

Melchizedek

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1. Introduction

GOD has a far more wonderful purpose for the human family than merely saving us from sin, and endowing us with eternal life, marvelous as these blessings are. And He has a grander objective still than appointing the redeemed to fill the vacancies left after the defection of Lucifer and his followers.

He intends that every soul rescued from the pit of sin shall become a messenger of the gospel for all the coming, everlasting existence of the kingdom. What He purposes shall most certainly be established.

To understand the fulfillment of God's purpose to communicate all of His blessings through many messengers, we need to be thoroughly conversant with the Melchizedek royal priesthood, and the relation to it of the priesthood of Levi. We need to know who Melchizedek was, where he came from, what his qualifications were, and how he and his ministry are a revelation of what the Almighty has in store for the redeemed.

Historical Background

Melchizedek first appears in history when he went out to meet the victorious Abram returning from his battle against the confederacy of Canaanite kings.

Genesis 14

¹⁸ Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High.

¹⁹ And he blessed him and said: Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth;

²⁰ And blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand. And he gave him a tithe of all.

Of this incident it is further written:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 136:

Another who came out to welcome the victorious patriarch was Melchizedek, king of Salem, who brought forth bread and wine for the refreshment of his army. As "priest of God Most High," he pronounced a blessing upon Abraham, and gave thanks

to the Lord, who had wrought so great a deliverance by His servant. And Abraham “gave him a tithing of all.”

There is no mention of the birth of this man, nor is there any direct statement revealing where he came from or where he went. Rather we are informed that he was...

Hebrews 7

³ ...without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.

Who Is He?

There has been much speculation as to the identity of this royal priest. We need to examine one or two of the more important possibilities in order to eliminate false leads. Was he Jesus Christ? The following statements verify that he was not:

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 1, p. 1092-1093:

God has never left himself without witness on the earth. At one time Melchizedek represented the Lord Jesus Christ in person, to reveal the truth of heaven, and perpetuate the law of God.

If he was the *representative* of Christ, then he could not have been Christ himself.

The Review and Herald, Feb. 18, 1890:

It was Christ who spoke through Melchizedek, the priest of the most high God. Melchizedek was not Christ, but he was the voice of God in the world, the representative of the Father.

Clearly then, Melchizedek was not Christ. Yet despite the unequivocal clarity of the statements just quoted to the effect that Christ was not Melchizedek, the disciples of Christ, speaking under divine inspiration, declared that Christ was indeed this wonderful man.

Their pronouncement was made toward the end of Christ's triumphal journey into Jerusalem in response to the question, “Who is this?” put to the disciples by the thoroughly agitated Pharisees.

The Desire of Ages, p. 578:

As the procession is about to descend the Mount of Olives, it is intercepted by the rulers. They inquire the cause of the tumultuous rejoicing. As they question, "Who is this?" the disciples, filled with the spirit of inspiration, answer this question. In eloquent strains they repeat the prophecies concerning Christ:

Adam will tell you, It is the Seed of the woman that shall bruise the serpent's head.

Ask Abraham, he will tell you, It is...

Genesis 14

¹⁸ Melchizedek King of Salem,

Hebrews 7

² ...King of Peace.

So, we are informed in one place that Christ was not Melchizedek, and in another place that He was. Can this seeming contradiction be resolved by arguing that the disciples were carried away with great excitement, and that in the intensity of the moment they made these extravagant but unreal claims for their beloved Master?

Such a solution to the problem must be summarily rejected in the light of the truth that those devoted men were filled, when they spoke, with the Spirit of inspiration. They were but the instruments through whom the Holy Spirit spoke. Therefore, what they said is the truth—Christ was Melchizedek, but He was not the Melchizedek who met Abram.

That is the key to the problem. There are two Melchizedeks: the copy and the original. The former appeared on earth in the days of Abram; and the latter is Jesus Christ.

Not the Holy Spirit

There is another theory that the Holy Spirit was Melchizedek. But when we study the qualifications needed to be a royal priest, we will find that the Holy Spirit does not possess all the specifications needed. It is impossible for Him to be King of Salem.

Nevertheless, there appears in circulation from time to time a printed report purportedly written by a highly respected advent

pioneer who is represented as testifying that Ellen White said in his hearing that the Holy Spirit was Melchizedek. This is quite an impressive document for, if the prophet said that, it must be true. We would recoil from labeling as false the witness of a venerated advent pioneer, for he was a man of great integrity.

Nevertheless the facts are that the prophet never said that, nor did the advent pioneer report her as saying that. I can say this with the utmost confidence, for, if the report were true, then she spoke in direct contradiction to the Holy Spirit when He spoke through the apostle Paul. This will be seen with convincing clarity when, in the next chapter we study the qualifications for the Melchizedek royal priesthood and see how the Holy Spirit could not possibly have qualified.

The Holy Spirit has given us clear instructions as to how to relate to reports of what the Lord is supposed to have said through His messenger. We are to give no credence to them whatsoever. Here is the counsel:

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 696:

And now to all who have a desire for truth I would say: Do not give credence to unauthenticated reports as to what Sister White has done or said or written. If you desire to know what the Lord has revealed through her, read her published works. Are there any points of interest concerning which she has not written, do not eagerly catch up and report rumors as to what she has said.

This is the final paragraph of a chapter entitled: “Unfounded Reports,” in which an explanation is given of how even honest people can, through carelessness, misreport what Sister White said or did.

Other souls, not so honest, allowed prejudice to color their reception of statements made by the prophet, and put into circulation representations of what she said which were decidedly misleading. In the chapter which begins on page 693, specific examples of these mischievous activities are given. It is highly recommended that the entire chapter be read.¹

¹ *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 692-696. Quoted in the *Appendix*.

If, when you read it, you take the instruction to heart, you will never be in danger of being misled by distorted reports of what the prophet actually said, nor will you give any credence to the claim that Sister White said that Melchizedek was the Holy Spirit.

Not Shem

Now, before we let the Scriptures teach us who Melchizedek really was, we will dismiss one last theory about his identity. Some say that he was Shem, the righteous son of Noah, who lived from before the flood to within twenty-five years of Abraham's death.

But Shem had both a father and a mother which Melchizedek had not. Furthermore, the royal priest, unlike Shem, had no end of life. Shem is not the wonderful person who received tithes from Abram, for it was another who filled that role. In the next chapter his identity will be established beyond all question.

It needs to be emphasized that in our search to find who this man was, we are not seeking to satisfy our curiosity, for to do that is nothing other than vanity. The ministry of the King of Salem, the Priest of the Most High God, contains rich stores of truth essential to the understanding of those who live in these last days. It is a study which will strengthen our faith, and enrich our experience. It is for these reasons we ask the question,

“Who is he?”

2. Qualifications of Melchizedek

ESSENTIAL to the discovery of Melchizedek's identity, and the understanding of his station and work, is a knowledge of the qualifications which had to be possessed by this man in order for him to fill his divinely appointed position. These are listed in:

- *Hebrews* 5:1-14;
- *Hebrews* 6:1-20;
- *Hebrews* 7:1-28.

Let us examine each specification in its turn, ever bearing in mind that what is found in the type, is a revelation of what is true of the antitype.

A Man

The first stipulation required that he be a man taken from among men.

Hebrews 5

¹ For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.

This is a highly significant expression of the divine purpose which eliminates any possibility of Melchizedek's being the Holy Spirit, or even an angel. He was a man and, to fulfill the divine purpose, could only be a man. At the same time, he could not be just any man, but had to be a righteous man, which he was and for which reason he was...

Hebrews 7

² ...King of righteousness, and...King of peace.

But why could he not be the Holy Spirit, or even a mighty angel? Why must he be a holy man? The answers to these questions are very important, and are found in the message on the Melchizedek order.

A Heavenly Priest

In the days of Abraham, the Melchizedek who met the patriarch on his return from the battle with the heathen kings, was a member of the priestly order of which Christ is the High Priest. Of our Saviour in that position it is written:

Hebrews 7

¹⁷ You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Therefore, in the time when Abraham was upon earth, there were two members of the order:

- Christ the High Priest who ministered in heaven, and
- Melchizedek whom we see ministering to Abraham on the earth.

But, you may say, this is impossible, for, in Abraham's day, Christ was not yet a man. That is true, but, it is also true that, while by Paul's time He had to be both God and fallen man and was, in Abraham's day He needed to be no more than God and angel, which He then was. In short, in both periods He was both Creator and creature in one person, as He had to be from eternity in the past to eternity in the future, in order to provide the means whereby every creature could find access to God, and He to them.

This priestly ministry became much more needful when man sinned, an eventuality which required the Melchizedek High Priest, Jehovah Immanuel, to step down from being God tabernacled in angel form, to being God tabernacled in sinful, mortal humanity.

Every member of that sacred order is a messenger, not at the earthly level, like Moses; but at the heavenly level where Christ is the leading messenger. Up there in heaven, every king-priest after the order of Melchizedek is a messenger and every messenger is a king and a priest of the Melchizedek order. This is why we are being introduced to the study of the order of Melchizedek. It is so that our understanding of what it means to be a messenger for God can be deepened and enlarged.

The membership of the order has been increased every time one or more of the redeemed are taken to heaven, the latest and largest single expansion being at Christ's ascension. These with those who went before them are brought to view ministering as kings and priests in the heavenly sanctuary subsequent to Christ's supreme sacrifice on Calvary. This revelation of them, their qualifications, and ministry, is recorded in *Revelation* 4:1-11, and *Revelation* 5:1-14, where they are presented as twenty-four elders and as four living creatures.

Two Natures

In order for them to be messengers at the heavenly level, they have to have two natures:

- the nature of the Creator, and
- the nature of the creature.

The fact that the ascended saints who are represented as the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures, are so qualified, is clearly brought to view in these two chapters in the *Revelation*, where, on the one hand they are seen to have the nature of God, while on the other they have the nature of a creature.

To be in possession of God's nature, does *not* mean that we attain to Deity, becoming God as He is. This is a mystery we shall better understand when we come to heaven. Those who have Christ's divine life begotten in them will have the unlimited capacity to enter right into the Divine Presence, and, sitting in the throne of the Father and the Son, will reign with Christ and God forevermore.

Let us first examine the evidence found in *Revelation* 4 and 5, that they are created beings—human tabernacles for the indwelling of the divine life and nature. What else could they be other than created beings when they are presented as elders and living creatures? That they are human elders and human living creatures is confirmed by their own testimony:

Revelation 5

⁹ 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.

There is only one category of created being who has been redeemed, that is, bought back from the ownership of sin and death, and they are members of the human family. So, these Scriptures make it very plain that the elders and living creatures do have the qualification of being men called from among men.

But what of the other necessary qualification: possession of the begotten life of the Creator? Does the Scripture under consideration reveal that they also possess this? It certainly does! In this reference we are informed that the elders were seated on twenty-four thrones surrounding the throne of the Omnipotent One. Each was dressed with a white robe, and wore the symbol of kingship: a golden crown.

Revelation 4

⁴ Around the throne [of God] 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.

Of the redeemed represented by the four living creatures, it is written:

⁶ Before the throne [of God] there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne [of God], and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind.

To sit upon the thrones surrounding God's throne, and to be in the midst of God's throne, requires capacities so special that no angel is in possession of them. We have no concept today of how awesome a place the midst of God's throne is, even though the prophets have attempted to describe for us what they had been shown of it.²

² See the following revelations of that incredible seat of authority and power: *Isaiah* 6:1-5; *Ezekiel* 1:1-28; *Daniel* 7:9-10.

These references make it plain that a fiery flood of immense proportions is continually pouring forth in every direction from the Almighty upon His throne to sustain the entire universe moment by moment. Were we able to assess the energy requirements needed to uphold the universe, we would have some idea of the infinitude of power which marks the Source from which comes that outflow of energy. Then we would know that only those with exceedingly high qualifications could abide in the midst of the throne, in the very heart of that fiery energy center.

There is one class of people and one only whose members are able to enter right into the midst of that fiery throne, and they are those whose existence began as created beings—Adam and Eve and their begotten children—and who have been subsequently endowed with the begotten life of God in the meantime.

While in their original condition, they, like all the created intelligences, were totally unable to stand in that fiery stream. When they sinned, they were even less able as was demonstrated by Nadab and Abihu, the two priest-sons of Aaron who attempted to enter God's presence in the earthly sanctuary, unprotected by the stipulated incense. They were both consumed.³

But to the repentant among the human family, Christ has not only given His life for them; but has given His life to them. That life is completely able to share the Father's throne. It has the capacity, even though tabernacled in sinless human flesh and blood, of entering into the actual presence of God without being consumed. Thus, in *Revelation* 4 and 5, there is revealed a large company of redeemed souls who enter right into the presence of God without even Christ in between.

Some may feel that this is saying too much, but, be assured, I would not be saying it without incontrovertible evidence to this effect. Those who have read and understand our booklet, *The Living and the Dead*, will have no difficulty with this assertion. They will know that the redeemed in whom is the begotten life of

³ See *Leviticus* 10:1-11.

Christ, who are joint heirs with Him, and who share His throne with Him, will have unrestricted access to the Almighty without passing through Christ. I strongly recommend that you restudy that booklet, with special attention being given to the chapter: "A Superior Pedigree." A very brief summary of the evidence there presented is here given.

That the redeemed will be able to come before God without having to pass through Christ is revealed in the Old Testament sanctuary. There we find that Aaron did not minister alone in the sanctuary. The work was done by the high priest and his sons. The sons did not approach the divine Presence in the sanctuary through their father, except during the service of final atonement, but themselves did so directly. Aaron could not be continually on duty. There were times when he had to be away. On such occasions, one or more of his sons ministered in the courtyard and in the holy place without the high priest even being present.

That which was true in the type is also true in the antitype. In the heavenly sanctuary, Christ does not minister alone as He once did. The time came when He was joined by a son: Enoch by name. Later came Moses, then Elijah, and then the multitude of captives who ascended with Christ after His resurrection. All of these went to heaven to minister as sons of the High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary where John saw them offering up the prayers of the saints, as it is written:

Revelation 5

⁸ 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.

Just as Aaron could not minister continually in the sanctuary, neither could Christ. There were occasions when His presence was required elsewhere such as His visits to Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Israel, Joshua, and others. While He was absent, He could not be performing the work of a priest in the sanctuary. Never was this more true than when he was but a tiny embryo in His

mother's womb, was walking the earth confined to mortal, sinful flesh, or was lying dead in Joseph's tomb.

The solution was for Him to leave three sons, Enoch, Moses, and Elijah, three members of the order of Melchizedek, in the temple above to receive the prayers of the penitent believers, mingle them with the incense of Christ's own righteousness, and present them in spotless perfection to the Father, while He himself was absent elsewhere. These sons of the High Priest did not do this through any merit in themselves, or by their own blood. It was by the blood of Christ and His righteousness that they were able to minister before the Eternal Father. It was also Christ's merits which they administered on the sinner's behalf before the Father into whose presence they had the same access as Christ when He was in heaven.

For these sons of the High Priest to be able to perform this essential ministry during His absence, they had to be able to fully enter directly into the presence of God without even Christ in between. And that is what they did and are still doing, and will continue to do throughout all eternity. What a wonderful future awaits the sons of God who today are preparing to be ministers in the heavenly sanctuary. Heaven will surely be well worth striving for.

There is a statement which seems to contradict this. It reads:

The Desire of Ages, p. 331:

Heaven is a ceaseless approaching to God through Christ.

It would appear that I am saying that heaven is a ceaseless approaching unto God through Christ *and* the redeemed. In a certain sense this is true. Even now, souls are being led to God through the ministry of true Christians and on from them through Christ to God. But, in the coming time when the saints are established in their eternal home and will be approaching God without Christ being physically between, their coming directly into God's presence will still be through Christ. It will be through His sacrifice, His merits, His victory, His righteousness, and His life that they will be doing this. Thus it will be eternally true that:

“Heaven is a ceaseless approaching to God through Christ.”

This capacity on the part of the redeemed children of God to reach all the way up to God and all the way down to the created sons of God, also qualifies them to be messengers.

Two Levels of Messengership

There are two levels of messengership: the heavenly and the earthly. In the days of Moses, Christ and Enoch were the messengers at the heavenly level. It has just been demonstrated that, once the immortalized, glorified, and translated Enoch had been taken to heaven, Christ did not stand between him and the Father, for it was not necessary. This does not diminish the glory of Christ’s mediation, but rather is a revelation of the heights to which His ministry will elevate the human family.

Our salvation depends upon Christ’s having had to be absent from heaven for thirty-three and one half years. But that would have been impossible if the services in the sanctuary could not have been effectively continued during the time He was away. That in turn required the services of sons who did not need to have Christ physically standing between them and God. So then, not only did Enoch have the power to enter into the presence of God; more than that, he, Moses, and Elijah had to have this ability if the plan of salvation was to prove workable.

Thus at the heavenly level, Enoch became a messenger because no one, not even Christ, stood between him and the infinite Source. The same will be true of every redeemed soul. No one, not even Christ himself, will stand between the messengers and God in heaven. In like manner, at the earthly level, no one stands between the human messenger and Christ, though Christ stands between him and God.

We have now seen that the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures are human beings who have been redeemed from this earth. They have sinless, immortal humanity in which is tabernacled the sinless, immortal life of Christ. Possessed of these two natures, they are able to reach all the way down to the lowly-

est of created intelligences on the human side, and all the way up to God on the divine side. Thus they are fully qualified to be messengers at the heavenly or highest level.

These were heard by John testifying as to what Christ had done for them—that He had...

Revelation 5

¹⁰ ...made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.

A king who is of so exalted status that he sits with God and Christ in their throne, while, as a holy and righteous priest he ministers in the sanctuary in the very presence of God, can be none other than a member of the distinguished order of Melchizedek. In that sacred order, Christ is King of kings, and High Priest of all other priests.

It is time now to affirm the declaration made earlier in this chapter that every member of that sacred order is a messenger, not at the earthly level where Moses was a messenger, but at the heavenly level where Christ is the leading Messenger.

Up there in heaven, every king-priest after the order of Melchizedek is a messenger, and every messenger is a king and a priest of the Melchizedek order. The study of this order provides priceless revelations of gospel order and of the incredible heights to which Christ, through the gospel, will eventually elevate us. This will not be to our glory and honor, but to His.

It is a privilege which should have been given to the angels, or at least to some of them, and would have been had Lucifer and his followers repented. But, when they had lost their sinless, created lives through transgression, they refused the loving offer of forgiveness, the acceptance of which would have enabled Christ to have begotten His very own sinless, immortal, righteous, divine life in them. Then, after the necessary period of probation, they would have become messengers before the Father, where no one, not even Christ himself, would have stood between them and the Almighty.

As noted before, when the angels fell and refused to rise again, God through Christ created man with the intention that he should multiply and fill the vacancies left by the departed angels. Three possibilities then presented themselves:

1. The multiplying human family all remained faithful to God. In that case, the vacancies would all have been filled, but there would have been no enlargement of the Melchizedek order. It would have remained with one lone member who would have been King of no kings of the Melchizedek order.
2. Sin would have overtaken the human family as it did, but then, like Satan and his followers, its members had refused to repent and return to the Lord. In that case the vacancies among the angels would have remained unfilled, and again, there would have been no enlargement of the Melchizedek order which would have remained with one lone member. He would still have been King of no kings of the Melchizedek order.
3. Man sinned, but many have repented, and more will do so yet. This provided God with the means not only of filling the vacancies in heaven, but of enlarging the Melchizedek order by exactly the same number. All that is required to fill the vacancies in heaven are righteous, created beings whether human or angelic.

To join the Melchizedek order, the candidate must have more than is required to fill the positions vacated by angels. He has to have two natures: the nature of man and the begotten nature of Christ. All who have these are members of that illustrious order, kings and priests unto God.

How Many?

We know how large the order was to begin with when it consisted of but one member, Jehovah Immanuel. We saw it grow by one additional member with the translation of Enoch, another with the resurrection of Moses, and still another with the transla-

tion of Elijah. Thus, by the time Christ was due to appear in Bethlehem, there were four in the order including the Saviour.

The next increase was at the ascension of Christ. We are not informed of the exact number who were raised at that time, but are only told that they were a multitude as the following statement says:

The Desire of Ages, p, 786:

As Christ arose, He brought from the grave a multitude of captives. The earthquake at His death had rent open their graves, and when He arose, they came forth with Him....

But those who came forth from the grave at Christ's resurrection were raised to everlasting life. They ascended with Him as trophies of His victory over death and the grave. "These," said Christ, "are no longer the captives of Satan; I have redeemed them. I have brought them from the grave as the first fruits of my power, to be with me where I am, nevermore to see death or experience sorrow."

But what will the total number of the Melchizedek order be in the final count which will be complete at the close of probation as it is written?

The Great Controversy, p. 613-614:

When the third angel's message closes, mercy no longer pleads for the guilty inhabitants of the earth....

Every case has been decided for life or death. Christ has made the atonement for His people and blotted out their sins. The number of His subjects is made up; "then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven," is about to be given to the heirs of salvation, and Jesus is to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords.

So, when Jesus ceases His work of pleading for sinners, the number required to fill the vacancies in heaven will be made up. Not one position will be left unfilled when the resurrected and translated saints will join those who have gone before.

Again, we are not at this time provided with exact figures of the number who will make up the Melchizedek priesthood, but we

are given some indication in the following way. We know for certain that one third of the angels fell, which left two thirds behind. Speaking of the devil in the form of a great red dragon, it is written that:

Revelation 12

⁴ His tail drew a third part of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth.

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 3, p. 115:

Satan in his rebellion took a third part of the angels.

This means that two thirds were left whose number Daniel described as follows:

Daniel 7

¹⁰ A thousand thousands ministered to Him: ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him.

These do not have to be literal numbers, for they could be symbolic, though at the time of my writing this, I cannot discern that they are symbolic. So, for the present at least, we will regard them as being literal.

The first figure is a thousand thousands, but we are not told how much the word “thousands” means. If we were told that there were thousands of angels, that could mean anything from two thousand to maybe one hundred thousand and possibly more. The amount is indefinite. But we are told that there are a thousand of these “thousands.” If we take “thousands” to mean the minimum of two thousand, and multiply that by a thousand, we get two million. The next figure is ten thousand times ten thousand, a total of one hundred million, which, added to the above figure provides a total of at least one hundred and two million angels faithfully serving the Lord.

Now this is not the one third who defected, but the two thirds who remained. Since one third is a half of two thirds, then those who left would be at least fifty-one million, which is one half of one hundred and two million.

If this interpretation of *Daniel 7:10* is correct, then there were at least fifty-one million angels who departed from heaven, leaving a minimum of fifty-one million vacancies to be filled by exactly the same number of repentant humans, each of whom is given his appointed place as a king and a priest after the order of Melchizedek.

The indications are that there will be, when the kingdom is fully and finally established, at least fifty-one million members of that illustrious order, and probably more. That is a vast company of people seemingly far more than we could expect to see gathered for the kingdom during the six thousand years of harvesting by the gospel. Everywhere we look upon God's people down through history, they seem tragically few in number.

We see but eight at the time of the flood, and, even though his household numbered over a thousand souls, we see a relatively lonely Abraham soon after.

There followed centuries of spiritual depression in Egypt, recurring apostasies on the way to the Promised Land, and subsequent to its conquest.

The kingdom reached its pinnacle of power and prosperity as a result of David's much blessed reign, but from Solomon's time onward, fewer and fewer remained loyal to God.

How small in number the faithful were during the Babylonian captivity, and what a tiny remnant of a mere fifty thousand returned in faith to rebuild the city and the sanctuary.

At the time of Christ's birth, the angels were able to find only a few shepherds, and a very small number of wise men from foreign lands, to whom they could give the glad tidings of the Savior's appearing. Of that disappointment to the angels it is written:

The Great Controversy, p. 314:

An angel visits the earth to see who are prepared to welcome Jesus. But he can discern no tokens of expectancy. He hears no voice of praise and triumph that the period of Messiah's coming is at hand. The angel hovers for a time over the chosen city and the temple where the divine presence has been manifested for

ages; but even here is the same indifference. The priests, in their pomp and pride, are offering polluted sacrifices in the temple. The Pharisees are with loud voices addressing the people or making boastful prayers at the corners of the streets. In the palaces of kings, in the assemblies of philosophers, in the schools of the rabbis, all are alike unmindful of the wondrous fact which has filled all heaven with joy and praise—that the Redeemer of men is about to appear on earth.

There is no evidence that Christ is expected, and no preparation for the Prince of life. In amazement the celestial messenger is about to return to heaven with the shameful tidings, when he discovers a group of shepherds who are watching their flocks by night, and, as they gaze into the starry heavens, are contemplating the prophecy of a Messiah to come to earth, and longing for the advent of the world's Redeemer. Here is a company that is prepared to receive the heavenly message.

And suddenly the angel of the Lord appears, declaring the good tidings of great joy. Celestial glory floods all the plain, an innumerable company of angels is revealed, and as if the joy were too great for one messenger to bring from heaven, a multitude of voices break forth in the anthem which all the nations of the saved shall one day sing:

Luke 2

¹⁴ Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.

The sad pattern of disinterest and rejection by the majority continued during His ministry, until His work appeared to be a dismal failure.

The Desire of Ages, p. 678:

As the world's Redeemer, Christ was constantly confronted with apparent failure. He, the Messenger of mercy to our world, seemed to do little of the work He longed to do in uplifting and saving.

At the cross, there was scarcely a soul left to identify with Him, but a brighter picture emerges with the coming of the former rain. One would be confident that, from this period of power, a large contingent would go toward making up the required num-

ber. But this was followed by another serious apostasy resulting in the development of the Dark Ages.

Then came the reformation and the great Second Advent movement, none of which appears to be highly productive of truly ransomed souls. Certainly, at the present time, we see only a small number of very scattered people who understand and follow the truth.

That leaves only the time of the latter rain during which period we shall see the greatest harvest of souls ever gathered. But, there are strong indications that the initial mighty inflow of believers, will be succeeded by a massive falling away when the pressure of persecution becomes so severe that they find themselves faced with a martyr's death.

So, one wonders where the Lord will find at least fifty-one million people to fill all those vacancies. Nevertheless, they will be filled.

The Review and Herald, May 29, 1900:

Heaven will triumph, for the vacancies made in heaven by the fall of Satan and his angels will be filled by the redeemed of the Lord.

In the first case, like Elijah who thought he alone was faithful when he could not see the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal, so we are quite unable to number Israel. We cannot see the great host out there who will yet be redeemed, but they are there nonetheless.

But, apart from this very large company, martyrs alone will contribute millions of souls toward the total. In addition to them, there will be a great multitude which no man can number as the following paragraph describing the gathering of all the faithful in the Holy City at the end of the millennium, shows:

The Great Controversy, p. 665:

Nearest the throne are those who were once zealous in the cause of Satan, but who, plucked as brands from the burning, have followed their Saviour with deep, intense devotion. Next are those who perfected Christian characters in the midst of false-

hood and infidelity, those who honored the law of God when the Christian world declared it void, and the millions, of all ages, who were martyred for their faith. And beyond is the...

Revelation 7

⁹ ...great multitude, which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues...before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands.

So then, between the millions of martyrs of all ages, and the great multitude, we can be assured that the gospel of Jesus Christ is not going to achieve insignificant results. Millions upon millions will be saved. Admittedly, the harvest from some places and certain times may be small, but at other times and places, it will range from moderate to highly impressive. The overall result will be adequate to achieve the divine purpose of filling the vacancies left by the fallen angels, and of greatly increasing the membership of the Melchizedek order.

Thus, in the Scriptures, the major reason is revealed for Melchizedek's having to be a man. It was because among all created beings, man alone, by sinning, repenting, receiving the gift of salvation, and thus becoming the recipients of Christ's own divine life, qualified for the position.

3. The Melchizedek Order

THE study of the Melchizedek priesthood provides a wonderful and beautiful revelation of the principles and procedures by which God builds His kingdom both in heaven and on earth. Through these lessons, the Eternal One makes it clear that, in this work, He will not deviate to the right or the left by so much as a hair's breadth to accommodate the desires or judgment of any created intelligence.

This means that, if we are to be sharers with the Almighty in the work of building the kingdom, then we must come into perfect conformity to His principles and procedures. We are to understand that it is not given to us even to the slightest degree to decide how the kingdom shall be built. All of that, and nothing less than that, belongs to God and God alone.

Therefore, it is total submission to the wisdom of the Omniscient One which is required. The believer is to look to God and not to himself for the design specifications of the kingdom of which we all so earnestly desire to be a part.

God's Order is Not Oppressive

For the truly converted soul from whom self has been dethroned, this is absolutely no problem, even as it was no difficulty to Christ in contrast to the self-important Jews of His time on earth, as it is written:

The Desire of Ages, p. 208:

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.

To the human mind, such total submission to the will of another is perceived to be the deprivation of the use of one's own capacities, even when it is the mind of the Infinite in knowledge, righteousness, and power to which we are called upon to submit. To so many it is cruel, limiting, trammeling bondage, from which they are driven by powerful urges to free themselves.

But our Saviour and Example did not find it to be so. Quite the contrary,

The Ministry of Healing, p. 19:

He glorified His life by making everything in it subordinate to the will of His Father.

It is our privilege not only to accept this as the truth because it is the truth, but also to understand how it is the truth; how it is that total submission to the divine mind and will is the glorification of those who so relate themselves to the Highest. It is the greatest gain in which nothing is lost save that which would destroy us.

The mind of God is the infinite storehouse of all knowledge, truth, and wisdom, so that we have nothing except it comes from that Source. Whether God's dealings with us produce bondage as He is accused so widely of doing, or elevates us to the unlimited development of every talent and faculty as are the true facts of the case, depends on how He relates to us as the Custodian of the wealth of the universe, and how we, in turn, respond to Him.

If He were to stand toward us as an arbitrary autocrat who demands blind, unreasoning obedience to commands from Him in order to serve His personal will, then most certainly the result would be extremely detrimental to those who were required to render obedience under those conditions.

The Papal Counterfeit

Nowhere in all human history has this been more convincingly demonstrated than in the reign of the papacy when absolute obe-

dience to the autocratic ruler of the world cut men off from the fountain of truth. The results were absolutely appalling. Darkness covered the earth and wrapped the world in ignorance, superstition, fear, poverty, and disease. It was an incredible descent from the elevation of righteousness, to the sunken depths of iniquity. Man had usurped the position of God, and frightful were the results. Let God be praised that never again will the some conditions prevail on the earth.

The Great Controversy, p. 60:

Popery had become the world's despot. Kings and emperors bowed to the decrees of the Roman pontiff. The destinies of men, both for time and for eternity, seemed under his control. For hundreds of years the doctrines of Rome had been extensively and implicitly received, its rites reverently performed, its festivals generally observed. Its clergy were honored and liberally sustained. Never since has the Roman Church attained to greater dignity, magnificence, or power.

But "the noon of the papacy was the midnight of the world." J. A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism*, b. 1, ch. 4. The Holy Scriptures were almost unknown, not only to the people, but to the priests. Like the Pharisees of old, the papal leaders hated the light which would reveal their sins. God's law, the standard of righteousness, having been removed, they exercised power without limit, and practiced vice without restraint. Fraud, avarice, and profligacy prevailed. Men shrank from no crime by which they could gain wealth or position.

The palaces of popes and prelates were scenes of the vilest debauchery. Some of the reigning pontiffs were guilty of crimes so revolting that secular rulers endeavored to depose these dignitaries of the church as monsters too vile to be tolerated. For centuries Europe had made no progress in learning, arts, or civilization. A moral and intellectual paralysis had fallen upon Christendom.

The condition of the world under the Romish power presented a fearful and striking fulfillment of the words of the prophet Hosea:

Hosea 4

⁶ My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you,...because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.

¹ There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land.

² By swearing and lying, killing and stealing and committing adultery, they break all restraint, with bloodshed after bloodshed.

Such were the results of banishing the word of God.

Banishing the word of God is the sending away of God's commands so that the orders of men and devils can take their places. It is always the act of replacing God's commands and the way in which we are invited to obey them, with human orders and the way in which despots demand we obey them. Therefore, all the darkness, suffering, and deprivation described in this quotation, are the direct results of the way in which tyrannical heads of the papacy issued their orders.

Freedom in God's Way

But turning from this awful outworking of the abuse of power, we view a different picture in God's blessed dealing with His children. In His relation to them as their Commander, He stands toward them, not as a despot, but as a loving Teacher who not only speaks the truth but is himself the Truth.

Consequently, every plan which He makes for us, every command which He issues, and every solution which He offers, is an expression of that truth, and is instruction in that truth. If received in living faith, it serves to emancipate every faculty of the receptive soul, and to lift him to higher and still higher levels of capacity and achievement. The ultimate, incredible exaltation to which the Melchizedek priesthood will be elevated is a marvelous revelation of these verities.

To confirm the truth of this, let us survey the range of the development of the Melchizedek kings and priests from where the gospel finds them to their ultimate positions, capacities, and powers—until the time when they shall be literally kings and priests

sitting on thrones around and in the midst of the throne of the Almighty. From that glorious elevation they, with Christ, shall all be messengers at the highest level.

The Heights To Be Attained

I will not attempt to cover every aspect of their transition from the lowest to the highest after Christ, the everlasting High Priest of the order, but will follow through one particular line of thought. The reason for God's doing nothing except through Christ was due to the impossibility of His making direct communication with any of His creatures or created works without destroying them, so great is the outflow of fiery energy from Him.

Not for a moment does this mean that the Almighty is a destroyer who obliterates all those who manifest disrespect for Him by encroaching on the reserved area with which He has surrounded himself. Instead, it is all in the nature of the situation itself and is not difficult to understand. It all stems from the fact that the universe is not self-supporting, but requires the unbroken provision of an adequate flow of energy from a source capable of supplying it. God alone has the capacity to be that Source. Only He from within himself can issue the energy supply required by the entire universe to maintain normal functioning.

The Ministry of Healing, p. 416:

God is constantly employed in upholding and using as His servants the things that He has made....

It is not by inherent power that year by year the earth yields its bounties and continues its march around the sun. The hand of the Infinite One is perpetually at work guiding this planet. It is God's power continually exercised that keeps the earth in position in its rotation. It is God who causes the sun to rise in the heavens. He opens the windows of heaven and gives rain.

Jeremiah 10

¹³ He gives snow like wool; He scatters the frost like ashes; when He utters His voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens: and He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth. He makes lightning for the rain, He brings the wind out of His treasures.

It is by His power that vegetation is caused to flourish, that every leaf appears, every flower blooms, every fruit develops.

What a stupendous supply of energy must be required to abundantly and continually meet all the needs of a universe of a billion galaxies, each of which in turn, is made up of a billion solar systems of which ours is one of the small ones. Not for an instant can the almighty Creator and Sustainer permit that flow of energy to diminish in the slightest, for otherwise the entire universe would suffer. The outpouring of the needed vitality must run continually at full flood tide.

Not even in the dimmest of terms are we able to begin to assess the volume of the fiery flood emanating from the Ancient of Days, but enough has been revealed to us to certify that no created being, unless very specially provided for, can stand in the presence of God without being instantly destroyed. This is a fact of life with which we must become accustomed that no one can approach God unshielded and survive. God himself stated the fact of it in these words:

Exodus 33

²⁰ You cannot see my face; for no man shall see me, and live.

At the same time, despite this impossibility, open communication between the Creator and His creation had to be established and maintained in order that the dwellers throughout the uttermost reaches of the kingdom could have unlimited access to the treasures of light, life, and power, and enjoy fullness of joy and total fulfillment eternally.

The problem was a very real one for which only one solution was available. It was that a shield must be positioned between the Creator and the creatures so that light and life could be channeled to the latter without their being destroyed. Confirmation of this is provided in these words:

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 265-266:

Christ, the Light of the world, veiled the dazzling splendor of His divinity and came to live as a man among men, that they might, without being consumed, become acquainted with their

Creator. No man has seen God at any time except as He is revealed through Christ. Christ revealed all of God that sinful, human beings could bear without being destroyed. He is the divine Teacher, the Enlightener.

A survey of the visible manifestations of God's glory shows that the more faithfully a person lives in true righteousness, the greater the manifestations of God through Christ he could endure. Compare, for instance, Moses' capacity for entering safely into the consuming fire on Mount Sinai and of remaining there for forty days and nights, with the withdrawal of the thoroughly frightened people from the base of the mountain when it quaked at the presence of the Lord.

Both the Father and the Son were present on the mountain when the law was given to Israel as the following statement testifies:

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 1, p. 1103:

When the law was spoken, the Lord, the Creator of heaven and earth, stood by the side of His Son, enshrouded in the fire and the smoke on the mount.

While God, the Father of Christ, deemed the occasion for the giving of His holy law on Mount Sinai so important as to call for His being there in Person, He could not come alone without destroying all the people including the righteous Moses. In fact, the entire earth would have been destroyed. Jesus had to be there to shield Israel from being consumed, and it was beneath the adequate shelter of Christ's presence that Moses could enter the cloud and the fire.

Let us now consider the following description of Moses' entrance into the presence of God, Christ, and a retinue of shining angels:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 313:

Moses and "his assistant Joshua" were now summoned to meet with God...

Exodus 24

¹⁵ Then Moses went up into the mountain, and a cloud covered the mountain.

¹⁶ Now the glory of the Lord rested on Mount Sinai.

For six days the cloud covered the mountain as a token of God's special presence; yet there was no revelation of himself or communication of His will. During this time Moses remained in waiting for a summons to the presence chamber of the Most High. He had been directed, "Come up to me on the mountain and be there," and though his patience and obedience were tested, he did not grow weary of watching, or forsake his post.

This period of waiting was to him a time of preparation, of close self-examination. Even this favored servant of God could not at once approach into His presence and endure the exhibitions of His glory. Six days must be employed in devoting himself to God by searching of heart, meditation, and prayer before he could be prepared for direct communication with his Maker.

Upon the seventh day, which was the Sabbath, Moses was called up into the cloud. The thick cloud opened in the sight of all Israel, and the glory of the Lord broke forth like devouring fire.

Awesome was the manifestation of divine power resting on Mount Sinai, even though it was heavily veiled by the Shield, Jesus Christ. It was a wonderful educational and sanctifying act of redeeming love on Jehovah's part to provide this revelation of himself.

Sadly, though the minds of the people who witnessed the scene were deeply impressed that day, they came far short of seeing all they might have seen when the mountain was blanketed in cloud, the consuming fire broke forth, the lightning flashed, the thunder rolled, and the mountain quaked. Some probably saw in it all an effort on God's part to intimidate them, so distorted was their understanding of God's true character.

All this happened a very long time ago and no one living on the earth today was present to witness that revelation of divine majesty. Therefore, it is more difficult for us to receive all the light which the Lord would deliver to us through this message. But, if

we were to devote greater, sanctified, prayerful effort toward seeing the event as if we had been there with truly enlightened eyes, we would much more clearly understand the position we will fill in heaven as priests and kings of the Melchizedek order.

With this objective in view, let each of us earnestly meditate upon the inspired description of that awesome manifestation of the divine presence when the Ten Commandments were spoken from Mount Sinai.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 304:

On the morning of the third day, as the eyes of all the people were turned toward the mount, its summit was covered with a thick cloud, which grew more black and dense, sweeping downward until the entire mountain was wrapped in darkness and awful mystery. Then a sound as of a trumpet was heard, summoning the people to meet with God; and Moses led them forth to the base of the mountain.

From the thick darkness flashed vivid lightnings, while peals of thunder echoed and re-echoed among the surrounding heights.

Exodus 19

¹⁸ Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly.

Exodus 24

¹⁷ The sight of the glory of the Lord was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain...

—in the sight of the assembled multitude. And,

Exodus 19

¹⁹ The blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder.

So terrible were the tokens of Jehovah's presence that the hosts of Israel shook with fear, and fell upon their faces before the Lord. Even Moses exclaimed,

Hebrews 12

²¹ I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.

It is important that we understand that the Almighty was not putting on a “fireworks display,” to impress or intimidate the people. What He was doing was lovingly revealing himself to them to

demonstrate that they needed a kingdom-structure which would provide them with access to the Almighty Father without their being consumed. To impart this vital and deeply spiritual understanding to them, He descended with His Son on Sinai to show enough of himself to teach them these essential truths.

As they shrank back from God's presence on the mountain, they were thereby to learn that they could not come into direct contact with Jehovah without being destroyed. At the same time they had to be made aware of the fact that they would also perish if they were cut off from all communication with the Infinite Source of all life-support.

It was a problem for which there seemed to be no solution until they learned of the one devised in the mind of the Omniscient One, and thereby saw the unique structure of the divine kingdom. They were being shown so, for as they were spiritually enlightened and perceptive enough to see it, that the Almighty does nothing except through a messenger, and because of this, so long as they themselves lived in obedience to the structure, they were perfectly safe from destruction. The very fact that they survived as subjects of a Sovereign from whom a flood tide of fiery streams constantly pour forth is in itself proof that a solution had been found and effectively applied.

Because of that solution, Israel abode in perfect safety at the base of the mountain, but, so dim was their understanding of the divine provision for their continued existence, and so weak was their faith in the Infinite Provider that, instead of being capable of coming into His loving presence, they sought in fear and trembling to draw back from it. This ought never to have been their reaction, for divine love that day was heralding the message of their salvation, not their destruction.

God was demonstrating with greater force and clarity than He had ever done before, that, while the potential for destruction hung over those entering His presence, He had made full provision for this problem. For them then to be insecure and fearful at the very time when such glorious light was shining upon them,

should have brought the strongest convictions to them of their great personal need to understand, grasp by unconquerable faith, and truly live out the sacred principles of gospel order. By these holy facilities, they would have developed the capacity to progressively enter more and more closely into the divine presence in perfect security, and thus become better and better qualified to be king priests after the Melchizedek order.

The Israelites who clustered fearfully around the mountain, were on some of the lowest rungs of the ladder. They must see their true condition and climb from the lowest where doubt prevailed and iniquity abounded, to the highest where they and we are to stand as messengers between God and His people. Apart from the positions occupied by the members of the Godhead, there is no higher elevation in existence. While the reaching of the standard will not be easy, yet, so attainable are these positions in heaven, that God does not require that only the favored few attain to them. Instead, every member of the redeemed will, through the incredible power of the gospel, ascend to that exalted plane.

As you catch some glimpse of the glory awaiting the conquerors through Christ of sin and death, do you find an element of disbelief taking hold of you? Do you feel that the heights to which Jehovah has said He will elevate the recipients of salvation, are too much to believe? If this is your response, do not be discouraged, for this is the usual reaction. Israel certainly could not believe what was being shown them as is evidenced by the terror which gripped them. Furthermore, history testifies to the tragic fact that most of them never did become believers.

Their unbelief was cherished in the face of powerful, visible evidence to the contrary, for, in full view of them all, Moses had calmly climbed the mountain, and the black clouds had parted to admit him into the presence of the Deity. There, although the watchers below could not see whether he had been consumed or not, the facts were that, thanks to his being especially shielded by Christ, he was not consumed.

What a glorious revelation this is of the ascent of those who will become full-fledged members of the Melchizedek order of eternal kings and priests! The children of Israel back there were on a low level of development, while Moses was on a much higher level. He was so much higher in fact that I know of no other man who spent so much time in such close contact with God. Only a man as highly qualified as he was could have done so.

Let us meditate for a time on the incredible and desirable privilege it was for Moses to be in intimate, continuous communion with God through Christ. Picture yourself passing through the same experiences. Relive the climb up the mountain as in eager expectation each step brings you closer to your precious Saviour and His and your everlasting Father for both of whom supreme love surges through your entire being, for,

The Desire of Ages, p. 83:

If we are Christ's, our sweetest thoughts will be of Him. We shall love to talk of Him; and as we speak to one another of His love, our hearts will be softened by divine influences. Beholding the beauty of His character, we "are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory." *2 Corinthians* 3:18.

When we love Christ and the Father so intensely that our sweetest thoughts are of Him, then, with eager anticipation we would avail ourselves of any opportunity to be in His company, no matter what it involved to come to Him. All else would be laid aside as with singleness of purpose we pressed forward to be with the Father and the Son.

Moses was a man of deep, intense love for God and His people. For them he sacrificed all that this world could offer—the throne of the richest and most powerful kingdom on earth, fame, honor, adoration, wealth, and much, much more. There was nothing of what is sought after in this world that he could not have had, but he exchanged it all in His greater love for his heavenly Father. This demonstrates something of the measure of his supreme, undying love for his Creator, and his selfless love for humanity.

How that great man of God must have eagerly climbed the steep slopes of Sinai so he could the sooner have reached the top. When we are driven by an all consuming love as Moses was, there will be no place we shall long to be other than in the divine presence, and, the closer the better.

Imagine then your arrival on the mountain top where you immediately enter into close communion with the supreme Sovereign Ruler of the universe through His incredibly lovely Son. It would be impossible to think of anything else so wonderful, so inspiring, so delightful, so life-giving, and so exhilarating. Think of the glorious treasures of the most precious truth which would be unfolded to your wondering and admiring mind as continuously and tirelessly for forty days and nights you drank in all that the Master Teacher was opening before you.

Think of having no need for sleeping, eating, or drinking during that period when you would be continuously nourished and energized as you bathed in the stream of energy emanating from the Almighty. No wonder Moses, at the age of one hundred and twenty, had flawless eyesight, perfect health, and fullness of vigor.

Deuteronomy 34

⁷ Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died.

His eyes were not dim nor his natural vigor abated.

Such sustained vitality in a mortal human being is possible only through constant and very close communion with the Source of all life and energy. It was only thus that our Saviour was enabled to bear the awful pressures which sought to destroy Him.

The Desire of Ages, p. 363:

As a man He supplicated the throne of God till His humanity was charged with a heavenly current that should connect humanity with divinity. Through continual communion He received life from God, that He might impart life to the world. His experience is to be ours.

That is the very same energizing communion which blessed and revitalized Moses during his forty days and nights on the moun-

tain. The awesome fire ever flowing from the Person of the Almighty did not devour him, but, instead, charged him with such vitality, strength, and energy that he was enabled to sit as a learner without a break for almost six weeks.

Can you imagine passing through such an experience? It would really be impossible to visualize the glory of such fellowship with God if you have not been there. It was a sad fact that, while Moses was being blessed so mightily on the mountaintop, none of the rest of Israel were fitted to share it with him. Joshua came the closest, for he was able to remain upon the mountain, but could not ascend the heights as Moses did. No doubt, from his lowlier position, Joshua also spent the time in very blessed communion which imparted a large measure of strength and vitality to him also.

But highly privileged and loftily positioned on the ladder as Moses was, he still stood far below the position to which every Melchizedek king and priest will be elevated. This is made evident by his asking Jehovah to show him His glory, his request for which is recorded:

Exodus 33

¹⁸ And he said, Please, show me your glory.

This plea was made after Moses' first forty days in the mountain with God, but before his second forty days in the same mountain. It is evident that, during those first forty days, Moses realized that the Almighty One had not been fully revealed to him. What he had seen of the Eternal, had quickened in him the most intense desire to see more and still more of the divine perfection, and fullness of beauty.

There was nothing sinful about such desires. In fact they are of the very character which the Lord seeks to generate in all of His children including Moses. Be assured that our loving heavenly Parent will always show us as much of His glorious attributes as we are able to bear. The only limitations are with us—our smallness of vision, lack of faith, cherished sin, or our being clothed with sinful, mortal flesh and blood. God's response to Moses' re-

quest was inhibited by the last of these factors. It was not possible for him to be shown all he desired to see and not be destroyed.

Of this Jehovah advised him in these words:

Exodus 33

²⁰ You cannot see my face; for no man shall see me, and live.

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 8, p. 265:

No man has seen God at any time except as He is revealed through Christ.

But this limitation which was on Moses and all the Redeemed while on earth, shall not always be there. There is coming the glorious day when every one of the saved will see His face, and live.

Revelation 22

⁴ They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.

Testimonies for the Church, vol. 8, p. 267-268:

Christ took with Him to the heavenly courts His glorified humanity. To those who receive Him, He gives power to become the sons of God, that at last God may receive them as His, to dwell with Him throughout eternity. If, during this life, they are loyal to God, they will at last “see His face; and His name shall be on their foreheads.” *Revelation 22:4*. And what is the happiness of heaven but to see God? What greater joy could come to the sinner saved by the grace of Christ than to look upon the face of God and know Him as Father?

Once the wonderful truth is grasped that the redeemed will sit with Christ in the midst of the throne on which the Father sits, and will literally see His face, then is realized something of what the Lord has opened to everyone who will be a king and a priest of the order of Melchizedek.

In the first case, it becomes very clear that there will be no Shield between them and the Father to whom each of them will have direct access. If there is any doubt about the certainty of this incredible status to be bestowed upon the saints in glory, it will be stripped away by remembering that, when Christ was upon earth where He could not serve as the Shield, the work was per-

formed by those members of the Melchizedek order already in heaven, namely Enoch, Moses, and Elijah. They were then the shields by which all God's creation was preserved from being consumed.

This means that they could stand in the full light of God's outpouring of power on the one side, and, on the other side serve as the agency through which light, life, and power flowed at a safe level to all creation. As messengers at the highest possible level, they had direct access both to the Source of all light and truth, and to the intelligences who needed it. So then, all the life-laden communications emanating from the Father passed through these king-priests to all the other creatures in the universe.

Incomprehensible as it may seem, any one of them had the fullest capacity to do this work alone. This is proved by the fact that one of them, Enoch, alone remained in heaven to serve in this capacity while Christ, Moses, and Elijah were together on the Mount of Transfiguration.

This is a position to which Moses, while on Mount Sinai, had only partially attained, yet what an incredible fellowship was that into which he entered when he was enclosed by the presence of the Father and the Son. It is quite impossible for anyone today to know the intensity of the vitalizing, enlightening, and glorious experience of being in the physical presence of the Almighty.

As I attempt to enter into an adequate and realistic understanding of the indescribable happiness, fulfillment, and rapture of it all, and to convey a representation of the full glory which awaits our admission to the Melchizedek order, I feel overwhelmed with a sense of hopeless inadequacy. How could one ever find words to portray the life of those who will be positioned far higher than the highest human thought could ever reach? It is not possible!

God's installation of the redeemed at such a level that they will have unrestricted access to Him, and will literally see His face, will provide them with such a breadth, and depth, and height of unblemished happiness such as has never been known on earth. It will be the ultimate Paradise for the attainment of which, any sac-

rifice will be wonderfully cheap. Add to this the blessings which will be theirs as they fill as co-workers with their wonderful and adorable High Priest, the privilege of being the messengers who will proclaim to all the dwellers in the universe the matchless character of Him...

1 Timothy 6

¹⁶ Who...[dwells] in the light which no man can approach unto.

Education, p. 309:

In our life here, earthly, sin-restricted though it is, the greatest joy and the highest education are in service. And in the future state, untrammled by the limitations of sinful humanity, it is in service that our greatest joy and our highest education will be found-witnessing, and ever as we witness learning anew...

Colossians 1

²⁷ ...the riches of the glory of this mystery;...which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Thus will the redeemed be established in their places as members of the sacred order of Melchizedek, messengers from God to the angels and the unfallen beings. It is the highest order in existence next to the order of the Godhead. It is the very position to which Lucifer aspired, but which was utterly denied him, for very good reasons:

1. At the time when he eagerly reached out to grasp it, he was totally unqualified for it, for he did not possess both the lives of Creator and creature.
2. He let selfishness become the driving force in his quest;
3. His approach involved Christ's being deposed from His position;
4. His methods involved the restructuring of the kingdom; and
5. His ways have given rise to all the misery, destruction, and death which has plagued this earth.

How different will be the coming of the saints to their coronation as kings, and investiture as priests:

1. Having the lives of both Creator and creature, they will be fully qualified for their position.
2. Service to self will have found no place in their arrival at their appointed place, for they will not have greedily, and ruthlessly struggled to obtain this high honor which has come to them as a gift
3. Far from being demoted, Christ will be the most honored of all living beings. He will be King of kings, Lord of lords, and Most Illustrious High Priest of the sacred, everlasting order of Melchizedek.
4. Far from requiring any restructuring of the kingdom, the exaltation of Christ and His people will have unchangeably established gospel order forever.
5. And finally, all these things will abundantly bless every created being no matter where he may be in the universe, with perfect happiness, joyful service, unlimited access to knowledge and radiant light, and eternal life.

4. Rulership in Christ's Kingdom

IN THE last chapter, we considered the tremendous span between man where the gospel finds him, and the levels to which that gospel will elevate him. It discovers him with dwarfed and enfeebled capacities at the lowest strata of degradation, stricken with physical, mental, and spiritual poverty, so well portrayed by the prodigal son.

From this position of seemingly hopeless despair, it lifts him to the incredible height where he has the capacity to stand before the Almighty and look directly into His face. So it is that, looking up with Spirit-enlightened eyes into the highest heavens, we see the redeemed around about and in the midst of the throne of the Almighty himself. There they occupy the positions of the highest messengers from Jehovah to the inhabitants of the universe, as kings and priests of the sacred and illustrious order of Melchizedek.

For the lack of space, I came far short of presenting all the scriptural evidences revealing this glorious truth. I know it would take many pages to cover this aspect of the destiny of the redeemed, but more than sufficient has been presented to cover the point. However, to reinforce the message, I will direct your attention to one or two further Scriptures.

It was when, in vision and under total inspiration, that Daniel the prophet was shown the saints reigning in glory. He wrote of what was revealed to him in these words:

Daniel 7

¹⁸ But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.

²⁷ Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.

This kingdom will be no insignificant domain tucked away in some obscure corner of the universe, but will be the entire domin-

ion of the Almighty. The staggering truth is that the saints collectively along with Christ will be given the universe as their actual possession. What an incredible inheritance awaits the faithful children of God through Christ!

There never has been, in the history of this world, a potentate with a kingdom so vast, so limitless, so infinite. At the very best, the greatest earthly ruler has not even presided over all the peoples of this earth, though a number of them have set out to do so. But here is a coming sovereignty over at least a billion galaxies each containing an average of a billion habitable solar systems. Really, it is far beyond the finite capacities of any human mind to grasp the sheer magnitude of that which the Almighty Monarch of the universe holds in waiting for the arrival of the redeemed.

Should you find it difficult or seemingly impossible to believe these assertions are true, you have but to look at the joint-inheritance the saints will share with Christ, the King of kings. Paul states the powerful truth of this in these words:

Romans 8

¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

¹⁷ And if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

Our claim to this inheritance is based, as usual, on our being sons of the Everlasting Father. It is because of that, that we are heirs of God, a position to which no angel can aspire,

Hebrews 1

⁵ For to which of the angels did He ever say: You are my Son, today I have begotten you? And again: I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?

The answer to those questions is: to none of the angels did He ever say that, because He could not, for no angel has ever become a begotten son of God.

This heirship of God is jointly with Christ, which means that we receive all that He receives on equal terms. That is the only

meaning to be understood by the expression: “joint-heirs.” So then, if Christ is heir to kingship of the entire universe, which He certainly is, then so are we. If He is heir to the eternal priesthood in that kingdom, which, once again, He certainly is, then so are we. It is for this reason Jesus himself promises that:

Revelation 3

²¹ To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame and sat down with my Father on His throne.

The saints will not merely sit on that mighty throne, but will rule from it, for, not only are they given the kingdom; they are also given the dominion of that kingdom. They will be kings literally and will reign throughout the infinity of the universe. That they can do this is due to their becoming fully qualified through the acquisition of the life both of the Creator and the creature.

What a glorious future awaits us when the long-standing quarrel over gospel order shall be at last resolved in favor of God’s everlasting position. It is much more than we could ever expect, and we would all be more than satisfied with much, much less. Just to be there far from sin, death, suffering, darkness, and so forth would be enough.

The Desire of Ages, p. 311:

God’s ideal for His children is higher than the highest human thought can reach.

Ephesians 3

²⁰ Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,

²¹ To Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Truly, it is revealed in these Scriptures that the Lord will in fact do exceeding abundantly above all that we could ask or think. Who of us, without these revelations of truth given to us of the Father through the Son, could ever have dreamed that God had such plans drawn up for the redeemed. The answer is that the

thought of it could never have been conceived in the mind of man.

1 John 3

² Beloved now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

³ And everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

- To be like Jesus;
- To have the power to sit with Him in the midst of the Father's throne from which great streams of fire are constantly pouring forth;
- To see the Father's face;
- To possess and reign over the kingdom wherever it is found throughout the universe;
- To be messengers of the Almighty One at the highest level; and
- To be holy members of the Melchizedek order of kings-priests;

—this is much more than enough motivation to strive to enter in at the strait gate. It should be impossible for any child of God to contemplate what we shall be in heaven without being mightily moved to sacrifice all, and put total effort into preparation for the occupation of our appointed places in those realms of glory. Earth, by comparison, has nothing to offer.

But the full glory has not been pointed out so far in these studies, nor will it be until the question has been answered:

“What need is there in the universe eternally freed from sin, of a vast class of kings and priests? Surely, since the law will be indelibly written on the heart and mind of every intelligent creature in the universe, and every soul will have the capacity, the desire, and the disposition to govern himself, there should be neither need nor place for kings.”

So it may be argued. And why should there be a need for a priesthood? Are they not primarily a ministry for the remission of sin. So then, where there is no sin, again it may be argued, there is no need of a priesthood. Yet, God will have a very numerous class of kings and priests in the coming earth renewed. From this we have to conclude that there is a vital need for them, and that the universe of the future will be greatly enriched by their ministry, for God does nothing without a purpose.

Not Like Earthly Kings

It would be a serious mistake to think of those Melchizedek kings as if they were like unto kings on this earth. There is no real comparison. Earthly kings, who have power as kings, use it for self-aggrandizement, personal exaltation, and, very often, the oppression of the people. God's kingdom and the kings who serve in it, are not of this character.

Christ's Object Lessons, 76-77:

In earthly governments there was nothing that could serve for a similitude. No civil society could afford Him a symbol...

The germ in the seed grows by the unfolding of the life-principle which God has implanted. Its development depends upon no human power. So it is with the kingdom of Christ. It is a new creation. Its principles of development are the opposite of those that rule the kingdoms of this world.

Earthly governments prevail by physical force; they maintain their dominion by war; but the founder of the new kingdom is the Prince of Peace. The Holy Spirit represents worldly kingdoms under the symbol of fierce beasts of prey; but Christ is...

John 1

²⁹ ...the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

In His plan of government there is no employment of brute force to compel the conscience. The Jews looked for the kingdom of God to be established in the same way as the kingdoms of the world. To promote righteousness they resorted to external measures. They devised methods and plans. But Christ implants a principle. By implanting truth and righteousness, He counter-works error and sin.

Not Vacation Land

Such is the character of the divine kingdom of eternal righteousness, but what of its activities? God's kingdom is one of ceaseless, coordinated activity, and unstunted growth. Every minute is marked by progress in every possible field of interest and endeavor.

Contrary to Satan's base, lying claims that God and His Son had imposed limits beyond which none could pass, there will be no point where every possible enterprise will have been carried out, the final chapter of the book of knowledge found, the last science mastered, and we are left with nothing more to achieve or to discover. Such a point will never be reached, for God and His knowledge are infinite.

This means that even with the incredible strength and energy which we will then possess, and with mental power vastly superior to that which we presently have, no matter how far into eternity we advance with eager, active minds gathering together all the light shining on our way, we cannot come to the place where we know it all.

The Great Controversy, p. 677:

There, immortal minds will contemplate with never-failing delight the wonders of creative power, the mysteries of redeeming love. There will be no cruel, deceiving foe to tempt to forgetfulness of God. Every faculty will be developed, every capacity increased.

The acquirement of knowledge will not weary the mind or exhaust the energies. There the grandest enterprises may be carried forward, the loftiest aspirations reached, the highest ambitions realized; and still there will arise new heights to surmount, new wonders to admire, new truths to comprehend, fresh objects to call forth the powers of mind and soul and body.

In the light of this statement it is evident that Paradise is not vacation land! Many years ago, I conversed over the message with a nurse who was attending a series of Bible studies I was giving. Our discussion moved around to my stating that heaven

and the new earth will be places of busy, intense, and tireless activity as it is written:

Isaiah 65

¹⁷ For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind...

²¹ They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

²² They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of my people, and my elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

²³ They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth children for trouble; for they shall be the descendants of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them.

That the new earth would be a work station was an entirely new and quite unwelcome thought to her. Instead, she saw herself relaxing on a deep, soft carpet of lawn grass, beneath the pleasant shade of gently swaying palm trees, while occasionally sipping from a glass of ice-cold lemonade.

I could understand why she had built up this concept, and could therefore sympathize with her. The only kind of work she had ever known was hard, pointless drudgery. In it she had found no personal satisfactions, no sense of achievement, and no indications that her dedicated services were recognized or appreciated. Naturally, any mention of productive labor in heaven would be interpreted by her in terms of work as she knew it, leading her to conclude that, if she had to engage in the same kind of work throughout eternity, as oppressed her in this life, she would just as soon not ever be taken to heaven.

Needless to say, the work activities which will engage the time and attention of the redeemed will be of a very different character from the burdensome responsibilities which must be borne in the sin-cursed period of our existence. With unbounded energies, we will undertake the work assigned to us by the master Plan-maker even as did Adam and Eve in Eden where they found their activities did not tire them, but were actually invigorating.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 50:

To the dwellers in Eden was committed the care of the garden, “to tend and keep it.” Their occupation was not wearisome, but pleasant and invigorating. God appointed labor as a blessing to man, to occupy his mind, to strengthen his body, and to develop his faculties. In mental and physical activity Adam found one of the highest pleasures of his holy existence.

So it will be again when the restoration of all things takes place.

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 3, p. 1164:

There will be employment in heaven. The redeemed state is not one of idle repose. “There remains therefore a rest to the people of God,” but it is a rest found in loving service.

The work done by Adam and Eve in their care of the Garden of Eden was but the beginning of the impressively larger fields of endeavor into which they would develop as their knowledge and skill advanced, and as they joined with others in carrying forward the grandest enterprises, in reaching the loftiest aspirations, and realizing the highest ambitions, after which there still...

The Great Controversy, p. 677:

...will arise new heights to surmount, new wonders to admire, new truths to comprehend, fresh objects to call forth the powers of mind and soul and body.

Some of these awesome projects may require the skilled participation of millions of co-laborers, all working in closest harmony and perfect coordination. To make such undertakings a success in a kingdom where failure and loss are unknown, will require an organizational structure of incredible complexity, effectiveness, perfection, and power.

Not Individual Atoms

It may be that some subscribe to the notion that, in God’s kingdom, each person is an independent unit, acting without reference to anyone else, while viewing himself as an individual answerable to God alone. But heaven has never been like that, rather, it has been maintained as an effective, working organiza-

tion in which each member of the community fills a certain specific role.

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 1173:

Each angel has his particular post of duty, which he is not permitted to leave for any other place. If he should leave, the powers of darkness would gain an advantage.

Another glimpse of the organization of sinless immortal beings is provided in the revelation of what took place when Lucifer rebelled originally, at which time there were groups of angels marshaled under commanding angels.

Early Writings, p. 145:

It was the highest sin to rebel against His order and will. All heaven seemed in commotion. The angels were marshaled in companies, each division with a higher commanding angel at its head.

The same organizational structure is also seen to be operative when Christ was agonizing in Gethsemane.

Early Writings, 167-170:

The Son of God prayed in agony. Great drops of blood gathered upon His face and fell to the ground. Angels were hovering over the place, witnessing the scene, but only one was commissioned to go and strengthen the Son of God in His agony. There was no joy in heaven. The angels cast their crowns and harps from them and with the deepest interest silently watched Jesus. They wished to surround the Son of God, but the commanding angels suffered them not, lest, as they should behold His betrayal, they should deliver Him; for the plan had been laid, and it must be fulfilled....

Many companies of holy angels, each with a tall commanding angel at their head, were sent to witness the scene. They were to record every insult and cruelty imposed upon the Son of God, and to register every pang of anguish which Jesus should suffer; for the very men who joined in this dreadful scene are to see it all again in living characters....

It was difficult for the angels to endure the sight. They would have delivered Jesus, but the commanding angels forbade them,

saying that it was a great ransom which was to be paid for man; but it would be complete and would cause the death of Him who had the power of death.

These statements prove that there is a close interaction between the individual persons who make up the subjects of the kingdom. It is evident that they are not scattered, disconnected elements, but are tightly organized like an army:

Early Writings, p. 145:

...marshaled in companies, each division with a higher commanding angel at its head.

It is clear that there are various levels of command without which the divine order could not operate successfully. Kings and commanding angels cannot be dispensed with in God's order, but each of them must occupy the place appointed him by the Commander of all commanders—God, the Everlasting Father. He, through Christ, is the Head of the church which is the beautiful community of the saints, and every appointment to all the positions of responsibility in the universe are made by Christ as the expression of the will of the Almighty.

In the organization of the encampment in the wilderness as the Hebrews journeyed on their way to the promised land, under God's leadership, Israel was very efficiently organized under various heads at different levels of responsibility and authority. For instance, in the important work of communicating God's will to the people, the instruction was first given to Moses, who taught it to the Elders, who made it known to the heads of families, who were to diligently impress the messages on the receptive minds of the children.

Once it is understood that, in the general government of the universe, and in the carrying forward of the grandest enterprises, in reaching the loftiest aspirations, and in realizing the highest ambitions, there will be those who will command, and those who will be led, it becomes apparent that there will be a very definite need for kings to rule at the highest levels. It is also clear that

these royal positions of very high authority and leadership will be occupied by the redeemed alone as joint rulers with Christ.

There is much further information in the Scriptures in regard to the organizational structure of God's government, but I have presented enough for the moment to demonstrate that there is a definite place and work for royal personages in heaven. They will not be mere figureheads with nothing to do, other than to receive honor and glory. On the contrary, they will be very busy commanders and leaders fully occupied with the work assigned to them by the Commander of commanders, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

Kingship Means Service

The kings and commanders in heaven do not relate to those under their leadership as do earthly men in authority who rule by force and fear, and who are satisfied with mindless, slavish obedience designed to benefit the "elite" at the expense of the "masses." God's kingdom is not the one in which the rich grow richer while the poor become poorer.

Instead, it is a government expressly designed for the richest blessing of every one of its subjects. Everyone is a loving servant to everybody else, and the higher the position, the greater the service to be rendered. A. T. Jones expressed the truth of this in these words:

Christian liberty is loving service. And loving service is Christian liberty. Therefore, Jesus said:

Matthew 20

²⁶ Whoever will be great among you,...

²⁷ ...let him be your servant,

Mark 10

⁴³ ...slave of all...

—at everybody's call. He who can best serve the most people is the greatest. And in the nature of things, just by virtue of that grace, he is chief. The reason that Jesus is the supremely greatest of all is that He was and ever is able to do most for most people.

And whoever is nearest like Him, most nearly does most for most people.

The grace willingly to serve most people, the grace to be most cheerfully at everybody's call, is the badge of greatness, the certificate of chieftaincy. And this is the primary and highest qualification for the "office" of elder or deacon.

An official "elder," one who had obtained the "dignity" by ecclesiastical politics, when brought into the presence of this truth of Christian service at everybody's call being the chief qualification for the responsibility of elder or deacon, exclaimed:

"Why, if that were so, nobody would ever want the office!"

It is true. It is not a dignity to excite human ambition or political rivalry. It is not an office to be gained by political method.

It is the opportunity for greater service to more people; and is the result of the grace of God already upon the Christian, qualifying him for the place of larger opportunity for the enjoyment of the Christian liberty of loving service.

It is found only in the fellowship of Christ. For, when He had said,

Matthew 20

²⁶ Whoever will be great among you, let him be...

Mark 10

⁴⁴ ...servant of all,

—at everybody's call. He continued:

Matthew 20

²⁸ Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many,

—and,

Luke 22

²⁷ I am among you as he that serves.⁴

Some may find it difficult it to match this definition of greatness in which the capacity and willingness to serve are the measuring lines, with the picture of angels

⁴ *The Reformation: 14th to 16th Century*, Chapter 13, "The Reformation Christian Brotherliness."

Early Writings, p. 145:

...marshaled in companies, each division with a higher commanding angel at its head.

From the defective devices of men we have been wrongly taught the idea that those in command are not servants, but masters, who are there to be served, enriched, and upheld in authority by those under their command. But, it is a serious mistake to develop impressions of what the divine kingdom is like, and how it is organized, from our knowledge of earthly dominions and the way in which they operate. We must never forget that Christ could find nothing in earthly kingdoms with which to illustrate the heavenly.

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 76:

In earthly governments there was nothing that could serve for a similitude. No civil society could afford Him a symbol.

Therefore, the roles played out by the commanding angels and by those under their command as they relate to each other, are very different from those found in any governments on earth. This is something which must be understood by those who are determined to fully institute gospel order in their lives.

In the kingdom of God, no one is in any position there with the objective of winning service to himself, but of providing service to others whether he is a commanding angel, or one being commanded. That is the principle of life in heaven—loving, self-sacrificing service to others no matter what the cost may be to the server. Nowhere will this be better understood than in the heavenly school when:

The Desire of Ages, p. 20:

...in the light from Calvary it will be seen that the law of self-renouncing love is the law of life for earth and heaven; that the love which "does not seek its own" has its source in the heart of God; and that in the meek and lowly One is manifested the character of Him who dwells in the light which no man can approach unto.

So then, a commanding angel must be one whose assigned contribution to the welfare of the kingdom is too great for him to do alone. In that case, God appoints helpers to him, so that they can, as a coordinated group together with their coordinator, the commanding angel, accomplish what otherwise could not be done. Between them all is a wonderful relationship of love and respect. It is sheer joy for them all to work together, all serving each other and the project to which they have been assigned and to which they are dedicated.

Thus, from the evidence available to us in the Scriptures, it is clear that in the perfect kingdom of God, there will be the need for kings to work for the effective rulership of the kingdom. It is to that position that the redeemed, together with Christ, have been assigned.

5. Priesthood in Christ's Kingdom

JUST as there will be the need for kings to govern the entire universe in the eternity yet to come, so there will be the need for a dedicated priesthood even though there will be no more confessed sin to be pardoned and transferred to the sanctuary, for final disposal with and on the scapegoat. That work will all have been completed by the time that probation will have closed, and the solemn pronouncement made:

Revelation 22

¹¹ He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still.

Think of what an unspeakable joy and privilege it will be to be a priest in a sinless universe, so that no part of your work will involve the unlovely and unpleasant task of cleansing, transferring, and finally disposing of sin. As well as sin itself being the source of all suffering, loss, and sorrow, dealing with it is also a painful process. Therefore, while the officiating priest is not suffering the actual pain of the sin confessed through him, he is suffering from the painful nature of the service he is rendering.

The Pain of Dealing with Sin

The typical services of the Old Testament sanctuary, through the symbolism of which we learn so much about God's truth, plainly reveal the unpleasant aspects of the ministry of the priesthood. Though this message from the sanctuary has been largely overlooked, we would do well to become aware of this aspect of the work done there by Aaron and his sons.

To make our awareness of this as vivid as possible, let us seek to relive the pain felt by the truly Christ-like priests as they ministered on behalf of repentant sinners. Let your imagination, enlightened and guided by revealed truth and illuminated by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, convey you through an experience of dealing with the expiation of sin from the conviction of the

wrongdoer, through repentance and confession, to the transfer of the iniquity to the sanctuary.

The entire procedure begins with the committal of sin, at first with seeming impunity, but sooner or later with a bitter harvest of pain and remorse, sickness, and loss. Not only does the one suffer who commits the sin; he also involves others with him in what can be terrible consequences. His is the pain of sin itself. But, there still comes another load of suffering—the dealing with the problem.

As a help in understanding this, imagine yourself now as the waiting priest for it is his role in the drama with which we are most interested in this study where we wish to see the contrast between the Levitical priesthood serving to remove sin, and the Melchizedek in which none of this terrible but wonderful work will be involved

You, in imagination, await the coming of the penitent bringing his substitutional sacrifice, the lamb, with him. As they approach, your heart is touched as you recognize the sweet innocence of the guiltless sacrifice, and torn with pain as you realize that the blameless one must die because of the sinner's transgression. A sense of horror grips you as you witness the plunging of the knife into the victim's throat and as you catch the blood in the bowl. Then imagine how it would feel by you, as the priest, as you dipped your fingers in the warm red blood and sprinkled it before the veil which separated the most holy from the holy place after touching it on the horns of the altar of incense.

If you can picture yourself as a priest performing this bloody ritual of expiation, you will have no difficulty in understanding how that the ministry for deliverance from sin is indeed a painful and unpleasant service. This is not to detract from the fact that the ministry by which man is set free from sin is a glorious one, for it indeed is, but it is a painful one nonetheless. Consider how Adam felt when he found himself obliged to kill the sacrificial victim for the first time!

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 68:

To Adam, the offering of the first sacrifice was a most painful ceremony. His hand must be raised to take life, which only God could give. It was the first time he had ever witnessed death, and he knew that had he been obedient to God, there would have been no death of man or beast.

But that which made it to be the most painful ceremony was the realization that his transgression would cost the life of the lovely Jesus.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 68:

As he slew the innocent victim, he trembled at the thought that his sin must shed the blood of the spotless Lamb of God. This scene gave him a deeper and more vivid sense of the greatness of his transgression, which nothing but the death of God's dear Son could expiate. And he marveled at the infinite goodness that would give such a ransom to save the guilty. A star of hope illumined the dark and terrible future and relieved it of its utter desolation.

As Adam suffered, so must every truly converted, loving, compassionate priest have suffered as he ministered continually to bring Christ's deliverance from sin to the people. All that they, fortified by faith, endured, was a clear picture in type of the sufferings of God and His Son as they labor

Daniel 9

²⁴ To finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.

For both the Father and the Son, saving man from sin and death is a ministry of suffering. None have any difficulty seeing that was so during the years of His sojourn among men, when He was persecuted, rejected, and finally murdered. That was more than suffering enough, but far worse was the agony of seeing men and women choosing death rather than life, and still worse again was the mental torture through which He passed when He voluntarily accepted the load of the sins of the entire world.

See Him in Gethsemane sweating great drops of blood and know His suffering was so intense, so great, so awful, that there has never been anything to compare with it. It was literally crushing Him to death, and would have taken His life then and there but for the temporary lifting of the burden.

Next day, on the cross, the full weight of it all was again laid upon Him, with the inevitable result that it crushed out His life. Only a God, fired with the same infinite love which He had, could have triumphed over suffering as He did, in order to save the perishing.

But this does not mean that Christ, of all the heavenly beings, alone endured a ministry of suffering, for the Almighty Father suffered with His beloved Son. God did not stand apart from Christ as one exacting His just dues, but was in Christ, suffering with Him in their joint ministry of salvation.

2 Corinthians 5

¹⁸ Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,

¹⁹ That is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

The Desire of Ages, p. 762:

God did not change His law, but He sacrificed himself, in Christ, for man's redemption.

2 Corinthians 5

¹⁹ God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.

Education, p. 263-264:

Those who think of the result of hastening or hindering the gospel think of it in relation to themselves and to the world. Few think of its relation to God. Few give thought to the suffering that sin has caused our Creator. All heaven suffered in Christ's agony; but that suffering did not begin or end with His manifestation in humanity.

The cross is a revelation to our dull senses of the pain that, from its very inception, sin has brought to the heart of God. Ev-

ery departure from the right, every deed of cruelty, every failure of humanity to reach His ideal, brings grief to Him. When there came upon Israel the calamities that were the sure result of separation from God—subjugation by their enemies, cruelty, and death—it is said that:

Judges 10

¹⁶ His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel.

Isaiah 63

⁹ In all their affliction He was afflicted...and He bore them and carried them all the days of old.

His Spirit “makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” As the “whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together” (*Romans* 8:26, 22), the heart of the infinite Father is pained in sympathy. Our world is a vast lazar house, a scene of misery that we dare not allow even our thoughts to dwell upon. Did we realize it as it is, the burden would be too terrible. Yet God feels it all.

In order to destroy sin and its results He gave His best Beloved, and He has put it in our power, through cooperation with Him, to bring this scene of misery to an end.

Matthew 24

¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Thus it is that for the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, all the ministering angels, and all the redeemed already in heaven where they are ministering in the sanctuary, there is a terrible aspect of that priestly ministry which is a very painful and sad work indeed. Even when the saints are transferred to heaven subsequent to Christ’s second advent, there will be the painful occupation of the redeemed as they examine the cases of all those who will have been lost, and confirm the decisions in regard to them already made by Christ.

The Great Controversy, p. 660-661:

During the thousand years between the first and the second resurrection the judgment of the wicked takes place. The apostle Paul points to this judgment as an event that follows the Second Advent.

1 Corinthians 4

⁵ Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts.

Daniel declares that when the Ancient of Days came,

Daniel 7

²² ...judgment was given to the saints of the Most High.

At this time the righteous reign as kings and priests unto God.

John in the Revelation says:

Revelation 20

⁴ And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them.

⁶ They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

It is at this time that, as foretold by Paul,

1 Corinthians 6

² ...the saints will judge the world.

In union with Christ they judge the wicked, comparing their acts with the statute book, the Bible, and deciding every case according to the deeds done in the body. Then the portion which the wicked must suffer is meted out, according to their works; and it is recorded against their names in the book of death.

Satan also and evil angels are judged by Christ and His people.

No one could describe this as being pleasant work, this examination of the lives of the lost, and the determination of the punishment which each will receive. As we have learned from our study of God's character, the Judge of all the earth does not arbitrarily apportion the infliction of final justice, but instead, declares what their accrued sins will do to the transgressors. Sin, not Jehovah, is the punisher.

But, once the thousand years have ended, the wicked have all been destroyed, and the earth been recreated, there will no longer be any priestly ministry for the eradication of sin, with its elements of pain and suffering. All that will be eternally in the past. But the ending of that ministry will not terminate the Melchizedek priesthood, which will continue throughout all eternity but without the painful aspect of dealing with sin. Theirs will

be a loving service in which there will be known no such things as sorrow, suffering, disappointment, tragedy, or grief.

Revelation 21

⁴ And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.

The Great Controversy, p. 678:

The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love.

So, there will be a priesthood without suffering, but, once this truth is established, the question must arise: what need for a priestly order will there be? Apart from the ministry of sin, even in this world of iniquity, there are, for the priesthood, other responsibilities to be met, and services to be rendered. The two principal ones are leadership in worship, and teachers of the principles of righteousness.

Leadership in Worship

Heaven will be a place of unceasing worship of the Most High, and of never ending acquirement of more and still more knowledge of the character of God as revealed through the plan of salvation. Therefore, there will be a vast and most important work to be done which will require the services of the Melchizedek priesthood to lead the dwellers throughout the universe in their worship of the Everlasting Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and to be the mighty messengers through whom the light of truth will shine more and more brightly.

Let some consideration firstly be given to the Melchizedek priests' work as leaders in worship. As already stated, the inhabitants of the entire universe are continually worshiping and praising the Deity, not because the Almighty requires it of them, but

because of their intense appreciation of the wonders of divine love and the perfection of the kingdom-structure God has built for them.

This is not a denial of the fact that the Lord instructs His children throughout the universe and especially on this sin-cursed earth to worship and praise Him, but the point is that His telling us to worship Him is not an arbitrary requirement. It is not the mighty Ruler's making certain that He alone is securely maintained as the exclusive recipient of universal adoration, for, if this were so, God would be selfish and self-centered.

This is not the character of our loving heavenly Father who is the very embodiment of purest love, which is so complete, so infinite, that not even the slightest trace of selfishness can be found therein. Everything, without the least possible exception, is done by God for others, never for himself. Therefore, when He calls upon us to...

Psalm 103

¹ Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name!

–He does not have himself in mind, but is thinking only of us and our need. He knows He is the only Source of life, so that separation from Him is certain death. True worship of God strengthens this vital awareness of our total dependence upon the Almighty, and thus preserves us from losing our connection with Him with all the dire consequences thus entailed.

Of all the creatures in the universe, redeemed mankind is the life form best fitted and most eager to direct all of its praise, appreciation, and worship away from itself to its Lord. This is because its members have learned by bitter, personal experience the cost of forgetting that in God alone can we...

Acts 17

²⁸ ...live and move and have our being.

Sin is self-sufficiency. It directs our attention away from our Source, and thus dries up the stream of life and health so essential

to our existence and happiness. This truth is so simple, fundamental, and inescapable, that one wonders how it could ever be missed, yet the time came when the most intelligent of all the created ones, saw himself as more praiseworthy than was His Creator, even though such could never be. His incredible foolishness led to his utterly losing his grip on reality, and his sinking into eternal darkness, and now irredeemable status.

Nevertheless, he so craftily presented his case that the human family was tricked into following him into the realms of desolation and death. All would have perished as will Satan and all his angels, but for the few who have turned from the dark side back to the light. This means that they, by the time they are enthroned in heaven, will know by personal experience the horror of separation from God to some degree or another. They will have been there for themselves, and will have tasted the bitterness, desolation, despair, suffering and distress of that brief existence lived apart from God, the Source.

As they realize the depths from which they will have been elevated, the pit in which they might have been abandoned, their knowledge of God's incomparable goodness will have a convincing reality unknown to those who have never been on the dark side. They will be so enraptured with wonder, delight, gratitude, and appreciation, that praise and worship will literally burst forth from within them, like those who, having been healed by Christ, could not refrain from heralding His praises wherever they went. His power, perfection, and righteousness were the only things on their minds. They emerged as the best qualified and most active in sounding forth praises to God and Christ. They could not contain themselves in their desire that all men should know what they had seen and heard of the infinite love and beauty of the mighty Saviour, Healer, and Deliverer. So influential was their witness, that others were inspired to join in the joyous, exultant tributes, thus swelling the anthems of praise.

This pattern will be continued in heaven and the earth made new, where the members of the Melchizedek priesthood, by virtue

of their having been brought back from the realms of darkness, will be exuberant with adoration and praise for their Redeemer. Naturally then, theirs will be a ministry of praise and of leadership in that worship. Furthermore, it will be an essential ministry, and not merely a pointless activity. That spirit of independence, of self-sufficiency, and of separation from God, and thus from life, which asserted itself once, could arise again, and would but for certain added safeguards acquired during the six thousand years of wanton rebellion.

One of those insurances will be praise power which will continually direct the minds of every created being away from himself to the power, love, and perfection of the Almighty. Thus the role of the Melchizedek priesthood will be vital to the stability of the divine government for all eternity.

Many more pages could be written on the ministry of leadership in praise as a vital factor in protecting the inhabitants of the universe from entertaining the least temptation to separate from God, but we will now leave this aspect of the ministry of the Melchizedek priesthood in order to consider their even more vital role as teachers of God's grace.

Teachers of the Principles of Righteousness

Once God's kingdom has been built on earth as it is built in heaven, and, subsequent to the creation of the new earth, has been established beyond all question forever, then sin will never rise again anywhere to the least degree whatsoever. The entire universe will be spotlessly clean for eternity.

True believers in Jesus have no difficulty in accepting the facts of this, even though some are not able to understand why sin will never reappear in the universe. There are very definite reasons why this will be so, and these must be understood by those who would comprehend and prepare for the wonderful ministry of the order of Melchizedek.

Our study of the ministry of these illustrious kings and priests is not for the satisfaction of idle curiosity, but is a very serious

search into the establishment of gospel order in the coming kingdom. It is revealed truth. Therefore we are required to give close study to this divinely appointed priesthood in order to understand it and be prepared for our occupation of our position therein. If we neglect to learn gospel order now, we will have no place in the Melchizedek order when its full membership shall be assembled subject to the resurrection of the just at the Second Advent.

So then, before the fall of Lucifer, there was that exceedingly long period at any point of time in which sin could have risen, and in which at a certain point of time it did. Then there is coming the unending future during which it will be impossible for sin to ever reappear. It cannot, and it will not. Sandwiched between these two eternities will be the seven thousand years of the great rebellion. From these facts it must be deduced that there will have been added to the kingdom structure of the eternal future, certain insurances not found in the eternity of the past, and that is precisely the case.

Let us compare the two situations. When God created the universe, He determined in love that He would give to every one of the created intelligences the best He could possibly give them. This included building into them tremendous physical, mental, and spiritual powers, as well as placing under their command certain powers in nature such as electrical power. This was all very wonderful, but contained the potential for disaster as well as for blessing, for power misused or out of control is a terrible destroyer. Even the beautiful power of love will be a deadly destroyer if not under the kingly power of reason.

The Creator then was faced with a problem which was no problem to Him. The question to be decided was how to give man the love-gift of all these mighty powers without their destroying him? It could have been done by making him without the ability to think, reason and choose, a mere machine controlled by a keyboard, a being without personal freedom.

If that was the best that the Almighty could have done, then that is the way it would have been, but there is a better way which involved the presentation of one more love-gift, namely, law. This totally removed any necessity for any created being to be under the control of another mind including the mind of the Omnipotent. That wondrous truth is made plain in these words:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 34:

The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all intelligent beings depends upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. God desires from all His creatures the service of love-service that springs from an appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced obedience; and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service.

Jehovah knows far better than any that only in perfect, willing, and intelligent obedience to His laws can mankind live in safety and prosperity. Therefore, He seeks to establish this quality of obedience, not by taking control of the individual concerned, but by educating him to understand the blessings available to him through obedience including protection from loss, suffering, and death.

This perfect and willing obedience was all that was known throughout the entire universe until Lucifer arose in rebellion against the divine formula for life and prosperity, and rejection of it. Up until that time, there was no knowledge of evil or its sad fruits. But when the first creatures to fall turned their backs on righteousness, the very things which God declared would happen in direct consequence of their departure from correct principles of operation, did happen.

Prior to this development, God's word alone had been the way of life for all created intelligences. All had implicit faith in that word, and thus rendered implicit, unquestioning obedience to it. When Lucifer diverted his loyalties from the Godhead to himself, he established another voice of authority in heaven which obliged all to make a solid commitment for the one or the other. The an-

gels and the inhabitants of all the created worlds had to remain loyal to God, or defiantly join in the great rebellion. In this, it was a case of the authority of God's word versus the authority of the word emanating from the devil.

This would seem to pose no problem at all, for the authority of God's word is final and absolute. If the Almighty says it, it is the truth against which no one can argue. But, while none can change the fact that truth is the truth, men and devils dare to contend with the Lord's great verities, and do it so successfully that light is made to appear to be darkness, and darkness light. By the pen of inspiration it is described as...

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 36:

...the bewildering sophistry by which rebellion would seek to justify itself.

In order to settle the problem by His word, the Almighty convened a meeting of the heavenly intelligences in which He very clearly explained the structure of His kingdom. Almost was the problem solved. Almost did the bright angel Lucifer yield to the power in that word, but pride won the day. From that point on, the Word of God was not sufficient to quell the seething tide of rebellion; the great controversy now must be settled by demonstration as well as by declaration.

Proof of this is offered in the fact that during the four thousand years or so between the uprising of sin and sinners, and the crucifixion, the loyal angels' minds were not completely satisfied by the word of the living God. While it is true that they faithfully served the Creator during those four millennia, they did so with many unanswered, troublesome questions on their minds, for which the Word alone was not sufficient.

But, when they beheld the demonstration of the wisdom, perfection, love, and all-sufficiency of that word, whereby it was seen that God had not misrepresented either himself or the enemy, for them it was enough. They then had that added factor which made them eternally secure from Satan's bewildering sophistries, as it is written:

The Desire of Ages, p. 758-759:

Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds. The arch-apostate had so clothed himself with deception that even holy beings had not understood his principles. They had not clearly seen the nature of his rebellion.

It was a being of wonderful power and glory that had set himself against God. Of Lucifer the Lord says,

Ezekiel 28

¹² You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

Lucifer had been the covering cherub. He had stood in the light of God's presence. He had been the highest of all created beings, and had been foremost in revealing God's purposes to the universe. After he had sinned, his power to deceive was the more deceptive, and the unveiling of his character was the more difficult, because of the exalted position he had held with the Father.

At the peerless demonstration of the character of the everlasting Father and His only begotten Son given on Calvary's cross where righteousness appeared at its shining best, and evil at its ugly worst,

The Desire of Ages, p. 761:

Satan saw that his disguise was torn away. His administration was laid open before the unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe. He had revealed himself as a murderer. By shedding the blood of the Son of God, he had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings. Henceforth his work was restricted.

Whatever attitude he might assume, he could no longer await the angels as they came from the heavenly courts, and before them accuse Christ's brethren of being clothed with the garments of blackness and the defilement of sin. The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken.

Yet Satan was not then destroyed. The angels did not even then understand all that was involved in the great controversy. The principles at stake were to be more fully revealed. And for the sake of man, Satan's existence must be continued. Man as

well as angels must see the contrast between the Prince of light and the prince of darkness. He must choose whom he will serve.

As those beautiful, sinless angels understood in the light of the cross that which previously had been shrouded in mystery to them, they had a protection from falling into sin such as they had not been blessed with before sin entered the arena, as it is written:

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 1132:

The death of Christ upon the cross made sure the destruction of him who has the power of death, who was the originator of sin. When Satan is destroyed, there will be none to tempt to evil; the atonement will never need to be repeated; and there will be no danger of another rebellion in the universe of God.

That which alone can effectually restrain from sin in this world of darkness, will prevent sin in heaven. The significance of the death of Christ will be seen by saints and angels. Fallen men could not have a home in the paradise of God without the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Shall we not then exalt the cross of Christ?

The angels ascribe honor and glory to Christ, for even they are not secure except by looking to the sufferings of the Son of God. It is through the efficacy of the cross that the angels of heaven are guarded from apostasy. Without the cross they would be no more secure against evil than were the angels before the fall of Satan. Angelic perfection failed in heaven. Human perfection failed in Eden, the paradise of bliss. All who wish for security in earth or heaven must look to the Lamb of God.

The plan of salvation, making manifest the justice and love of God, provides an eternal safeguard against defection in unfallen worlds, as well as among those who shall be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Our only hope is perfect trust in the blood of Him who can save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. The death of Christ on the cross of Calvary is our only hope in this world, and it will be our theme in the world to come.

These statements make it very clear that there will be present in the world to come a totally effective protection against the re-emergence of sin which was not present before angelic perfection

failed in heaven and human perfection failed in Eden. Because of the presence of this factor, it will be absolutely impossible for sin to rise again.

And what will that factor be? It will be the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ on Calvary by which not only was the price paid for our redemption, but, equally importantly, the true character of God and the nature of His principles of operation were fully revealed on the one hand, while on the other, sin and Satan were fully exposed for what they are.

This does not mean that the principles of perfect righteousness, which found their greatest expression on the cross, were new or different from what had always been there. The principle of the cross is the principle of self-sacrificing love, of dedicated service to others regardless of the cost to the server.

On the other hand, the principle by which the satanic kingdom operates is service to one's self no matter what this may cost others, whose loss is your gain.⁵ It was the principle of the cross which Lucifer rejected in favor of service to himself. His ascent toward his goal of personal supremacy over the entire world is slippery with the blood of others. There is no scruple he will not discard, no loyalties that he will not betray, no principle that he will not violate, and no subterfuge to which he will not turn, in his determination to reign supreme.

But all this was not apparent when the controversy opened. Because no challenge had ever been previously mounted against the divine order, no opportunity had been given to really test and prove the integrity of the divine kingdom-building structure. Further, with a cunning possible only from a mind as highly developed as Lucifer's from spending an untold length of time in God's service and presence, the devil made it appear that he was in the right and God in the wrong.

⁵ See *Behold Your God*, Chapter 20, "The Way of the Cross."

The Desire of Ages, p 758-759:

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But, at the cross where righteousness appeared at its radiant best, and sin at its ugly worst, every possible question that could be asked in regard to the character and government of God was answered.

The Great Controversy, p. 652:

The mystery of the cross explains all other mysteries.

This does not mean that the books of record will be closed once the issues of the long-standing contest are resolved. It will not be enough for the redeemed, the angels, and the unfallen inhabitants of the universe to study through the subject but once. Instead, there will have to be continuous, ever deepening study into the inexhaustible theme of God's solution to the problem, which solution is the gospel of Jesus Christ, the creative power of God to save from physical, mental, and spiritual bondage, separation from God, and ultimately, eternal death.

The Great Controversy, p. 499:

Satan's rebellion was to be a lesson to the universe through all coming ages, a perpetual testimony to the nature and terrible results of sin. The working out of Satan's rule, its effects upon both men and angels, would show what must be the fruit of setting aside the divine authority. It would testify that with the existence of God's government and His law is bound up the well-being of all the creatures He has made.

Thus the history of this terrible experiment of rebellion was to be a perpetual safeguard to all holy intelligences, to prevent them from being deceived as to the nature of transgression, to save them from committing sin and suffering its punishments.

Satan's rebellion was to be a lesson, or a theme to be studied, not just for once, but "...through all coming ages." It is to be a "perpetual testimony." There will never come a time when the subject will be laid aside. The eyes of all created beings must forever behold the sufferings and death of Christ, for there is no other place of security. Let not the impression be formed that the saints throughout the universe will regard this study requirement as an exercise to be dutifully performed, for, on the contrary, they will approach the subject with eager, inquiring minds.

The Desire of Ages, p. 19:

Our little world is the lesson book of the universe. God's wonderful purpose of grace, the mystery of redeeming love, is the theme into which "angels desire to look," and it will be their study throughout endless ages.

All of this brings us to the teaching role to be filled by the illustrious members of the Melchizedek priesthood. Already it has been noted that, in the universe freed from sin, each of them will be messengers. Now we are to see what they shall teach.

Isaiah 43

¹² Therefore you are my witnesses says the Lord, that I am God.

This also we shall be in eternity.

Education, p. 308:

For what was the great controversy permitted to continue throughout the ages? Why was it that Satan's existence was not cut short at the outset of his rebellion? It was that the universe might be convinced of God's justice in His dealing with evil; that sin might receive eternal condemnation.

In the plan of redemption there are heights and depths that eternity itself can never exhaust, marvels into which the angels desire to look. The redeemed only, of all created beings, have in their own experience known the actual conflict with sin; they

have wrought with Christ, and, as even the angels could not do, have entered into the fellowship of His sufferings; will they have no testimony as to the science of redemption—nothing that will be of worth to unfallen beings?

The answer is that, of all the created beings involved, the saved of this earth will be able to make the most valuable and the most illuminating contributions to the knowledge of the incredible wisdom and love of the everlasting Father as manifested in the plan of salvation.

There are three classes of witnesses to the perfection of the divine solution to the sin-problem:

The first class are the inhabitants of distant worlds who, although they are following the progress of the struggle between the forces of light and darkness with all-absorbing interest, are not participants in the battle. Yet, what they see of the suffering and loss experienced on earth together with the death of God's dear Son, is more than sufficient to keep them from transgression. They are fixed in their determination not to have in their galaxies what they see infecting this earth, and justifiably so. They long with the angels and the redeemed to search more deeply into the issues and solutions of the great controversy.

Next are the holy, ministering angels who are much more intimately involved in the war against evil. They will have fulfilled a vital role in protecting God's people from Satan's malice, and in freeing the captives held by the chains of sin. Obviously, they will be much better acquainted with the power of the gospel on the one hand, and the might of sin on the other. From what they have known from very close contact with the protagonists, they will be even more secure than those living on distant galaxies.

Then there is the third and final class of created beings—the members of the human family who have been rescued from the power of sin and elevated to the position of joint heirs with Christ. These have known in their own persons the binding, destructive power of sin, its frustration, misery, pain, hopelessness, darkness, and so forth.

For them, the presence of sin and its terrible consequences was not merely something to be observed, but was known to them as a personal experience. They knew the power of sin, for it had held them in its grip. They knew the futility of struggling against it in their own power. They understood the sheer desperation of their situation until they had abandoned all hope of saving themselves, and had cast their helpless selves on the mercy of their Redeemer.

Then they knew the actual power of the gospel to save them personally from sinfulness, and to fill them with the peace of sins forgiven. To them, the gospel is no speculative theory, but a living, working, saving, recreating, total solution to every problem which could ever arise.

Obviously, the redeemed who will make up the membership of the Melchizedek priesthood, will be the most effective witnesses available to God to be the messengers through whom He can continually reveal the saving wonders of the gospel. This will be their eternal ministry as priests and kings unto God.

Education, p. 309:

In our life here, earthly, sin-restricted though it is, the greatest joy and the highest education are in service. And in the future state, untrammled by the limitations of sinful humanity, it is in service that our greatest joy and our highest education will be found-witnessing, and ever as we witness learning anew...

Colossians 1

²⁷ ...the riches of the glory of this mystery;...which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

So then, there is a pressing need of, and work for, an order of highly qualified kings and priests to serve the complex needs of a universe saved from sin, of which more will be learned as time goes by.

6. The Testimony of God's Redeeming Love

WE WILL now give further consideration to the work of the kings and priests of the Melchizedek order after sin and sinners have been exterminated.

Heartrendingly tragic as that awful wastage of human life will be, it is grimly necessary in order to establish unblemished peace in the universe. One's mind sickens with horror at the realization of it. Oh! What a burden for the lost and perishing begins to develop as we are aroused to see almost the entire race descending unsaved into Christless graves while we do so little about it.

We have been silent in the presence of those who know nothing of God's power to save them from sin and eternal ruin because, in our grave spiritual feebleness, we have been unable to penetrate the indifference manifested by so many toward spiritual issues, but, if we are to be numbered among those of the order of Melchizedek, we must first learn to have a telling witness for Christ now.

Of all the created intelligences inhabiting the universe, those who, from this one rebellious planet, have actually experienced personal deliverance from sin and death, are best fitted to witness to the holiness, justice, love, righteousness, and perfection of the everlasting Father.

This is not the only qualification with which they will be endowed. These noble creatures will also be in possession of another begotten life—that of the Creator. By virtue of this superior life in them, they will be able to enter into the counsels of the Omnipotent as no other creature can do. Thus they will be constantly receiving life and light from God to impart to others.

While we need to be ever mindful of this, at this point in our study we are investigating how it is that their experiences in escaping from sin fit them for the highest positions as instructors in righteousness in the kingdom when it is finally established in freedom from any further challenges. We also need to understand how it will be that what they have gained by personal experience

in their battle to recover from sin will, when taught to others, serve to render all concerned immune from ever again yielding to the power of evil.

God Is the Source of All Light

I want now to more specifically delineate how this will be done in strict observance of gospel order, for there is the danger that we may misunderstand the source from which the witness of personal experience comes. I say this because the point has been stressed that it is because of those experiences through which they have passed that the members of the order of Melchizedek have a superior witness in comparison to all others. This would seem to assign to our experiences the elevated role of sources of information shared by no other. If this were true it would deny the fact that God is the sole Source of all truth, that no one can have anything except it came from the everlasting Father through Jesus Christ.

Both of these truths are eternally right, even though at first they appear to be contradictory. All light does come from the Lord, while those who have the strongest experiences in that light do have the most powerful witness to give. When the light from God first reaches the guilty sinner, it finds him experiencing the darkness and despair which is the lot of those in the pit of sin. In the cases of those who respond to the divine offers of mercy, there follows the passage through the *Romans 7* experience, and, if he goes on accepting the light offered to him, he emerges into the experience of glorious deliverance from sin into righteousness. From that through which he has passed he has learned much that remains forever unknown by those who have never sinned.

For the person who passes from darkness to light, the experience through which he passes is the product of that light, and is not something in addition to it, or apart from it. He is what he has become because of the saving power in the light shining upon him. That light is the Word of God and comes to him as the prom-

ises of God. In that living light shining upon him from above is nothing short of the creative power of the Almighty himself.

The Ministry of Healing, p. 122:

The same power that Christ exercised when He walked visibly among men is in His word. It was by His word that Jesus healed disease and cast out demons; by His word He stilled the sea and raised the dead, and the people bore witness that His word was with power. He spoke the word of God, as He had spoken to all the prophets and teachers of the Old Testament. The whole Bible is a manifestation of Christ.

The Scriptures are to be received as God's word to us, not written merely, but spoken. When the afflicted ones came to Christ, He beheld not only those who asked for help, but all who throughout the ages should come to Him in like need and with like faith. When He said to the paralytic,

Matthew 9

² Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven;
—when He said to the woman of Capernaum,

Luke 8

⁴⁸ Daughter, be of good cheer; your faith has made you well;
—He spoke to other afflicted, sin burdened ones who should seek His help.

So with all the promises of God's word. In them He is speaking to us individually, speaking as directly as if we could listen to His voice. It is in these promises that Christ communicates to us His grace and power. They are leaves from that tree which is...

Revelation 22

² ...for the healing of the nations.

Received, assimilated, they are to be the strength of the character, the inspiration and sustenance of the life. Nothing else can have such healing power. Nothing else can impart the courage and faith which give vital energy to the whole being.

Education, p. 253:

Whatever gift He promises, is in the promise itself.

Luke 8

¹¹ The seed is the word of God.

As surely as the oak is in the acorn, so surely is the gift of God in His promise. If we receive the promise, we have the gift.

So then, he who in the pit of sin receives the promise of God, is receiving the life and the light which is as surely in the promise as the oak is in the acorn. As he receives this endowment of light and life, and only as he does so, can he rightly interpret the experiences through which he is being led by the truth in the word. Therefore, not only does the light shining on his pathway find its Source in the Omniscient One, but the messages conveyed to him in his experiences are likewise all from above.

God's Testimony vs. Our Testimony

Let me emphasize the thought that only as the sinner understands his experiences in the light shining on him from heaven, can he rightly evaluate and interpret them. This is confirmed by the reactions of the wicked to the experiences through which they pass in their slavery to sin. Unless enlightened by the Holy Spirit, they never correctly comprehend the situation in which they find themselves.

There are many examples recorded in the sacred writings of the rejecters of divine grace misinterpreting the experiences through which sin was taking them. A striking case was the controversy between Job and his deeply religious, self-appointed counselors. They advanced one interpretation of the situation, against which the Lord's servant countered with the truth. Finally, the Lord declared His recognition that Job, and not his "friends," had the correct view of his sufferings.

Job 42

⁷ And so it was, after the Lord had spoken these words to Job, that the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.

Another occasion was when Jesus declared to the Jews:

John 8

³² And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

The Saviour was speaking of spiritual bondage, and not physical, but those to whom He spoke were quite unable to see in His words anything other than a physical application. Even so, they walked so deeply in darkness that they denied ever being in bondage to any man, when, at that very time, they were under Roman domination.

Perhaps the best known of all spiritual failures to rightly interpret the situation is found in Nicodemus' misunderstanding of Christ's diagnosis of his spiritual condition.

Then too is the Laodicean appraisal of their being rich, increased with goods, and in need of nothing, when the truth is that they are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, naked, and in need of everything.

A True Evaluation of Our Experiences

I have found by the Word of God shining on numerous experiences, that sinners seeking salvation must be led under the ministry of the Holy Spirit to see themselves as they really are. This is always an essential first step, which, once accomplished, clears the way for that which is to follow. It is safe to say that everyone who has found a true conversion involving deliverance from the sin-master, has obtained a true evaluation of his experiences.

So, if both the light by which we are directed on our way to heaven, and the correct evaluation of the experiences through which we pass, are all from heaven, then what is the point in having those hard lessons? How is it that the redeemed learn so much from them that they become the best qualified throughout eternity to declare the wonders of salvation?

The answer is very simple. Though never organized into existence by God who tempts no one, these situations, problems, and experiences are divinely appointed teachers, just as surely as are the written word, the created truth as found throughout nature,

the ministry of Christ, the Holy Spirit, the work of the angels, and the witness of those who have already joined with Christ. None of these teachers are the Source of that which they communicate to those who are their students. They each teach only that which they have firstly received from the Omniscient One—the everlasting Source of all light and truth.

Even Christ Is Taught by the Father

Some might consider that Christ would be an exception to this, that He would likewise as the Father, also be the Source, but He testified otherwise of himself.

John 5

³⁰ I can of myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is righteous, because I do not seek my own will but the will of the Father who sent me.

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.

²⁰ For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel.

All this Jesus summed up in this testimony:

John 8

²⁸ But as my Father taught me, I speak these things.

These declarations of Jesus assure us that He understood His position as “The Teacher sent from God,”⁶ and faithfully occupied that position. He did not come to the earth as the Source, but as the Messenger.

Education, p. 73:

Through Christ had been communicated every ray of divine light that had ever reached our fallen world.

God has ever been the Source who reveals all that which can be revealed, through His Messenger,

⁶ *Education*, p. 73.

The Desire of Ages, p. 19:

Immanuel,...God with us.

This means that we are not to limit the messengership of Jesus to His earthly appearance and sojourn. Rays of light came to our fallen world through Him long before and up till His first advent, and have been coming through to the sons of men ever since. Therefore, throughout the entire span of human history, Christ has been, is, and ever will be the Teacher of all teachers, the Messenger of God.

What makes this ministry of Christ to be a cause for amazement, wonder, and adoration is the fact that Christ is so truly God with all the powers possessed by His Omnipotent Father, that, if He chose not to remain submissive to the role of Messenger, He could occupy the position of Source. Satan did his devilish best to pressure Him into breaking away from His assigned position even for an instant, but, fortunately, he failed to the uttermost.

The Desire of Ages, p. 761:

Could one sin have been found in Christ, had He in one particular yielded to Satan to escape the terrible torture, the enemy of God and man would have triumphed. Christ bowed His head and died, but He held fast His faith and His submission to God.

Incredible was the exaltation of Christ by all the inhabitants of heaven, but this did not effect the slightest change in the position of Christ. He was, and is, and ever will be the mighty Messenger who teaches only what He has received from His Father. His testimony of himself is still true:

John 8

²⁸ But as my Father taught me, I speak these things.

This truth is powerfully reiterated in the opening verses of the last book in the Bible:

Revelation 1

¹ The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants things which must shortly take place.

The absolute submission to His Father's will which characterized His life on this earth, is continued in heaven after His ascension, as is powerfully evident from this introduction to *Revelation*.

Jesus Christ upon His return to heaven, certainly had the omniscience to know all there was to know about himself, and had the power to reveal that to the church, but, for Him to have done so from himself would have been just as much a setting aside of the kingdom-building structure, as Lucifer attempted to accomplish in his fearful rebellion. Instead of His presenting the revelation of himself which was from himself, He communicated only that which the Father gave Him, thus setting the example for all other members of God's kingdom.

This is apparently true even of the Holy Spirit of whom Jesus said:

John 16

¹³ However, when He, the Spirit of Truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

Thus with meticulous faithfulness, both Christ and the Holy Spirit live according to the principles of Gospel Order. Their faithful submission to the beneficent will of God, and the perfection of blessing which continually flows to all creation in consequence, is a radiant witness to the effectiveness of the divine order. In response to this glowing testimony to the glory of God, let us all resolve to copy the Pattern.

The Role of Personal Experiences

Now that we have seen the way in which all truth taught by Christ and the Holy Spirit comes not from them, but through them, we are prepared to understand the role of personal experiences in the struggle upwards from sinfulness to righteousness. They are wonderful teachers when their true meaning is seen in the light shining on them from God, through Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the pure and spotless angels.

But nothing of what they teach comes from themselves. They are simply instruments in divine hands to provide an education in things eternal for those who submit themselves to this instruction.

These important teachers and their priceless instruction are available to only one class of person, namely, those who have been conceived in iniquity. Unfortunately, not all who are eligible to receive instruction from these teachers actually do so, but reject them in favor of their own interpretations of life's experiences. These people end up hating God, blaming Him for their sad plight, and blaspheming His holy name.

But of those born in iniquity, there are the few who do respond to the divine appeals to accept salvation, and, by doing so, enter the school where, by personal experience, they gain deep insights into the plan of salvation as it is written:

Education p. 308:

The redeemed only, of all created beings, have in their own experience known the actual conflict with sin; they have wrought with Christ, and, as even the angels could not do, have entered into the fellowship of His sufferings.

There are many Bible records detailing the truth of this statement. I chose one of them, an experience in the life of David as being typical of the rest. As the champion who slew Goliath, David distinguished himself in Israel, and by his incorruptible behavior during his period of service to King Saul in his court, won the monarch's respect. In consequence,

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 649:

David was entrusted with important responsibilities, yet he preserved his modesty, and won the affection of the people as well as of the royal household.

But, as the king sank into apostasy, he came to feel that the son of Jesse was viewed more favorably by the people than he, and therefore constituted a threat to his throne. Fear and jealousy gripped him ever more powerfully.

God was tutoring David in preparation for the important position he was to occupy as king of Israel. To accomplish this, He worked through a number of Teachers: Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the angels, the written and created words, and personal experiences. Note the use made of the last of these in his vital education:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 649:

It was the providence of God that had connected David with Saul. David's position at court would give him a knowledge of affairs, in preparation for his future greatness. It would enable him to gain the confidence of the nation. The vicissitudes and hardships which befell him, through the enmity of Saul, would lead him to feel his dependence upon God, and to put his whole trust in Him. And the friendship of Jonathan for David was also of God's providence, to preserve the life of the future ruler of Israel.

The time came when David had to flee for his life. In the course of this escape, he arrived at Nob, the residence of the high priest, and the site of the sanctuary.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 656:

The priest looked upon him with astonishment, as he came in haste and apparently alone, with a countenance marked by anxiety and sorrow. He inquired what had brought him there.

The temptation to return a lying reply rested heavily upon David, and he yielded to it. It was a tragic mistake which cost the lives of the high priest and his household of over eighty-five innocent people. In the meantime David fled for refuge to the Philistines; an act of cowardly unbelief. Now David was learning by personal experience in the battle against sin, how weak and untrustworthy is the arm of flesh, and how vital it is to maintain unshaken faith in the almighty powers of Heaven.

But that which truly impresses me is the role filled by God who used these experiences, not to level judgmental condemnation against David, but to restore him, and fit him for his lifework and a place in heaven.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 657:

Yet this experience was serving to teach David wisdom; for it led him to realize his weakness and the necessity of constant dependence upon God. Oh, how precious is the sweet influence of the Spirit of God as it comes to depressed or despairing souls, encouraging the fainthearted, strengthening the feeble, and importing courage and help to the tried servants of the Lord! Oh, what a God is ours, who deals gently with the erring and manifests His patience and tenderness in adversity, and when we are overwhelmed with some great sorrow!

It was not God, but the defiant rebellion of Saul and David's lack of faith which produced the situation in which David failed so badly. But just as soon as God's erring servant placed himself in difficulties too great for him to solve, his loving heavenly Father was there to provide him with a correct evaluation of his situation and a revelation of the way of escape.

Under the convicting, enlightening power of the Holy Spirit, David knew he deserved the severest punishment, even death. He would have felt that God would have been fully justified in withdrawing from him, treating him coldly, maintaining an attitude of condemnation toward him, and of manifesting great displeasure on account of his behavior.

But none of these expectations were realized. Instead, the eternal One revealed himself as a tenderhearted, loving Saviour working to turn David's experiences from being destroyers to restorers. Under such circumstances, David's experience was providing him with a knowledge of God's character which could never have been acquired simply by declaration. David now really knew that his heavenly Father is truly loving and forgiving, not because he had read about it in a book, but because he had personally experienced it.

There is mighty power in such a personal knowledge of the ways of God. It is a power which charges with light and life the testimony of those who have passed through great experiences of divine deliverances. Such people know for themselves in their

own living experience that God is love, and that the gospel is the power of God to save from sin, sickness, and death. In this world which now is, while all the truly born again have something to tell about what the grace of God has done for them, only a few have great testimonies to bear. Those who do are the ones who have plunged most deeply into sin:

- as did Peter the night he betrayed Christ with cursings;
- as did Abraham when he took a second wife;
- as did David when he sinned; and
- as did Moses when he struck the rock.

All these and others received a personal knowledge of God unknown to those who had led circumspect lives. As a factor in increasing the divine kingdom, and in securing it through all eternity, these testimonies are of infinite value. The greater the sinner and the more marked his deliverance, the more valuable he is to God. Consider carefully the following statement:

The Ministry of Healing, p. 100:

Our confession of His faithfulness is heaven's chosen agency for revealing Christ to the world. We are to acknowledge His grace as made known through the holy men of old; but that which will be most effectual is the testimony of our own experience. We are witnesses for God as we reveal in ourselves the working of a power that is divine. Every individual has a life distinct from all others, and an experience differing essentially from theirs. God desires that our praise shall ascend to Him, marked with our own individuality. These precious acknowledgments to the praise of the glory of His grace, when supported by a Christ-like life, have an irresistible power that works for the salvation of souls.

It is for our own benefit to keep every gift of God fresh in our memory. By this means faith is strengthened to claim and to receive more and more. There is greater encouragement for us in the least blessing we ourselves receive from God than in all the accounts we can read of the faith and experience of others. The soul that responds to the grace of God shall be like a watered

garden. His health shall spring forth speedily; his light shall rise in obscurity, and the glory of the Lord shall be seen upon him.

Think of these principles in the light of the experience of the two demon-possessed men of Gergesa. No one could be in a worse spiritual plight than were they. So possessed were they by demons that, not only were they completely unable to save themselves from the overmastering power, they could not even express their desire for deliverance. Worse still, against their desires, they set about trying to kill the one Person in whom they dimly perceived to be their only hope.

By the creative power in Christ's word they were elevated to total freedom from the presence of both the sin-master, and the demons who had taken up residence in them. They were now in their right minds.

The Desire of Ages, p. 338:

Their eyes beamed with intelligence. The countenances, so long deformed into the image of Satan, became suddenly mild, the bloodstained hands were quiet, and with glad voices the men praised God for their deliverance.

There was not another person in Gergesa, who, though astonished as they were at the incredible transformation in these men, knew in their own experience what those two knew of the love and power of God. Therefore, none could give a testimony to compare with theirs. No other life in that vicinity at that time qualified as they did, to be God's witnesses.

The Desire of Ages, p. 340:

The two restored demoniacs were the first missionaries whom Christ sent to preach the gospel in the region of Decapolis. For a few moments only these men had been privileged to hear the teachings of Christ. Not one sermon from His lips had ever fallen upon their ears. They could not instruct the people as the disciples who had been daily with Christ were able to do. But they bore in their own persons the evidence that Jesus was the Messiah. They could tell what they knew; what they themselves had seen, and heard, and felt of the power of Christ.

This is what everyone can do whose heart has been touched by the grace of God. John, the beloved disciple, wrote:

1 John 1

¹ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life;

³ That which we have seen and heard we declare to you.

As witnesses for Christ, we are to tell what we know, what we ourselves have seen and heard and felt. If we have been following Jesus step by step, we shall have something right to the point to tell concerning the way in which He has led us. We can tell how we tested His promise, and found the promise true. We can bear witness to what we have known of the grace of Christ. This is the witness for which our Lord calls, and for want of which the world is perishing.

Thus, those who have a powerful, living experience in the things of God, have the most effective witness to give on Jehovah's behalf, but, not for an instant are we to subscribe to the idea that we are to descend into sin in order to experience a greater manifestation of divine power in delivering us. To follow such a course is presumption, a step Christ forever condemned when He refused to cast himself from the pinnacle of the temple in order to claim the protecting ministry of the angel's. He who deliberately sins so that grace might the more abound, is placing himself on very dangerous ground indeed.

Today, for want of an effective, living testimony from God's true people, "the world is perishing." The believers in Jesus have a fearful responsibility to keep their experience in Jesus alive and flourishing so that they will have a living witness with the capacity to win souls. The proclamation of the truth will attract but few, especially when there are so many theories in circulation, but there is a very different response when the missionary has a personal experience in that truth. He will find himself eagerly sought after by those yearning for salvation.

I have personally found this true in my own experience. Before the message of living righteousness opened to my mind and

transformed my life, I was a very busy soul winner who never won any souls, despite my going out to hunt for them at every opportunity. But, when I became blessed with a living experience, I no longer had to go hunting, for now, sensing that I had what they needed, they came to me. What a refreshing change it was, and it has remained that way ever since.

Not only are men and women who hunger and thirst after righteousness blessed by the living witness of an indwelling experience. The angels and the unfallen inhabitants of all the other worlds are greatly blessed as they see the living power of God transforming sinners into saints. Every achievement in the work of righteousness inspires them with joy, gratitude, and firmer loyalties to the divine standards. It is amazing to see that holy beings who have lived and served God for uncounted eons of time, could eagerly learn from humans who have been in existence for so short a period, but it is so!

Education, p. 308-309:

Even now,

Ephesians 3 [RV]

¹⁰ To the principalities and powers in the heavenly places [is] made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God.

Ephesians 2

⁶ And [He] raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

⁷ That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.

Psalms 29

⁹ In His temple everyone says, Glory!

And the song which the ransomed ones will sing—the song of their experience—will declare the glory of God:

Revelation 15

³ Great and marvelous are your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the saints!

⁴ Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify your name? For You alone are holy.

In our life here, earthly, sin-restricted though it is, the greatest joy and the highest education are in service. And in the future

state, untrammled by the limitations of sinful humanity, it is in service that our greatest joy and our highest education will be found—witnessing, and ever as we witness learning anew...

Colossians 1

²⁷ ...the riches of the glory of this mystery...which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

While the sinless inhabitants are learning much from their observation of the outworking of the great controversy, they are, as yet, cut off from direct communication with those who have a personal involvement in the struggle. With longing desire, they await the arrival of the ransomed so they can inquire into the mysteries of salvation, for their interest in this theme is all absorbing.

So it will also be with the redeemed—the members of the Melchizedek order of kings and priests. It will be their highest joy to witness to the wonders of redeeming love.

Unfettered by Mortality

As we ponder these truths at this present time, we may look upon the weakness of our present witness, and the frailty of our existing experience, and doubt that we could ever make any worthwhile contribution to the learning of the angels and the unfallen intelligences. We could easily fear that when these mighty individuals, rich with the knowledge gained through unknown eons of intense study and research, actually meet us, they will be utterly disappointed and will turn away feeling badly let down. But this shall not be the case. They will not be disappointed, but will be abundantly satisfied with us as their kings, priests, and teachers as they learn from us wonders otherwise inaccessible to them.

But how can this be? It will be because we will not then be as we now are. Consequently, our testimony will not be given then in the weakness and crudity which now so drastically limits its presentation, but will be declared in all the awesome power of those who will have been invested with immortality, and, having the begotten life of the everlasting Father, have penetrated into the midst of His throne and His presence. That is where in the en-

tire universe the light shines the brightest—brighter than a billion suns. There too, the light of truth shines with infinite, undimmed brightness. It is the place where every mystery is explained, every question answered, every problem solved, and every perplexity removed.

The redeemed will take all their experiences with them as they eagerly crowd into the presence of the Almighty, and, in the incredible light shining there, will understand the value, significance, power, beauty, and complete effectiveness of what they have passed through in their being delivered from sin.

I made the point earlier in this chapter that no one can understand his own experience except by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. That is true, both now and in eternity. Due to our extremely limited capacities at the present time, and our tenuous grip on things eternal, the Holy Spirit is able to show us very little of the truth about our experiences. But how different it will be when, upon our arrival in heaven, we are immersed in this flood of the most brilliant light in existence. Every obscuring cloud will be swept away and with marvelous clarity we shall then see the full message implicit in our testimonies of praise to the Lord.

It will be when we emerge from the presence of the Almighty One, with our surpassing witness to the glory of God, and eternally thereafter, that the sinless ones who have been there long, long before we will be, shall seek us out to learn from us what otherwise would remain hidden from them. What they then hear will not disappoint them, but will make them yearn for more.

It is evident that the redeemed will regard the Holy City as their home, but will travel as kings and priests to all the other worlds in their turn. After ruling and teaching there for a period of time, they will return to the city, before setting forth on another tour of delightful duty. All of this will be perfectly and smoothly organized by the King of kings and Lord of lords. The revelation of Enoch's work in heaven presents this order.

Early Writings, p. 40:

Then I was taken to a world which had seven moons. There I saw good old Enoch, who had been translated. On his right arm he bore a glorious palm, and on each leaf was written "Victory." Around his head was a dazzling white wreath, and leaves on the wreath, and in the middle of each leaf was written "Purity," and around the wreath were stones of various colors, that shone brighter than the stars, and cast a reflection upon the letters and magnified them. On the back part of his head was a bow that confined the wreath, and upon the bow was written "Holiness." Above the wreath was a lovely crown that shone brighter than the sun. I asked him if this was the place he was taken to from the earth. He said, "It is not; the city is my home, and I have come to visit this place." He moved about the place as if perfectly at home.

We can be certain that he was not visiting this place as a tourist, for it is as busy, ministering kings and priests that the redeemed visit the various inhabited planets throughout the universe. Emerging directly from the very heart of God's presence, supercharged with light, and life, and blessings,

The Great Controversy, p. 677:

...unfettered by mortality, they wing their tireless flight to worlds afar,

—where they minister what they have acquired in their communion with the Omnipotent One. In turn,

The Great Controversy, p. 677:

With unutterable delight the children of earth enter into the joy and the wisdom of unfallen beings. They share the treasures of knowledge and understanding gained through ages upon ages in contemplation of God's handiwork.

Try to fully visualize for yourself what a glorious and totally satisfying life it will be for the members of the holy order of Melchizedek. Think of what it will be like for them to enter right into Jehovah's very presence there absorbing the life and light of God until literally supercharged with power; then to journey with incredible speed to a far distant solar system where their arrival

will be hailed with the greatest joy by the residents there. Think then of the beautiful fellowship into which all will enter absolutely surpassing anything experienced on this earth.

Truly, it is not possible just now to have any adequate knowledge of what it shall mean to be a priest and a king after the order of Melchizedek. But this I do know: in the writing of this study, I have seen enough of the glory and wonder of it all to fill me with intense longing and determination to be there as a king and a priest. I pray the same response will be generated by every person who reads these words.

Of us when we arrive there will these words be true:

The Desire of Ages, p. 826:

Those whose course has been most offensive to Him He freely accepts; when they repent, He imparts to them His divine Spirit, places them in the highest positions of trust, and sends them forth... to proclaim His boundless mercy.

7. Further Qualifications

SO FAR, in the examination of the list of qualifications needed for one to be a member of the order of Melchizedek, we have noted that he had to be a man, although there was a time when he could have been a fallen, but repentant angel. We have seen too that the ending of the great controversy does not terminate the need for kings and priests.

Now it is time to continue our survey of the list of specifications by which Melchizedek is identified.

Experiencing Weakness

The next requirement is that:

Hebrews 5

² He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since He himself is also beset by weakness.

Our great King and High Priest of the Melchizedek order, could have chosen to have come to this earth:

1. With all the glory of His Father; or
2. In sinless, perfect humanity such as that possessed by Adam and Eve before they fell; or
3. In weakened, degenerate, sinful, mortal humanity as it was following about four thousand years of fearful degeneracy after the temptation and fall of our initial parents.

The one nature out of these three in which He came could only have been the last, for several vital reasons. These reasons have been covered in considerable detail in other publications,⁷ so I will deal briefly only with the main points here.

Christ's primary objective in coming to this earth was to save the kingdom from disintegration. Lucifer had mounted a mighty challenge against the government of the Most High God which called for the abolition of His laws on the charge that they could not be kept by created beings except under the most favorable

⁷ See *The Consecrated Way to Christian Perfection* by A. T. Jones, *The Destiny of a Movement* and *The Three Temples*, by F. T. Wright.

circumstances.⁸ Satan pointed to his own defection and to that of the human family as “clear proof” that the commandments of God could not be obeyed. There are many statements to this effect in the sacred, inspired writings:

The Desire of Ages, p. 24:

Satan represents God’s law of love as a law of selfishness. He declares it is impossible for us to obey its precepts. The fall of our first parents, with all the woe that has resulted, he charges upon the Creator, leading men to look upon God as the author of sin, and suffering, and death.

The Review and Herald, July 31, 1888:

From the beginning, it has been the special doctrine of the adversary of God and man, that the law of God was faulty and objectionable. He has ever represented the royal law of liberty as oppressive and unendurable. He has denoted it “a yoke of bondage.”

He has declared that it was impossible for man to keep the precepts of Jehovah. This has been, and still is, the work of Satan. This is the seductive doctrine that devils are seeking to spread throughout the world.

The Great Controversy, p. 489:

Through defects in the character, Satan works to gain control of the whole mind, and he knows that if these defects are cherished, he will succeed. Therefore he is constantly seeking to deceive the followers of Christ with his fatal sophistry that it is impossible for them to overcome.

A sophistry is cunning, seductive reasoning, which is made to look so like the truth that one is in very great danger of being deceived by it. It is to present darkness as if it were the light, and truth as if it were a lie. So skillfully has Satan done this work that the majority of mankind are thoroughly deceived thereby. Ministers from their pulpits are world leaders in proclaiming this deadly error.

Only those who have been delivered from the power of sin, and have had the vacuum filled with “Christ in you, the hope of

⁸ See *Entering into God’s Sabbath Rest*, Chapter 15, “God’s Witnesses.”

glory,” can heartily believe that the law is the expression of God’s love, and can be kept by His children. The deceptive sophistry by which the devil works tirelessly to destroy confidence in the precepts of Jehovah, is called a “fatal” sophistry, which means that its certain effect on those who are deceived by it, is eternal death. So then, to be saved from death, you must first be saved from Satan’s fatal sophistry. That is the work which Christ came to this earth to accomplish, as it is written:

The Desire of Ages, p. 24:

Jesus was to unveil this deception. As one of us He was to give an example of obedience.

Right here is a crucial truth. It was for all His subjects that this deception was to be unveiled, not just for one class among them. Certainly the point had to be made for fallen humanity, as much as for those who had never fallen.

But, it is obvious that if it could be proved that those with the greatest possible handicaps, under the most difficult conditions, could achieve perfect righteousness, then all those blessed with much more favorable circumstances have no reason to doubt that they too can live sinless lives. In other words, if fallen, sinful mortal man could obey every one of God’s precepts in a world full of every pressure and enticement to sin, while encumbered with the drastically reduced strength of sinful flesh, then most certainly a spotless inhabitant of a distant planet which has never known sin, would have no excuse for transgression.

Therefore, to expose Satan’s fatal sophistry that the law cannot be kept by humanity, whether sinless or sinful, Christ had to give His demonstration under the worst, not the best, possible conditions. It had to be a demonstration, for the declaration of it would not suffice. Both Christ and Satan had to prove their point by actually doing what they claimed. Therefore, Christ had to render perfect obedience to the law, while tabernacled in the same sinful, fallen mortal flesh and blood as borne by any sinner.

The Desire of Ages, p. 24:

As one of us He was to give an example of obedience. For this He took upon himself our nature, and passed through our experiences.

Hebrews 2

¹⁷ Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren.

If we had to bear anything which Jesus did not endure, then upon this point Satan would represent the power of God as insufficient for us. Therefore Jesus...

Hebrews 4

¹⁵ ...was in all points tempted as we are.

He endured every trial to which we are subject. And He exercised in His own behalf no power that is not freely offered to us. As man, He met temptation, and overcame in the strength given Him of God. He says,

Psalms 40

⁸ I delight to do your will, O my God: yea, your law is within my heart.

As He went about doing good, and healing all who were afflicted by Satan, He made plain to men the character of God's law and the nature of His service. His life testifies that it is possible for us also to obey the law of God.

Thus, of necessity, Jesus came to fight the same battle we have to fight under the same conditions, and in the same sinful, mortal humanity. By so doing, He understands by personal experience, as every Melchizedek priest must do, what it means to gain such a victory. Therefore,

Hebrews 5

² He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since He himself is also beset by weakness.

It is important with this as with other Scriptures, that we do not take the matter to extremes. Christ never came to prove that the individual in whom the sin-master is resident and reigning, can obey the commandments of God, for such a man, while he remains in that condition, most certainly cannot live righteously.

Until he is saved from bondage to the old sin master, every person who is a child of Adam and Eve, is, at the same time, the offspring of his or her father, the devil. In that situation, he is a helpless slave of sin. He may know what is right, and may exert all his energies in a determined effort to do what the law requires, but he will experience only miserable defeat.

By the living power of God, the old sin-master must be eradicated, and replaced with the presence of the life of Christ. He must become a...

2 Peter 1

⁴ ...partaker of the divine nature.

To win the battle, Christ combined divinity with humanity, for no other combination could possibly triumph. He was God in the flesh, and, before we can overcome as He did, the evil nature resident in our fleshly tabernacle must be exchanged for the divine nature. Then, as in the case of our great Exemplar, divinity is once again tabernacled in humanity.

The Ministry of Healing, p. 180-181:

The Saviour took upon himself the infirmities of humanity and lived a sinless life, that men might have no fear that because of the weakness of human nature they could not overcome. Christ came to make us “partakers of the divine nature,” and His life declares that humanity, combined with divinity, does not commit sin. The Saviour overcame to show man how he may overcome.

There is wonderful comfort in the knowledge that Jesus was beset with the same weaknesses which encumber us, for this means that He has already met and overcome every possible trouble and temptation that the devil can conceive. Therefore,

1 Corinthians 10

¹³ No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

The man who was beset by our weaknesses, and to whom every possible temptation “is common,” is Christ Jesus. Satan was so de-

terminated to destroy the plan of salvation, that he employed every possible temptation, and combination thereof, in his desperate purpose. But he exhausted his arsenal against our Champion without success.

The Great Controversy, p. 623:

Not even by a thought could our Saviour be brought to yield to the power of temptation.

The comfort of knowing that every victory has already been won, is enhanced by the fact that Christ truly came to us right where we are and overcame just as we must do. Thus we have complete access to Him and through Him in turn to the Father. This is a most vital qualification for a Melchizedek priest and king.

To help us to appreciate the value of such personal access to Jesus, we have but to remember the experience of Daniel and the wise men of Babylon. When King Nebuchadnezzar demanded of the wise men that they reveal to him both the dream and its interpretation, they sadly admitted that their gods did not dwell with mankind, and that therefore the secret was inaccessible to the king and his wise men. Here is their admission:

Daniel 2

¹⁰ There is not a man on earth who can tell the king's matter; therefore no king, lord, or ruler has ever asked such things of any magician, astrologer, or Chaldean.

¹¹ It is a difficult thing that the king requires, and there is none other who can tell it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.

But to Daniel the situation was very different, for his God was accessible to him through the Melchizedek priest and king, Jehovah Immanuel. Therefore, he could say with confidence:

²⁸ But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days.

The fact that we have a Melchizedek priest and king, that is, One who has total access to the Almighty on the one hand, and

reaches us where we are on the other, was the means of saving the lives of Daniel and the wise men that day. More importantly, it was the means by which one of the truly great victories for the cause of God was achieved.

The fact that Jesus demonstrated that the law could be kept to perfection by believers tabernacled in fallen, sinful, mortal flesh and blood, was but one of the reasons for His coming to earth “beset by weakness.” He also came to die for mankind in order to pay the redemption price for our salvation. But, sinless flesh and blood cannot die. Adam and Eve were quite immortal until they sinned. Paul makes this truth very clear in his letter to the Romans:

Romans 5

¹² Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.

Therefore, Christ’s sinless divinity did not die when He was crucified, for that would have been an impossibility. Only what sin has touched can and will die, and sin had never touched the divinity which dwelt in His flesh.

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 1113:

When Christ was crucified, it was His human nature that died. Deity did not sink and die; that would have been impossible.

All this places the modern professed Christian churches in an undefendable position when they teach that our Saviour came in the sinless flesh and blood with which Adam and Eve were blessed before the fall. They cannot hold such a position, and, at the same time, believe that He died on Calvary. This means that they have a Saviour who, because He could not die for them, could not save them. For them there is no Melchizedek order of kings and priests.

Another reason for the necessity of Christ’s being beset by the weaknesses of the people He came to save, lies in the fact that He not only had to give His life for them; but He had to give His life to them. His giving His life to them was required because, having

lost forever the eternal life God gave them in Adam, they had to be given another life to take its place. The only life available is the life of Christ himself.

For Him to give us His life required the implantation of His seed in the willing, human recipient. To do this He had to enter into a marriage of divinity with humanity. When He contracted that marriage, it would have been pointless to unite with sinless, immortal humanity, since that was not the humanity that needed His seed. Sin and death had not touched it, therefore it did not need a new life.⁹

Thus it was needful for the Melchizedek High Priest to have been beset with weakness in order to fulfill His commission and truly occupy His position. While the priests and kings of that order cannot, by their deaths, pay the ransom price as did Christ, the antitypical Lamb, it is still necessary for them to have been beset by weakness in order to uplift those to whom they minister, leading them to the riches of ever increasing fellowship with God.

It must be obvious that neither in type nor antitype can the Holy Spirit be Melchizedek according to this specification, for He never has been, nor ever will be, beset by weakness. Nor was Christ the Melchizedek who met Abraham returning from the battle against the heathen kings, for, at that time, He had not yet been beset by weakness, nor would He be until He was born in Bethlehem.

We are left no option then but to continue our survey of the identifying marks of this great man until we arrive at a knowledge of who He was.

Atonement for His Sins

The next point is that because he shares the weaknesses of the people, he must receive the atonement for his sins even as they must for theirs, as it is written:

⁹ See *The Living and the Dead*.

Hebrews 5

³ Because of this He is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.

The priests of the Old Testament Levitical system were one with the people and found deliverance from their sins in the same way as did the people. If the priest sinned, there was a stipulated sacrifice he must make, just as it was with the people when they sinned, in order to obtain expiation for their transgressions.¹⁰ On the great day of atonement, the high priest first offered the bullock for himself and his family, before making the atonement for the people.¹¹ As they thus demonstrated their faith in the antitypical Sacrifice, Jesus, the Lamb of God, they obtained deliverance from both the guilt and the power of their sins. They recognized themselves to be members of the sinful race, not one member of which had escaped pollution,

Romans 3

²³ For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

This is also true of the Melchizedek priesthood. All of its members are taken from fallen, sinful humanity, each of whom had to rely on the blood shed on Calvary for the expiation of his sins. This includes the High Priest of the order, Jesus Christ, as the Scripture says:

Hebrews 5

³ Because of this He is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.

As we read these words, we tend to look upon Christ as an exception from this condition, for He never had any sins of His own to confess, and this is true. But, He had the same fallen, sinful, mortal human nature as those He came to save. Note carefully that it was a sinful, and not a sinning human nature, even though it could have been. But, as we well know, Jesus never sinned, not even in thought let alone in action, throughout His childhood,

¹⁰ See *Leviticus* 4.

¹¹ See *Leviticus* 16.

youth, and manhood, even though tempted to a greater degree than any other person.

But in order to come to us where we are before being born again, He had to be made sin, which happened in Gethsemane. He did not sin, but took our sins upon himself and was numbered with the transgressors as fully as if He had committed those sins himself. For these sins He needed atonement.¹²

The Desire of Ages, p. 88:

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. 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. Thus He would have failed of carrying out the plan for our redemption. Had He even admitted that there could be an excuse for sin, Satan would have triumphed, and the world would have been lost. This is why the tempter worked to make His life as trying as possible, that He might be led to sin.

But, no matter how free He was from sinning, nor how spotless He was in His divine nature, the very fact that He tabernacled in fallen, sinful, mortal human nature, imposed on Him the necessity experienced by every true believer, that of approaching the Father through an intercessor administering the blood of the atonement.

No man, while living upon this earth, can approach unto God directly. He must do it through a Mediator who must be able to apply the efficacy obtained by Christ on Calvary, in order to make the mediatorial service effective. The principle involved here is plainly set forth in these words:

¹² For a further explanation of the extent of Christ's sinful condition, see *The Destiny of a Movement*, Chapter 10.

Selected Messages, vol. 1, p. 344:

The religious services, the prayers, the praise, the penitent confession of sin ascend from true believers as incense to the heavenly sanctuary, but passing through the corrupt channels of humanity, they are so defiled that unless purified by blood, they can never be of value with God. They ascend not in spotless purity, and unless the Intercessor, who is at God's right hand, presents and purifies all by His righteousness, it is not acceptable to God. All incense from earthly tabernacles must be moist with the cleansing drops of the blood of Christ.

He holds before the Father the censer of His own merits, in which there is no taint of earthly corruption. He gathers into this censer the prayers, the praise, and the confessions of His people, and with these He puts His own spotless righteousness. Then, perfumed with the merits of Christ's propitiation, the incense comes up before God wholly and entirely acceptable.

That is the way it is with every person seeking salvation upon whom is the curse of sinful, mortal flesh and blood. From this rule, Christ, when He was upon this earth, could not be exempt. He possessed the same flesh and blood as the fallen children of Adam do, so that, if they in that sinful nature had to meet certain conditions before their prayers could be acceptable to God, then Christ in the same nature had to meet the same conditions before His prayers could be acceptable before God.

It was only when, in heaven, He was the minister of God's grace, that He could be the Mediator and Intercessor mingling the incense of His own righteousness with the prayers of true believers. He could not perform this work while on earth, where He himself needed an Intercessor, though it was by the administration of His own blood that both He and His people received the vital covering needed by them to approach the Father.

As studied earlier, the Melchizedek priests, Enoch, Moses, and Elijah, who were already in heaven as they had to be before Christ could vacate His work up there, were the mediators and intercessors between God and His people including Jesus during the entire period that the Melchizedek High Priest was of neces-

sity absent from the Father's presence. This mediatorial ministry on the part of these three men, is plainly pictured in *Revelation* 4 and 5, where the twenty-four elders, and the four living creatures, are shown carrying censors from which issued incense which is the prayers of the saints.

But, while others than Christ can fill the office of Mediator, only the blood of Christ can make the prayers of penitent believers acceptable before God, whether the suppliant be Christ himself, or one of the people. Thus, when Christ officiates as the Mediator, it was by His own blood. When Enoch, Moses, Elijah, one of the twenty-four elders, or one of the priests symbolized by the four living creatures fill the role of mediator, they do not mingle their blood with the prayers of saints in order to render them acceptable to God.

It is by the blood of Christ alone that they present to the Father the penitence, praise, and prayers of true believers. But since His resurrection, Christ has been divested of sinful, mortal flesh and blood, and He no longer needs mediation for himself as He did when on earth.

Called by God

We will now move on to the next identifying mark of this mighty minister, which is that he can never be self-appointed, but must be called of God.

Hebrews 5

⁴ And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was.

⁵ So also Christ did not glorify himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: You are my Son, today I have begotten You.

⁶ As He also said in another place; You are a Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

In God's kingdom no places are provided for those who would appoint themselves to any position whatsoever. The original sin involved Lucifer's assigning himself a position to which God had

never appointed him, and, when he did, the tragedy began to unfold.

The fact that men with the best of intentions, and the greatest of self-sacrificing zeal, put themselves to work in the most worthy of all causes—the building of God’s kingdom—does not for a moment sanctify that work. Self-sent workers will always be a curse to the mission of God and His people. To qualify for a divinely appointed place among the members of the Melchizedek order, you must be fully surrendered to the divine will, for:

Hebrews 5

⁴ No man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was.

1 Corinthians 12

²⁸ And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.

This is a vast subject which is covered fairly well in the book, *God’s Sabbath Rest*. So, rather than repeat the information already there, we will pass on to the next point.

What a vast field of study is opened to our minds in the next specification which reads:

Hebrews 5

⁷ Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear,

⁸ Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.

Here, Paul is of course speaking of Christ, the great antitypical High Priest of the order, but, it must be remembered that what is true of the antitype, is true also of the type and of every member of the order as well. In these verses is pictured Christ facing death, a trauma He encountered more or less every day of His earthly life as Satan did his uttermost to destroy Him, but never with such struggle and agony as He experienced in Gethsemane.

There He encountered His most desperate conflict with the powers of darkness as the sins of the entire world throughout all its history, were laid upon Him.

The Signs of the Times, August 14, 1879:

The wrath that would have fallen upon man, was now failing upon Christ.

At best, we can but dimly know by experience the incredible horror produced when the wrath of God falls upon man. As we learned in the study of God's lovely character, God's wrath is not God in a state of personal fury. This cannot be, for Jehovah never changes, but is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. What do change are the mighty forces our loving heavenly Father has invested in the earth for our benefit and blessing.

While His children obey the law and live righteously, the Almighty remains in perfect control of nature, which in turn is as peaceful as a placid lake or a gentle summer breeze. But, should men devote themselves to wickedness as they so frequently have done, the Omnipotent One loses His guiding control of nature which then collapses into a state of uncontrolled fury such as we are witnessing all too frequently in storms, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods, and so forth. These awesome manifestations of nature when let loose, generate sheer terror in those threatened by destruction as they find themselves unable to avoid the all-powerful flood of annihilating forces about to overwhelm them.

But this is not the most-to-be-feared manifestation of God's wrath, the one which came so very close to crushing out the life of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, and did in fact kill Him the next day upon the cross. In the Garden that night, there were no storms tearing the trees apart and hurling heavy branches through the air. There were no erupting volcanoes, no earthquakes, no floods, no conflagrations, nor anything else that would strike terror to the hearts of men. Instead, the disciples were able to sleep peacefully only a short distance from where the wrath of God was destroying the Son of God.

Furthermore, Jesus had demonstrated that the wildest of storms on the lake held no terror for Him, nor did the prospect of being hurled down a cliff by infuriated, religious bigots, or of being set upon by demon-possessed men. He had proved himself the Master in all such situations, but, in the Garden of Gethsemane, it was a very different situation.

The wrath of God which the Saviour faced on the stormy lake, and in the life-threatening presence of men under Satan's control, was but the effect of sin. However, in the Garden, the actual sin itself was laid upon Him. While the former induces terror, the latter produces horror which is the ultimate form of the wrath of God. In Gethsemane it threw Jesus into a state of mental anguish which no language can describe, and can only be known by experience.

It is that which will be known by every one of the rejecters of God's mercy, when, at the end of the final judgment, they will be left to reap the consequences of what they have sown. Then, when the full horror of sin becomes known to them, the pain of the fiery holocaust consuming them will seem as nothing.

In the Garden,

The Signs of the Times, August 14, 1879:

It was not bodily suffering from which the Son of God shrank, and which wrung from His lips in the presence of His disciples these mournful words:

Matthew 26

³⁸ My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here, [said He,] and watch with me.

He was bowed to the earth with mental anguish, and in an agony He prayed to His Heavenly Father. He felt the iniquity of sin, and the wrath of God against the violators of His holy law.

Consider those words,

He was bowed to the earth with mental anguish.

Christ was a strong man, physically, mentally, and spiritually, so that it required tremendous anxiety to "bow Him to the earth."

So great was the force involved, that the Son of God himself was astonished.

The Signs of the Times, August 14, 1879:

Christ was amazed with the horror of darkness which enclosed Him....The divine sufferer shuddered with amazement at this mysterious and terrible conflict.

That awful conflict was so terrible that it literally forced a bloody sweat from the pores of His skin. It was a horror beyond all description as it divested Him of any sense of His Father's love and presence. He was encompassed within impenetrable darkness from which He found no way of escape except by abandoning man to his horrible fate. The temptation to do so was all but overpowering especially when in desperate need of human comfort and support, He returned to His chosen disciples only to find them sleeping.

The Signs of the Times, August 14, 1879:

The disciples roused from their slumber to find their Master standing over them in a state of mental and bodily anguish such as they never before had witnessed. They saw the grief and agony of His pale face, and the bloody sweat upon His brow, for:

Isaiah 52

¹⁴ His visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.

The disciples were grieved that they had fallen asleep, so that they could not pray and sympathize with their suffering Lord. They were speechless with sorrow and surprise.

The suffering Son of God leaves His disciples, for the power of darkness rushes upon Him with an irresistible force which bows Him to the earth. He prays as before, and pours out the burden of His soul with stronger crying and tears. His soul was pressed with such agony as no human being could endure and live. The sins of the world were upon Him. He felt that He was separated from His Father's love; for upon Him rested the curse because of sin.

It was because He prayed with agonizing cries and tears, that He was able to possess the victory over sin and eternal death, and

thus qualified himself to be the Melchizedek High Priest. Knowing from personal experience what it meant to be held in total helplessness by the power of sin and death, and knowing what it cost to obtain complete deliverance from that bottomless, loathsome pit, He can in turn,

Hebrews 7

²⁵ ...save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him.

In like manner all those who will be members of that sacred order must know what it means to be in that pit, and how to escape from it by clinging through the unremitting prayer of faith to Him,

Hebrews 5

⁷ ...who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear.

It is once again clear and certain that at no time including the days of Abraham to whom Melchizedek appeared, did the Holy Spirit have to pray for salvation from death. Therefore, the Holy Spirit could never have been the Melchizedek who appeared to Abraham as some would have us believe.

No amount of prayerful, enlightened study can ever exhaust the light shining from Gethsemane. What we have presented here is but the barest introduction to the theme, and it is highly recommended that each believer make a deep study for himself of what took place in Gethsemane that fateful night.

Learned Obedience by Suffering

In the meantime, we move forward to the final specifications for Melchizedek kings and priests listed in *Hebrews 5*. They are these:

Hebrews 5

⁸ Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.

⁹ And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.

It is one thing to obey God's holy law in the immaculate environment of heaven while enjoying perfect and powerful physical,

mental, and spiritual health. Under those conditions, obedience is achieved without suffering, but it can never be the quality of obedience which is maintained under the worst possible conditions.

The flawless obedience rendered by Christ to qualify Him for the eternal priesthood, was bitterly and resolutely contested at every step by all the apostate forces of darkness, both human and demonic. These made it as difficult as possible to faithfully obey the divine laws, ever making it appear that disobedience is liberation from laws which are restrictive, limiting, and enslaving. To obey under these conditions is to really learn what it means to suffer for righteousness sake, and to learn obedience through suffering. Since Adam and Eve fell, every person aspiring to a place in Paradise must learn to obey against:

- persecution from the enemies of truth;
- the pressures of loved ones and friends;
- the terrifying witness of sight and circumstances;
- the threat of lost material support;
- betrayal, and so forth.

The history of the patriarch Job is, for instance, an excellent example of one who learned obedience through the things which he endured. Consider too the intense pain suffered by Abraham when called upon to obey God's requirement to sacrifice his precious son, Isaac. By such obedience these men came to understand the love of God, the structure of His kingdom, the righteousness of His holy law, the justice of His requirements, and the perfection of the plan of salvation. All this served to make them perfect, and thus qualify them to be the authors of salvation.

It is only in a certain special sense that the redeemed become authors of "eternal salvation to all who obey Him." The fullness of the authorship belongs to Jesus Christ who alone could give His spotless life for us and to us. In a much more limited sense, each redeemed soul is the author of salvation in that, as explained earlier, he will contribute great truths learned through personal experiences such as only fallen man can know, which will serve to

save the sinless beings from going into sin. Through them, God will provide a safeguard against evil which He was not able to provide before rebellion developed initially. In this sense, the Melchizedek kings and priests will be the authors of eternal salvation from any further rebellion, forever.

In closing this chapter, let us list the identifying specifications of a Melchizedek King-priest. They are:

- He must be taken from among men, for men;
- He must be beset by weakness so that he can have compassion on the weak and fully understand their need;
- He must offer for both his own sins and for the sins of the people;
- He must be called to his position by God;
- He must have experienced deliverance from death;
- He must have learned obedience through suffering;
- He must become the author of salvation to all who obey Him.

It is obvious that the Holy Spirit has never met these requirements and so could not be the Melchizedek of Abraham's day. Who then was the king-priest to whom Abraham paid his tithes? His identity will be disclosed in the next chapter.

8. The Identity of Melchizedek

HAVING laid down the seven principal specifications which must be met by all who will become Melchizedek priests and kings, Paul, in his kind but straightforward manner, advised the Hebrews of his time that they ought to be much more advanced than they were in their capacity to understand spiritual things.

He had much to teach them about Melchizedek, but their dullness of hearing prevented their receiving great light from heaven. To them he wrote:

Hebrews 5

¹² For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

¹³ For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.

¹⁴ But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

We of the present generation can only wonder what Paul knew about this great man, that we would be glad to know today. No doubt it was much more than he was actually able to communicate to them in his letter, which is known to us as *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. It is a solemn thought that their failure to keep pace with the advancing revelations from God, not only robbed themselves of great light, but also deprived future generations, including the present one, of truths essential to the finishing of the work.

This must impress us with the awareness of our solemn responsibility to keep pace with the advancing light lest our dullness of hearing be the means of depriving ourselves and others of the truths essential for the preparation for the coming conflict, and a place in the kingdom. At the same time, we are to be encouraged with the thought that, while not all that could have been made

manifest was brought to light back then, a great revelation of Melchizedek's position and work was placed on record despite the Hebrews' low level of experience.

So it was that, after expressing his regrets that so little could be revealed just then, Paul returns in chapter seven to the presentation of further information about this great king-priest.

Hebrews 7

¹ For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him,

² To whom Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated King of Righteousness, and then also King of Salem, meaning King of Peace,

³ Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.

⁴ Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils.

⁵ And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though they have come from the loins of Abraham;

⁶ But he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises.

⁷ Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better.

⁸ Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives.

⁹ Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak,

¹⁰ For he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

¹¹ Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron?

¹² For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law.

¹³ For he of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar.

¹⁴ For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood.

¹⁵ And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest

¹⁶ Who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life,

¹⁷ For He testifies: You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

¹⁸ For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness,

¹⁹ For the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

²⁰ And inasmuch as he was not made priest without an oath

²¹ (For they have become priests without an oath, but he with an oath by Him who said to Him: The Lord has sworn and will not relent, You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek),

²² By so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.

²³ And there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing,

²⁴ But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood.

²⁵ Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He ever lives to make intercession for them.

²⁶ For such a high priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens;

²⁷ Who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up himself.

²⁸ For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever.

In the first part of the chapter, Paul focuses our attention on the Melchizedek who lived on the earth in Abraham's day, while the latter part of the chapter deals with Melchizedek, the great Original. There is not the slightest problem identifying who the great Original is, for He can be none other than Jesus Christ.

But the specific identification of the Melchizedek to whom Abraham paid his tithe is somewhat more difficult though far from impossible. In fact, once he has been identified, we will marvel at how simple and obvious the solution is.

Who Is He?

So who is this man who had neither father nor mother, no genealogy or descent, no beginning, and no end of life? It would seem that no such man could exist, and still be a man.

There are, of course, some who could meet part of the specifications, such as Adam who did not have father or mother, and no descent, for he was a created being, the direct production of the Creator's handiwork. But Adam certainly had a beginning, and his life came to an end. Thus, because the Melchizedek for whom we are searching had to meet every specification, Adam does not qualify, for he could meet only some but not all.

There is the suggestion that Shem, the righteous son of Noah, was Melchizedek. But, while it is true that he was alive in Abraham's time, he does not meet the other specifications:

- he had a father, Noah, and a mother;
- he had a genealogy which stretched back to Adam;
- he had a beginning, for he was born in the year 1558 after creation;
- he had an end of life having died in the year 2158 after creation. Abraham outlived him by only twenty-five years.

Elijah, being translated, met the specification calling for an endless life, but he lived long after the days of Abraham, so could not have been the great king-priest who met and blessed Abraham.

Let us now turn to the positive determination of who this wonderful man was. At this stage, as a foundation for what must fol-

low, let us be settled on the fact that he was in truth a man even though that may seem to be an impossibility. Paul wrote:

Hebrews 7

⁴ Now consider how great this *man* was.

This, as we saw from *Hebrews* 5:1, is the first of the seven specifications which must be met by anyone aspiring to be a priest and a king after the order of Melchizedek. He had to be a man.

A very great assistance in arriving at the true knowledge of who he was is provided in the comparison made by Paul between the two priesthoods—those of Melchizedek and Levi. From this comparison, the Melchizedek order emerges as the superior of the two. Abraham, in whose loins rested the as yet unborn Levi, paid his tithes to Melchizedek, which meant that Levi in Abraham paid his tithes to Melchizedek, even though the Levites themselves when their time came, received tithes from their brethren.

Furthermore, Melchizedek blessed Abraham, and therefore Levi in Abraham. The fact that “beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better,” placed Melchizedek as the superior priesthood, and Levi as the lesser even though the latter performed a wonderful ministry.

But, the most significant point of comparison for the purpose of our identification here is this:

⁸ Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives.

The “mortal men” who receive tithes, are the members of the Levitical order, as distinct from the immortal men who are members of the Melchizedek order. The priest and king who met Abraham had...

³ ...neither beginning of days, nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually,

¹⁶ ...according to the power of an endless life.

Therefore the Melchizedek who blessed Abraham, never died, and is still very much alive right now. He was likewise alive in

Paul's day as is confirmed by the Holy Spirit speaking through the inspired apostle in these words:

Hebrews 7

⁸ ...of whom it is witnessed that he lives.

With confidence and authority, Paul declared that, in his day, the Melchizedek who blessed Abraham was still living. Today, we can still say with Paul:

⁸ ...of whom it is witnessed that he lives.

Abraham lived about two thousand years before Christ, and we are close to two thousand years after our Savior's first advent, which means that Melchizedek is at least four thousand years old. But where is he? If he were upon this earth, such an extraordinary man could not pass himself off unnoticed, nor would he attempt to hide himself from God's people, but would meet with them as he did with Abraham in his day.

Remember, He was a priest of the Most High God, a fact which constrained him to continual ministry. There was no possibility of his hiding himself away from the people, for he could not do that, and still be a true priest and king sent from God, to be wholly and only engaged in loving ministry.

So then, it is clear that today, though still living, the Melchizedek who met with Abraham is certainly not on this earth. He has departed this planet for places in God's universe unknown to us, as well as to heaven itself. This can only mean that, like Elijah, he was translated from this earth without seeing death. It is an experience so rare for a human being to be translated from earth to heaven without seeing death, that, so far, there have been only two men who have been so blessed—namely, Enoch and Elijah. This fact is confirmed in the following statement which deals with Moses' and Elijah's appearance on the Mount of Transfiguration:

The Desire of Ages, p. 421:

The disciples, awaking, behold the flood of glory that illuminates the mount. In fear and amazement they gaze upon the ra-

diant form of their Master. As they become able to endure the wondrous light, they see that Jesus is not alone. Beside Him are two heavenly beings, in close converse with Him. They are Moses, who upon Sinai had talked with God; and Elijah, to whom the high privilege was given—granted to but one other of the sons of Adam—never to come under the power of death.

The statement recognizes that the high privilege of translation given Elijah was accorded to only one other person. The individual referred to can be none other than Enoch, for, without question, Enoch was translated as surely as was Elijah.

Hebrews 11

⁵ By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death;...for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 88:

In the midst of a world by its iniquity doomed to destruction, Enoch lived a life of such close communion with God that he was not permitted to fall under the power of death.

This being true, then Melchizedek must have been either Enoch or Elijah. Obviously, he could not have been Elijah, for Elijah was not even born when Melchizedek blessed Abraham. Therefore, he could only have been Enoch who was certainly still living in Paul's day, not upon earth, but in heaven.

Without Father or Mother

At this point, it could be objected that, while Enoch had the power of an endless life in Abraham's day, he certainly had a father and mother, and therefore had a genealogy which stretched right back to Adam. These things being so, it could be argued that Enoch did not meet the specifications required to be Melchizedek.

To argue along these lines is to overlook the differences between Enoch as Enoch, and Enoch as Melchizedek, for, once those differences are seen and understood, all the difficulties disappear. It will then be plainly seen that Enoch was Melchizedek, once he had been translated. Let it be remembered that Melchizedek did not appear on earth until after Enoch was translated.

From his birth till his translation, Enoch was not Melchizedek. During that period, he had a father and a mother, a descent in which he was the seventh generation from Adam and Eve, and had a beginning of days. Not yet blessed with immortal flesh, he expected to come to the end of his days like anyone else. But, in the moment of his translation, great changes took place in Enoch, such as will again take place when the saints are raised on the resurrection morning, and will be transported to heaven with the one hundred and forty-four thousand. These changes completed his qualifications to become Melchizedek.

We will firstly consider what happened to Enoch's mortal, corruptible, sinful flesh and blood body which he received from his father, Jared, and his mother. That can never be taken to heaven, even though we shall need flesh and blood bodies in Eden restored. The Holy Spirit through the inspired prophet, Paul, declared that the flesh and blood human bodies will never be found in heaven nor upon the new earth:

1 Corinthians 15

⁵⁰ Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.

⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed

⁵² In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

⁵⁴ So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory.

⁵⁵ O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?

The Great Controversy, p. 322-323:

We have seen by the scriptures just given that when the Son of man comes, the dead are raised incorruptible and the living are changed. By this great change they are prepared to receive the kingdom; for Paul says:

1 Corinthians 15

⁵⁰ Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.

Man in his present state is mortal, corruptible; but the kingdom of God will be incorruptible, enduring forever. Therefore man in his present state cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

But when Jesus comes, He confers immortality upon His people; and then He calls them to inherit the kingdom of which they have hitherto been only heirs.

Seeing that none but an immortal, incorruptible humanity can enter heaven, it becomes necessary for every person who has set his heart on occupying his appointed place in the kingdom restored, to acquire that kind of flesh and blood from a heavenly Source. It is certainly not imparted by mothers and fathers who can only transmit to their children that which they themselves have—mortal, corruptible humanity, the kind which cannot go to heaven, not even in any modified state or improved form.

It needs to be emphasized that no modified improvements of anything which sin has touched, will be accorded a place in heaven.

The Desire of Ages, p. 172:

The Christian's life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. There is a death to self and sin, and a new life altogether.

2 Corinthians 5

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Isaiah 65

¹⁷ For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.

Thus the Lord declares that He is not engaged in patching up the old, but instead, He is committed to giving us a “new heavens and a new earth,” and a new body and a new spirit. A moment's consideration of these declarations by the Almighty will quickly show how certainly:

The Desire of Ages, p. 172:

The Christian's life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature.

When the Creator called into existence His love-gifts for the human family, He firstly created for them a beautiful home called "the Planet Earth." From the dust of that earth, He fashioned an immortal, uncorrupted human body, into which He breathed a sinless, spiritual life-force. When sin entered the lives of Adam and Eve, the human family was faced with the total loss of all three of these gifts. Had not Christ stepped in to provide mankind with probationary time in which to be redeemed, this deprivation would have been instant, permanent, and total. The fulfillment of the words:

Genesis 2

¹⁷ In the day you eat the fruit of it you shall surely die,

—would have been realized at once. But,

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 1, p. 1085:

The instant man accepted the temptations of Satan, and did the very things God had said he should not do, Christ, the Son of God, stood between the living and the dead, saying, Let the punishment fall on me. I will stand in man's place. He shall have another chance.

Because of Christ's incredible intervention, man did not lose his possessions in an instant:

1. His spiritual nature was the first to go, for this was lost the moment sin entered.
2. Next came the loss of his flesh and blood body when death overtook him.
3. Lastly will come the destruction of the earth which was so incredibly beautiful when it came from the Creator's hand. This final sweeping away of God's original gifts to man will be effected by the holocaust which will totally consume everything on the earth at the end of the millennium.

Through the effectiveness of the plan of redemption, these gifts will be totally restored to man in the reverse order from that in which they were first given:

1. The spiritual nature at the new birth;
2. The immortal, incorruptible human nature at the resurrection of the just; and
3. The new earth at the end of the millennium.

Let us now see that, in respect of each of these three gifts, there is the total elimination of everything which sin has touched, and the replacement of all that with an all-new creation. Nothing of the old will be retained. Instead, only that which is new will be there.

The easiest place to see this is in respect to the recreation of the earth after the wicked have come to their chosen and final end. As John was shown this in prophetic vision, he exclaimed:

Revelation 21

¹ And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.

We have no difficulty understanding that the old heavens and earth will have so completely passed away that there will be nothing left to modify or improve. The fire which will achieve this will return the earth to the formless emptiness that it was at the beginning of the first day of creation. The only way to make it habitable will be to repeat the same creative work which occupied the first six days of earth's history.

In the restoration of the spiritual life at the new birth, the same procedures are repeated. The evil nature is replaced by a new creation altogether.

2 Corinthians 5

¹⁷ Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

It can be no other way than by the exchange of mortal, corruptible flesh and blood for immortal, incorruptible flesh and blood. The old must totally pass away, and be as totally replaced. This

means that everyone who will be taken to heaven will go there without anything of the flesh and blood body acquired from a mother and a father, but with a new body coming to them in an instant by the direct creative act of God. Of the redeemed it will be truthfully said at that time that they will be without father and mother.

So it was that while Enoch as Enoch had a father and a mother, Enoch, as Melchizedek, certainly did not have a father and a mother, for, in the instant he was translated, he lost that which his parents had given him and received a newly created flesh and blood body instead. This is also true of the new spiritual life in the believer, of which God alone is the Father. No human parents can claim that they are the source of the new creation in any born again believer.

But, despite the loss of that which came from our earthly parents, the family bonds and other legitimate emotional ties developed here will be retained in heaven. On the great resurrection morning, for instance,

The Great Controversy, p. 645:

Little children are borne by holy angels to their mothers' arms.
Friends long separated by death are united, nevermore to part,
and with songs of gladness ascend together to the city of God.

So, in this limited sense, the redeemed will still have father, mother, family relationships, and friends, which, established here, will continue throughout eternity.

Without Descent

The next point we shall take in identifying Melchizedek as the immortalized Enoch is the statement that he was "without genealogy" or descent.

Once again, Enoch as Enoch certainly did have a genealogy which was a secret neither to him nor to us. It extended from Adam, who received his life from God directly, through Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, and Jared, to himself, Enoch. The life forces were passed on down a line of descent from father to son.

But this system is not employed by God in giving to each of His redeemed the immortal flesh and blood which alone has the fitness to enter heaven and dwell there. Everyone who receives that precious, incorruptible immortality, will be given it, not through a long line of forebears, but directly, personally, and individually from God through Jesus Christ.

Thus it was with Enoch. When he was translated to heaven, he certainly left all that had previously come by descent. As Melchizedek, he was without earthly genealogy.

No Beginning of Days nor End of Life

It is also said of him that he had...

Hebrews 7

³ ...neither beginning of days nor end of life.

The question now arises as to how this could be true of Enoch as Melchizedek? Surely, only God is beginningless! This is true, for only the Deity is as eternal in the past as He is in the future. What must be understood is that when the recipients of salvation receive Christ in them, they become actual partakers of that life which has no beginning and no ending. This is a beautiful and powerful truth which needs to be clearly known in the power of personal experience by every one of God's children.

Recognizing the necessity of this, Jesus sought to teach it to the Jews of His day in that wonderful message He proclaimed to them the day after the feeding of the five thousand:

John 6

⁴⁷ Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in me has everlasting life.

Through the apostle John, the same truth was later reiterated with emphasis:

1 John 5

¹¹ And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

In both of these Scriptures, the thought is plainly stated that the believing child of God already possesses eternal life. It is not something to be given to him when Christ returns, but is his now.

This is not teaching holy flesh, for, as has been clearly stated earlier in this chapter, we are all handicapped with mortal, corruptible, unholy flesh and blood which cannot live eternally. Instead, it is the pure life of Christ dwelling in the believer's fleshly tabernacle which is everlasting. It can be nothing else, for it is Christ dwelling in the believer by the implantation of His seed. By this means His actual, immortal, incorruptible, perfect, and everlasting life is reproduced in the believer. Thus there is immortality tabernacled in mortality, perfection in imperfection, righteousness in unrighteousness, and everlasting life in temporary life. It is Christ in you; the hope of glory.

We tend to think of eternal life as something extending interminably into the future, but this is a limited view. Eternal life is as beginningless in the past as it is endless in the future. Therefore, when it is assuredly declared that the Christian "has eternal life" in him, this means that he has life which has no beginning and no ending.

This does not mean that the believer as a whole person had no beginning, for that could never be true. Enoch certainly had a beginning when he was conceived. It was the eternal life from Christ implanted in him at the moment of his being born again, which had no beginning and no ending. Even though there came a point of time when that eternal life began its residence in him, this did not change the fact that that life had no beginning and no ending.

It must be evident by this time that the Scriptures at which we have been looking, are not merely pointing to our living in Paradise forever from a future starting point, namely, the second advent of Christ. Instead, we are finding that they speak of a life-force which, being the actual life of Christ himself, is in itself everlasting from eternity in the past to eternity in the future. It is

when that living entity is implanted in the believer that he has eternal life as a personal possession.

In the beginning, God gave Adam and Eve immortal life with the power to transmit this life to their posterity through the reproductive process. Theirs at that time was not the actual life of God in them, but the life of a created being as distinct from that of a begotten son of God. When they sinned, they lost their immortality, whereupon their desperate need was for more than forgiveness. They needed another immortal life to replace the one they had lost, for a forgiven dead man is no better off than an unforgiven dead man.

The life which they needed was not to be found in Adam, for he, having lost the only life which had been given him as the father of the human race, had none to give. Someone else must take his place as the life-giving seed-bearer. The only Person available was Christ who had in himself life which could be given through the implantation of His seed in those willing to receive it.

Naturally, the life provided by the second Adam is far superior to that which was available from the first Adam, for it places the recipients of that life far above the angels who have never sinned, where they will be kings and priests in joint heirship with Jesus Christ forevermore.¹³

We need to understand that only those who have that beginningless life in them will come up in the resurrection of the just.

The Desire of Ages, p. 388:

Christ became one flesh with us, in order that we might become one spirit with Him. It is by virtue of this union that we are to come forth from the grave,—not merely as a manifestation of the power of Christ, but because, through faith, His life has become ours.

Those who see Christ in His true character, and receive Him into the heart, have everlasting life. It is through the Spirit that Christ dwells in us; and the Spirit of God, received into the heart by faith, is the beginning of the life eternal.

¹³ See *The Living and the Dead*, for a fuller treatment of these points.

Herein lies a great mystery hidden as yet to our understanding. It caused Paul to exclaim as he wrote about the resurrection:

1 Corinthians 15

⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.

If, as He descends in awful majesty, He were to simply manifest His creative power by remaking each of the saints according to the list of those who have passed the scrutiny of the judgment, there would be no mystery involved. But, to come forth in response to Christ's call by virtue of the eternal life placed in them when they were born again, is indeed a mystery. It is apparent that their resurrection will be a copy of His of whom it is written:

The Desire of Ages, p. 785:

When the voice of the mighty angel was heard at Christ's tomb, saying, Your Father calls You, the Saviour came forth from the grave by the life that was in himself.

So it will be with the righteous on the resurrection morning as it is written:

The Great Controversy, p. 644:

Amid the reeling of the earth, the flash of lightning, and the roar of thunder, the voice of the Son of God calls forth the sleeping saints. He looks upon the graves of the righteous, then, raising His hands to heaven, He cries: "Awake, awake, awake, you that sleep in the dust, and arise!" Throughout the length and breadth of the earth the dead shall hear that voice, and they that hear shall live.

Obviously, they will not hear that voice with their physical ears, for they will have been reduced to dust, nor can we as yet explain in what way the call of the Life-giver will be heard, but we accept by faith the Word of God which tells us it is by virtue of the life in them which has no beginning and no ending.

So then, Enoch, when he had become Melchizedek, fulfilled all the specifications laid down in the Scriptures:

Hebrews 7

³ [He was]...without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.

Every word written in the identification of Melchizedek will be equally true of each and every one of the redeemed who have been or yet will be taken to heaven. The ministry of this first of all the king-priests is provided to reveal the incredibly high destiny awaiting those who shall be saved by the blood of the Lamb.

When Enoch was taken to heaven, he was immediately given his new family name, Melchizedek, and commenced his noble work as priest of the Most High God, and king of righteousness and of peace. In the course of his work, he came back to this earth for an unspecified period of time in Abraham's day to reveal, as only he could, the type of ministry awaiting God's people in the ages yet to come.

9. The Number of Melchizedek

BEFORE we leave the study of the evidences identifying just who the Melchizedek was who met and blessed Abraham, we need to consider the remarkable symbolism of the number 13. This information adds another witness to the fact that Enoch, once he was translated, was given his special, personal, new name: Melchizedek.

By the world it is known as the “unlucky” number, or the “devil’s number.” Many hotels do not have a floor or rooms by that number, nor airlines, seats. Should a cricketer playing in a match reach a batting score of eighty-seven which is thirteen short of a hundred, he becomes very apprehensive, for he fears his luck has turned against him. He is usually immensely relieved when he passes that score without being dismissed. Thus, thirteen is a number with a bad reputation.

But it is one of the most beautiful numbers in the entire Bible. Both in type and antitype, this is the number designating the structure of God’s kingdom. Therefore, it is the symbolic number of gospel order. It is no wonder then that the enemy of God and men has loaded that number with infamy.

Let us look now at the instances where this number signifies the structure of God’s kingdom.

The Tribes of Israel

There were twelve sons of Jacob each of whom became, as he multiplied, one of the twelve tribes of Israel. There was one exception to this, namely Joseph, to whom was assigned two tribes identified by the names of his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. This made a total of thirteen tribes altogether: Reuben, Simeon, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Ephraim, Manasseh, Benjamin, Dan, Asher, Gad, Naphtali, and Levi. Twelve of these were the numbered tribes, while Levi, the thirteenth tribe was not numbered with the rest, as it is written:

Numbers 2

³² These are the ones [the twelve tribes of Israel apart from Levi] who were numbered of the children of Israel by their fathers' houses. All who were numbered according to their armies of the forces were six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty.

³³ But the Levites were not numbered among the children of Israel, just as the Lord commanded Moses.

In the highly significant setting up of the order of the encampment, the Levites were directed to pitch their tents immediately around the tabernacle. Then, outside of the area occupied by the Levites, the remaining were to camp encircled around the Levites and the tabernacle:

- Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun, encamped on the east side;
- Reuben, Simeon, and Gad to the south;
- Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin to the west; and
- Dan, Asher, and Naphtali to the north.

This information is contained in *Numbers 2*.

In the New Testament, once the death of the Lamb of God had replaced the sacrifice of the typical lamb, the typical Levitical priesthood was replaced by the ministry of Christ, the antitypical high priest of that ministry. Therefore, we must expect the number thirteen to be present in the New Testament as certainly as it was in the Old Testament.

The Disciples and Elders

So it is that we find Christ to be the central figure surrounded by twelve disciples, which makes a total once more of thirteen.

Once He had returned to heaven to take up the duties of that “merciful and faithful High Priest,” He shared with His Father, the throne of the Omnipotent. We would therefore expect each of them to be encircled by twelve beings or companies of beings. And indeed there are, in the persons of twenty-four elders. Here is the arrangement as it was revealed to John:

Revelation 4

² Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.

³ And He who sat there was like a jasper and sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald.

⁴ 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.

Twenty-four elders plus the Father and the Son is twenty-six which is a double thirteen. As is to be expected, the wonderful number thirteen will be as firmly established in the earth made new as it ever was in the old.

The Holy City

So we read that there will be twelve gates to the holy city, on each one of which will be inscribed the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel, while on each of the foundations will be written the name of one of Christ's apostles. This does not mean that Judas' name will appear there, but rather the name of Paul, the man to whom Judas' place was given.

Revelation 21

¹² Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:

¹³ Three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west.

¹⁴ Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

Within the city will be the Father and the Son who, with the apostles and the twelve tribes, make up twenty-six, another double thirteen, at the very time when the Melchizedek order of kings and priests will be fully and eternally in operation.

Now, it is absolutely sure and certain that, if the structure of the antitypical system of the Melchizedek order involves the number

thirteen, then so does the typical (when the role of king, or leader, and priest were united in one).

There was only one period from which the type could be taken, but that could not have been during the days of the children of Israel when there were no king-priests. From the time the Levites were appointed to the priesthood at the golden calf incident, until the ending of the Levitical system at the cross of Calvary, the kings came from Judah and the priests from Levi. This was not a system symbolizing Melchizedek in which the offices of both king and priest were invested in one person.

The Patriarchal Period

To find the typical system which does represent the Melchizedek order, we have but to locate that era during which the priests were kings, and the kings were priests. The only such interval was between Adam and Jacob, otherwise known as the patriarchal period.

But, not only did each of these men have to be both king and priest in the one person in order to represent the Melchizedek order, there also had to be exactly thirteen of them. Furthermore, as in the antitypical system the central or middle figure is Melchizedek, so in the typical system the central figure must be the typical Melchizedek.

Between Adam and Jacob, there were certainly more than thirteen generations. There were in fact twenty-two, but it must be remembered that to become the king, one had to outlive his father, and of the twenty-two, exactly thirteen did. They were:

1. Adam
2. Seth
3. Enos
4. Cainan
5. Mahalaleel
6. Jared
7. Enoch
8. Methuselah

9. Noah
10. Shem
11. Eber
12. Isaac
13. Jacob

Enoch of course did not outlive his father while on earth, but did so by being translated.

Now, the center of thirteen is seven. The six numbers, 1-6, precede 7, and the six numbers, 8-13, come after 7. Therefore, the seventh king and priest after Adam provided the Melchizedek type, and was the only one who could. Enoch was that man.

So it was that Enoch, “the seventh from Adam,”¹⁴ went to heaven, received his new name, “Melchizedek,” and at once commenced his work as...

Genesis 14

¹⁸ ...king of Salem,...priest of the Most High God.

In that office, he began the proclamation of the infinite grace of the everlasting Father whose glory it is to forgive and restore. In the course of this ministry, he returned to this earth for a period of service, by which he showed as only he could, the glorious future awaiting the redeemed.

¹⁴ *Jude* 14.

Appendix: Unfounded Reports

By Ellen White

Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 5, p. 692-696

These paragraphs were referenced at the end of Chapter 1, regarding a second-hand claim to the effect that Ellen White supposedly said that Melchizedek was the Holy Spirit.

SEVERAL times during the past winter [1888-89] I have met the report that, during the Conference at Minneapolis,

“Sister White was shown that the judgment, which since 1844 had been passing upon the righteous dead, had now begun upon the living.”

This report is not true. A similar rumor, which has been afloat for about two years, originated in this wise: In a letter written from Basel, Switzerland, to a minister in California I made a remark substantially as follows:

“The judgment has been over forty years in progress on the cases of the dead, and we know not how soon it will pass to the cases of the living.”

The letter was read to different persons, and careless hearers reported what they thought they heard. Thus the matter started. The report from Minneapolis arose from someone’s misunderstanding of a statement to the same effect as the one quoted from the letter. There is no other foundation for either report than this.

Secondly, report has it that a minister now living has been seen by me in vision as saved in the kingdom of God, thus representing that his final salvation is assured. There is no truth whatever in this statement. The word of God lays down the conditions of our salvation, and it rests wholly with ourselves whether or not we will comply with them.

Says the Revelator:

Revelation 3

⁴ You have a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

⁵ He that overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels.

2 Peter 3

¹³ Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that you look for such things, be diligent that you may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

¹⁷ You therefore, beloved, seeing you know these things before, beware lest you also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.

1 Thessalonians 3

¹² And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: to the end He may stablish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

Hebrews 10

³⁸ Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

Here we have the Bible election plainly stated. Here are specified who shall be crowned in the city of God and who shall have no part with the just.

Revelation 22

¹⁴ Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

The third report states that, in the Conference at Minneapolis,

“Sister White confessed that in some of her remarks at that meeting she had been in error and had manifested a wrong spirit.”

This report also is wholly without foundation. I could not forbear giving to the Conference the light that God had given me.

This I presented both in messages of warning and reproof and in words of hope and faith. But nothing spoken by me at that meeting has been taken back or confessed to be wrong. I still view matters from the same standpoint, and am of the same mind, as when at Minneapolis. All the dangers which I then saw, and which brought such a burden upon me, have been more clearly developed since that meeting. As I become more fully acquainted with the condition of our churches I see that every warning given at Minneapolis was needed.

The influence of this report from Minneapolis, tended to destroy confidence in all reproofs and warnings given by me to the people. One example of this I will here relate.

A sister connected with one of our missions had been reproved for her wrong influence over the young people with whom she was associated. She had encouraged a spirit of lightness, trifling, and frivolity, which grieved away the Spirit of God and which was demoralizing to the workers. When the report came by letter from Minneapolis concerning Sister White's wrong course which called for a confession there, the relatives of Sister T at once remarked:

“Well, if Sister White was wrong in regard to matters in the Conference at Minneapolis, and had to confess this, she may have made a mistake as to the message she gave my sister and may have to confess that also.”

And they justified the wrongdoer in her course. Since that time, however, Sister T has acknowledged the wrong for which she was reproved. Those who originated and spread the report have exerted an influence to embolden wrongdoers in rejecting reproof, and souls have thus been imperiled. Let all who have engaged in this work beware lest the blood of these souls be found upon them in the great day of final judgment.

The cases mentioned will serve to show how little reliance can be placed upon reports concerning what I have done or taught. During my labors in connection with the work of the Lord I have

not made it a practice to vindicate my own cause or to contradict reports that have been put in circulation in regard to myself. To do this would occupy my time to the neglect of the work which God has appointed me. These matters I have left to Him who has a care for His servants and His cause.

But I would say to my brethren:

“Beware how you give credence to such reports.”

The Saviour bade His disciples:

Luke 8

¹⁸ Take heed therefore how you hear.

And He speaks of a certain class that hear and will not understand lest they should be converted and be healed. Again He said:

Mark 4

²⁴ Take heed what you hear.

John 8

⁴⁷ He that is of God hears God’s words.

Those who listened to the words of Christ heard and reported His teaching just according to the spirit that was in them. It is ever thus with those who hear God’s word. The manner in which they understand and receive it depends upon the spirit which dwells in their hearts.

There are many who put their own construction upon what they hear, making the thought appear altogether different from that which the speaker endeavored to express. Some, hearing through the medium of their own prejudices or pre-possession, understand the matter as they desire it to be,—as will best suit their purpose,—and so report it. Following the promptings of an unsanctified heart, they construe into evil that which, rightly understood, might be a means of great good.

Again, an expression perfectly true and right in itself, may be wholly distorted by transmission through several curious, careless, or caviling minds. Well-meaning persons are often careless and make grievous mistakes, and it is not likely that others will

report more correctly. One who has himself not fully understood a speaker's meaning repeats a remark or assertion, giving to it his own coloring. It makes an impression on the hearer just according to his prejudices and imaginings. He reports it to a third, who in turn adds a little more and sends it forward; and before any of them are aware of what they are doing, they have accomplished the purpose of Satan in planting the seeds of doubt, jealousy, and suspicion in many minds.

If persons listen to God's message of reproof, warning, or encouragement while their hearts are filled with prejudice, they will not understand the true import of that which was sent them to be a savor of life unto life. Satan stands by to present everything to their understanding in a false light. But the souls that are hungering and thirsting for divine knowledge will hear aright, and will obtain the precious blessings that God designs to convey to them. Their minds are under the influence of His Holy Spirit, and they hear aright.

When hearts are purified from selfishness and egotism, they are in harmony with the message God sends them. The perceptions are quickened, the sensibilities refined. Like appreciates like.

John 8

⁴⁷ He that is of God hears God's words.

And now to all who have a desire for truth I would say:

“Do not give credence to unauthenticated reports as to what Sister White has done or said or written. If you desire to know what the Lord has revealed through her, read her published works. Are there any points of interest concerning which she has not written, do not eagerly catch up and report rumors as to what she has said.”

Truly, it is not possible just now
to have any adequate knowledge
of what it shall mean to be a priest and a king
after the order of Melchizedek.

But this I do know:
in the writing of this study,
I have seen enough of the glory and wonder of it all
to fill me with intense longing and determination
to be there as a king and a priest.

I pray the same response will be generated
in every person who reads these words.

*From Chapter 6,
"The Testimony of God's Redeeming Love"*

