford self-pity. Let us look at the last verses of this chapter and read about John the Baptist. “So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel.” *Luke* 1:80.

John grew up in the desert. Is that a pleasant place to live? Would you send your child to grow up in the desert? That is what God did. It taught John to be very tough, right from the beginning, and to have no feelings of self-pity whatsoever. Let us now very briefly turn to *The Desire of Ages*, chapter 10, “The Voice In The Wilderness”. There it talks about his youth and the purpose of his ministry.

“From among the faithful in Israel, who had long waited for the coming of the Messiah, the forerunner of Christ arose. The aged priest Zacharias and his wife Elisabeth

were ‘both righteous before God;’ and in their quiet and holy lives the light of faith shone out like a star amid the darkness of those evil days. To this godly pair was given the promise of a son, who should ‘go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways.’

“Zacharias dwelt in the hill country of Judea but he had gone up to Jerusalem to minister for the work in the temple.” *The Desire of Ages*, 97.1.

We will continue a little bit further on.

“John was to go forth as Jehovah’s messenger, to bring to men the light of God. He must give a new direction to their thoughts. He must impress them with the holiness of God’s requirements, and their need of His perfect righteousness. Such a messenger must be holy. He must be a temple for the indwelling Spirit of God. In order to fulfill his mission, he must have a sound physical constitution, and mental and spiritual strength.” *The Desire of Ages*, 100.3. John had a mature character. He was the opposite of a weakling or a softy. “Therefore it would be necessary for him to control the appetites and passions. He must be able so to control all his powers that he could stand among men as unmoved by surrounding circumstances as the rocks and mountains of the wilderness.

“In the time of John the Baptist, greed for riches, and the love of luxury and display had become widespread. Sensuous pleasures, feasting and drinking, were causing physical disease and degeneracy, benumbing the spiritual perceptions, and lessening the sensibility to sin. John was to stand as a reformer. By his abstemious life and plain dress he was to rebuke the excesses of his time. Hence the directions given to the parents of John,—a lesson of temperance by an angel from the throne of heaven.

“In childhood and youth the character is most impressible. The power of self-control should then be acquired. By the fireside and at the family board influences are exerted whose results are as enduring as eternity.

More than any natural endowment, the habits established in early years decide whether a man will be victorious or vanquished in the battle of life. Youth is the sowing time. It determines the character of the harvest, for this life and for the life to come.” *The Desire of Ages*, 100.4–101.1. That is the reason why we go into so much detail. What is the rod in the case of a child and a school boy? John definitely experienced the rod in his life.

“As a prophet, John was ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.’ In preparing the way for Christ’s first advent, he was a representative of those who are to prepare a people for our Lord’s second coming. The world is given to self-indulgence. Errors and fables abound. Satan’s snares for destroying souls are multiplied. All who would perfect holiness in the fear of God must learn the lessons of temperance and self-control. The appetites and passions must be held in subjection to the higher powers of the mind. This self-discipline is essential to that mental strength and spiritual insight which will enable us to understand and to practice the sacred truths of God’s word. For this reason temperance finds its place in the work of preparation for Christ’s second coming.

“In the natural order of things, the son of Zacharias would have been educated for the priesthood. But the training of the rabbinical schools would have unfitted him for his work. God did not send him to the teachers of theology to learn how to interpret the Scriptures. He called him to the desert, that he might learn of nature and nature’s God.

“It was a lonely region where he found his home, in the midst of barren hills, wild ravines, and rocky caves.” *The Desire of Ages*, 101.4.

Our society would have probably said: “Those loveless parents are sending their poor child into the wilderness to be educated there.” That would be the attitude of people in

society. They would think, "He cannot have fun like other children; he does not have any other children around to play with. He cannot go to the beach, or play with other children at the beach", and so forth. "They are taking all of that away from him."

He was in the midst of "barren hills, wild ravines, and rocky caves. But it was his choice to forgo the enjoyments and luxuries of life for the stern discipline of the wilderness. Here his surroundings were favorable to habits of simplicity and self-denial. Uninterrupted by the clamor of the world, he could here study the lessons of nature, of revelation, and of Providence. The words of the angel to Zacharias had been often repeated to John by his God-fearing parents. From childhood his mission had been kept before him, and he had accepted the holy trust. To him the solitude of the desert was a welcome escape from society in which suspicion, unbelief, and impurity had become well-nigh all-pervading. He distrusted his own power to withstand temptation, and shrank from constant contact with sin, lest he should lose the sense of its exceeding sinfulness.

"Dedicated to God as a Nazarite from his birth, he made the vow his own in a life-long consecration. His dress was that of the ancient prophets, a garment of camel's hair, confined by a leather girdle. He ate the 'locusts and wild honey' found in the wilderness, and drank the pure water from the hills." *The Desire of Ages*, 101.4–102.1.

Everything was such that a normal person would say, you took away all of his joy. You took away everything that he would desire as a child. But that is not the case, not at all. He had the school of life right from the beginning.

"But the life of John was not spent in idleness, in ascetic gloom, or in selfish isolation. From time to time he went forth to mingle with men; and he was ever an interested observer of what was passing in the

world. From his quiet retreat he watched the unfolding of events. With vision illuminated by the divine Spirit he studied the characters of men, that he might understand how to reach their hearts with the message of heaven. The burden of his mission was upon him. In solitude, by meditation and prayer, he sought to gird up his soul for the lifework before him." *The Desire of Ages*, 102.2. And then it goes into his temptations. Satan was in the desert, too.

"Although in the wilderness, he was not exempt from temptation. So far as possible, he closed every avenue by which Satan could enter, yet he was still assailed by the tempter. But his spiritual perceptions were clear; he had developed strength and decision of character, and through the aid of the Holy Spirit he was able to detect Satan's approaches, and to resist his power." *The Desire of Ages*, 102.3. You did not need to tell John that he should not do this or that he should not do that, for he did not want to. He had a clear aim in his life.

"John found in the wilderness his school and his sanctuary. Like Moses amid the mountains of Midian, he was shut in by God's presence, and surrounded by the evidences of His power. It was not his lot to dwell, as did Israel's great leader, amid the solemn majesty of the mountain solitudes; but before him were the heights of Moab, beyond Jordan, speaking of Him who had set fast the mountains, and girded them with strength. The gloomy and terrible aspect of nature in his wilderness home vividly pictured the condition of Israel. The fruitful vineyard of the Lord had become a desolate waste. But above the desert the heavens bent bright and beautiful. The clouds that gathered, dark with tempest, were arched by the rainbow of promise. So above Israel's degradation shone the promised glory of the Messiah's reign. The clouds of wrath were spanned by the rainbow of His covenant-mercy." *The Desire of Ages*, 102.4.

So, you can look at the school of life as a gloomy thing, or you can see the good side of it. You can see the blue sky.

John the disciple was another person who had to experience the school of life in a rough form, and was in the desert. He was taken to Patmos. This was where they sent the rough prisoners. So he had to live amongst them. Patmos was a rocky island, not very fertile. There was nothing for him to enjoy there, you might say. There was only rock and ocean, rock and ocean. He could have mourned and complained about his fate but, he saw the good side. He saw the love of God in everything in nature. And then God gave him this wonderful revelation. So we need to really see the bright side to everything, even in the hardest school. God is really blessing us through these things.

Now let us turn to *John*.

“After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized. Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized. For John had not yet been thrown into prison. Then there arose a dispute between some of John’s disciples and the Jews about purification. And they came to John and said to him, ‘Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified—behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!’” *John* 3:22–26.

The disciples of John were filled with self-pity--they were absolutely filled with it. What was the reason for their self-pity? The reason was not the theological question of purification. That was only the hook on which to hang their story so that they did not have to say what was really in their hearts. What was in their hearts? What were they burdened with? Envy. You know, John had fewer and fewer followers, while more and more were following Jesus.

There is a habit among pastors of counting baptismal candidates. “I baptized this many”,

“Well I baptized this many,” and “I baptized so and so many.” This was the theme of many discussions in the Adventist Church. That is their way of thinking. “How many did you baptize?”, “How many followers do you have?”, “How many run after you?” So when someone really deserved to be honored because he really gave his all and everything for another person, but if he suddenly has fewer and fewer followers, it is a bit of a cause for envy.

I still remember the Adventist school I attended. I wanted to give a little study for the evening worship. My theme was the character of God. So I presented the character of God to the people and expected that they would be at least a little interested in it. But there was absolutely no response. The people slept. They slept through the presentation and they did not even know what I was talking about.

One girl must have paid attention. After the worship was over, I had a duty to do. So I went there to clean the classroom. I was not feeling very well, I must say. I had self-pity because nobody listened to me, when I had such an interesting theme to preach to them. Then this girl came and said: “Oh, I am sorry nobody listened to you.” That did not make it any better. Not at all. So, I can really imagine how what a temptation it was for John to have self-pity. “Everybody is following Christ now; they do not listen to you anymore.” That was the feeling Satan tried to impress upon John the Baptist.

“John answered and said, ‘A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.’” *John* 3:27. This is a very true statement. But who can think so sensibly under such circumstances? Only one who has learned to accept the school of life. Only one who is mature in his Christian experience. Only one who has oil in his vessel. And this is what we want to have. “A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.”

“You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent before Him.’ He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled.” *John* 3:28, 29.

“He must increase, but I must decrease.” So rejoice and be exceedingly happy. This was the attitude of John the Baptist. Is this our attitude as well? If it were so, there would be wonderful unity amongst us. There would be no conflict whatsoever if we would accept the school of life. “He must increase, but I must decrease. He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true. For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure. The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” *John* 3:30–36.

This is the real testimony of somebody who accepted the school of life. However, this was not the last school for John. He had to go through several schools: as a child, as a youth, and here as an adult, the final school for him was when he was cast into prison. We want to turn to the twenty-second chapter of *The Desire of Ages* to see how he handled that school.

“John the Baptist had been first in heralding Christ’s kingdom, and he was first also in suffering. From the free air of the wilderness and the vast throngs that had hung upon his words, he was now shut in by the walls of a dungeon cell.” So not only did less and less followers come to him but he was also rewarded now with a prison sentence.

Remember: be exceedingly glad and rejoice. There was nothing at the moment to rejoice and be exceedingly glad about. “He had become a prisoner in the fortress of Herod Antipas. In the territory east of Jordan, which was under the dominion of Antipas, much of John’s ministry had been spent. Herod himself had listened to the preaching of the Baptist. The dissolute king had trembled under the call to repentance. ‘Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy;. . . and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. ‘ John dealt with him faithfully, denouncing his iniquitous alliance with Herodias, his brother’s wife. For a time Herod feebly sought to break the chain of lust that bound him; but Herodias fastened him the more firmly in her toils, and found revenge upon the Baptist by inducing Herod to cast him into prison.

“The life of John had been one of active labor, and the gloom and inaction of his prison life weighed heavily upon him.” *The Desire of Ages*, 214.1, 2.

You can imagine that there were many factors that really made this school of life especially difficult for him. First of all, he had been used to having a throng that flocked to him. But nobody came to him in prison apart from the few disciples. Secondly, he was used to having a lot of space in the wilderness, but he was confined in prison. Thirdly, he was used to a lot of light, but now he was confined in a dark cell. Fourthly, the wilderness was very dry, the dungeon was probably moist and damp. These are all contrasts, totally new situations for him, none of which he was used to.

How would he deal with that situation? And what temptations would Satan bring to him there? We need to understand this in order to see what the school of life is and how we can finally accept the school of life.

Study 23

Let us continue to look at the experience of John the Baptist. In our last study, we saw how great the difference was between his earlier life and the life that he had in prison. He had to suffer under this change. Every change is a stressor for the human nature, but this change was a very drastic one. So let us consider the quote from *The Desire of Ages*.

“The life of John had been one of active labor, and the gloom and inaction of his prison life weighed heavily upon him. As week after week passed, bringing no change, despondency and doubt crept over him.” *The Desire of Ages*, 214.2.

Is this understandable? Yes. Do we feel with him? Would despondency and doubt creep over us? We tend to think yes. But was there a reason for this? Humanly speaking, yes, there was a reason; but it did not have to happen this way. “Rejoice and be exceedingly glad.” *Matthew* 5:12. At this moment John could not rejoice and be exceedingly glad, because he did not understand what was going on.

“His disciples did not forsake him. They were allowed access to the prison, and they brought him tidings of the works of Jesus, and told how the people were flocking to Him. But they questioned why, if this new teacher was the Messiah, He did nothing to effect John’s release. How could He permit His faithful herald to be deprived of liberty and perhaps

of life?” *The Desire of Ages*, 214.2. This is the kind of sympathy that people tend to give to others. Does this help? Does this really help to overcome self-pity? No, not really. You see, if somebody hurts me, and a friend comes to me and says, “The man who hurt you is a bad guy!” Is this the help that I need? Definitely not! I need another kind of help. I need to face the situation bravely, instead of trying to escape from it.

“These questions were not without effect. Doubts which otherwise would never have arisen were suggested to John. Satan rejoiced to hear the words of these disciples, and to see how they bruised the soul of the Lord’s messenger. Oh, how often those who think themselves the friends of a good man, and who are eager to show their fidelity to him, prove to be his most dangerous enemies! How often, instead of strengthening his faith, their words depress and dishearten!” *The Desire of Ages*, 215.1. You are not really helping the person; rather, you actually make it more difficult for him. It is as though a physician would give someone the wrong treatment. For example, if a person suffered

Examples

- **Ellen G. White** (*The Early Years*, 28-31)
- **John the Baptist** (*John* 3:22-36; *The Desire of Ages*, 214-224)
- **Adam, Cain** (*Genesis* 3:16-24; *Genesis* 4:1-15)
- **Jacob** (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 204.3 – 205.3)
- **Isaiah** (*Isaiah* 6; *The S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, 4:1139.1)
- **Joseph** (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 208ff)
- **Jesus** (*Hebrews* 2:10; *Hebrews* 12:2; *Revelation* 21:6; *Revelation* 22:13; *Matthew* 4:1-11; *The Desire of Ages*, 117.3; *The S.D.A Bible Commentary*, 5:1080.1; 1081.6)

from a disease that could be helped by the simple observation of the laws of health, and he went to a physician, what would the physician do? He would pump him full of drugs instead of telling him to change his habits. That may make the patient feel better for the moment, because his pain is gone and he feels much lighter, but is the physician doing him a service? Not at all! He is his most dangerous enemy. He is poisoning him, actually harming this person whom he should be helping. He certainly wants to help him, but though his motives are good, his actions are harmful.

“Like the Saviour’s disciples, John the Baptist did not understand the nature of Christ’s kingdom. He expected Jesus to take the throne of David; and as time passed, and the Saviour made no claim to kingly authority, John became perplexed and troubled. He had declared to the people that in order for the way to be prepared before the Lord, the prophecy of Isaiah must be fulfilled; the mountains and hills must be brought low, the crooked made straight, and the rough places plain. He had looked for the high places of human pride and power to be cast down. He had pointed to the Messiah as the One whose fan was in His hand, and who would thoroughly purge His floor, who would gather the wheat into His garner, and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Like the prophet Elijah, in whose spirit and power he had come to Israel, he looked for the Lord to reveal Himself as a God that answereth by fire.” *The Desire of Ages*, 215.2. We smile about this and say that surely this was not the case, but put yourself into the position of John. John was very spiritually-minded. His spiritual understanding of things helped him to see matters much deeper than most people of his time, but still he did not fully fathom the work of Christ.

“In his mission the Baptist had stood as a fearless reprover of iniquity, both in high places and in low. He had dared to face King

Herod with the plain rebuke of sin. He had not counted his life dear unto himself, that he might fulfill his appointed work. And now from his dungeon he watched for the Lion of the tribe of Judah to cast down the pride of the oppressor, and to deliver the poor and him that cried. But Jesus seemed to content Himself with gathering disciples about Him, and healing and teaching the people. He was eating at the tables of the publicans, while every day the Roman yoke rested more heavily upon Israel, while King Herod and his vile paramour worked their will, and the cries of the poor and suffering went up to heaven.” *The Desire of Ages*, 215.3. Many of us would have told John the same things. “This should not happen. He is eating with people that you have rebuked, etc. He is not delivering you, as you deserve. Something must be wrong.” That is what logic tells us. It was difficult for John to answer these things. These questions were puzzling him.

“To the desert prophet all this seemed a mystery beyond his fathoming. There were hours when the whisperings of demons tortured his spirit, and the shadow of a terrible fear crept over him. Could it be that the long-hoped-for Deliverer had not yet appeared?” *The Desire of Ages*, 216.1. What was the real problem of John’s disciples? They had not learned to understand the benefits of the school of life, to really see the blessings of it. How many of us still have this feeling of compassion toward the down-trodden, toward those who are unfortunate, and so forth? We want to change their situations, yet we do not see that even the hardships people sometimes experience are a blessing to them. They are a school that will make its students richer even than those who live in luxury and riches. Can we see this with the eye of faith? This is what Jesus invites us to see. He says: “My yoke is easy and my burden is light.” *Matthew* 11:30. It is easy! Understand it! Do not fight against it all the time, as though it is a hard thing. But even in

the case of John the Baptist it led to doubt. And it leads to doubt in our case too.

“Then what meant the message that he himself had been impelled to bear? John had been bitterly disappointed in the result of his mission. He had expected that the message from God would have the same effect as when the law was read in the days of Josiah and of Ezra (2 Chronicles 34; Nehemiah 8, 9); that there would follow a deep-seated work of repentance and returning unto the Lord. For the success of this mission his whole life had been sacrificed. Had it been in vain? John was troubled to see that through love for him, his own disciples were cherishing unbelief in regard to Jesus. Had his work for them been fruitless?” *The Desire of Ages*, 216.1, 2. He was shut in by many impossible situations. “If Jesus is the Messiah, then my work for the disciples was fruitless.” And the disciples would have thought that they could express some doubts, because they thought John was strong and well able to give them the right answer: “If we are right, then it’s good if we tell this to him, and if we are wrong, then he will still be able to bear it.” John was the one they leaned on.

“But the Baptist did not surrender his faith in Christ. The memory of the voice from heaven and the descending dove, the spotless purity of Jesus, the power of the Holy Spirit that had rested upon John as he came into the Saviour’s presence, and the testimony of the prophetic scriptures,—all witnessed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Promised One. John would not discuss his doubts and anxieties with his companions. He determined to send a message of inquiry to Jesus. This he entrusted to two of his disciples, hoping that an interview with the Saviour would confirm their faith, and bring assurance to their brethren. And he longed for some word from Christ spoken directly for himself. The disciples came to Jesus with their message, ‘Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?’” *The Desire of Ages*, 216.3-5.

It is always good to ask questions, even if the questions are a result of our doubts or a result of our wrong concepts, if we address them to the right persons. That is a very important condition. If we address our doubts to those who cannot answer them, this is a problem. The question we need to ask is: was it right for the disciples of John to express their doubts to him? Was he not the right man, who could answer their questions? I would say it was better to ask him than to express these doubts to the Pharisees or to the people. But it still did not really strengthen John. They should have gone to Jesus and asked Him to tell them how they could strengthen John. These questions showed how weak they were, and yet they did not need to be so weak. Jesus could have dealt with it. The problem comes in when we, being weak, ask our questions, and we get a straight answer that rebukes us. What do we do? We stand up and say: “Are we not allowed to ask any questions?” “Is it forbidden to ask a question?” No, it is not forbidden to ask a question, but the questions you ask reveal that there are doubts in your heart. These doubts must be rebuked. You can ask your questions, but you must also be prepared for the answers. The answers might not be flattering. So you can come and ask Jesus, but when you come to Him with the wrong spirit, He may have to rebuke you. Count this as a blessing, not as a curse. Do not run away because He rebukes you; do not try to escape. Face the situation as it is. Be a man. Stop this spirit of escapism in your heart.

“The disciples came to Jesus with their message, ‘Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?’ How short the time since the Baptist had pointed to Jesus, and proclaimed, ‘Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’ ‘He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me.’ John 1:29, 27. And now the question, ‘Art Thou He that should come?’ It was keenly bitter and disappointing to human nature. If

John, the faithful forerunner, failed to discern Christ's mission, what could be expected from the self-seeking multitude?" *The Desire of Ages*, 216.5-6.

Very often, we do not consider the effects our questions may have when we ask them, in public or even in private, to those who are able to give us an answer. We are only thinking about ourselves. "Does that mean that I should not ask questions anymore?" Of course not. But remember that every question you ask is an expression of what is in your heart. If it is doubt, this is not good, and in the end it has a weakening effect on others and on yourself.

So what should we do when we have such questions? What should John and his disciples have done? It was keenly disappointing and bitter for Jesus to hear this question. Had John known this, would he have asked the question? What should we do? We must address the question somewhere. The right person to address them to is God, through Christ. "It was keenly disappointing to the human nature of Christ", but as the divine human being who would bring our prayers to the father, He was happy to receive these questions. In other words, it was good that they were addressed to Christ.

Let us see that these things must be overcome. We must be prepared to really see that when these troubles are in our hearts, we need to overcome them. It is not a virtue to bring out doubting questions to show that we are honest people. That is not necessary. Some people think it is a virtue to always express doubts. This should not be encouraged. But we should encourage a person who is plagued with doubts to address them to the right person. Let our minds be directed to God through Jesus Christ. So while it was bitter and disappointing to the human nature, it was not so to the divine-human nature.

"The Saviour did not at once answer the disciples' question." *The Desire of Ages*, 216.7. Why not? Was He upset, was He

angry? No, He was not. He was answering their question, but in a different way than they expected.

"As they stood wondering at His silence, the sick and afflicted were coming to Him to be healed. The blind were groping their way through the crowd; diseased ones of all classes, some urging their own way, some borne by their friends, were eagerly pressing into the presence of Jesus. The voice of the mighty Healer penetrated the deaf ear. A word, a touch of His hand, opened the blind eyes to behold the light of day, the scenes of nature, the faces of friends, and the face of the Deliverer. Jesus rebuked disease and banished fever. His voice reached the ears of the dying, and they arose in health and vigor. Paralyzed demoniacs obeyed His word, their madness left them, and they worshiped Him. While He healed their diseases, He taught the people. The poor peasants and laborers, who were shunned by the rabbis as unclean, gathered close about Him, and He spoke to them the words of eternal life." *The Desire of Ages*, 216.7. This is the message in action. This is what gives power to preaching, which is more efficient even than words.

"Thus the day wore away, the disciples of John seeing and hearing all. At last Jesus called them to Him, and bade them go and tell John what they had witnessed, adding, 'Blessed is he, whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in Me.' Luke 7:23, R. V. The evidence of His divinity was seen in its adaptation to the needs of suffering humanity. His glory was shown in His condescension to our low estate.

"The disciples bore the message, and it was enough. John recalled the prophecy concerning the Messiah, '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.' Isa. 61:1, 2. The works of Christ not only

declared Him to be the Messiah, but showed in what manner His kingdom was to be established. To John was opened the same truth that had come to Elijah in the desert, when ‘a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire:’ and after the fire, God spoke to the prophet by ‘a still small voice.’ 1 Kings 19:11, 12. So Jesus was to do His work, not with the clash of arms and the overturning of thrones and kingdoms, but through speaking to the hearts of men by a life of mercy and self-sacrifice.

“The principle of the Baptist’s own life of self-abnegation was the principle of the Messiah’s kingdom. John well knew how foreign all this was to the principles and hopes of the leaders in Israel. That which was to him convincing evidence of Christ’s divinity would be no evidence to them. They were looking for a Messiah who had not been promised. John saw that the Saviour’s mission could win from them only hatred and condemnation. He, the forerunner, was but drinking of the cup which Christ Himself must drain to its dregs.

“The Saviour’s words, ‘Blessed is he, whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in Me,’ were a gentle reproof to John. It was not lost upon him. Understanding more clearly now the nature of Christ’s mission, he yielded himself to God for life or for death, as should best serve the interests of the cause he loved.” *The Desire of Ages*, 217.1-218.2.

John’s final school was the hardest school of his life. As the last people of God, we have to go through a similar school. For this reason we should often contemplate and study the life of John the Baptist. Our experience will be exactly the same. Are we willing to really go through this final school, which calls us to

give up our lives for the cause? That is the question that we need to ask ourselves.

The rest of the chapter is very interesting to study, but for lack of time, we will not do that now. In the last paragraph we read this: “God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him. Not Enoch, who was translated to heaven, not Elijah, who ascended in a chariot of fire, was greater or more honored than John the Baptist, who perished alone in the dungeon. ‘Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake.’ Philippians 1:29. And of all the gifts that Heaven can bestow upon men, fellowship with Christ in His sufferings is the most weighty trust and the highest honor. *The Desire of Ages*, 224.5. Let us see in all this the true school of life, which helps us to overcome all self-pity. You can be sure that John the Baptist did not have self-pity any longer after that school. There were no traces of self-pity left.

Adam and Cain

Let us briefly look at Adam, and then we will look at Cain. They both received the same school, the school of life. Let us read *Genesis* 3:16 and onwards. After man fell into sin, there was a lot of self-pity in him. Let us first turn to verse 6. “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.” *Genesis* 3:6-7. What are these fig leaves? What are these coverings? They were not the provisions that God gave them. They were provisions that they had made for themselves. This is

important to see. These fig leaves and coverings are a symbol of what we do when sin becomes obvious. In other words, we try to hide it. We try to hide it under our own garments. What are these garments? What do they express? They clearly express self-pity. Satan says, "Pity yourself! You are naked! Cover it with your own fig leaves!"

It becomes even more obvious in the following verses. "And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden." Verse 8. What does it mean that they hid themselves from the presence of the Lord? Again, it means that they had self-pity. They were not brave enough to face God. That is very often the problem. When we are convicted of sin, then we admit that we have sinned, but then we want to bury it very quickly. But if there was a true sense of repentance, we would not want to bury it. What would we do? We would stand up to it and say, "Yes, this is what I have done. I feel sorry for it." If people could take such a stand, that would at least show some sign of a true conviction of sin. But mostly the reaction is to lighten our burden by placing blame on the other. "Yes, I have done something, but you have done something worse." Or, "Show me the one who is faultless!" Or, "Do you expect perfection from me?" Statements like these show that there is a spirit of constantly running away. We must stop this. We must stand to our sin and say, "Yes, yes, I am the sinner." That is the only way that we can be helped. It is the first step to recovery. Adam and Eve hid themselves from the presence of the Lord. They did not want the Lord to know that there was a problem. That was the real reason why they hid. Normally they welcomed the Lord in the evening. This was the usual time when Christ came to communicate with them.

"Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, 'Where *are* you?'" *Genesis* 3:9. I often wondered why the Lord would ask such a question. He knew where they were, but He asked it for their sake. "Where are you? Think about where you are!"

"So he said, 'I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.'" Verse 10. That was not the truth. It was true that he was naked, but it was not the full truth. It was only a half-truth, which is a whole lie. He hid the full truth even from God.

"And He said, 'Who told you that you *were* naked?'" Verse 11. This was also a very valid question. "Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" When there was no longer the possibility to escape from the discovery of that sin, the man said, "The woman whom You gave *to be* with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate." Verse 12. This was a long explanation at the end of which he admitted, "... and I ate." That is not an acceptable confession. That is a real fig leaf again. It is a self-made garment. It is showing all the self-pity in which he stood.

"And the LORD God said to the woman, 'What *is* this you have done?'" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." Verse 13. Eve likewise gave a long explanation at the end of which she admitted, "... and I ate." That is probably a very abbreviated form of what she actually said. She must have given a long explanation at the end of which came the admission.

"So the LORD God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, you *are* cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.' To the woman He said, 'I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your

conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; your desire *shall be* for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” *Genesis* 3:14-16. When women cannot accept that the husband rules over them, what does this express? Again, it is self-pity. Of course the husband is to rule in a good sense. What do women express when they complain about the pain of childbirth? Again, it is self-pity.

But men also have their expressions of self-pity. “Then to Adam He said, ‘Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, “You shall not eat of it”: ‘Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat *of* it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground; for out of it you were taken; for dust you *are*, and to dust you shall return.’” *Genesis* 3:17-19. Can you see that man has a lot of self-pity too? He asks: “Why do the thorns grow on my field?” “Why do I have to sweat in order to earn my bread?” “Why do I have to till the ground that is so hard?” “Why do I have to become dust?”

For Adam it was very difficult to watch the first leaf fall from the tree. (See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 62.1). He was filled with great sorrow when he saw this. It was even greater than the sorrow people have today over the death of their loved ones. This shows how deeply he was moved by the effects of sin. But when he was finally 930 years of age, he saw God’s mercy in it (See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 82.2). Now he saw that it was mercy that he could die. It took him a long time to really overcome that part of self-pity. That does not mean that Adam did not accept the plan of salvation. He certainly did. As he did so, certainly a great portion of self-pity would have gone from his life, but some still remained behind, and this expressed itself in his posterity. The great depression that Adam experienced was partly out of sorrow for their

sins; but he should have rejoiced and been exceedingly glad for the consequences of those sins, because all the things were for his blessing. They were a part of the plan of salvation. They were necessary to bring him out of that situation again. These circumstances were the school of life. The 144,000 must fully and absolutely accept this school of life. We cannot afford, like Adam, to accept it mostly and only get the victory after 930 years. We must accept the school of life from the beginning.

“Then the Lord God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever’— therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the Garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.” *Genesis* 3:22-24. The fact that God guarded the way to the tree of life was another school of life. It was also a necessary school, a blessing.

Let each one of us look back at the disappointments of our lives. What do we say about these past experiences? We should feel sorry for our failure to reach the aim that the Lord made possible through His blood. But we still need to learn how to rejoice and be exceedingly glad for the schools God sends to us; for the disappointments that are the result of our own or other people’s sins. In fact, we could even thank those who cause these schools for us. That must be our attitude. I really pray that we will come to the point where the school of life is a school we like to go to; that it will not be a school to which we hesitate to go. Some children go to school with enthusiasm, while others do not like to go. The outlook of both is very different. Our outlook should lead us to enthusiastically welcome the schools of life.

“Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, ‘I have acquired a man from the Lord.’ Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.” *Genesis* 4:1-2. Sister White tells us something of the different attitudes that these two brothers had. “Cain and Abel, the sons of Adam, differed widely in character. Abel had a spirit of loyalty to God; he saw justice and mercy in the Creator’s dealings with the fallen race, and gratefully accepted the hope of redemption. But Cain cherished feelings of rebellion, and murmured against God because of the curse pronounced upon the earth and upon the human race for Adam’s sin. He permitted his mind to run in the same channel that led to Satan’s fall—indulging the desire for self-exaltation and questioning the divine justice and authority.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 71.1.

Can you see extreme self-pity in the case of Cain? Cain was constantly complaining about supposed hardships. It was all self-pity. Abel, however, had a different spirit. He was really grateful for all provisions that God had given. When both gave their firstfruit offerings, the one from the field and the other from the flock, God accepted the offering of Abel but rejected that of Cain. This was done in a visible way. Fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice of Abel, but nothing happened to the sacrifice of Cain. So Cain became very angry, and his countenance fell. What does this terminology mean? It means that he was disappointed. It means he was full of self-pity. You can even see this at times in a person’s countenance. Sometimes it is also expressed in the actions. There is as a lot of self-defense and a lot of hiding at the same time. This is the meaning of the term, “his countenance is fallen”. If we have no self-pity, we can bear wrong done to us. But if we have self-pity, we cannot bear it. Wrong was done to Cain. This is how he perceived it. He had to be justified, and this is why he finally

killed his brother, in order to avenge the wrong that God had done to him. But he would not stand up and take the blame. When God asked him: “Where *is* Abel your brother?” Cain answered “I do not know. *Am* I my brother’s keeper?” (See *Genesis* 4:9.) This was a sheer lie, but it was more than that: it was a covering. What was he covering? He covered up his own sin. He did not dare to say to God, “I have done this.” He did not dare to stand up and take the blame for his act of revenge.

God finally told him that He knew what happened. “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground.” Then Cain said, “My punishment *is* greater than I can bear!” (See *Genesis* 4:10-13.) Was this true repentance? Certainly not! There was no repentance in this statement, because he was just thinking of himself and nothing else. He was full of self-pity even now. He was a murderer, full of self-pity. Many confessions of murderers are only an expression of self-pity and nothing else.

“Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground.” *Genesis* 4:14. This is also an expression of self-pity, as are the following statements. “I shall be hidden from Your face”, “I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth”, “And it will happen that anyone who finds me will kill me.” Can you see self-pity in every sentence?

“And the Lord said to him, ‘Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.’ And the Lord set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him. Then Cain went out from the presence of the Lord and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden.” *Genesis* 4:15, 16. Do you know what “Nod” means? It means literally “wandering” or “running away”. That is land where he was. He was a constant fugitive; he was constantly trying to escape. Escapism had become the principal of his life. Therefore the land in which he lived bore this

name. This was an appropriate name, because that spirit was in the heart of Cain, and his descendents had the same spirit. As the

people of God we need to understand this. We need to overcome self-pity.

Study 24

In our last study we were considering the examples of Adam and Cain to see how they rejected the school of life. When we look at the consequences of the rejection of the school of life, especially on the part of Cain, we really see how serious it is. Cain was the father of a whole generation of serious apostates, so serious that the world had to be destroyed by flood.

God did not actually destroy them, but as a consequence of sin, He could not hinder the flood anymore. And even the flood proved to be a blessing for mankind. It would have been very difficult for Noah and his sons to see the blessing of the flood when they came out of the ark and saw the waste that surrounded them. After the flood, everything must have looked horrible--all of the wilderness and the barrenness. There was no green foliage as we see today; everything had been soaked under water for such a long time that it was destroyed. Noah and his sons still remembered the wonderful earth as it was before the flood. What a difference! And yet this was exactly what they needed. It was the only way to save mankind.

They had to learn the same lesson that Adam and his sons did not fully learn. The earth was once again plunged into deep apostasy. But there was a godly seed among them that helped to preserve the earth. Thus everything hinges on whether we accept the school of life or not. We could study the example of Israel when they were in the wilderness. We could

study their experience from the viewpoint of their own world, or from the viewpoint of accepting the school of life. The wilderness was a real school of life in many respects. The manna was a school of life. Their being sent back from the conquest of Canaan at Kadesh-barnea was a school of life. We could study stage after stage. It was all a school of life, step by step, but I think I must leave it up to you to study these stories in that light.

Jacob

Let us come to Jacob. He was one of the forefathers, or patriarchs. We want to see how the school of life in the acceptance of his family was a real blessing for his family. Now Jacob was not exactly spoiled by his father. The favorite son of the father, rather, was his twin brother Esau. But Jacob was the favorite of his mother. What does it mean to be the favorite child of a parent? You are spoiled. And what does it mean to be spoiled? It means that the school of life is taken away from you in one way or another. We are not exactly told what Isaac did to Esau in order to

Examples

- **Ellen G. White** (*The Early Years*, 28-31)
- **John the Baptist** (*John* 3:22-36; *The Desire of Ages*, 214-224)
- **Adam, Cain** (*Genesis* 3:16-24; *Genesis* 4:1-15)
- **Jacob** (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 204.3 – 205.3)
- **Isaiah** (*Isaiah* 6; *The S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, 4:1139.1)
- **Joseph** (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 208ff)
- **Jesus** (*Hebrews* 2:10; *Hebrews* 12:2; *Revelation* 21:6; *Revelation* 22:13; *Matthew* 4:1-11; *The Desire of Ages*, 117.3; *The S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, 5:1080.1; 1081.6)

take away the school of life from him, but the character that developed in Esau was definitely a sign of some neglect on the part of the father. If Isaac had been stricter, if he had allowed more of the school of life to come to Esau, it certainly would have been better for Esau. But one mistake that Isaac eventually made was the desire to give him the birthright. Isaac knew that Esau should not have the birthright, but his personal feelings prevailed. It is a very dangerous thing when the personal feelings of the parents prevail over the word of God. Rebekah, on the other hand, had a problem with indulgence. When she saw that Isaac wanted to bless Esau, she objected, not on grounds that this was not the will of God, but on grounds of her preferences, which were toward her favorite son. This was the real problem. We need to understand that favoritism is and has been a deep problem.

Because of the favoritism of his mother, Jacob was led into the serious sin of lying to his father. And when the whole story came out, as it had to come out, he had to run away from home. If both parents had carefully considered every consequence of their actions, maybe they would not have done what they did. But, as you know, love is blind. Sometimes it does not see. I mean, of course, that unreasonable love is blind; selfish love is blind. Love does not see the consequences of certain acts. Love acts irrationally, but realizes the seriousness of the consequences later. This is how Jacob acted under the counsel of his mother. Because of this, his home life was shattered, and he had to run away.

Then he felt like he did not deserve the protection or favor of God. That was the condition he was in when he laid down at night with a stone for his pillow. In this place he dreamed a wonderful dream, in which God revealed His favor to Jacob as His son. He showed Jacob that He still loved him and cared for him and would communicate with

him. This strengthened Jacob. This was where he received forgiveness. He erected a stone upon which he made a covenant with God that he would walk in His ways from now on. He never forgot his sin. He never forgave himself; his repentance was real and genuine.

When Jacob came back after many years, he was not boastful against his brother. He did not make any claims. He did not say, "But you have done this!" Jacob could have said to his brother, "I did something wrong to you, but what did you do meanwhile! You did this and this and this..." I mean, you could say that the sins of Esau were much worse. But that was not Jacob's attitude, not at all. He fully accepted his lot.

When Jacob had a family, he saw his weakness revealed in the weaknesses of his own sons. In fact, Jacob himself showed favoritism. But before we come to this part of the story, we will turn to *Patriarchs and Prophets* and read another interesting part of the story about the life of the patriarch and his sons. It happened soon after Simeon and Levi committed their treacherous act, in which they deceived the people of Shechem and killed them. (See *Genesis* 34.)

"The treacherous cruelty of Simeon and Levi was not unprovoked; yet in their course toward the Shechemites they committed a grievous sin. They had carefully concealed from Jacob their intentions, and the tidings of their revenge filled him with horror. Heartsick at the deceit and violence of his sons, he only said, 'Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land: ... and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house.' But the grief and abhorrence with which he regarded their bloody deed is shown by the words in which, nearly fifty years later, he referred to it, as he lay upon his deathbed in Egypt: 'Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret;

unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united... Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel.’ Genesis 49:5–7.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 204.3. It is interesting that Jacob did not even desire to enter into their secrets. This means that Jacob had no desire to be a part of this clique.

“Jacob felt that there was cause for deep humiliation. Cruelty and falsehood were manifest in the character of his sons. There were false gods in the camp, and idolatry had to some extent gained a foothold even in his household. Should the Lord deal with them according to their deserts, would He not leave them to the vengeance of the surrounding nations?

“While Jacob was thus bowed down with trouble, the Lord directed him to journey southward to Bethel. The thought of this place reminded the patriarch not only of his vision of the angels and of God’s promises of mercy, but also of the vow which he had made there, that the Lord should be his God. He determined that before going to this sacred spot his household should be freed from the defilement of idolatry. He therefore gave direction to all in the encampment, ‘Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments: and let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.’” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 205.1, 2.

If you tell young people to put away their idols, what will they usually do? If they are not too rebellious, they will put them away for a time, but then they will pick them up again, because they are simply too weak. If they are rebellious they will say, “No! What does the old man have to tell me?” This is usually the pattern with young children. You would not expect that the children of Jacob were any better than this. But surprisingly, they actually put away their idols. What was

the grounds for it? Why did they do this? The answer is given in this Bible text, but it is a bit hidden. Let us read the explanation of Sister White.

“With deep emotion Jacob repeated the story of his first visit to Bethel, when he left his father’s tent a lonely wanderer, fleeing for his life, and how the Lord had appeared to him in the night vision. As he reviewed the wonderful dealings of God with him, his own heart was softened, his children also were touched by a subduing power; he had taken the most effectual way to prepare them to join in the worship of God when they should arrive at Bethel. ‘And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem.’” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 205.3.

Jacob hid their idols to make sure that they were out of sight. There is a saying, out of sight, out of mind. It is very important to see why they put these idols away. What was the reason? It was the recounting of Jacob’s own experience. “With deep emotion Jacob repeated the story of his first visit to Bethel.” In other words, through repeating his own experience, Jacob showed them what he had done, and this impressed them.

There are many children who still have quite some respect for their parents. They may not have respect for the church, as such, because they have estranged themselves to some extent. But they still have respect for their parents. If the parents would only deal correctly with their children, then they could help them. One way to do this is by really taking definite steps yourselves. I think it would be safe to say that the real reason the children do not walk in the way of faith is that their parents did not consistently walk in it. The parents only come in half-heartedly. They give lip confession, but do not actually walk in the faith. And this is the real reason.

When you take a deeper look into the families, you find a certain effort to reform. But then, after awhile, it all flickers out and old habits come in, and so forth. Maybe there is another effort to reform when another message is given, and then the old habits come back yet again. This attitude will definitely produce a generation of Laodiceans, that is for sure.

Jacob understood this, and for that reason he made very sure to tell his children of his own experiences, of his own sins, and of how God helped him. We must not be too shy, even toward our own children, to really confess to them where we have been wrong and to warn them of the mistakes that we made. This is what Jacob did, and for this reason they put their idols away.

“God caused a fear to rest upon the inhabitants of the land, so that they made no attempt to avenge the slaughter at Shechem. The travelers reached Bethel unmolested. Here the Lord again appeared to Jacob and renewed to him the covenant promise. ‘And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He talked with him, even a pillar of stone.’” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 206.1. That was at least one victory gained in this moment, and certainly other victories were still to come for the children of Jacob.

Isaiah

Let us study the life of Isaiah before we continue with the story of the children of Jacob. What school did Isaiah go through? His school was his experience. Let us turn to *Isaiah* 6. This is the story of his calling as a prophet. He was already rebuking the people by the command of God, as we shall soon see in *Bible Commentary*. He received his real call in the instance mentioned here, in which the Lord helped him to better understand what the basis of his work was. Let us turn to verse one. “In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it

stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!’ And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. So I said: ‘Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.’ Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it, and said: ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged.’ Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?’ Then I said, ‘Here am I! Send me.’ And He said, ‘Go, and tell this people: Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive. Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and return and be healed.’ Then I said, ‘Lord, how long?’ And He answered: ‘Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant, the houses are without a man, the land is utterly desolate, the Lord has removed men far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. But yet a tenth will be in it, and will return and be for consuming, as a terebinth tree or as an oak, whose stump remains when it is cut down. So the holy seed shall be its stump.’” *Isaiah* 6:1–13.

We will continue this story in the *S.D.A. Bible Commentary* 4. Let us look at this before we go into a deeper explanation of *Isaiah* 6.

“As the prophet Isaiah beheld the glory of the Lord, he was amazed, and, overwhelmed with a sense of his own weakness and unworthiness, he cried, ‘Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips,

and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.’

“Isaiah had denounced the sin of others; but now he sees himself exposed to the same condemnation he had pronounced upon them.” *S.D.A. Bible Commentary* 4:1138.6, 1139.1. Was it wrong for him to denounce the sins of others? It sounds a little bit like it when you read this, but he had already received this task from God. It was not wrong as such, because God had already sent him. But the spirit in which he did his work was less than perfect. It was faulty, and the Lord needed to correct him. And He corrected him through this vision. Isaiah had denounced the sins of others, but now he sees his own sins exposed. Whenever we denounce others, it is important for us to see ourselves.

“He had been satisfied with a cold, lifeless ceremony in his worship of God. He had not known this until the vision was given him of the Lord. How little now appeared his wisdom and talents as he looked upon the sacredness and majesty of the sanctuary. How unworthy he was! how unfitted for sacred service! His view of himself might be expressed in the language of the apostle Paul, ‘O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’

“But relief was sent to Isaiah in his distress.

“The vision given to Isaiah represents the condition of God’s people in the last days. They are privileged to see by faith the work that is going forward in the heavenly sanctuary. ‘And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament.’ As they look by faith into the holy of holies, and see the work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, they perceive that they are a people of unclean lips,—a people whose lips have often spoken vanity, and whose talents have not been sanctified and employed to the glory of God. Well may they despair as they contrast their own weakness and unworthiness with the

purity and loveliness of the glorious character of Christ. But if they, like Isaiah, will receive the impression the Lord designs shall be made upon the heart, if they will humble their souls before God, there is hope for them. The bow of promise is above the throne, and the work done for Isaiah will be performed in them. God will respond to the petitions coming from the contrite heart.” *S.D.A. Bible Commentary* 4:1139.1-3.

We will see the same things when we look into the sanctuary. The question is if we have made a similar experience. Are we willing to have such an experience? It is a real shattering experience. If someone has a true concept of the holiness of God, he will not have a tendency to condemn others, to place himself above them. On the other hand, if God commands him to go and preach the message, to tell the people their sins, he will do so with a true sense of his own unworthiness, with a sense that he is not above the law. He will see that he is as condemned as the people are through the law. This is something that people sometimes overlook. They think that the one who preaches to them is one who does not preach to himself. That may be so, but if it is the case, then his message is not worth much. He must preach to himself first of all. It must be very clear that the message he brings to others is the same message that he directs to himself, that it works in his own heart as well. This is absolutely essential. And this was Isaiah’s experience. As we have said, his service was not perfect.

But coming back again now to the Bible text, we want to better understand the school of life that Isaiah was in. First of all, God let him experience the feeling of utter unworthiness. How many people would give up at this point? They would say, “I am worthless,” and that would be it. But how did Isaiah react when the call came to him--“Whom shall we send, and who will be our messenger?” Isaiah said: “Here am I. Send me.” He only dared to

do this because his lips had been touched by a live coal. In other words, he received the assurance of forgiveness. Yet he would ever bear the remembrance of his own weakness with him, wherever he went. And how firm was his resolution? The Lord tested him, the Lord told him, "You will go to the people, and you will preach to them, but they will not listen. They will make their hearts hard, they will make their ears dull; it will be like talking to a wall. Maybe not quite, but pretty much. You will experience many disappointments." How would many people react at that point? I asked myself how I would react. I have had such experiences. I preached to the people, but they did not listen. How would you have reacted? In my case, I was rather frustrated. And I wondered, "Why am I here? What is the purpose? Should I stay here any longer or should I rather go?" This is what Isaiah could have asked, but he did not. He knew he was sent by God, and that was all that mattered. We need to have the same attitude, or else something is wrong. We still need to have an experience like Isaiah's. He saw the glory of the Lord and His holiness. We need this experience.

Isaiah did not say: "Lord, then why are you sending me?" He didn't say: "Please do not send me then." He merely asked the question, "How long?" In other words, he knew that even in those words there was hope. He saw the hope, he saw the silver lining, and he fastened his eyes on it. He was just asking: "Lord, how long until the bright morning comes?" The answer was very discouraging at first. "Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant, the houses are without a man, the land is utterly desolate..."

It is very important to dwell on this experience of Isaiah, because in many respects we are sent into the same situation. I am not just thinking of the Laodicean condition that we are in as God's people. I am thinking of the world and its Laodicean condition.

When we preach the message to the world, we know exactly that we are to be the salt of the earth. When reformers in the past like Luther, Calvin, Roger Williams, and others preached the message, they did so with the deep conviction that the preaching of the message would be for the benefit of the whole nation.

Luther was a great patriarch. He really loved the German people, and he did the things he did for the German people. He loved them, and it was his deep desire to bless them. And of course, beyond this you can say that he had love for all men. Nationalism is something else. It is when people love their own people at the cost of other people. Nationalism was not in Luther's heart.

Likewise, Calvin and the other reformers had a very deep sense of being the salt of the earth. Do we have this sense? We do not tend to have it, because we are so few. We look at the vastness of Satan's control over this world. We see how everyone is running after money, how the people follow after fashion, after appetite, and all these things. And we are a small people. What shall we do?

This morning we were sitting at the table and talking a little. Tirza was with us, and we asked her what she was going to do next week. She said she had to go to school. Then she said she had to give a book report. And when we asked her what the book was, she brought out a crime novel, in English. She has to learn English, but I was disappointed that she has to learn it by reading this book. We conversed afterward, and now she has decided not to read the book. However, she will still have to stand up and say: "I will not read this book." She will probably get a bad mark now. Even if she does not get a bad mark, she will have to fight against a wall of resistance. We must constantly do this. We want to change the world, and it is full of these kinds of things.

When you go to school today you can read books in English, Spanish, German, or

whatever language you want to learn. You can read ghost stories, or crime novels; You can read about sentimentalism, for that's all it is. You will not learn anything else. It is disappointing. How can we change the world? How can we change the attitude of people? How can we give a better standard, how can we put better morals into the minds of the people? What can we do; what can we tell our children? It seems almost hopeless.

The other day someone asked me: "How can we go forward, when the message we bring to the people only calls forth a reaction of resistance, a setting up of the image of the beast? What is the point? Is it not in vain?" Let us see the answer in the life of Isaiah. He asked the question, "How long?" Likewise, our only question should be: "How long?" We should not ask the question, "Why?", because when God sends us, there is a purpose. We may ask the question: "How long?" This is permitted. But not "Why?", because God knows that when He sends us out, if we do not give up hope, then there will be a true change in society.

We are the salt of the earth. It is true that we will not hinder the setting up of the image of the beast. It will definitely happen. But we have to understand that in spite of this, we are to work against the image of the beast even before it is set up, and our effort to hinder it from being set up will not be in vain. It will bear its fruit. How long, how long till it bears fruit? "Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant, the houses are without a man, the land is utterly desolate, the Lord has removed men far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. But yet a tenth will be in it, and will return and be for consuming, as a terebinth tree or as an oak." *Isaiah 6:11-13*.

How true this is, especially for the last work. In other words, there will be a great desolation. The ten plagues will surely come, the image of the beast will be set up, national apostasy will lead to national ruin. You

cannot expect that this perverted world will change. This perversion will have consequences. We do not see the consequences today; everything seems to be running smoothly. But a great crash will come. These things will happen. Yet "a tenth will be in it"; there will be a seed, there will be a people. But for what purpose? "For consuming." In other words, there will be a people among all this confusion that is in the world, but for what purpose? For consuming; in other words, we will be consumed in it. In being consumed, we will give a demonstration of God's character. That is why we have to do the work, and that is why we have to fight against the image of the beast and really do all of this.

All these things that come upon us are schools; they make up the school of life. And this school of life is a school of eternal life, it is a school that brings eternal life. We may ask the question, "How long?", but not in a doubtful way. God will bring forth the victory. However, let us first have a vision, as Isaiah had. Let us go into the sanctuary and plead with the Lord to give us a deeper understanding of the holiness of His character. This will give us the ability to accept the school of life as Isaiah accepted it. It is my prayer for us that we will really accept this school in the same way. We must not refuse the call because there seems to be no other outcome. We must march forward.

Joseph

We want to leave Isaiah now and begin to study the life of Joseph. Joseph is also a wonderful example of a person who really came to accept the school of life, though it took him a while to get to that point. There was a great change in his life once he accepted it. Let us turn to *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

"There was one, however, of a widely different character—the elder son of Rachel, Joseph, whose rare personal beauty seemed but to reflect an inward beauty of mind and

heart. Pure, active, and joyous, the lad gave evidence also of moral earnestness and firmness. He listened to his father's instructions, and loved to obey God. The qualities that afterward distinguished him in Egypt—gentleness, fidelity, and truthfulness—were already manifest in his daily life. His mother being dead, his affections clung the more closely to the father, and Jacob's heart was bound up in this child of his old age. He 'loved Joseph more than all his children.'

"But even this affection was to become a cause of trouble and sorrow. Jacob unwisely manifested his preference for Joseph, and this excited the jealousy of his other sons." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 209.1, 2. Again, when preference is shown for one son, it takes away the school of life to some degree. When you study the Spirit of Prophecy, it is a little bit difficult to understand how Jacob prevented the school of life for Joseph. But one time he bought Joseph a nice tunic. He did not buy one for the other children. Jacob could have bought Joseph a coarse garment instead, which may have been a school for Joseph. But he bought him a nice garment, and so he took away that school.

If you read the Bible through very carefully, you can see that Joseph was a petted child. For example, when the family marched toward Esau and Jacob arranged his family for that march, he put Joseph in the safest place, to make sure that nothing happened to him. If the other sons were injured, that would have been bad, but not as bad. Jacob placed Joseph in the safest place. From these little things, you can see how Jacob was really giving preference to Joseph and thereby not allowing the school of life to educate him. Let us take another look at the book *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

"The father's injudicious gift to Joseph of a costly coat, or tunic, such as was usually worn by persons of distinction, seemed to them another evidence of his partiality, and excited a suspicion that he intended to pass by

his elder children, to bestow the birthright upon the son of Rachel. Their malice was still further increased as the boy one day told them of a dream that he had had. 'Behold,' he said, 'we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.'" *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 209.4.

What do you think? What was Jacob's influence on his other sons? Was he preventing the school of life for them as well? Yes. If you do it for one, you do it for all, in a sense. They also had a lot of self-pity. Their jealousy was self-pity. They pitied themselves, because they were not as privileged as Joseph was.

The time came when the school of life really hit Joseph, and his father could not prevent it. Joseph was sent to his brothers with a message, and they, seizing the opportunity, tried to kill him. First they threw him into a ditch. Reuben tried to save him out of it. However, before Reuben could do this, the other brothers had sold him as a slave to a caravan whose destination was Egypt. This was really a school of life for him in many respects. He was suddenly treated very roughly by his brothers, he was no longer the favorite son, and his nice tunic did not help him at all. So now he was experiencing that which he had never experienced before. You know, the school of life is harder when you have not received it as a child. And for Joseph it was very hard. He wept very bitterly as he moved along with the caravan. This story is told in the twentieth chapter, "Joseph in Egypt", in the book *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

"Meanwhile, Joseph with his captors was on the way to Egypt. As the caravan journeyed southward toward the borders of Canaan, the boy could discern in the distance the hills among which lay his father's tents. Bitterly he wept at thought of that loving father in his loneliness and affliction. Again the scene at Dothan came up before him. He saw his angry brothers and felt their fierce

glances bent upon him. The stinging, insulting words that had met his agonized entreaties were ringing in his ears. With a trembling heart he looked forward to the future. What a change in situation—from the tenderly cherished son to the despised and helpless slave! Alone and friendless, what would be his lot in the strange land to which he was going? For a time Joseph gave himself up to uncontrolled grief and terror.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 213.1.

Can you see self-pity here? He had a lot of self-pity! Many people would say that this is understandable, it is normal for the lad to cry a little bit, because of the injustice done to him. But if you were a wise angel going along with Joseph, what would you have told him? Joseph, now be a brave soldier. This is your school, and something very good will come

out of it. You will be greatly blessed; this is a necessary experience that you must go through. Accept it, do not cry, do not give yourself up to uncontrolled grief. Accept it! Such words would be an encouragement, and such words would be words from a friend. But what would an enemy tell him, who is his supposed friend? He would say, “Poor soul, you are really treated very roughly, and we really sympathize with you. As for your brothers, they should be punished or killed for what they have done to you.” If such words come from a friend, then he is really an enemy. The Holy Spirit is our friend; He speaks much more wisely to us. I wish that we could discern the voice of the Holy Spirit, and also understand who our true friends are. I wish that we would also be true friends to one another. This is my earnest prayer. Amen.

Study 25

This morning, we want to continue our studies about the school of life. That is the special school into which each one of us will come, and through which God designs to help us overcome self-pity and develop true Christian characters. We have realized that self-pity is a very common disease under which we all suffer, especially the foolish virgins. You can characterize the foolish virgins as a group of people who have that disease of self-pity. It is our quest to learn how to overcome this disease and to learn how to fill our vessels with oil. For that reason we are studying some examples.

We have already begun studying the life of Joseph. He was educated in the school of self-pity, not in the school of life. We cannot say that all of his education was bad, for he had a very ardent father who loved the truth, and who was also, to a great degree, self-sacrificing. But there were some unwise elements in the education of his children. One thing was that he gave Joseph preference over his brothers. Part of this was due to the fact that Joseph was the first son of the wife whom Jacob loved most. It is unfortunate that the patriarchs did not understand the principle that God designed for man to have only one wife. So, unfortunately, they had several wives. This caused strife and trouble in the family, and was finally reflected in the children as well. To some degree, Joseph was a weakling. And because of this, the school of life was very hard for him when he was eventually sold as a slave to Egypt. Let us see what the Spirit of Prophecy has to say about this.

“But, in the providence of God, even this experience was to be a blessing to him. He had learned in a few hours that which years might not otherwise have taught him. His father, strong and tender as his love had been, had done him wrong by his partiality and

indulgence.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 213.2. This confirms the Bible text: “He who spares the rod, hates the son”. *Proverbs* 13:24. Jacob would not have seen it like this. As far as he was concerned, what he did for his son was done out of sheer love. But the Spirit of Prophecy clearly tells us that in reality, he had done him wrong.

“This unwise preference had angered his brothers and provoked them to the cruel deed that had separated him from his home. Its effects were manifest also in his own character. Faults had been encouraged that were now to be corrected. He was becoming self-sufficient and exacting. Accustomed to the tenderness of his father’s care, he felt that he was unprepared to cope with the difficulties before him, in the bitter, uncared-for life of a stranger and a slave.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 213.2.

Here we see several things. Whereas before he had received tenderness and care, he was now uncared for, a stranger and a slave, and he became bitter. How contrasting these two situations are! But God knew why He let this situation come upon Joseph. Joseph was receiving that school which was the very best for him, even though he did not discern it at that moment. It was the greatest blessing.

“Then his thoughts turned to his father’s God. In his childhood he had been taught to love and fear Him. Often in his father’s tent he had listened to the story of the vision that Jacob saw as he fled from his home an exile and a fugitive.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 213.3.

It is very interesting that Jacob had made a similar experience. He was well cared-for by his mother. In Jacob’s case, his father had given preference to another son, but his mother showed preference to him. Jacob had had to leave his mother as well. He never saw her again in his life. So Jacob and Joseph went through very similar situations. And Joseph remembered this. He remembered his father talking about these matters.

“He had been told of the Lord’s promises to Jacob, and how they had been fulfilled—how, in the hour of need, the angels of God had come to instruct, comfort, and protect him. And he had learned of the love of God in providing for men a Redeemer. Now all these precious lessons came vividly before him. Joseph believed that the God of his fathers would be his God. He then and there gave himself fully to the Lord, and he prayed that the Keeper of Israel would be with him in the land of his exile.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 213.3.

It is wonderful to see how Joseph was able to grasp his father’s past experiences by memory. We can really see that the most difficult situations, as hard as they seem to be, can often bring out a person’s best attitudes. I can recall my experiences at certain times, when I was put into such strait places. Then I really had to depend fully on God, and these were great blessings to me--some of the greatest blessings. I remember some of these times, when human support was cut off and I had to stand alone. I like to tell this to young people sometimes.

But let us read on now. “His soul thrilled with the high resolve to prove himself true to God—under all circumstances to act as became a subject of the King of heaven. He would serve the Lord with undivided heart; he would meet the trials of his lot with fortitude and perform every duty with fidelity. One day’s experience had been the turning point in Joseph’s life. Its terrible calamity had transformed him from a petted child to a man, thoughtful, courageous, and self-possessed.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 214.1. Now we need to ask ourselves: are we a petted child, or are we a man? What are we? Are we thoughtful, courageous, and self-possessed? Then we are a man. But if we cannot face difficulties, if we run away from difficulties, then we are a petted child. And a petted child is full of self-pity. Now this one day’s experience changed all that for Joseph. What a tremendous change in only one day!

We now will very briefly go through the rest of Joseph’s life together before turning to a greater Character. Joseph’s life contains so many wonderful lessons. “Now when Joseph came into Egypt, he came to Potiphar, as we know, the “Captain of the king’s guard, in whose service he remained for ten years.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 214.2. Now he had accepted the school of life with his whole heart. “His soul thrilled with the high resolve to prove himself true to God—under all circumstances to act as became a subject of the King of heaven”. When he fully accepted it, in this situation, the school of life was not so difficult anymore. The amazing thing is that once we have truly accepted the school of life, it is not so hard anymore. It is much easier. The more we fight against the school of life, the less we accept it, and the more difficult it is.

“He was here exposed to temptations of no ordinary character.” Then Joseph entered a different school altogether. Now he was not petted, but he was tempted. “He was in the midst of idolatry. The worship of false gods was surrounded by all the pomp of royalty, supported by the wealth and culture of the most highly civilized nation then in existence. Yet Joseph preserved his simplicity and his fidelity to God. The sights and sounds of vice were all about him, but he was as one who saw and heard not. His thoughts were not permitted to linger upon forbidden subjects. The desire to gain the favor of the Egyptians could not cause him to conceal his principles. Had he attempted to do this, he would have been overcome by temptation; but he was not ashamed of the religion of his fathers, and he made no effort to hide the fact that he was a worshiper of Jehovah.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 214.2.

I wish that our children were not ashamed of the religion of their fathers. Then they could stand crystal clear on the principles. They would have seeming disadvantages, but in the end they would be respected for what

they believed. If, on the other hand, they always have to get the permission of their parents for what they do in school, they will be looked upon as poor subjects of fanatical parents. But if the children stand for themselves, it is a very different matter. Joseph had no father he could appeal to, no mother. He had to stand for himself. But he was not standing alone, of course, the angels were with him.

“And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man. . . . And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand.’ Potiphar’s confidence in Joseph increased daily, and he finally promoted him to be his steward, with full control over all his possessions. ‘And he left all that he had in Joseph’s hand; and he knew not aught he had, save the bread which he did eat.’” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 214.3. Potiphar had absolute confidence in Joseph.

Now comes the story of Potiphar’s wife, who had unholy desires. As a result, Joseph had to stand very firm, even against his mistress, which he would not normally do, since he was submissive to her. In this case, he had to obey God more than man, and this obedience cost him dearly. Potiphar knew that the claims of his wife against Joseph were wrong. First of all, he knew the fidelity of Joseph; and secondly, he probably also knew his wife a little bit. That was the reason that he would not execute Joseph, but put him in prison instead. But why put him in prison at all, if he knew the accusation was wrong? Because he had to save the honor of his house. That was more important for him than justice. That is how it usually is for great men.

When Joseph was in prison, he had a different school of life, and it was a bit harder than before. When he was sold as a slave, would he have dreamed that he would end up in a prison? He would not have dreamed that. But that is what happened.

Now he could have reflected on why he was thrown into prison, and he could have said: “Well, my fidelity brought me into prison.” He could have repented of this. But he did not cherish these thoughts. In fact, he began to accept that school also. Let us study a little bit further.

“At the first Joseph was treated with great severity by his jailers. The psalmist says, ‘His feet they hurt with fetters; he was laid in chains of iron: until the time that his word came to pass; the word of the Lord tried him.’ Psalm 105:18, 19, R.V. But Joseph’s real character shines out, even in the darkness of the dungeon. He held fast his faith and patience; his years of faithful service had been most cruelly repaid, yet this did not render him morose or distrustful. He had the peace that comes from conscious innocence, and he trusted his case with God. He did not brood upon his own wrongs, but forgot his sorrow in trying to lighten the sorrows of others. He found a work to do, even in the prison. God was preparing him in the school of affliction for greater usefulness, and he did not refuse the needful discipline. In the prison, witnessing the results of oppression and tyranny and the effects of crime, he learned lessons of justice, sympathy, and mercy, that prepared him to exercise power with wisdom and compassion.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 218.2

This school prepared him for a very important position of trust. It was good for him. At the time he could not say: “Thank you Lord, that you gave me prison!”, but he could later. “Joseph gradually gained the confidence of the keeper of the prison.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 218.3. So he was given responsibilities, even there as a prisoner. And again, once we accept the school of life, it becomes easier. That is always the case.

Then Joseph tried to use the interpretation of the inmates’ dreams to be freed from prison. This was not a very wise act. He did

not understand that if the injustice that was done to him became public to Pharaoh and to the state, it would actually cause great problems for him, because Potiphar would never allow such an inquisition to come upon him and his family. It would have caused unnecessary trouble for Joseph himself. He did not understand these things, and for that reason the Lord overruled his attempts, and he remained in prison for another two years. Finally, after two years the cupbearer remembered the interpretation of the dreams, and without bringing up the controversy he simply said: "There is somebody in prison who can interpret dreams." (See *Genesis* 41:11-13.) This was during the time when Pharaoh had these dreams. You know the story. Finally Pharaoh called Joseph out of prison. Then Joseph gave Pharaoh the wise interpretations of his dream, and was even made the chancellor of the kingdom--the highest position after Pharaoh himself.

Then the brothers came back to see him. At first they did not recognize him, but Joseph recognized them. What would Joseph had done if he had still cherished self-pity? What would he have done to his brothers if he had not learned the school of life? He would have wanted revenge. We have learned this already. Revenge is a way to escape. It is escapism. But there were no such thoughts in Joseph's mind. When he finally revealed himself to his brothers, what did he tell them? At first he treated them a little bit tough, we must agree. He let them wait; he made them feel as though the governor was against them. But why did he do all this? In order to avenge himself? No. Sister White tells us that the reason why he did this was to test the sincerity of their repentance. It was not a desire for revenge at all. In fact, when he revealed himself, what did he tell them? He told them that it had been God's providence for him to come to Egypt. God allowed it to happen. They were not the cause of his being in Egypt. God had brought him. By this he

took the whole weight off his brothers, who had acted so deceitfully and so cruelly to him.

Of course he did not excuse them of their sins, because they needed to have their own repentance. But he wanted them to see that they had sinned. They felt this in the tests that Joseph gave them. In other words, he wanted to see if they had really repented of their sins. And they clearly confessed that they had, not knowing that Joseph understood them. They thought he was an Egyptian, so they talked amongst themselves and said: "This happened because we sold our brother."

Joseph heard their discussion. Then he ran out to weep. When he came back, he called all of the Egyptians out of the room. When he was alone with his brothers, he wept and he told them who he was. That was when he told them that he was in Egypt by God's providence. (See *Genesis* 45:1-5.)

Can we forgive our enemies as Joseph forgave his brothers? That is total forgiveness. He did not tell them that they were great sinners; he really told them that he was in Egypt by God's providence. He did not hold any grudges against them in his heart--not in the least, because the their actions had become a blessing. He would not have become the chancellor if they had not sold him back there. That was from God. He would not be a wise chancellor if he had not been cast into prison. He would even have thanked Potiphar for putting him into prison and told him that he learned how to deal with those who are in prison. Through God's providence he learned to be a wise ruler of Egypt.

Through this experience, Joseph truly accepted the school of life. I really pray that we can accept our schools as Joseph did his., because that is what makes us wise virgins. That is what makes us men instead of petted children.

There is a very interesting statement in *Patriarchs and Prophets* that draws a parallel between Joseph and Christ. "The life of

Joseph illustrates the life of Christ. It was envy that moved the brothers of Joseph to sell him as a slave; they hoped to prevent him from becoming greater than themselves. And when he was carried to Egypt, they flattered themselves that they were to be no more troubled with his dreams, that they had removed all possibility of their fulfillment. But their own course was overruled by God to bring about the very event that they designed to hinder. So the Jewish priests and elders were jealous of Christ, fearing that He would attract the attention of the people from them. They put Him to death, to prevent Him from becoming king, but they were thus bringing about this very result.

“Joseph, through his bondage in Egypt, became a savior to his father’s family; yet this fact did not lessen the guilt of his brothers. So the crucifixion of Christ by His enemies made Him the Redeemer of mankind, the Saviour of the fallen race, and Ruler over the whole world; but the crime of His murderers was just as heinous as though God’s providential hand had not controlled events for His own glory and the good of man.

“As Joseph was sold to the heathen by his own brothers, so Christ was sold to His bitterest enemies by one of His disciples. Joseph was falsely accused and thrust into prison because of his virtue; so Christ was despised and rejected because His righteous, self-denying life was a rebuke to sin; and though guilty of no wrong, He was condemned upon the testimony of false witnesses. And Joseph’s patience and meekness under injustice and oppression,

his ready forgiveness and noble benevolence toward his unnatural brothers, represent the Saviour’s uncomplaining endurance of the malice and abuse of wicked men, and His forgiveness, not only of His murderers, but of all who have come to Him confessing their sins and seeking pardon.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 239.2-4. You see that Joseph was an example for Jesus. Now we want to study the life of Jesus.

Jesus

Did Jesus need a school of life? Did He have self-pity He needed to overcome? He was in danger of self-pity, that is true. Jesus received the school of life in the same way that we receive it. Let us read this in *Hebrews*. “For it was fitting for him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” *Hebrews* 2:10. How did Jesus become perfect? Through the school of life, that is through suffering. He became perfect by going through this school of life. “Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher

Examples

- **Ellen G. White** (*The Early Years*, 28-31)
- **John the Baptist** (*John* 3:22-36; *The Desire of Ages*, 214-224)
- **Adam, Cain** (*Genesis* 3:16-24; *Genesis* 4:1-15)
- **Jacob** (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 204.3 – 205.3)
- **Isaiah** (*Isaiah* 6; *The S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, 4:1139.1)
- **Joseph** (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 208ff)
- **Jesus** (*Hebrews* 2:10; *Hebrews* 12:2; *Revelation* 21:6; *Revelation* 22:13; *Matthew* 4:1-11; *The Desire of Ages*, 117.3; *The S.D.A Bible Commentary*, 5:1080.1; 1081.6)

of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” *Hebrews* 12:2. That is also what we read in connection with the symbol of the firstfruit. “And He said to me, ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.’” “‘The first and the last.’” *Revelation* 1:8, 11. We will study these significant texts, which describe Jesus as the beginning and the end, more deeply in connection with the school of life.

Jesus really opened a door for us, which is how He is the first and the last. We can see our experience through His experience. As Jesus gained a perfect character through the school of life, so we can also gain a perfect character through it. He actually prepared the way. If He had not gone this way first, it would be impossible for us to go. So when we study His life, I want to pay close attention to the fact that He actually made a way. This is how He is the way. It is not that a way existed and Jesus simply showed that it did; no, He made the way. That is a difference. Let me emphasize this again. On the one hand we could say: “Well, the possibility of perfection was always there, and Jesus proved that it was there. Period.” But the possibility of perfection would not have been there if Christ had not gone the way to perfection. We would not be able to stand in the school of life if Jesus had not stood first.

Now, you may ask: “How does this apply to the people who lived before Jesus came into this world?” Simple: Jesus is the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world. In other words: the way that He opened while on earth was opened for all time, both prior to and after His life. I do not fully understand how this is possible, and we do not need to fully understand this, except to understand the fact that He actually opened the way.

So when we study the life of Jesus now, let us really see that every step is a promise. He made it possible for us to travel this way.

For this purpose I would like to begin with the childhood of Jesus. And I would like to read a few statements from *The Desire of Ages*.

“The childhood and youth of Jesus were spent in a little mountain village. There was no place on earth that would not have been honored by His presence. The palaces of kings would have been privileged in receiving Him as a guest. But He passed by the homes of wealth, the courts of royalty, and the renowned seats of learning, to make His home in obscure and despised Nazareth.” *The Desire of Ages*, 68.1.

I really recommend that everyone of us reads chapters seven, eight, and nine again and again and again. Especially parents and children. You know, we forget these lessons. We read them and go about our duty as before without any change. And that is very sad. Many studies that we had on child salvation would not have been necessary if we only had read these chapters, to be honest. And many children would save themselves a lot of trouble if they would read these chapters again and again. So let us go over it together.

“As a child, Jesus manifested a peculiar loveliness of disposition. His willing hands were ever ready to serve others. He manifested a patience that nothing could disturb, and a truthfulness that would never sacrifice integrity. In principle firm as a rock, His life revealed the grace of unselfish courtesy.

“With deep earnestness the mother of Jesus watched the unfolding of His powers, and beheld the impress of perfection upon His character.” *The Desire of Ages*, 68.3, 69.1.

When you look at the mother of Jesus, what do you see? You see a person who did not, to a great degree, consider Jesus her possession. She was not perfect, but she

recognized Christ as the Son of God. He did not belong to her. That means she did not hold Jesus as her own world. He was not her own world. How often are the children of parents their own world?

How do we know that Mary did not keep Jesus as her own world? By the words, "With deep earnestness the mother of Jesus watched the unfolding of His powers, and beheld the impress of perfection upon His character." Can our parents do this? Can they watch the unfolding of the powers that God puts in the children? Can they behold the impress of perfection upon their characters? "With delight she sought to encourage that bright, receptive mind. Through the Holy Spirit she received wisdom to co-operate with the heavenly agencies in the development of this child, who could claim only God as His Father." *The Desire of Ages*, 69.1. Jesus was not her possession; He belonged to God.

"From the earliest times the faithful in Israel had given much care to the education of the youth. The Lord had directed that even from babyhood the children should be taught of His goodness and His greatness, especially as revealed in His law, and shown in the history of Israel. Song and prayer and lessons from the Scriptures were to be adapted to the opening mind. Fathers and mothers were to instruct their children that the law of God is an expression of His character, and that as they received the principles of the law into the heart, the image of God was traced on mind and soul. Much of the teaching was oral; but the youth also learned to read the Hebrew writings; and the parchment rolls of the Old Testament Scriptures were open to their study." *The Desire of Ages*, 69.2.

Christ would read from the parchment rolls which existed at that time. One interesting little detail here is that papyrus was the paper used for a very, very long time. But Papyrus was not so stable. Parchment, on the other hand, was very stable. You could roll and unroll parchment again and again. You could

even wipe the letters off and write them again. But you could not do that with papyrus. It would break, it would be spoiled. The parchment rolls were something like a personal Bible--something you could take with you. You could not necessarily do this with a papyrus roll, but you could with parchment.

"In the days of Christ the town or city that did not provide for the religious instruction of the young was regarded as under the curse of God. Yet the teaching had become formal. Tradition had in a great degree supplanted the Scriptures. True education would lead the youth to 'seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him.' Acts 17:27. But the Jewish teachers gave their attention to matters of ceremony. The mind was crowded with material that was worthless to the learner, and that would not be recognized in the higher school of the courts above. The experience which is obtained through a personal acceptance of God's word had no place in the educational system. Absorbed in the round of externals, the students found no quiet hours to spend with God. They did not hear His voice speaking to the heart. In their search after knowledge, they turned away from the Source of wisdom." *The Desire of Ages*, 69.3. Here we read about the school of the Pharisees, which he did not attend. He did not receive instruction from them, and the reason given was that "He needed not the education to be obtained from such sources; for God was His instructor." *The Desire of Ages*, 70.1.

Today we have many schools in the system of so-called higher education, where we learn the philosophies and the doings of men. In these schools we learn how they practice the art of healing; how they practice science; how they view nature, namely as something that developed by itself, in a way of competition.

God has a very different philosophy about nature. We are really invited to observe nature from a different angle. But only God

can give us this understanding. Do our children need the education obtained from worldly sources? Not if God is their Instructor. That does not mean that we can prevent them from going to school. Daniel had to go into a Babylonian school, too. But he did not need it, because God was his Instructor. And this is something we need to understand.

We have to look carefully at the schools in the world, with their philosophies and with their traditions, which they impress upon the young people. If we understood how to make God the instructor of our children, they would not need these things. And when we, as parents or as teachers of God, instruct our children, we must make sure that what we teach is from the Lord and not from ourselves. We will not teach the traditions and sayings of men, but the revelation of God. This is what we really need to look at. Again, by stating this, I am not promoting a situation where we have no education--you understand this. But our education must be from a higher source than that of the world at all times and at all age levels.

"The question asked during the Saviour's ministry, 'How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?' does not indicate that Jesus was unable to read, but merely that He had not received a rabbinical education. John 7:15. Since He gained knowledge as we may do, His intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures shows how diligently His early years were given to the study of God's word." *The Desire of Ages*, 70.2. You know, children never forget what they learn from God's word in their earliest moments.

As soon as their minds are able, let them meditate upon the Scriptures. Let them understand the individual verses themselves. Let them make their own marks in their Bible, write their own comments, make their own highlighting system or notes, and so forth. Their minds must be occupied with scripture until they truly understand it. And this will

have a lasting effect on their whole life. This knowledge of scripture will be more than just knowledge of scripture itself. It will broaden their minds for other subjects as well.

"And spread out before Him was the great library of God's created works. He who had made all things studied the lessons which His own hand had written in earth and sea and sky. Apart from the unholy ways of the world, He gathered stores of scientific knowledge from nature." "Apart from the unholy ways of the world." Does this mean that Jesus would not understand things that were unholy? Sometimes people consider unholy things to be general knowledge. "Well, you have to read this novel and that novel, you have to know this band and that band and their music and so forth. Everybody knows it." Jesus would not have known it. "He gathered stores of scientific knowledge from nature. He studied the life of plants and animals, and the life of man. From His earliest years He was possessed of one purpose; He lived to bless others." So whatever He learned, He learned for one purpose only, and that was to bless others. "For this He found resources in nature; new ideas of ways and means flashed into His mind as He studied plant life and animal life. Continually He was seeking to draw from things seen illustrations by which to present the living oracles of God. The parables by which, during His ministry, He loved to teach His lessons of truth show how open His spirit was to the influences of nature, and how He had gathered the spiritual teaching from the surroundings of His daily life." *The Desire of Ages*, 70.2.

Very often today the military developers study nature and discover things about it in order to develop new weapons. This is because their minds are constantly asking, "How can we make better weapons? How can we destroy more, and be more sophisticated about it?" That is why they study nature. But when you think about it, it is all selfish. Now

Jesus' mind was also constantly working, "How can I help, how can I bless?" And He used every possible thing to help Him understand things better. He found a lot of examples in nature to help Him understand how He could be a blessing to others. That's how He studied nature. And our nature study would be much more interesting if it had a purpose, namely: How can we bless? Does nature show us, for example, how we can relate to one another? Does nature show us

how we can comfort somebody who is depressed? Does nature show us how we can heal somebody who is wounded? Does nature show us how we can sooth a quarrel between people? Etc. Ask yourself these questions. Nature shows us more than we think, for sure. And this is how Jesus constantly learned.

We want to continue to read from His wonderful life in the next session, because our time is now over.

Study 26

We will continue to study into the life of Jesus, who passed through the school of life as an example and strength for us. We will first look into His childhood.

“The life of Jesus was a life in harmony with God. While He was a child, He thought and spoke as a child; but no trace of sin marred the image of God within Him. Yet He was not exempt from temptation. The inhabitants of Nazareth were proverbial for their wickedness. The low estimate in which they were generally held is shown by Nathaniel’s question, ‘Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?’ John 1:46.” *The Desire of Ages*, 71.1. Very often, we express the thought that it is impossible to develop a perfect Christian character in our day and age. However, what example has Jesus given us? He lived in an age of great moral corruption and vice, and, in addition to this, He lived in a village that offered the worst possible surroundings. Yet His life was in harmony with God; He developed and maintained a Christian character.

Let us continue to read from the same paragraph. “Jesus was placed where His character would be tested. It was necessary for Him to be constantly on guard in order to preserve His purity. He was subject to all the conflicts which we have to meet, that He might be an example to us in childhood, youth, and manhood.” Christ was in a school, and in this school, His character was constantly tested. This statement also mentions that He was constantly on guard to preserve His purity. We, too, need to apply the messages that we receive and keep a constant vigilance in order to preserve our purity, in order to have a life that is in harmony with heaven.

Let us read the next paragraph from the same book, and we will see that Satan always had a school for Jesus. “Satan was unwearied

in his efforts to overcome the Child of Nazareth. From His earliest years Jesus was guarded by heavenly angels, yet His life was one long struggle against the powers of darkness. That there should be upon the earth one life free from the defilement of evil was an offense and a perplexity to the prince of darkness. He left no means untried to ensnare Jesus. No child of humanity will ever be called to live a holy life amid so fierce a conflict with temptation as was our Saviour.” *The Desire of Ages*, 71.2. What does this mean, “so fierce”? Never will a battle be so fierce a conflict with temptation as were the battles of our Saviour.

“The parents of Jesus were poor, and dependent upon their daily toil.” *The Desire of Ages*, 72.1. This was another school of life for Jesus, and can be for us today. We should see the virtues of being poor; it is a blessing to be poor. Why do I say this? Because poverty is a school of life. Jesus lived in poverty.

Let us continue to read from the same paragraph. “The parents of Jesus were poor, and dependent upon their daily toil. He was familiar with poverty, self-denial, and privation. This experience was a safeguard to Him. In His industrious life there were no idle moments to invite temptation.” Jesus would not allow idleness to be a part of His life; there were no idle moments in the life of Jesus to invite temptation. How many hours do our young people have, even our own children, which are idle? We want no such idle hours for our children, yet, if disciplinary action is taken to prevent a child from having these hours of inactivity, then the parents, who themselves allow such wasted hours for their own children, will consider this discipline cruel. “No aimless hours opened the way for corrupting associations. So far as possible, He closed the door to the tempter. Neither gain nor pleasure, applause nor censure, could induce Him to consent to a wrong act. He was wise to discern evil, and strong to resist it.” This shows that Jesus

Himself put forth the necessary efforts, not just waiting for His parents to make these decisions. Jesus chose to spend not one moment in idleness; He disciplined Himself to have no aimless hours. Again, Jesus made these decisions Himself, not waiting for His parents or others to do what He could do for Himself.

“Christ was the only sinless one who ever dwelt on earth; yet for nearly thirty years He lived among the wicked inhabitants of Nazareth. This fact is a rebuke to those who think themselves dependent upon place, fortune, or prosperity, in order to live a blameless life. Temptation, poverty, adversity, is the very discipline needed to develop purity and firmness.” *The Desire of Ages*, 72.2. If parents understood this principle, they would voluntarily surrender their wealth; but this is very difficult for a rich man to do, and this is why it is very hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

“Jesus lived in a peasant’s home, and faithfully and cheerfully acted His part in bearing the burdens of the household. He had been the Commander of heaven, and angels had delighted to fulfill His word; now He was a willing servant, a loving, obedient son. He learned a trade, and with His own hands worked in the carpenter’s shop with Joseph. In the simple garb of a common laborer He walked the streets of the little town, going to and returning from His humble work. He did not employ His divine power to lessen His burdens or to lighten His toil.” *The Desire of Ages*, 72.3. This is another school of life, to be an ordinary and humble worker, from the most difficult to simplest tasks.

“As Jesus worked in childhood and youth, mind and body were developed. He did not use His physical powers recklessly, but in such a way as to keep them in health, that He might do the best work in every line.” *The Desire of Ages*, 72.4. This statement reveals the fact that Jesus was a true health reformer;

He was truly health-conscious, and not only in health; for He was precise in whatever He did, seeking to do the best work possible. His life clearly reveals this.

Let us re-read this statement. “As Jesus worked in childhood and youth, mind and body were developed. He did not use His physical powers recklessly.” Do we understand the profundity of this statement? Jesus was very careful as far as health principles were concerned. So He did not use His powers recklessly, “but in such a way as to keep them in health, that He might do the best work in every line. He was not willing to be defective, even in the handling of tools. He was perfect as a workman, as He was perfect in character. By His own example He taught that it is our duty to be industrious, that our work should be performed with exactness and thoroughness, and that such labor is honorable.” What is a tool? A hammer, a saw, a pot, a spoon, lawn mower, etc--these are all tools. Jesus was not defective in handling the tools of His day; He was not careless in the handling of tools. Jesus used His tools wisely, being careful not to break them, and putting them away properly so that if someone needed the same tool, they could find it easily. He would clean His tools after each use. That was His character, and His actions manifested His character. Jesus was a living example of the gospel in all His daily work.

“The exercise that teaches the hands to be useful and trains the young to bear their share of life’s burdens gives physical strength, and develops every faculty.” To share life’s burdens: what do these words mean? It means exactly what it says, and this applies to very young children as well, for they, too, should begin to share life’s burdens. This means more than just little tasks, like the exercises young children have in their kindergarten class. It is good that they learn to use their tools correctly, and to clean and put them away properly as well. This is sharing the burden; but sharing the burden it is more than

that. They must be given tasks that help share life's burdens. How many young children, and even youth and young adults, have experienced sharing life's burdens? Often, parents impart life's burdens to their children too late, and at that point the children cannot handle it. Grown-up children are still children in the minds of many parents, and so the parents delay sharing life's burdens with them or even disallow it altogether. For example, some parents will not allow their licensed child to drive the car because they feel that they can drive better than the child. This is also true in the financial realm. How often do grown-up children earn a living, yet continue to live in their parents' home? Though not wrong in itself, this can become a bad situation if the working child is not required to share the financial burdens of the household because the parents say it is still a child. Some may even get "pocket money" from their parents on top of what they earn! This is preventing the school of life. It was not so with Jesus. He definitely shared life's burdens. "All should find something to do that will be beneficial to themselves and helpful to others. God appointed work as a blessing, and only the diligent worker finds the true glory and joy of life. The approval of God rests with loving assurance upon children and youth who cheerfully take their part in the duties of the household, sharing the burdens of father and mother. Such children will go out from the home to be useful members of society." *The Desire of Ages*, 72.4.

Children should cheerfully take their part in the duties of the household. But if they have not learned this and have always complained about doing any duties, then it is very difficult for them to adjust to the burdens that life will bring. When these children, with their spoiled ways and unwillingness to enter into the school of life, are employed, then their usefulness will definitely be limited, and their employers will most likely experience

great difficulties with them. But it is not too late for them, or for us, though our tardiness will make progress more difficult. If we are willing to accept and to learn in the school of life, to start as an "apprentice," we can make the most of the time left, and learn to be functional and helpful wherever we are.

"Throughout His life on earth, Jesus was an earnest and constant worker." *The Desire of Ages*, 73.1. What does it mean that Jesus was an earnest and constant worker? Earnest means that He was concentrated; that Jesus was serious about His work, goal-orientated. Constant means that He finished the job; working on it non-stop until it was completed. "He expected much; therefore He attempted much. After He had entered on His ministry, He said, 'I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.' John 9:4. Jesus did not shirk care and responsibility, as do many who profess to be His followers. It is because they seek to evade this discipline that so many are weak and inefficient." How true this last sentence is. However, through the school of life--if this school is fully accepted and appreciated--one will grasp the discipline needed. "They may possess precious and amiable traits, but they are nerveless and almost useless when difficulties are to be met or obstacles surmounted. The positiveness and energy, the solidity and strength of character, manifested in Christ are to be developed in us, through the same discipline that He endured. And the grace that He received is for us.

"So long as He lived among men, our Saviour shared the lot of the poor. He knew by experience their cares and hardships, and He could comfort and encourage all humble workers." *The Desire of Ages*, 73.2. We have already noted that poverty was part of Christ's school. We should make a list of all the schools of life in the life of Jesus: poverty, sharing life's burdens, and so forth. Another

school of life was His work, starting as an apprentice, in His father's business.

"Jesus carried into His labor cheerfulness and tact. It requires much patience and spirituality to bring Bible religion into the home life and into the workshop, to bear the strain of worldly business, and yet keep the eye single to the glory of God." *The Desire of Ages*, 73.3. Many remark, "I cannot worship God, because I have too much work; I have no free time. Also, my family demands too much, therefore I cannot worship God. In all of this, I find no time for prayer. If I had no children, then I could pray the whole day and that would be great." They would like to go to a cloister, if they could. Sister White agrees that it is difficult to maintain a godly patience and spirituality, and we must agree with this too. It does require much patience and spirituality to bring Bible religion into ordinary life, i.e. into the home, the workshop, and despite the strain of worldly business. It is very difficult. But is it impossible? It is not! There is a necessity to set time apart for worldly business, the home life, and the workshop. But above this is the time we designate for personal prayer and study, and this is very important. In addition to this, we must never forget that while we perform our everyday duties, we bring our Bible religion with us, manifesting the principles of the Bible and keeping our communion with God.

"Yet keep the eye single to the glory of God. This is where Christ was a helper. He was never so full of worldly care as to have no time or thought for heavenly things. Often He expressed the gladness of His heart by singing psalms and heavenly songs. Often the dwellers in Nazareth heard His voice raised in praise and thanksgiving to God." *The Desire of Ages*, 73.3. This is a wonderful opportunity we all have. For example, when I visit the helpers in the kitchen, sometimes they are singing, and this is good. The songs they sing lift my heart and mind to heavenly things, and

this is the benefit of singing. I remember that when I was in my apprenticeship; I would lift my voice and heart in songs to God. I could not sing loudly, because that would have been too offensive to my colleagues, but I sang loudly in my heart. I sang the same songs that I had sung the preceding Sabbath, and this strengthened and encouraged me. "He held communion with heaven in song; and as His companions complained of weariness from labor, they were cheered by the sweet melody from His lips. His praise seemed to banish the evil angels, and, like incense, fill the place with fragrance. The minds of His hearers were carried away from their earthly exile, to the heavenly home."

Let us now leave this chapter and come to the ninth chapter of the same book, page 85.1. "In every gentle and submissive way, Jesus tried to please those with whom He came in contact." Was Jesus a man pleaser, as this statement seems to imply? What is a man pleaser? Someone who tries to please everyone, but Jesus was not a man pleaser of this sort. He tried to please everyone, but not by making any compromises with sin. A man pleaser is normally one who makes compromises with sin. In other words, he says what others want to hear, not what they need to hear. This was not the character of Jesus, yet He did try to please. In other words, He was careful, He was not careless in how He presented the truth. He wanted His hearers to understand the truth, so He spoke with Christian tact. Think of Paul, for example, when he wrote his first letter to the believers in Corinth. With what care, what tact, did he write! Read the letter yourself, and you will see the spirit Paul had very clearly. He had to sternly rebuke them, but with much love, and even then Paul questioned himself, thinking that maybe he was a bit too harsh, or too direct. Paul wanted to please those with whom he came into contact, not for his own sake, but for theirs. This spirit will exist in the heart of the true Christian.

Let us continue to read from the same paragraph. "Because He was so gentle and unobtrusive, the scribes and elders supposed that He would be easily influenced by their teaching. They urged Him to receive the maxims and traditions that had been handed down from the ancient rabbis, but He asked for their authority in Holy Writ." So if someone has this gentle spirit, some people think they can take advantage of this. They will say, "Yes, we can easily manipulate him!" Christ had such a simple and gentle spirit, yet He was firm as a rock--unbendable, unmovable as far as principle was concerned. He asked for their authority in Holy Writ, and that was a very sensible question. "He would hear every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." So we can call Jesus a radical reformer, a reformer who would make no compromises with tradition whatsoever. He would only act on the authority of the Word, and this is the kind of reforming spirit that we need to possess. "But He could not obey the inventions of men. Jesus seemed to know the Scriptures from beginning to end, and He presented them in their true import. The rabbis were ashamed to be instructed by a child. They claimed that it was their office to explain the Scriptures, and that it was His place to accept their interpretation. They were indignant that He should stand in opposition to their word."

So, can we see that this was a school of life for Jesus? Constant conflicts with people who interpreted the Word differently, which meant that Christ had to know what He believed; He could not just have a superficial knowledge of the truth. If He had, He would have been blown away by the first argument.

"They knew that no authority could be found in Scripture for their traditions. They realized that in spiritual understanding Jesus was far in advance of them. Yet they were angry because He did not obey their dictates. Failing to convince Him, they sought Joseph and Mary, and set before them His course of

noncompliance. Thus He suffered rebuke and censure.

"At a very early age, Jesus had begun to act for Himself in the formation of His character, and not even respect and love for His parents could turn Him from obedience to God's word. 'It is written' was His reason for every act that varied from the family customs. But the influence of the rabbis made His life a bitter one. Even in His youth He had to learn the hard lesson of silence and patient endurance." *The Desire of Ages*, 85.2, 86.1. Is this a hard lesson to learn, silence and patient endurance, when we are treated very roughly and unjustly? This can also be difficult to learn when we see children treated wrongly by their parents or other adults, who should care for them but do not. Well, there is a lesson to be learned in all this--a lesson of silence and patient endurance.

"His brothers, as the sons of Joseph were called, sided with the rabbis." *The Desire of Ages*, 86.2. This made matters worse for Jesus, but it also meant that He had another school of life--His brothers were a school for Him. "They insisted that the traditions must be heeded, as if they were the requirements of God. They even regarded the precepts of men more highly than the word of God, and they were greatly annoyed at the clear penetration of Jesus in distinguishing between the false and the true. His strict obedience to the law of God they condemned as stubbornness. They were surprised at the knowledge and wisdom He showed in answering the rabbis. They knew that He had not received instruction from the wise men, yet they could not but see that He was an instructor to them. They recognized that His education was of a higher type than their own. But they did not discern that He had access to the tree of life, a source of knowledge of which they were ignorant." I find it very interesting how Jesus approached the people, and with what openness He did this.

“Christ was not exclusive, and He had given special offense to the Pharisees by departing in this respect from their rigid rules. He found the domain of religion fenced in by high walls of seclusion, as too sacred a matter for everyday life. These walls of partition He overthrew. In His contact with men He did not ask, What is your creed? To what church do you belong? He exercised His helping power in behalf of all who needed help.” *The Desire of Ages*, 86.3. Is it not interesting that Jesus did not ask these questions? Jesus did not ask these questions because He looked at each person as a seeker. Of course, if the individual decided not to have a seeking spirit, then Jesus could not help him. But Jesus’ attitude and perspective toward all was, “What is your relationship with God?”, not “What is your creed?” or “To what church do you belong?” “At all times and in all places He manifested a loving interest in men, and shed about Him the light of a cheerful piety.

“Jesus worked to relieve every case of suffering that He saw. He had little money to give, but He often denied Himself of food in order to relieve those who appeared more needy than He.” *The Desire of Ages*, 87.1. This was yet another school for Jesus, and He gladly entered this school. He had a right spirit, so this generosity on His part was an outflow of that within; it was a natural reaction. “To those who were in need He would give a cup of cold water, and would quietly place His own meal in their hands.” What does “quietly” mean? This means that Jesus did this without display; He was not looking for everyone to take notice of His kind acts. It is probable that no one noticed most of His kind acts. Maybe He was thinner than the other boys, because He frequently gave his food away, but that was all you would have noticed. On the other hand, He lived a healthy life, so even His possible weight loss may not have been noticeable.

“All this displeased His brothers. Being older than Jesus, they felt that He should be under their dictation.” *The Desire of Ages*, 87.2. Again we see this school of life for Jesus in dealing with His brothers and their displeasures toward Him.

“Jesus loved His brothers, and treated them with unflinching kindness; but they were jealous of Him, and manifested the most decided unbelief and contempt.” *The Desire of Ages*, 87.3. Jesus had quite a school with His brothers. His brothers were jealous, unbelieving, and contemptible, in a most decided manner, toward Jesus. Could one receive a worse treatment than this from one’s brothers? Indeed, this is quite a school to go through. How sorry we would feel for such a person, but we should realize that it is what they need, and it is actually good. “They could not understand His conduct. Great contradictions presented themselves in Jesus. He was the divine Son of God, and yet a helpless child. The Creator of the worlds, the earth was His possession, and yet poverty marked His life experience at every step. He possessed a dignity and individuality wholly distinct from earthly pride and assumption; He did not strive for worldly greatness, and in even the lowliest position He was content. This angered His brothers. They could not account for His constant serenity under trial and deprivation. They did not know that for our sake He had become poor, that we ‘through His poverty might be rich.’ 2 Corinthians 8:9. They could understand the mystery of His mission no more than the friends of Job could understand his humiliation and suffering.

“Of the bitterness that falls to the lot of humanity, there was no part which Christ did not taste. There were those who tried to cast contempt upon Him because of His birth, and even in His childhood He had to meet their scornful looks and evil whisperings.” It is definitely a part of the school of life when others look scornfully upon you and whisper

evils about you. Can we endure this treatment silently and patiently? “If He had responded by an impatient word or look, if He had conceded to His brothers by even one wrong act, He would have failed of being a perfect example.” *The Desire of Ages*, 88.2.

“Jesus did not contend for His rights. Often His work was made unnecessarily severe because He was willing and uncomplaining.” *The Desire of Ages*, 89.4. So, in essence, Jesus created a school of life for Himself by His perfect character. Moreover, others noticed this despicable usage, and often asked Him why He submitted to this rude treatment. His reply was always a quote from the Scriptures.

Let us now look into another school for Jesus, and this was His relationship with His mother. We will read from the same book, *The Desire of Ages*, 90.2. “Mary often remonstrated with Jesus, and urged Him to conform to the usages of the rabbis.” Why did she do this? Because of manipulation by the other children in the family, as we read in the same book, *The Desire of Ages*, 90.1 - “The sons and daughters of Joseph knew this, [the special relationship that the mother had to Jesus] and by appealing to her anxiety, they tried to correct the practices of Jesus according to their standard.” They, the children, worked through Mary as well, and so Mary, in turn, often remonstrated with Jesus, urging Him to conform and submit to the usages of the rabbis. His own mother, the one nearest to Him--what a school this was for Jesus!

“At times she wavered between Jesus and His brothers.” *The Desire of Ages*, 90.3. Mary was not as decided in her ways as the brothers of Jesus were. She would see His holy life on the one hand, and on the other hand she felt obliged to tradition, and to the ecclesiastical authorities.

“Yet through childhood, youth, and manhood, Jesus walked alone. In His purity and His faithfulness, He trod the wine press alone,

and of the people there was none with Him. He carried the awful weight of responsibility for the salvation of men. He knew that unless there was a decided change in the principles and purposes of the human race, all would be lost. This was the burden of His soul, and none could appreciate the weight that rested upon Him. Filled with intense purpose, He carried out the design of His life that He Himself should be the light of men.” *The Desire of Ages*, 92.2.

Many people believe that others do not understand them. In other words, these folk believe that they have to travel the road alone. To some degree, this may be true. However, we need to be balanced in this. On one side we need to stand alone, but on the other side we must learn to be open one with another. Many, unfortunately, want to shut themselves in; they are, I would say, stubborn in their belief that no one understands them. It is possible that others do understand them better than they think! Jesus was not holding back, thinking that others would not understand Him. Jesus was not intentionally treading the winepress alone, feeling a satisfaction in this, as though it was giving Him a reason to have self-pity. No, not at all! Jesus would have gladly shared everything with others; He would have gladly told others what He was doing, and why He was going through all the suffering and abuse, but they would not have understood. Jesus did not complain about this, nor did He forsake His mission. He tread the winepress alone, but did not tell the people He was treading the winepress alone. This is a manifestation of that spirit which truly accepts the school of life. And what exactly did Jesus do when He tread the winepress? What does this mean? It simply means that He worked out our salvation.

At this point I want to go back to a statement in *The Desire of Ages*, 88.2. “Thus He would have failed [that is, if Jesus had responded by one impatient word or look] of carrying out the plan for our redemption. Had

Examples

- **Ellen G. White** (*The Early Years*, 28-31)
- **John the Baptist** (*John* 3:22-36; *The Desire of Ages*, 214-224)
- **Adam, Cain** (*Genesis* 3:16-24; *Genesis* 4:1-15)
- **Jacob** (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 204.3 – 205.3)
- **Isaiah** (*Isaiah* 6; *The S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, 4:1139.1)
- **Joseph** (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 208ff)
- **Jesus** (*Hebrews* 2:10; *Hebrews* 12:2; *Revelation* 21:6; *Revelation* 22:13; *Matthew* 4:1-11; *The Desire of Ages*, 117.3; *The S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, 5:1080.1; 1081.6)

He even admitted that there could be an excuse for sin, Satan would have triumphed, and the world would have been lost.” I want to make a very important point here. We have many Bible examples, or Bible-worthy examples, which show us a true seeking spirit and faithfulness, such as Moses, Joseph, and Daniel. Of course, *the* example is Jesus Christ. He is more than an example, for Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our faith, the Foundation of our faith. He is the One who made the path for us to travel, opening the way for us, in which we can safely walk, simply because He has already traveled that way for us. This is a very great assurance for all of us.

Do you remember what *Matthew* 4:1-11 is about? It is about Jesus’ wilderness experience. Jesus went through great temptations while in the wilderness, and by this He opened the way for us. Let us read a few statements from *S.D.A. Bible Commentary* 5:1079.7.

“Christ was our example in all things. As we see His humiliation in the long trial and fast in the wilderness to overcome the temptations of appetite in our behalf, we are to take this lesson home to ourselves when we are tempted. If the power of appetite is so strong upon the human

family, and its indulgence so fearful that the Son of God subjected Himself to such a test, how important that we feel the necessity of having appetite under the control of reason. Our Saviour fasted nearly six weeks, that He might gain for man the victory upon the point of appetite.” This point about self-control is very important. Can we have appetite under the control of reason? Is this possible? Of course it is, if we understand and apply this correctly.

When we read the words “for man,” we must not understand this to mean that Jesus did everything, paid it all, and so we do nothing, only believe that He did it for me. No, this means much more. This victory that Jesus gained actually imparts power to us; He can give us that very same victory. In other words, we can have the same victory over appetite today and always, no matter what our circumstances! Jesus gained this victory over appetite when He fasted, and we must realize this and grasp this victory in the schools of life.

“Christ, in the wilderness of temptation, stood in Adam’s place to bear the test he failed to endure. Here Christ overcame in the sinner’s behalf, four thousand years after Adam turned his back upon the light of his home. Separated from the presence of God, the human family had been departing every successive generation, farther from the original purity, wisdom, and knowledge which Adam possessed in Eden.” *S.D.A. Bible Commentary* 5:1081.6.

Let us now turn to *Romans* 5:12-14. “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and

When Should the Educator Begin to Use the Rod?

In Life?

In the School?

In the Home?

We have to begin in our own life.

thus death spread to all men, because all sinned--For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come." It is a known fact that Adam fell into sin, and the very point he fell was appetite; he did not control his appetite. This loss of control of his appetite was not in the physical realm, though this is important, too. The principle of appetite reaches deeper than just the physical level, for it also concerns our desires, our curiosities, our love for worldly things, etc. In other words, our feelings and

thoughts are very much involved in appetite. Adam lost his control of appetite and sinned, and because he fell, as the Bible states, we too are weak in this area. From generation to generation we have grown weaker in resisting the desires of appetite, and today many are addicted to drugs, to alcohol, and to many other things. We are very weak.

Appetite, in its myriad forms, is impossible to resist without Christ. Due to the fall of Adam

and the ongoing degradation of each succeeding generation since, there are few in this world of sin that have gained the victory over appetite. However, Christ is the second Adam; He is the One who has given, and who gives us the victory over appetite today. "And the gift is not

When Does the School of Life Begin?

- "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God:" *1 Peter 4:17*
- "For, lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name." *Jeremiah 25:29*
- "Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house." *Ezekiel 9:6*
- "Lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." *1 Corinthians 9:27*
- "It was fitting that God, ... should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings." *Hebrews 2:10 RSV*

like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. For if by one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ." *Romans 5:16, 17.* Again, in Jesus, by His example and actions, we can have the victory over appetite. We should earnestly and diligently study His wilderness experience because this is what Jesus wants to implant in our own lives--the victories that He has gained for us.

What does this diagram reveal to us in our battle against our tendency toward escapism? Where does this start, in the home, the school, or in life? Where do we apply the rod first? Most wish to apply the rod first to their children, but is that what Jesus did when He walked on this earth? No, Jesus applied the rod first to Himself, and this is what the educator should do as well. In other words, as Jesus prepared the way for us, so likewise the parents should prepare the way for their children. Jesus treads

The First Temptation

The School of Life

- 1. To accept His role as a son**
- 2. Hunger**

Rejection of the School of Life

To make bread for Himself

Jesus' Reaction

To live by the Word of God alone

down the path first; He made the path for us. If a path through a thick forest is needed, then a heavy-duty vehicle goes through first, clearing a path for other vehicles to follow. The vehicles that follow are incapable of making such a path; they can only follow the path that the heavy-duty

The Second Temptation

The School of Life

To trust God even if we do not see anything

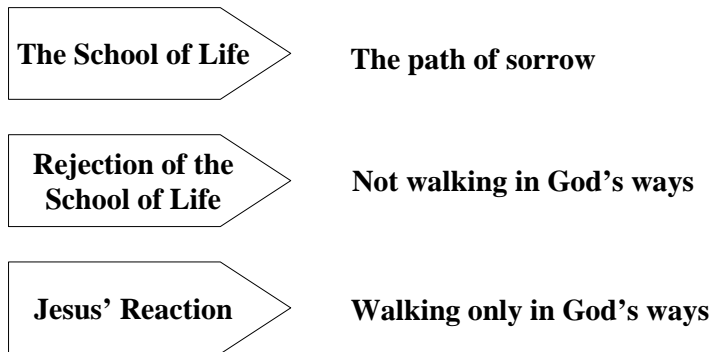
Rejection of the School of Life

Try it

Jesus' Reaction

Trust in the Father

The Third Temptation



vehicle made. Likewise, we must prepare the way for our children by accepting responsibility for their weaknesses and trusting and believing in the power and love of Jesus, who has prepared the way for all of us.

So when does the school of life begin? The school of life begins with the house of God. We have many Bible texts to confirm this, but we

will not quote them all. Let us read the last one on the diagram. "It was fitting that God ... should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings." *Hebrews 2:10 RSV*. Jesus is called the "pioneer of their salvation," and we are called to be pioneers as well! To be more specific, Jesus has called us to be pioneers in the acceptance of the school of life, and this is the reason why we are studying this subject.

Very briefly, the next three diagrams are about the three temptations, the first, the second, and the third, that Christ faced in His wilderness experience. These should be studied and meditated upon to see how Jesus accepted the school of life in these temptations, so that we are able to do the same.

Lord's Supper Study

This is the communion service study for the 2003 International Camp Meeting. The texts we usually read for this service after the footwashing are found in *1 Corinthians* 11. However, we want to read these texts in the beginning of our service. Let us start from verse 23.

“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.” *1 Corinthians* 11:23–26.

Paul wrote these words to the Corinthian Church members because they had fallen away from their first love. Strife existed amongst the members, and they needed a stern warning. In this context Paul wrote this chapter. Paul also wrote about the institution of the Lord’s Supper in this chapter, and he gives what is probably the clearest definition and revelation of this institution of all the New Testament writers, even though he was not personally present at the first Lord’s Supper with Jesus. He received everything about this institution from the Lord, and we are privileged to have these words today for our admonition. We want to focus on why this was written. Let us read again from the same chapter, starting from verse 27.

“Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an

unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come.” *1 Corinthians* 11:27–34.

Of course, we know that Paul wrote to the Corinthians as babes in Christ, not able to partake of solid food. In this context the Corinthian church was a Laodicean church, and this is very clearly expressed in these words: “For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.”

During this camp, we have studied about our own world, foolish virgins, and about being a true seeker. We also studied about submitting to the Holy Spirit, and through this submitting to the schools of life. All this is summed up in the communion service, and even in the prayer for the sick, which we now want to study.

We need to understand the reasons for sickness. Why are there the weak and sick among us, and many sleep? The reason given in *1 Corinthians 11* is because we have failed to judge ourselves. If we were to judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, the Lord chastens us, that we may not condemn, and that we may not be condemned with the world. God gives us these things so that we wake up and think about our condition; He wants to send us a loving warning. God invites us to pray for the sick, but in praying for the sick, it is important that we judge ourselves. It is also important that we judge ourselves when we come together for the Lord’s Supper. It is a most solemn act to

pray for the sick, and a most solemn act to partake of the Lord's Supper. We should never take these things lightly; we need to understand the solemnity of these events. As the Israelites received a solemn warning before the Day of Atonement, so the Lord wants to give us a warning before the final atonement takes place for us. As the Israelites were warned by the sounding of trumpets, so God is giving a trumpet sound for us today, namely that we need to "judge ourselves". If we judge ourselves, we will not be judged.

Let us look at the reason why there are many sick among us and many sleep from another point of view. To do this, let us open *Isaiah* 58:1. "Cry aloud, spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet; tell My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." This trumpet sound, as we have studied, is equal to the First Angel's message. It is the solemn warning that God gives us in love, warning us to forsake our own world in order to be ready for the Judgment. It is the appeal to accept the school of life, to become a true seeker, and to fill our vessels with holy oil. "Cry aloud, spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet; tell My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins."

It is not the worldly people who receive this warning. Those warned are the virgins, those who ardently wait for the coming of the Bridegroom, who believe the truth, who advocate the truth, who join God's true people, and feel well or comfortable with them. "Yet they seek Me daily, and delight to know My ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and did not forsake the ordinance of their God. They ask of Me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching God." *Isaiah* 58:2. All this applies to the foolish virgins as we have seen. So we have the same warning and witness in the Old Testament.

In addition to these points, there is another aspect, which may be a bit of a surprise to

find as a characteristic of the foolish virgins. "'Why have we fasted,' they say, 'and You have not seen? Why have we afflicted our souls, and You take no notice?'" *Isaiah* 58:3. They, the foolish virgins, see their lack; they notice it, they realize it; in other words, they are not satisfied with their condition, and see their imperfections.

The foolish virgins notice that the Lord does not answer them, as Cain noticed that God did not answer him. "Why have we fasted," they say, "and You have not seen? Why have we afflicted ourselves and You take no notice?" The answer does come, and this we must look into very carefully. We must look at what the answer from the Lord to these questions is, as well as to the question of why there are so many sick amongst us.

"In fact, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and exploit all your laborers. Indeed you fast for strife and debate, and to strike with the fist of wickedness. You will not fast as you do this day, to make your voice heard on high. Is it a fast that I have chosen, a day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head like a bulrush, and to spread out sackcloth and ashes? Would you call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord?" *Isaiah* 58:3-5. It is just amazing how much the foolish virgins accomplish, but there is something in them that is lacking. "Is this not the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh?" *Isaiah* 58:6, 7.

Now we may say that we have done all this. In fact, you will find that the very ones who are the slowest in reform are the ones who are the first in opening their houses to people from the world. You may be a little bit surprised, but that's the way it is. The reason

why we open our houses to the worldly people is not for social contact, but in order to open our hearts to them. It is to open the truth to them, to open the unpopular truth of our times, the unpopular present truth. When I write unpopular, I do not mean that it is unpopular with those who are true seekers. We need to understand that it is unpopular with the majority of the people, but not with the true seekers. Our houses will be filled with true seekers if we are consistent in the acceptance of reform. In other words, to “open our houses” and to “open our houses” are two different things.

I can open my house to all kinds of worldly-minded people, and bid them come in, but nothing changes with them or with me. If reform is of little or no importance to me, and I continue to abuse my body, what can I expect from those who come into my home? I must seek to loose the bands of wickedness within so that God can use me to loose the bands of wickedness without. What is the band of wickedness? It is the resistance and fear of the judgments of God, of the righteousness of God, and of the reforms. The fear of these is the band and these are the bands of wickedness, which we place upon others because of our fear. We hinder them from accepting the truth. We are a stumbling block, and this is what *Isaiah* 58:6, 7 is referring to.

“Is this not the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry?” *Isaiah* 58:6, 7. What is the bread? It is the bread of truth. It is the bread of the whole truth, not just a part of it, not just that which people like to have, but the whole truth. It is like whole grain bread. Usually, white enriched bread is the preference, because whole grain bread is not palatable to the people. But whole grain bread is our bread. So likewise, the truth contains all the commandments of God. It

contains obedience and harmony with the law. Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and are there not hungry people seeking this bread? We can quickly fill our houses with all kinds of people if we give them white bread. But this is not what this text says. To share your bread, the true bread from heaven, with the hungry; that you bring to your house those that are poor and cast out.

“And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; When you see the naked that you cover him.” The righteousness of Christ is the only cover for spiritual nakedness, and those who are truly seeking will accept this cover. Every other cover is not a proper cover. “When you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh?” *Isaiah* 58:7.

“Then your light shall break forth like the morning, your healing shall spring forth speedily, and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and He will say, ‘Here I am.’ If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, if you extend your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then your light shall dawn in the darkness, and your darkness shall be as the noonday. The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and strengthen your bones; you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail. Those from among you shall build the old waste places; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; and you shall be called the Repairer of the Breach, the Restorer of Streets to Dwell In.” *Isaiah* 58:8–12.

There are many holes in the wall. These holes are all the neglect from the past and present generations, and we are called upon to restore the wall. We are called upon to do the very work that was neglected. Now when you read the *Testimonies*, when you read why our

forefathers went into Laodicea and compare this with today, you see the same fears creeping into our generation. This is the reason why we are called the repairers of the breach. Our forefathers have made a breach when they went into Laodicea. And shall we be the repairers? Of course, but only if we judge ourselves. “The Restorer of Streets to Dwell in.”

“If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the Lord; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the Lord has spoken.” *Isaiah* 58:13, 14. The Lord desires that we find pleasure in His ways, and this is why we want to search our hearts, to judge ourselves, so that we are in harmony with Him.

Let us now go to the book *The Ministry of Healing*, to the chapter entitled “Prayer for the Sick.” We want to understand the solemnity that surrounds praying for the sick and, as we partake of the Lord’s Supper, we want to see and come with the same solemnity.

“The Scripture says that ‘men ought always to pray, and not to faint’ (Luke 18:1).” *The Ministry of Healing*, 225.1. This Bible text is taken from the object lesson of the widow, her son, and the unjust judge, who was annoyed by her petitions. The widow persevered, seemingly pestering the judge. She persisted in her asking until the judge gave her what she requested from him. (See *Luke* 18:4, 5.) Jesus said that because of her importunity, she got what she wanted. Therefore, this is a lesson for us, which shows that we are to ask, praying always and not fainting in our petitions to God. In practical terms, when we see the sick among us, this is a challenge to pray; the sick are

invited to call the elders, and the elders are invited to seek out the sick in order to pray with them.

Let us continue to read from the same paragraph. “And if ever there is a time when they feel their need of prayer, it is when strength fails and life itself seems slipping from their grasp. Often those who are in health forget the wonderful mercies continued to them day by day, year after year, and they render no tribute of praise to God for His benefits. But when sickness comes, God is remembered. When human strength fails, men feel their need of divine help. And never does our merciful God turn from the soul that in sincerity seeks Him for help. He is our refuge in sickness as in health. ‘Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust.’ *Psalms* 103:13, 14. ‘Because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, [men] are afflicted. Their soul abhorreth all manner of food; and they draw near unto the gates of death.’ *Psalms* 107:17, 18, A.R.V. ‘Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saveth them out of their distresses. He sendeth His word, and healeth them, and delivereth them from their destructions.’ Verses 19, 20, R.V.”

God is just as willing to restore the sick to health now as when the Holy Spirit spoke these words through the psalmist. Likewise, Christ is the same compassionate physician now as He was during His earthly ministry. Would you have called Christ to tell Him about a sickness if you had lived back then? Yes, and we have the same opportunity today as those who called Him when He walked on this earth. Nothing, save unbelief, will hinder Christ from doing what He has promised to do. The Word of God makes this clear to us, and it would be illogical to think otherwise. It is true that He may work in a less spectacular manner than in previous times, but sometimes this is needed.

“God is just as willing to restore the sick to health now as when the Holy Spirit spoke these words through the psalmist. And Christ is the same compassionate physician now that He was during His earthly ministry. In Him there is healing balm for every disease, restoring power for every infirmity. His disciples in this time are to pray for the sick as verily as the disciples of old prayed. And recoveries will follow; for ‘the prayer of faith shall save the sick.’ We have the Holy Spirit’s power, the calm assurance of faith, that can claim God’s promise.” What can claim God’s promises? The Holy Spirit’s power, the calm assurance of faith. “The Lord’s promise, ‘They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover’ (*Mark 16:18*), is just as trustworthy now as in the days of the apostles. It presents the privilege of God’s children, and our faith should lay hold of all that it embraces. Christ’s servants are the channel of His working, and through them He desires to exercise His healing power. It is our work to present the sick and suffering to God in the arms of our faith. We should teach them to believe in the Great Healer.” *The Ministry of Healing*, 226.1.

The true right arm work is a work not only of physical relief, but also--and even more so--of spiritual healing. The mechanical part is a great part of this work, but even this is to be done in faith. The most important part is to present the sick and suffering to God in the arms of faith. We should teach them to believe in the Great Healer. Sister White was once asked, “Do you heal people?” Her reply was “No, no! Christ is the Healer.”

“The Saviour would have us encourage the sick, the hopeless, the afflicted, to take hold upon His strength. Through faith and prayer the sickroom may be transformed into a Bethel. In word and deed, physicians and nurses may say, so plainly that it cannot be misunderstood, ‘God is in this place’ to save, and not to destroy. Christ desires to manifest His presence in the sickroom, filling the

hearts of physicians and nurses with the sweetness of His love. If the life of the attendants upon the sick is such that Christ can go with them to the bedside of the patient, there will come to him the conviction that the compassionate Saviour is present, and this conviction will itself do much for the healing of both the soul and the body.

“And God hears prayer. Christ has said, ‘If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it.’ Again He says, ‘If any man serve Me, him will My Father honor.’ John 14:14; 12: 26. If we live according to His word, every precious promise He has given will be fulfilled to us. We are undeserving of His mercy, but as we give ourselves to Him, He receives us. He will work for and through those who follow Him.

“But only as we live in obedience to His word can we claim the fulfillment of His promises. The psalmist says, ‘If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.’ Psalm 66:18. If we render to Him only a partial, halfhearted obedience, His promises will not be fulfilled to us.

“In the word of God we have instruction relative to special prayer for the recovery of the sick. But the offering of such prayer is a most solemn act, and should not be entered upon without careful consideration. In many cases of prayer for the healing of the sick, that which is called faith is nothing less than presumption.

“Many persons bring disease upon themselves by their self-indulgence. They have not lived in accordance with natural law or the principles of strict purity. Others have disregarded the laws of health in their habits of eating and drinking, dressing, or working. Often some form of vice is the cause of feebleness of mind or body. Should these persons gain the blessing of health, many of them would continue to pursue the same course of heedless transgression of God’s natural and spiritual laws, reasoning that if God heals them in answer to prayer, they are

at liberty to continue their unhealthful practices and to indulge perverted appetite without restraint. If God were to work a miracle in restoring these persons to health, He would be encouraging sin." *The Ministry of Healing*, 226.2-227.3. This is, of course, what worldly medicine does; it only encourages sin. If God were to work through and with drugs, then of course we would encourage sin. This is the curse of worldly medicine.

"It is labor lost to teach people to look to God as a healer of their infirmities, unless they are taught also to lay aside unhealthful practices. In order to receive His blessing in answer to prayer, they must cease to do evil and learn to do well. Their surroundings must be sanitary, their habits of life correct. They must live in harmony with the law of God, both natural and spiritual." *The Ministry of Healing*, 227.4. We often excuse ourselves for sinning against the natural laws because we tend to think the spiritual laws are of greater importance. However, both the natural and spiritual are the law of God, and the transgression of one is as evil as the transgression of the other.

"To those who desire prayer for their restoration to health, it should be made plain that the violation of God's law, either natural or spiritual, is sin, and that in order for them to receive His blessing, sin must be confessed and forsaken.

"The Scripture bids us, 'Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.' James 5:16. To the one asking for prayer, let thoughts like these be presented: 'We cannot read the heart, or know the secrets of your life. These are known only to yourself and to God. If you repent of your sins, it is your duty to make confession of them.' Sin of a private character is to be confessed to Christ, the only mediator between God and man. For 'if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' 1 John 2:1. Every sin is an offense

against God and is to be confessed to Him through Christ. Every open sin should be as openly confessed. Wrong done to a fellow being should be made right with the one who has been offended. If any who are seeking health have been guilty of evil-speaking, if they have sowed discord in the home, the neighborhood, or the church, and have stirred up alienation and dissension, if by any wrong practice they have led others into sin, these things should be confessed before God and before those who have been offended. 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' 1 John 1:9.

"When wrongs have been righted, we may present the needs of the sick to the Lord in calm faith, as His Spirit may indicate." That means we must really submit to the Holy Spirit. Then comes the following: "He knows each individual by name, and cares for each as if there were not another upon the earth for whom He gave His beloved Son. Because God's love is so great and so unfailing, the sick should be encouraged to trust in Him and be cheerful. To be anxious about themselves tends to cause weakness and disease. If they will rise above depression and gloom, their prospect of recovery will be better; for 'the eye of the Lord is upon them' 'that hope in His mercy.' Psalm 33:18.

"In prayer for the sick it should be remembered that 'we know not what we should pray for as we ought.' Romans 8:26. We do not know whether the blessing we desire will be best or not. Therefore our prayers should include this thought: 'Lord, thou knowest every secret of the soul. Thou art acquainted with these persons. Jesus, their Advocate, gave His life for them. His love for them is greater than ours can possibly be. If, therefore, it is for Thy glory and the good of the afflicted ones, we ask, in the name of Jesus, that they may be restored to health. If it be not Thy will that they may be restored, we ask that Thy grace may comfort and Thy

presence sustain them in their sufferings.”
The Ministry of Healing, 228.1-229.2.

The Holy Spirit may direct us to pray differently than what is mentioned above, though principally the prayer will be the same. We are not to pray a formalistic prayer for the sick, a prayer we have learned by heart. But if there is no specific direction by the Spirit for healing, then we should pray as mentioned above, in spirit and in truth, for God knows what is best for the sick person. And it is not a denial of faith to pray that God knows what is best. Of course some may pray for healing or sustaining comfort for the sick one because they want to cover themselves, but in the honest-hearted person, this prayer will not weaken faith.

“God knows the end from the beginning. He is acquainted with the hearts of all men. He reads every secret of the soul. He knows whether those for whom prayer is offered would or would not be able to endure the trials that would come upon them should they live. He knows whether their lives would be a blessing or a curse to themselves and to the world. This is one reason why, while presenting our petitions with earnestness, we should say, ‘Nevertheless not my will, but Thine, be done.’ Luke 22:42. Jesus added these words of submission to the wisdom and will of God when in the Garden of Gethsemane He pleaded, ‘O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me.’ Matthew 26:39. And if they were appropriate for Him, the Son of God, how much more are they becoming on the lips of finite, erring mortals!

“The consistent course is to commit our desires to our all-wise heavenly Father, and then, in perfect confidence, trust all to Him. We know that God hears us if we ask according to His will. But to press our petitions without a submissive spirit is not right; our prayers must take the form, not of command, but of intercession.

“There are cases where God works decidedly by His divine power in the restoration of health. But not all the sick are healed. Many are laid away to sleep in Jesus. John on the Isle of Patmos was bidden to write: ‘Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.’ Revelation 14:13. From this we see that if persons are not raised to health, they should not on this account be judged as wanting in faith.

“We all desire immediate and direct answers to our prayers, and are tempted to become discouraged when the answer is delayed or comes in an unlooked-for form. But God is too wise and good to answer our prayers always at just the time and in just the manner we desire. He will do more and better for us than to accomplish all our wishes. And because we can trust His wisdom and love, we should not ask Him to concede to our will, but should seek to enter into and accomplish His purpose. Our desires and interests should be lost in His will. These experiences that test faith are for our benefit. By them it is made manifest whether our faith is true and sincere, resting on the word of God alone, or whether depending on circumstances, it is uncertain and changeable. Faith is strengthened by exercise. We must let patience have its perfect work, remembering that there are precious promises in the Scriptures for those who wait upon the Lord.

“Not all understand these principles. Many who seek the Lord’s healing mercy think that they must have a direct and immediate answer to their prayers or their faith is defective. For this reason, those who are weakened by disease need to be counseled wisely, that they may act with discretion. They should not disregard their duty to the friends who may survive them, or neglect to employ nature’s agencies for the restoration of health.

“Often there is danger of error here. Believing that they will be healed in answer to prayer, some fear to do anything that might seem to indicate a lack of faith. But they should not neglect to set their affairs in order as they would desire to do if they expected to be removed by death. Nor should they fear to utter words of encouragement or counsel which at the parting hour they wish to speak to their loved ones.

“Those who seek healing by prayer should not neglect to make use of the remedial agencies within their reach.” That is, God’s remedial agencies and not those of the world. “It is not a denial of faith to use such remedies as God has provided to alleviate pain and to aid nature in her work of restoration. It is no denial of faith to co-operate with God, and to place themselves in the condition most favorable to recovery. God has put it in our power to obtain a knowledge of the laws of life. This knowledge has been placed within our reach for use. We should employ every facility for the restoration of health, taking every advantage possible, working in harmony with natural laws. When we have prayed for the recovery of the sick, we can work with all the more energy, thanking God that we have the privilege of co-operating with Him, and asking His blessing on the means which He Himself has provided.” *The Ministry of Healing*, 230.1-231.3.

The next two paragraphs of the same book describe the experiences of Hezekiah and the blind man. Hezekiah was healed, not instantaneously, but by a poultice, or plaster, made from figs. Christ anointed the blind man’s eyes with clay in order to heal him. Therefore, when we have prayed for the recovery of the sick, whatever the outcome of the case, whatever methods God chooses, let us not lose faith in God’s promises and principles.

“When we have prayed for the recovery of the sick, whatever the outcome of the case, let us not lose faith in God. If we are called upon

to meet bereavement, let us accept the bitter cup, remembering that a Father’s hand holds it to our lips. But should health be restored, it should not be forgotten that the recipient of healing mercy is placed under renewed obligation to the Creator. When the ten lepers were cleansed, only one returned to find Jesus and give Him glory. Let none of us be like the unthinking nine, whose hearts were untouched by the mercy of God. ‘Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.’ James 1:17.” *The Ministry of Healing*, 233.2.

It is a great privilege to gather together for the communion service, and we have seen the solemnity of this service. Likewise, it is a great privilege to pray for the sick, and it is also a very solemn occasion. In addition to this, we have seen how important it is that one judge himself, to see if there is any sin that would hinder the inflowing of the Holy Spirit, which brings the healing and gifts of which we stand in need.

In the light of all this, we want to have a season of prayer for Sister Dorit. This will not be the first time we have prayed for her because of her illness. However, Jesus has bid us to pray without ceasing. Remember the words we read from *The Ministry of Healing*, 225.1: “The Scripture says that ‘men ought always to pray, and not to faint’ (Luke 18:1).” Therefore, it is not a problem, or a lack of faith, to pray again for her.

In the past, we have prayed for Dorit in small and large groups. In either case, we always emphasized the fact that any known sins must be confessed. Our dear sister has received a great spiritual cleansing. I do not need to mention these things in detail, but the main point is that she has received a definite cleansing in her life.

Those acquainted with Dorit have seen changes in her life since our prayers with her, and all are very grateful and thankful for what

God has done. Dorit's service is even more precious to us now than it was before! In addition to this, Dorit herself has expressed her definite faith in God as the Healer, and in this faith, she has discontinued the treatments given by the worldly physicians. Dorit has not run away from anything; she has fully accepted the school of Christ. In this, God has strengthened her with many promises that have given her assurance and faith.

I do not know what you think about this matter of healing, now that you are informed about it. Before I presented these thoughts to you this evening, some asked me what my thoughts on Dorit's situation are. My thought is simply that I want the Holy Spirit to specifically lead, especially in our prayer this afternoon.

However, since we desire to pray for her in the power of the Holy Spirit, we must seek to prepare ourselves spiritually. Now we will have the footwashing, of course, and this means we want to open up to one another, and freely ask, "Brother, what is lacking in me that hinders the Holy Spirit? Tell me what

I am still lacking." Let us judge ourselves to see if there is still pride, selfishness, fear of reform, or any other fears about our health or other things. We must put away those fears that deny Christ in our lives. Are we still clinging to medicines? Of course we can use natural remedies, but where is our trust? Do we have a godly fear of His law, or of the messages God gives? We must lean fully on God, trusting our all to Him. Let me emphasize again that our whole heart, mind and soul must be open to Jesus, and to one another, during the footwashing so that we can be filled with the Holy Spirit during the communion service, and thereafter pray for our sick sister. This is my desire.

And, of course, as we pray for Dorit, we need to also pray for other believers who are not present, remembering that we represent the whole world field. I do not know what your thoughts are, but my desire is for the Lord to fill us with the Holy Spirit, so that we can work and pray in calm assurance and faith as the disciples did when Jesus sent them out. Amen.

Study 28

We have considered our own world, the giving up of that world, and submission to the will of the Lord. We now want to understand God's plan for gospel ministry. We are ministers for the world field, therefore we need to understand God's plan for us. What is our work?

To begin, we want to consider the statement that "every believer is a minister." (See *The Review and Herald*, February 28, 1893 par. 6.) This is important to state because the previous understanding was that there was a certain class of believers who had a special endowment. These were the leaders; the others were only to be led. This idea is so prevalent even today that we tend to distinguish between those who work full-time in the cause and those who do not. Those who work full-time are considered the preachers. They are a special class, while those who do not work full-time are dependent upon them. These two classes are known as the clergy and the laity.

Are we laymen? Are we clergy? What is our ministry? What is our status? Where do we stand? These questions are often asked because our ideas about the two classes are so fixed. This "class thinking" is a problem more deeply imbedded in the human mind than we might think. It is in our minds even though we never use the terms clergy and laity, even though we never say that ministers are a special class and the ordinary believers are another class. Both classes, the clergy and the laity, have this "class thinking" in their minds.

Where does this class thinking come from? How did it begin? How did it develop in the early church? In the time of the early disciples, everyone was a minister in the gospel work. It never crossed their minds to think of whether they were full or part-time workers. That was neither their issue nor their question. Their only burden was to preach Christ. It was not important how they did it. This spirit filled all of the disciples so much

so that in Antioch they were called Christians because they constantly talked about Christ. Everybody knew they were Christians because they always talked about Christ. They were not ashamed to tell the people about Christ. This was the spirit of the early church.

How did the church lose that spirit? As the first generation died off, the gospel work was left in the hands of the so called "professionals." This was due to the fact that many people began to leave the wonderful, simple, gospel of Jesus Christ. Instead of speaking about the wonderful example of Jesus Christ, they began to develop theories that would be novel and startling, something to catch the attention of others. They wanted to be known as preachers, they wanted to give themselves a name. Because of this, they began to develop a lot of errors. These false teachers were everywhere. So it became necessary to know who the true teachers were. Because of this a class of "professionals" developed, who were recognized but were more orthodox, more settled, more sober in their thinking. This class stood in contrast to those self-sent workers. People began to depend upon the so called "professionals" more and more. They were the ones who led out in the church.

What brought about the next step to distinguish between the clergy and the laity? It came from the human mind and was comprised of part unholy ambition and part indolence. When people try to present something startling, something novel, something exciting, something that really draws the masses, this is unholy ambition. It is a desire to rule over others, to control and manage other people. On the other hand, there is indolence. People who are indolent tend to be lazy and slow. They tend to lean on others, to let others do their thinking. This is human nature. We see both elements in the nature of man. This leads to two classes, the clergy and the laity.

These two classes have existed in the church for thousands of years. Today, when you go to

the churches, it is normal to ask: Are you part of the clergy? Are you a Reverend? Are you a Holy Father? If so, you are treated with special respect. We must overcome this idea of “class thinking.”

Sister White describes this attitude of human nature. “In the kingdoms of the world, position meant self-aggrandizement. The people were supposed to exist for the benefit of the ruling classes. Influence, wealth, education, were so many means of gaining control of the masses for the use of the leaders. The higher classes were to think, decide, enjoy, and rule; the lower were to obey and serve. Religion, like all things else, was a matter of authority. The people were expected to believe and practice as their superiors directed. The right of man as man, to think and act for himself, was wholly unrecognized.” *The Desire of Ages*, 550.2. She is talking about those who have this unholy ambition. If she were talking about the indolent, she would say, “The people did not want to think for themselves; instead, they leaned upon others.” You can look at it from two angles, and both would be right.

We must see ourselves in both positions. We must see ourselves in the position of those who try to rule, and those who are too lazy. We must overcome both tendencies in our hearts. Most of all, we must overcome fear. Fear is the foundation and basis of “class thinking.”

When we look at this paragraph, we immediately fear that we belong to the class who is being ruled. We fear that we are expected to believe and practice what others command us to do. This fear is a great part of our problem. This is the “class thinking” that we must overcome. In God’s church, no human mind is to lead us. The mind of Christ is to lead us.

If somebody comes to us with an unholy ambition, there is nothing to fear because when our life is hid with Christ in God, nothing can happen to us. If we become lazy and lose our personal connection with Jesus, however, then

we need to fear that we are led astray. Then we will be led astray. Not because of another person, but because of ourselves.

This “class thinking” must be absolutely eradicated from our minds.

What is God’s way of preventing this development of “class thinking”? How do we overcome this terrible situation? There is more than one answer. We overcome by having a personal relationship with Christ and resting fully in Him.

What has God done for those who work full-time? Even in the early days, in the time of Paul, there were those who worked full-time and those who did not work full-time. But did Paul ever participate in this “class thinking”? Never! Did Jesus ever participate in this “class thinking”? Never! And yet, He was a full-time worker for at least three and a half years of His life. How did God prevent this thinking in their time? What is God’s plan today to prevent this?

We have these two categories: the laymen, who do not work full-time, and the full-time workers. In the beginning we made the statement that everybody is a gospel worker. Yet we will call the first class “laymen” for the sake of distinguishing between those who work full-time and those who do not work full-time. What is the advantage of being a layman? What is the advantage of being a full-time worker?

A layman devotes some of his time to spreading the message. He shows that Christians are not only consumers, but also producers. If our religion only consisted of people who leave ordinary work in order to do spiritual work, we would soon have to live off of the work of others. Others would have to harvest the fields, make the food, build the houses, and do everything for us to enjoy. Our only job would be to pray and to prepare ourselves for Christ’s coming. Such a church could not live. They would only be consumers, and not producers. The laymen

show that Christians are not only consumers, but they are also producers.

The laymen can reach classes that the full-time minister cannot reach. They spread the message through the manner and quality of their work. This is the right arm work, about which we also studied this week. The manner in which we work makes a great difference. Do we work slowly and sluggishly? Or do we work diligently and efficiently? This gives a tremendous witness of our religion to the world.

During our bread-baking course we read a statement from Sister White, in which she questions the religion of those who do not know how to cook. (See: *Child Guidance*, 374.2). Those who are only consumers but not producers do not have a religion that is worth much. For this reason, the laymen show that they know how to handle everyday life. This is the reason why a well-ordered family is the best testimony for the gospel.

Let us summarize the great advantage of a layman. I wish that we were all laymen from this standpoint. There are churches in existence that only have laymen. They make sacrifices to spread the message. "Paul set an example against the sentiment, then gaining influence in the church, that the gospel could be proclaimed successfully only by those who were wholly freed from the necessity of physical toil." Can you see how this thought developed in the Christian church? Paul showed by his own example that this thought was not right. "He illustrated in a practical way what might be done by consecrated laymen in many places where the people were unacquainted with the truths of the gospel. His course inspired many humble toilers with a desire to do what they could to advance the cause of God, while at the same time they supported themselves in daily labor. Aquila and Priscilla were not called to give their whole time to the ministry of the gospel, yet these humble laborers were used by God to show Apollos the way of truth more perfectly." *The Acts of the Apostles*, 355.1.

This shows us that Paul was an example of somebody who was a fully recognized worker, and yet he worked with his own hands to support himself. Thus we could say that laymen are self-supporting workers.

At the same time, there are full-time workers. What is the advantage of being a full-time worker? They can be fully or partly self-supporting. They earn their own keep. They are an example by working with their own hands. Through their physical labor they reach other classes. They spread the message through the manner and quality of their work.

Can you see that there are really no differences between a layman and a full-time worker? Maybe there is a difference in the amount of time somebody spends doing physical work. But in principle there is no difference. Both should do everything to show that they are not just consumers, but also producers. They are both an example in that they work with their own hands. Both of them reach other classes through their physical labor. And both of them spread the message through the manner and quality of their work.

When Christ made a piece of furniture, everybody would have known that it was His work. His trademark was quality. This accomplishment was an example for us, that we may become like Him.

It makes no difference whether we are laymen or full-time workers. Our work must be quality. It may not be perfect, but we are not to give up or become discouraged because of this. Always remember that we can reach the same accomplishment as Christ. We strive for perfection in the manner and quality of our work.

Should a minister be free to work full-time? There are arguments on both sides. Some say that a minister should be free to work full-time. Others say no, he should also support himself, at least part-time. I want to bring up some good arguments as to why a minister should be free from daily labor.

Very often faith demands the refusal of ordinary work. For example, when Jesus called His disciples to follow Him, He called them away from their fishing nets. When they saw that Christ's ministry was becoming weak, they went back to their fishing. That was a lack of faith. Sometimes faith demands that we give up our ordinary work.

We could say that souls are being lost because a preacher is working instead of preaching. Instead of proclaiming the message to people, he goes to an ordinary job. Meanwhile, souls are lost. The minister cannot concentrate on his appointed work and is always being diverted. He needs to concentrate on his work. People do not look at him as a minister anymore if he does too much ordinary work. He must show that the spiritual is more important than the physical. He is in danger of overwork. If he works at an ordinary job, he will be overworked.

Finally, the minister has a right to compensation. The scriptures say so. "My defense to those who examine me is this: Do we have no right to eat and drink? Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working? Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?" *1 Corinthians 9:3-7*. This is a strong argument for a minister to be free to preach.

I want to bring up the other side, the other list of arguments. Faith demands that a minister should support himself. After all, Paul supported himself. Souls can be won through mingling with them in their daily work. I see this as a contrast.

Faith can demand that we refuse ordinary work, or faith can demand that we support ourselves. It depends on where God is calling us. Souls are lost because we do not preach. But souls are lost because we do not mingle

with them. Here are some different arguments about this: he cannot concentrate on his work, but work can become the necessary balance to prevent him from being one-sided. People do not look upon him as a minister, but he can reach a class of people he could not reach otherwise. He must show that the spiritual is more important, but he must also show that there is nobility and blessing in ordinary work. He is in danger of overwork, but his health demands a balance. The minister has a right to compensation, but he also has the privilege of being an example to others. There is an answer to each one of these points.

What I want to stress is that it is not a sin for a minister to work with his hands. It is really a blessing.

I want to show you, from history, what God's plan is. How did God work in the past? Let us look at some examples. The first is the schools of the prophets. They were founded by Samuel. Elijah and Elisha carried forward this work. In these schools, the young people were trained for spiritual work. They were ministers. Today they would be called the ministerial schools. These colleges today call the young people away from ordinary work and give them spiritual work. What did the schools of prophets do?

"Further provision was made for the instruction of the young, by the establishment of the schools of the prophets. If a youth desired to search deeper into the truths of the word of God and to seek wisdom from above that he might become a teacher in Israel, these schools were open to him. The schools of the prophets were founded by Samuel to serve as a barrier against the widespread corruption, to provide for the moral and spiritual welfare of the youth, and to promote the future prosperity of the nation by furnishing it with men qualified to act in the fear of God as leaders and counselors. In the accomplishment of this object Samuel gathered companies of young men who were pious, intelligent, and studious. These were

called the sons of the prophets.... The pupils of these schools sustained themselves by their own labor in tilling the soil or in some mechanical employment.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 593.1, 3.

They did not live on the gifts and offerings of others. They sustained themselves. That was a part of their schooling, which is a very important point. Does this tell us something? Certainly! “In Israel this was not thought strange or degrading; indeed, it was regarded a crime to allow children to grow up in ignorance of useful labor. By the command of God every child was taught some trade, even though he was to be educated for holy office. Many of the religious teachers supported themselves by manual labor. Even so late as the time of the apostles, Paul and Aquila were no less honored because they earned a livelihood by their trade of tentmaking.” *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 593.3.

Today this “class thinking” is even in the world, not only in the church. What do parents tell their children today? “I want you to sit behind a desk so you can have a good job one day. I do not want you to have a job where you have to sweat and get dirty every day.” That is what everybody wants. Ordinary work is considered degrading. But that was not the case during the times of the Israelites. We need to understand that this work is ennobling and not degrading. It was considered a crime if a young person did not know how to work.

Let us study the example of Elisha. What profession did he pursue before he was called by Elijah? He was a farmer. That is an interesting profession. Let us look at this for a moment. “As Elisha accompanied the prophet on his round of service from school to school, his faith and resolution were once more tested. At Gilgal, and again at Bethel and Jericho, he was invited by the prophet to turn back. ‘Tarry here, I pray thee,’ Elijah said; ‘for the Lord hath sent me to Bethel.’ But in his early labor of guiding the plow, Elisha

had learned not to fail or to become discouraged.” *Prophets and Kings*, 225.2. Where had Elisha learned this? He learned it in his early labor in guiding the plow. If you begin plowing a furrow and stop in the middle of the row, it is very hard to start again. If you keep going, it is much easier. This is what Elisha learned. He learned not to stop, not to look back, but to finish his job. Now he applied this to his spiritual work. His work as a farmer had really taught him character.

Remember the time when Elisha asked King Joash to beat his arrows on the ground? The king smote the ground three times and then stopped. (See *2 Kings* 13:15-19). Elisha basically asked: “Why did you stop so soon? You took the plow, you began the work, but then you stopped. You did not finish the job.” He understood from his own life what it meant to carry a work through until the end. He learned this through his toil and labor.

Let us look at an example of the Jews. “Among the Jews physical toil was not thought strange or degrading. Through Moses the Hebrews had been instructed to train their children to industrious habits, and it was regarded as a sin to allow the youth to grow up in ignorance of physical labor. Even though a child was to be educated for holy office, a knowledge of practical life was thought essential.” *The Acts of the Apostles*, 346.2.

Let us look at Paul very briefly. He labored night and day. “Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God.” *1 Thessalonians* 2:6-9.

If we think our labor is too hard, we should think of Paul. He labored night and day in order to win souls. He was an example to idle people in Thessalonica. That is where he really started his work. There were some people who did not want to work. "Nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us. For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread." *2 Thessalonians* 3:8-12. It was very important for Paul to be an example here.

It was also important for Paul to avoid false reports. The city of Corinth, which was located close to the sea, was a flourishing business city. The people of Corinth considered their businesses to be more important than anything else, regardless of whether they used honest or dishonest means. Naturally, there were many clever men who knew how to get money from others. They did this by witchcraft, or by making different claims. And Paul knew this. Therefore, he showed the people that he did not come to them to get their money. He came to bring the gospel.

It was for this reason that Paul labored among them, to dispel their wrong ideas. He asks: "Did I commit sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge? I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you. And when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what I have lacked the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in

everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep myself. As the truth of Christ is in me, no one shall stop me from this boasting in the regions of Achaia. Why? Because I do not love you? God knows! But what I do, I will also continue to do, that I may cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the things of which they boast." *2 Corinthians* 11:7-12.

In order to save people, Paul would work with his own hands. In that way he preached an important principle. This principle is found in *Acts*. "I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" *Acts* 20:33-35. Paul preached this by his own example.

Sometimes Paul received compensation. While he was in Thessalonica, he received aid from the Philippian church. (See *Philippians* 4:16). He commends them for sending aid for his personal necessities while he was in Thessalonica. This shows that he was a part-time worker. Sometimes he would work with his own hands and other times he received aid in order to be able to live. This was his actual condition.

Let us consider the Waldenses. They were the people of God in the Middle Ages. They lived in the mountains. There is a lot that we can learn from them. We could spend a whole study on that subject alone. In *The Great Controversy* we read: "The Waldenses had sacrificed their worldly prosperity for the truth's sake, and with persevering patience they toiled for their bread. Every spot of tillable land among the mountains was carefully improved; the valleys and the less fertile hillsides were made to yield their increase. Economy and severe self-denial

formed a part of the education which the children received as their only legacy. They were taught that God designs life to be a discipline, and that their wants could be supplied only by personal labor, by forethought, care, and faith. The process was laborious and wearisome, but it was wholesome, just what man needs in his fallen state, the school which God has provided for his training and development. While the youth were inured to toil and hardship, the culture of the intellect was not neglected. They were taught that all their powers belonged to God, and that all were to be improved and developed for His service." *The Great Controversy*, 67.3.

The Waldenses did a very good work. Their children were sent to schools in the valleys. There they influenced the whole school for the better. When the teachers wanted to find out where the influence came from, they could not, because the children were so tactful. What was the reason for all this? They learned from childhood on to make full use of even the smallest piece of land. They learned to work hard in order to survive. This labor taught them to be disciplined, self possessed, and to know when to be quiet. That was very important. This self possession was life-saving.

We can become like them. We must become like them if we want to do the same work.

Christ Himself only preached for three and a half years. For the rest of his life He worked as a carpenter. Was Christ not preaching the message then? Did he only preach for three and a half years? No! And again, No! Christ's whole life was spent preaching the message. It is not an argument to say that He spent the last three and a half years preaching the message.

Christ connected ordinary work with spiritual work. This is something that we need to do too. "Jesus carried into His labor cheerfulness and tact. It requires much patience and spirituality to bring Bible

religion into the home life and into the workshop, to bear the strain of worldly business, and yet keep the eye single to the glory of God. This is where Christ was a helper. He was never so full of worldly care as to have no time or thought for heavenly things." Very often young people complain that they have so much work that they no longer have time for spiritual things. But Christ disproved this. "Often He expressed the gladness of His heart by singing psalms and heavenly songs. Often the dwellers in Nazareth heard His voice raised in praise and thanksgiving to God. He held communion with heaven in song; and as His companions complained of weariness from labor, they were cheered by the sweet melody from His lips. His praise seemed to banish the evil angels, and, like incense, fill the place with fragrance. The minds of His hearers were carried away from their earthly exile, to the heavenly home." *The Desire of Ages*, 73.3. That is preaching the message. That is God's plan for ministry. Until we have experienced this, we are not fit to preach the message to the world. We can have a thousand full-time ministers, but it will not work. We have to preach the message where we are. We have to preach it by the quality of our work, by the manner in which we work, and by allowing Jesus to be our helper in this area.

Let us make a summary of why the worker should labor with his own hands. First of all, to avoid the bad reputation that he is only living from the profit of others. Second, to be an example to others. Third, to avoid "class thinking." By this the minister shows that he is an ordinary person like everyone else. Fourth, for his own spiritual, physical, and mental health. He needs to be balanced spiritually, mentally, and physically. To sit behind a desk all day is not healthy. Fifth, in order to be a producer and not only a consumer.

Let us look at a statement from *The Acts of the Apostles*. "Work is a blessing, not a curse. A spirit of indolence destroys godliness and

grieves the Spirit of God. A stagnant pool is offensive, but a pure, flowing stream spreads health and gladness over the land. Paul knew that those who neglect physical work soon become enfeebled. He desired to teach young ministers that by working with their hands, by bringing into exercise their muscles and sinews, they would become strong to endure the toils and privations that awaited them in the gospel field. And he realized that his own teachings would lack vitality and force if he did not keep all parts of the system properly exercised.

“The indolent forfeit the invaluable experience gained by a faithful performance of the common duties of life. Not a few, but thousands of human beings exist only to consume the benefits which God in His mercy bestows upon them. They forget to bring to the Lord gratitude offerings for the riches He has entrusted to them. They forget that by trading wisely on the talents lent them they are to be producers as well as consumers. If they comprehended the work that the Lord desires them to do as His helping hand they would not shun responsibility.” *The Acts of the Apostles*, 352.3–353.1.

The sixth reason for ministers to work with their own hands is in order to reach men. We cannot reach men unless we work with our own hands and mingle with them. “Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good.” You can only mingle with them if you work with them. That is where they spend most of their time. “He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me.’

“There is need of coming close to the people by personal effort. If less time were given to sermonizing, and more time were spent in personal ministry, greater results would be seen. The poor are to be relieved, the sick cared for, the sorrowing and the bereaved comforted, the ignorant instructed,

the inexperienced counseled. We are to weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice. Accompanied by the power of persuasion, the power of prayer, the power of the love of God, this work will not, cannot, be without fruit.” *The Ministry of Healing*, 143.3, 4. Here we clearly see that we must mingle with the people.

The final reason is that in the last days, this is the only way to reach men. “I wish to tell you that soon there will be no work done in ministerial lines but medical missionary work.” I take the freedom to interpret medical missionary work here as all of the right arm work, including bread-baking and farming. I wish to tell you that soon there will be no work done in ministerial lines but in the right arm work. “The work of a minister is to minister. Our ministers are to work on the gospel plan of ministering. . . .” *Counsels on Health*, 533.1.

Do you see that Sister White has a different concept of what a minister is than most people have today? Ministry is not to stand at the pulpit and preach to the people. A minister is to minister. He is to personally mingle with the people, and lay hands on the work. We are to actually touch the work. That is the work that the Lord has called us to do. In the last days there will be no work done except along these lines. What a warning this is. If we do not know how to work, how can we ever preach the message? God cannot use us as a people, except as we lay hands on the work.

In closing, I wish to answer the question: When is it sinful to labor? Some people say that it is sinful to leave your work and become a laborer.

We may be quite happy to take up an ordinary business. But when we labor in “our own world,” it becomes sinful, and we have to cut it off. When faith in God’s cause is weakened, it is sinful. For example, the disciples’ faith in Christ’s ministry was shaken, and this led them to turn back to their secular work. It is also sinful when we work

in order to run away from God's call, like Jonah. He said: "I do not want to go. I would rather do secular work." Another example is when I want to prove myself, saying, "Look at what I can do." That is pride. When the work is dishonorable, such as liquor trafficking, or things of that nature, then it is also clearly sinful. And if I work on a task that the Lord has not called me to do, it is also sinful.

Do not make this an excuse for not performing the work that lies nearest, for not doing physical labor. Some people do not understand how to cooperate with God. They say: "God must give me instruction." They do not even get out of bed, or do anything. We have to cooperate with God. There is never the possibility that we will do too much. There is the possibility that we will do too

little, or that we will do the wrong work. It will always require our whole nature to cooperate with God. We will close here.

I pray that we can become workers, like Paul, who know how to lay hands on the work and how to support ourselves. In this way many branches of our work will be self-supporting. It will not drain the treasury so much as to limit its usefulness. As we learn to work according to the gospel plan that we have learned of now, the Lord will open doors that we have not thought possible before, and the Holy Spirit will accomplish our work. I pray that we will all go home and diligently look for this plan. How can we best support it? How can our work be done most efficiently? It is according to this plan that we must work. Amen.

