## Contents

1. The Provocation and Provision—December 25-31
2. His Glorious Purpose Foreshadowed in Types—January 1-7
3. Jesus and the Sanctuary—January 8-14
4. A Body You Have Prepared for Me—January 15-21
5. In the Shadow of Calvary—January 22-28
6. The Passion Week—January 29–February 4
7. Passage to Calvary—February 5-11
8. Darkness at Noon—February 12-18
9. He Is Risen—February 19-25
10. The Heart of the Cross—February 26–March 4
11. The Cross and Justification—March 5-11
12. The Cross and Sanctification—March 12-18

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The Answer From Above

“Who, if I cried out, would hear me among the angels’ hierarchies?”

With that pained utterance, the German poet Rilke asked what modern humanity—whose outlines have been sketched by Darwin and then colored in with the soulless hues of science—has long asked.

Why not, considering the dismal picture evolution paints of human origins? According to this scenario, about fifteen billion years ago a tremendous explosion created matter, energy, time, and space at once. Atoms condensed into gaseous clouds, stars coalesced from whirling strands of fire and light, and, from those stars, molten globules hardened into planets, including our own. Shallow water fermented, simple life forms emerged by chance, and millions of years later, human beings. If the temperatures had been warmer or colder, or if gravity had been slightly off, none of us would be here.

No wonder Rilke asked, Is anyone above listening? Is there anyone above us? Is there even an above us—something besides what we, with all our sophisticated gadgetry, could ever see? Are we here only by design of cold forces that operate with no purpose and yet gave us hearts and minds that cry out for purpose? (How cruel to be creatures who want answers in a world that offers none.)

Worse than no purposeful creator would be one with evil designs on us. The fact that a god exists doesn’t automatically mean good news. Ancient mythologies crowd the heavens with cruel deities. Better to take a chance with the cold, lifeless forces of the cosmos than with an evil god who takes pleasure in our sorry lot.

Fortunately, the Bible teaches that there is a Creator God, Jesus, who loves the human race. Far from taking pleasure in our sorry lot, He has shared it, suffering worse than we ever could. His sufferings climaxed at the Cross, the topic for this quarter.

Years ago, Friedrich Nietzsche wrote about a madman who shouted, “What were we doing when we unchained this earth from the sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying, as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space?”
His point was that all moral and spiritual foundations have been shattered, leaving humans to plunge aimlessly in all directions through a purposeless and infinite nothingness.

Scripture says the opposite. The spikes in His hands, in His feet, not only nailed Jesus to the cross but nailed the earth to heaven in ways that nothing could sever. The Cross shows this tiny planet that we are not alone and that our Creator has linked Himself to us through our pain.

All through the Bible, from Creation through the birth of Jesus, God reveals to us that He is intimately involved in humanity. The incarnation of Christ, where the Creator dwelt among His creation in human form, was amazing enough. But that God should, in this Incarnation, substitute Himself for us and bear the full brunt of His own divine wrath against sin, all in order to save us from that wrath? Who even can begin to grasp what this sacrifice means? We’ll need eternity to fathom it (in the meantime, we’ll cover what we can in the next three months).

Though we follow the plan of redemption down through the ages, we will focus on the final week of Christ’s life, His death, and resurrection. From here we will reflect on the meaning of the Cross and what it offers to us—who claim it as the foundation of our salvation.

Who, if we cried out, would hear us from above?

The Cross not only answers who has heard us from above; it is the answer from above.

Our principal contributor, Pastor Brian Jones, recently served as coordinator and materials developer for a multilanguage Bible information ministry, sponsored by the Upper Columbia Conference, in Spokane, Washington. Brian, the author of two previous quarterlies of the Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide, has a Ph.D. in Christian counseling; he and his wife have a young daughter and currently reside in West Virginia.
How to Use This Teachers Edition

The teachers comments demonstrate different methods of teaching the adult standard edition Bible study guide. Five parts make up the teachers comments:

**Key Text, Lesson Aim, and Outline:** The key text is taken from the standard edition guide. The lesson aim is designed to (a) help class participants understand and know about the lesson material, (b) evoke an appropriate feeling about the lesson material that complements the lesson content and helps to internalize it, and (c) help class participants apply the lesson material to their daily lives. The lesson outline may not always follow exactly the material that appears in the standard guide. It may reflect additional perspectives as it attempts to stimulate class discussion.

**The Commentary** follows the traditional teaching methods of Sabbath School. It explains Bible passages and provides appropriate information leading to spiritual applications.

**The Inductive Bible-Study Method** emphasizes careful, methodical discovery of the meaning in a text. The teacher encourages and supports the learner’s investigation and discovery, using distinctive approaches: (a) Study a text thoroughly and systematically before drawing a conclusion. (b) Look for textual meaning carefully and thoroughly, understand the passage in context, avoid misquoting the author. We must not develop opinions without biblical proof. (c) Share insights through group discussion as students examine a Bible passage together. (d) Apply the text to life today. (e) Allow the Holy Spirit to minister to class members during Bible study.

**The Focus-on-Witnessing Approach** should be used in conjunction with other methods of Bible study to demonstrate how particular passages of Scripture can be used to encourage people to commit their lives to Christ and to nurture spiritual life once it has been awakened.

**The Life-Application Approach** demonstrates how issues that grow out of Bible study can be shared in a small-group setting. This section uses an approach suitable for discussion in a small group in which interpersonal sharing and dialogue are key elements.

*Use a combination of teaching methods. Within one class period it often is possible to draw from all five methods demonstrated in the teachers comments. Some teachers will prefer to focus on one method of teaching, drawing heavily on the material in the teachers comments.*
Lesson 1  *December 25-31*

The Provocation and Provision

SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week’s Study:** Genesis 1–3.

**Memory Text:** “Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, ‘Where are you?’” (Genesis 3:9, NKJV).

A toy company produced a doll called Cindy Smart that spoke five languages, read well, told time, and could do simple math. Cindy was the first doll that would do what it was told. Those who first met Cindy were a little spooked. How could a doll do all these things?

The answer is good computer programming, a 16-bit microprocessor in the belly, and an optical scanner that allows it to recognize numbers or letter-shaped objects. In many ways Cindy Smart was just an advanced version of Chatty Cathy, one of the first pull-string dolls that could **speak**.

Yet, no matter how complicated or even intricate Cindy Smart is, the doll is still just a computer, programmed to do what it’s told. Free will is not an option for Cindy, no matter how **smart** the doll is.

In contrast, we’re not just quantitatively different from Cindy in that we can say more, but qualitatively different: We have been given moral freedom, something totally alien to Cindy. This issue of free will is the crucial difference, one that gets to the heart of the matter as we look at the rise of sin—and its cure.

**The Week at a Glance:** Why, in order to love God, must we be free? Why must freedom entail the possibility to do wrong? How did God respond to the fall of Adam and Eve?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 1.*
To Love God

Read the following texts: Deuteronomy 6:5, Matthew 22:37, John 15:9-11. What are they all admonishing us to do, and why must we have freedom, moral freedom, in order to obey?

Students of the Bible are familiar with the record that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. He was not dependent on preexisting matter or conditions. He brought everything into being by His word, His logos, which is the expression of His mind (Ps. 33:6, 9; John 1:1-3). Infinitely perfect Himself, He made everything flawless and beautiful. God is love, and everything He does is consistent with His perfect love and infinite wisdom. Upon His intelligent beings He bestowed the noble attributes of personal individuality and freedom of choice. But choice, by its very nature, involves the option of choosing between right and wrong. Hence, the risk of human rebellion was there from the beginning.

At the same time, God desires us to have personal, mutually satisfying fellowship with Him (Ps. 36:5-10). He also endows us with wisdom, knowledge, love, and the capacity for joy. These relational qualities can have real existence only in beings who have freedom of will, something not found in Cindy Smart.

When was the last time you ever heard of a happy computer, a joyous PC, or a loyal and loving laptop? Why can’t these things, which can do amazing intellectual feats, ever be happy, loving, or loyal?

To love God, we have to be free. It’s as simple as that. Love cannot exist without moral freedom, and moral freedom can’t exist without the capacity to do wrong.

“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.”—Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 34.

A science-fiction story is told about a man who, having lost his wife, had her replaced by a robot that looked, talked, felt, and acted exactly as his wife did. If he hadn’t known any better, he would have had no idea that this wasn’t she. In the end, however, he sent her away, because the experience wasn’t the same. What do you think was missing, and what does that have to do with the day’s study?
Key Text: Genesis 1–3.

Teachers Aims:
1. To remind us of our heritage, created by a loving God.
2. To help us understand sin and its origins.
3. To illuminate God’s plans to rescue and to restore us to communion with Him.

Lesson Outline:

I. Creation—God Designs His Creatures for Relationship With Him (Gen. 1:27).
   A. An infinitely perfect God created a flawless world, inhabited with sinless people.
   B. God endowed us with relational qualities that include the gift of freedom of will.
   C. True relationship with God means moral freedom, which cannot exist without our having the capacity to choose to do wrong.

II. God’s Creatures Withdraw From Their Loving Creator (Ezek. 28:14-17).
   A. Lucifer, a free moral agent, begins a campaign of subversion.
   B. Our God of infinite wisdom and love seeks to convince Satan of his error.
   C. Satan, exiled from heaven, spreads his dissent on earth.

III. Salvation—the Plan to Rescue and Restore (Gen. 3:8, 9, 15).
   A. Humanity believes Satan’s lies about their Creator.
   B. God initiates a search for His rebellious creatures.
   C. God shares His plan for humanity’s redemption, our blessed hope.

Summary: Before humanity chose to believe Satan’s lies, God planned for our rescue. In the cool of the evening, He went in search of our lost parents after they fell. He shared the blessed hope of our restoration through the gift of a Savior. This promise includes the termination of sin and Satan. It extends to each of us the offer of restoration to fellowship with God.

COMMENTARY

The Provocation and Provision.

Introduction. God is love (see 1 John 4:8, 16)—that is life’s foundational truth. No true answer to any mystery lies outside the boundaries of this all-encompassing truth. God’s love is active, engaged, purposeful.

When sin, a wholly negative and unloving force, arose, God launched a response designed to eradicate sin and treat all perpetrators and victims of evil in a manner entirely consistent with His love. Love is infinitely wise. It communicates, educates, draws lines of distinction between good and evil, preserves freedom of
Satan’s Defection *(John 8:44).*

**Scripture** informs us that Lucifer rebelled against God. What factors led him to choose this path of opposition, and with what effect? *Isa. 14:12-14, Ezek. 28:14-17.*

Lucifer, Ellen White tells us, gradually becoming self-infatuated, withdrew from loving his Creator and began to covet supreme power and authority. Jealous of Christ, who is the Creator and coequal with the Father *(Heb. 1:1-3)*, Lucifer began a campaign of subversion, maliciously insinuating that God was autocratic, His laws arbitrary, and His expectation of worship and service from the creation unreasonable. Ingratitude, egotistic ambition, self-love, covetousness, dissatisfaction, hostility, deceit, malice, and a craving for worship and power were the fruits of Lucifer’s pride. God created Lucifer a perfect being without any propensity toward moral confusion or failure. Yet, as a free moral agent, Lucifer was at liberty to diverge from harmony with the God who brought him into existence and gave him his exalted station.

Attitudes and actions, of course, have consequences. Departure from God’s law is sin *(1 John 3:4)*, and the wages of sin are death *(Rom. 6:23).* Lucifer was “full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty,” “perfect in [his] ways” from the day he was created *(Ezek. 28:12, 15).* He dwelt in the very presence of God as the anointed cherub, the chief communicator of divine revelations to the universe. Thus, he stood entirely without excuse for his seditious estrangement from the Lord. Through his crafty misrepresentation of God, Lucifer (renamed Satan, or “adversary,” after his fall) seduced one-third of the angelic host into siding with him *(Rev. 12:4).*

Satan’s representation of God and His way could not be treated as acceptable. Truth and righteousness are not a matter of subjective opinion but of absolute, unalterable revelation that shapes character and conduct.

“In great mercy, according to His divine character, God bore long with Lucifer. The spirit of discontent and disaffection had never before been known in heaven. It was a new element, strange, mysterious, unaccountable. Lucifer himself had not at first been acquainted with the real nature of his feelings; . . . yet he did not dismiss them. He did not see whither he was drifting. But such efforts as infinite love and wisdom only could devise, were made to convince him of his error. . . . He was made to see what would be the result of persisting in revolt.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets,* p. 39. Notice: An all-wise, all-powerful God would not forcibly stop Lucifer’s moral slide. Why not? What does that tell us about the sanctity of moral freedom?
choice, defines consequences, upholds what is right and good, eradicates what is wrong and injurious, redeems what is redeemable, and purges what is not.

**I. Loving God.**

Healthy personal identity consists of certain irrevocable qualities:

a. consciousness
b. capacity to differentiate between right and wrong (moral options)
c. power of choice (will)
d. ability to communicate
e. capacity for personal relationships
f. ability to love, to have an unselfish concern for the welfare of others
g. trust in God, the Creator and Sustainer of life, and a communicative relationship with Him
h. obedience to God and a clear sense of accountability to Him

Lacking these qualities, personal identity is seriously impaired, if not negated. Rooted in the Creator’s plan is the determination that humans, made in His image, shall retain all the characteristics of individuality forever, without compromise or curtailment. When our inner being is healthy, then we know and love God freely and perpetually discover fresh aspects of the truth that in His “presence is fullness of joy,” at His “right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Ps. 16:11, NKJV).

**II. Satan’s Defection.**

Gradually, Lucifer, the highest ranking of created beings, began to turn his thoughts toward himself. Egotism prompted him to take credit for all the abilities and attractive force he had, as though he were the originator of it all, when, in reality, he had received all as a gift from God. His gratitude and worshipfulness toward God dwindled, and he filled the void with a craving for admiration from his fellow angels. Festering pride began to poison his whole moral nature and infect him with antagonism toward God and a malicious determination to discredit Him.

Lucifer’s character change became so profound that his name (which meant Light Bearer) was changed to Satan (adversary). He dwelt in spiritual darkness. Satan became a spiritual parasite—willing to feed on the life of God and exploit His bountiful provisions but determined to pose as one superior to the Source of life and to bend the infinite power of God to his own self-serving ends. What perverse blindness! What disjointed, delusional thinking! This is the mystery of iniquity. Though powerless to create and unwilling, as well as impotent, to provide the least of life’s blessings, Satan wanted to usurp God as the ruler of the universe. Satan’s ambition was as devoid of logic as it was of decency. Conscious, persistent deviation from God’s moral order produces a steel-hearted rebellion, unmoved by love or reason and opposed to wisdom and life.
Satan’s Earthly Exile

Read Luke 10:18, Revelation 12:4-9. What happened to Satan after his rebellion in heaven?

Revelation 12:12 tells those on earth to beware, because the devil has come down to us having great wrath. And though that warning was given in the context of the Cross and the doom that the Cross spelled for Satan, the Eden story nevertheless presents us with a prototype, a model, on how the devil, who “deceiveth the whole world” (vs. 9), works to deceive each of us even now.

Read Genesis 3:1. Compare it with Genesis 2:16, 17. What ploy did Satan use to set his trap?

How fascinating that Satan used a mixture of truth and error. He took a direct command from God and simply rephrased it in a way that sounded almost as if he were repeating what God said, only he put a different spin on it. In other words, he mixed just enough truth with error in order to make it sound right.

Read Genesis 3:2,3. What does it say about Eve’s knowledge of God’s command and, thus, her responsibility for her action?

Though deceived (1 Tim. 2:14), Eve, by her words, showed that she knew what God had told her to do. That’s a powerful lesson for us: We could save ourselves a lot of heartache, sin, and deception if we simply obeyed the clear commands of God, no matter how much we might not understand a certain situation or all the variables in it. Deplorable as Eve’s sin was, Adam transgressed with eyes wide open. Even amid their ignorance, they could have saved themselves from deception simply by obeying God, trusting that His way was the best way, even when they didn’t fully understand it.

Read Genesis 3:6. What were the things about the tree that led Eve to disobey? What principles were at work there? How are these same principles manifested today?
III. Satan’s Earthly Exile.

Satan’s assumed independence from God subtly perverted all his thoughts, words, and actions. His heart bore a kind of fruit never before seen in the universe—deceit, hatred, treachery, destructiveness. But just because it was so strange and so cunningly disguised by its rebellious originator, sin had to be given time to manifest its true character in all its ramifications. This must be allowed in order to preserve peace, harmony, and freedom in the universe. It was morally imperative for each of the angels and other spiritually intelligent beings throughout creation to evaluate the contrasting character and fruits of good and evil, truth and error, righteousness and unrighteousness.

God determined to give this same freedom of choice to Adam and Eve, progenitors of His newly created race of beings. “God might have created them without the power to transgress His

Inductive Bible Study


1. In Genesis, we are told repeatedly that what God made was not only good, “it was very good” (Gen. 1:31). As you read the Creation account in Genesis 1, 2, imagine what it would be like to walk as a perfect being in a flawless world. What would that world look, smell, feel, and taste like? 1 Corinthians 2:9, 10 tells us, “‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard . . . but God has revealed . . . to us’” (NKJV) His wonders and what He has prepared for us. What does this tell you about God and His original plan for His created companions?

2. God is love. The heavens and earth, even in their current sinful state, announce this fact. Scripture records His acts of love through the narratives of ordinary human beings. Even in our rebellious condition, God seeks an active, ongoing relationship with His creatures. What does this tell you about God? Why would He risk creating us in His image, especially when this means we would have the freedom and capacity to choose to do wrong?

3. Into a perfect world the ultimate villain entered. Lucifer saw a reflection of himself and, in self-infatuation, withdrew from his loving Creator and began to covet supreme power and authority. How does such evil manifest itself in the world? What are some of the ways it insinuates its ideas into a perfect society? How does this help you recognize Satan’s attacks on your life? Where can you find hope for renewing your allegiance to God?
“Ayecah”? (Gen. 3:6-23).

Bewitched by Satan’s subtle and not-so-subtle lies, the human race fell. Instantly, the whole relationship between heaven and earth changed. The paradigm of Paradise radically shifted. The harmony, the peace, and the balance of Eden shattered. At that moment, the history of the universe altered. Satan’s rebellion, once confined only to himself and the fallen angels, had now gained a foothold in a new world. The issues at stake had become momentous.

Read Genesis 3:9. What is the first thing that the Bible records as said by God to fallen humanity, and why are those words so important even for us today? What do we see foreshadowed in them?

The Hebrew word *ayecah* translates into “Where are you?” Thus, the first thing that God communicates to His fallen creatures is a question, a question that, in a sense, He has been asking ever since. He doesn’t ask it in order to know; He asks it in order to force Adam and Eve to confront what they had done.

“Ayecah?” What we see here is not a condemnation but already the first of what will be endless pleas to Adam and Eve and all of their descendants to acknowledge their sinful position, to acknowledge their need, and to acknowledge that God is here to save them.

“Ayecah?” God comes to them. God is seeking them out. Though we often view Genesis 3:15 as the first gospel promise, already here, in this simple question, “Ayecah?” we see the beginning of what will end only at the close of probation: the Lord seeking us out and taking the initiative to save us.

Read the following texts: John 3:16, Rom. 8:3, Gal. 4:4, 1 John 4:10. In what way do they reflect what we’ve seen in Genesis 3:9? What principle do we see in these verses, and how have you experienced this principle in your own life?
Witnessing

EPCOT Center, an educational theme park located in Orlando, Florida, attracts millions of visitors each year. They are drawn to its futuristic inventions and cutting-edge technology. A large building, devoted entirely to the power of energy, is located on the grounds. Children (adults too!) are drawn to one area in particular—the robotic pets.

These little metal creatures, which come in all sizes, shapes, and colors, follow commands to “roll over,” “shake hands/paws,” “beg,” and so on. They nuzzle, cuddle, and follow wherever you go. Speak crossly to one and its tail stops wagging, its ears droop, and it turns slowly away from you. It often becomes necessary to remind oneself that these marvels of humankind’s imagination technology are not real and that a stern command to one of them to “stop biting” does not truly hurt its feelings!

No matter how clever, cute, or realistic humankind’s creations appear to be, they are completely devoid of the one quality that defines God’s human creations—the ability to choose between right and wrong. Throughout our lesson this week runs the thread of God’s great compassion in permitting us the freedom to choose between right and wrong, good and bad, sin and sinlessness. The choices we make and their resulting influence on others are of paramount importance to God.

Others will have the opportunity to glimpse the scope of God’s love and compassion through our personal example and witness. If the choices we make reflect His nature, our witness will have a profound and positive effect on others with whom we come in contact. If, however, our choices cause others to turn away from the Father and His plan of salvation, our witness will have the opposite effect and will strengthen Satan’s evil influence. How important it is, then, for ourselves and for those around us, that our daily witness, through action, thought, and deed, be entirely reflective of the heavenly Father and His pure love for us. During this week, what a powerful example we will be within our home, our community, and our workplace if we demonstrate to all that we have chosen to exercise our free will to follow the Father’s path to eternal life.
God’s Intervention and Gospel Foreshadowed (Gen. 3:15).

Almost immediately after Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, they recognized their fatal mistake. A chill crept over their cold souls, and they knew that something vital had died within them. Their beautiful garments of light and glory, exhibiting their natural harmony with God, disappeared (Gen. 3:7). As they stood naked and ashamed, gone was their customary joy over God’s daily visit with them for fellowship and instruction (vs. 8).

How did Adam and Eve attempt to cover their nakedness? Gen. 3:7. What spiritual lesson does this point to, concerning mere human effort to remedy the effects of sin and improve our moral condition? Isa. 64:6, Rom. 10:3. How was this same principle seen in Cain’s offering? Gen. 4:3.

The fall of Adam and Eve hadn’t taken God by surprise. No sooner did they fall and no sooner had He gotten a confession from both of them (Gen. 3:12, 13), then He proceeded to give them the great hope found in Genesis 3:15, understood as the first gospel promise.

Read Genesis 3:15. What is it saying that offers the fallen couple hope against the serpent? See also Rom. 16:20, Eph. 6:11, 2 Tim. 2:26, Heb. 2:14, 1 John 3:8, Rev. 20:10.

Notice, too, how, when dealing with the serpent, the Lord asked no questions and sought for no confession (Gen. 3:14). He simply condemned the serpent while, in the next verse, He offered the promise of hope to Adam and Eve. This promise included the termination of sin and its originator, Satan. Thus, the glory of God’s everlasting gospel was disclosed in this judgment setting, a setting in which He definitively reveals the mysteries of His will and the marvels of His grace.

How would you respond to the charge, “Why was God so harsh with Adam and Eve? After all, what did they do other than eat a piece of fruit?” What is being missed in this charge?
IV. “Ayecah?” (“Where Are You?”).

God goes in search of the lost. On the very day of Adam and Eve’s transgression, the Son of man came into the Garden of Eden to seek and save them. Terrified and alienated by sin, Adam and Eve would never have taken the initiative to seek God. Grace makes the first overtures, and grace completes the work of redemption.

Needless to say, God knew where Adam and Eve were, but rather than move in on them as an arresting officer, He gave them opportunity to come out, to respond to His call of love, and to confess their sin.

V. God’s Intervention and Grace Fore-shadowed.

God’s plan of redemption, which He began to unfold to our first parents on the day they sinned, met the crisis in full. Adam and Eve had distrusted God’s promises, disbelieved His word, and rejected His authority. This brought on a fatal degradation and paralysis of moral power. No longer spiritually minded, no longer drawn to God, they were “dead in trespasses” (Eph. 2:1, NKJV). Christ covered the nakedness of their spiritual destitution with the covenant of His promise of redemption and clothed their bodily nakedness with the skins of animals, whose death typified His own future sacrifice that would pay the price and ensure all the provisions of the gospel.

Life-Application Approach

**Icebreaker:** What type of people does the world view as heroes, and why? Who are your heroes? Why?

**Verses for Group Focus:** Revelation 12:1-12.

What is humanity’s situation that human beings should need the cross of Christ?

**Thought Questions:**

1. Assuming that the woman in Revelation 12:1-12 represents God’s people, what messages do you think Jesus is seeking to convey to those who read this passage?

2. What similarities and differences do you see between Eve and the woman in this passage?

**Application Questions:**

1. How does a person overcome Satan? (See Rev. 12:11.) What does “‘by the blood of the Lamb’” (NIV) mean? What does “‘by the word of their testimony’” mean (NIV)?

2. What message is God conveying to you through this passage?
   To the church?

“God permitted Satan to carry forward his work until the spirit of disaffection ripened into active revolt. It was necessary for his plans to be fully developed, that their true nature and tendency might be seen by all. . . .

“It was therefore necessary to demonstrate before the inhabitants of heaven, and of all the worlds, that God’s government is just, His law perfect. Satan had made it appear that he himself was seeking to promote the good of the universe. The true character of the usurper and his real object must be understood by all. He must have time to manifest himself by his wicked works. . . .

“Had he been immediately blotted out of existence, some would have served God from fear rather than from love. . . . For the good of the entire universe through ceaseless ages, he must more fully develop his principles, that his charges against the divine government might be seen in their true light by all created beings, and that the justice and mercy of God and the immutability of His law might be forever placed beyond all question.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 41, 42.

Discussion Questions:

1. Dwell carefully and prayerfully on the last sentence in the Ellen White quote above. What is she saying? What do these words tell us about the character of God? From a human perspective, with so much suffering and anguish, wouldn’t it have been better for God simply to have destroyed Satan from the start? If not, why not?

2. Compare Genesis 3:15 with Revelation 12:17. What parallels do you see? What message is in there for us, today?

3. What lessons are there for us in the fact that sin could arise in such a perfect environment as heaven?
His Glorious Purpose Foreshadowed in Types

SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: Gen. 4:1-8, 22:1-19, Num. 21:4-9.

Memory Text: “And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together” (Genesis 22:8).

Most Christians understand a crucial truth: Salvation has always been accomplished only one way—through the sacrificial death of Jesus. Anyone in heaven will be there only through Jesus, whether or not they ever knew Him by name. Some will know much about the plan of salvation, others little; some will live here amid an outburst of light, others only in the shadows.

And yet life in the shadows isn’t all darkness. For there to be shadows, there needs to be light. Shadows, in their own way, are an outline of light; they exist on the edge of light; and they couldn’t be formed if there were no light. Shadows help us understand the light.

This week we look at those who were living in the shadows, shadows that were created only because the light was always there to begin with. Long before the full revelation granted at Calvary, the Lord was teaching His people truths about what God would do to save the world from sin, and He taught them with the shadows.

The Week at a Glance: What words does the Bible use to define sin? How was the Cross revealed in the story of Cain and Abel, in Abraham at Moriah, and in the fiery serpents in the wilderness? What do these accounts teach us about the gospel?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 8.
The Sin Crisis

The Bible uses a number of different words to convey the idea of sin. Below are the most common ones used in both Testaments, including an explanation of their meaning and a few verses where the words are used. Look up the verses, applying the explanation as you read:

Old Testament
1. *Hattat*, “to miss the mark,” “to miss a target” (Lev. 5:5, Ps. 51:4).
2. *Awon*, translated “iniquity,” with the basic idea of crookedness, falsehood, a twisting (Gen. 15:16, Isa. 43:24).
3. *Pesha* means a deliberate, willful violation of a norm or authority. It’s rebellion against God and is sometimes translated as “transgression” (Isa. 1:2, Amos 4:4).

New Testament
1. *Hamartia* means literally to “miss the mark” and is used in the New Testament to denote a human decision that is hostile to God (John 19:11, 1 John 1:8).
2. *Parokoe* means literally a “failure to hear” or an “unwillingness to hear.” Often translated as “disobedience” (Rom. 5:19, Heb. 2:2).
3. *Paraptoma* usually means a slip, a fault, a falling down. Commonly translated as “trespass,” or “transgression” (Matt. 6:14, Rom. 4:25).
4. *Anomia* suggests contempt or violation of the *nomos*, the law, and is the word from which “transgression of the law” is translated in 1 John 3:4 (Matt. 7:23, Heb. 1:9).
5. *Adikia* conveys the idea of “unrighteousness” (Rom. 1:18, 2 Pet. 2:15).

“To miss the mark,” a “twisting,” a “failure to hear;” “rebellion” . . . so many different words and concepts express the idea of sin. What this seems to say, among other things, is that sin can be manifested in various ways, spurred on and incited for different reasons. Write a short paragraph expressing what other lessons you’ve learned about sin from this word study.
Key Text: John 3:14, 15.

Teachers Aims:
1. To confront us with the reality and the consequences of sin.
2. To highlight how the Lord has taught those who were looking forward to salvation.
3. To proclaim that the way to receive salvation is but to “look and live.”—Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 175.

Lesson Outline:

I. Sin—the Desperate Crisis (Isa. 6:5).
   A. Sin is a senseless rebellion.
   B. Everyone alive or who has ever lived in the whole world, except for One, has participated in this criminal hostility toward God.
   C. Only as we truly realize the horror of sin can we understand the value of what it takes to save us.

II. Shadows and Types Reveal the Cure for Sin (John 12:32).
   A. Cain and Abel each represent how we may choose to respond to the promise of Jesus as our sacrificial Lamb.
   B. The substitutionary death of Jesus is shown by Abraham on Mount Moriah.
   C. Moses and the serpent in the wilderness point to our only means of salvation.

III. Jesus—our Only Hope of Salvation (Isa. 6:7).
   A. A marvelous paradox of the Christian faith is that Jesus, all goodness, becomes, on the cross, the focus of all evil.
   B. We must recognize our own utter inability to save ourselves.
   C. When we look to Jesus in implicit faith, this grants to us the object we most desire and need—our rescue from sin.

Summary: Sin is a desperate crisis that completely destroys our relationship with our Creator. We cannot save ourselves; only Jesus can save us. The types and shadows of the Cross allow us to anticipate this act of rescue. As we recognize our utter inability to save ourselves, we can fully accept and trust in the salvation Jesus offers. In implicit and blind obedience we are invited to but “look and live.”—Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 175.

COMMENTARY

His Glorious Purpose Foreshadowed in Types.

Introduction. Ever since the Fall, it has been God’s pointed aim to restore sinful humanity to oneness with Himself and to eradicate evil forever. He accomplishes this aim through the atoning sacrifice
The Sin Crisis (cont.).

“And the whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 John 5:19).

How can we, as beings steeped in sin, fully understand the magnitude of sin? We really can’t. It’s like trying to look at a blackboard in a dark room. And though we can’t fully understand sin, we can still understand enough to know its malignity.

**Think** of three people to whom you are close: family, friends, neighbors, whomever. Look at their lives and write down the suffering that sin (and not necessarily their own) has brought upon them.

What did you write about? Sickness, disease, death, crime, violence, pain, alienation, hatred, bitterness, and on and on? Now multiply that by every human being who ever has lived or ever will live (except One), and we only begin to understand the ravages of sin.

And yet the outward physical destruction of sin is only part of the problem. Sin goes much deeper than what it does to us physically. Sin is, ultimately, a rebellion against the lordship and sovereignty of God. It is a refusal to accept His authority in one’s life, conduct, and final destiny, and it is manifested in different moral, spiritual, and ethical behaviors that inevitably lead to suffering and death.

Sin, to be understood as sin, must be seen in the context of who we are in relationship to God. It must be seen as a state of existence as much as it is acts and deeds. Indeed, the acts and deeds themselves result from the state of sin in which we exist. Sin, therefore, is as much who we are as it is what we do, because, in the end, we do what we do because we are what we are.

Only as we appreciate what it takes to save us from sin can we begin to understand how pernicious it must be. What do the following texts tell us about how bad sin is, in that it took such extreme measures in order to save us from it? *Luke 24:7, John 3:14, Rom. 3:21-26, 2 Cor. 5:21, 1 Pet. 2:24.*
of the Messiah. This week we review how the Lord revealed His plan of redemption in types and symbols to His people before the Cross.

**I. The Sin Crisis.**

Sin, in all its variety and gradation, ultimately pays the same wage—death. Though it promises much and is often pleasurable to the flesh, sin is deceitful and degrading (see Heb. 3:13, 11:25), with no truly beneficial effects. Sin separates us from God and impedes our perception of spiritual truth (Isa. 59:1; Rom. 1:21, 22). Mingled with pride, sin induces us to believe that our opinions and limited reasoning powers and the collective “wisdom” of humankind are superior to God’s revelation. Sin is far too dangerous and fatal to be parlayed with; we cannot safely make a compact with it, even for one moment.

Jesus came to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (see Heb. 9:26; cf. John 1:29). Chapters 6 through 8 of Romans lead us not just doctrinally but also therapeutically through the practical processes by which Christ sets us free from the law of sin and death and gives us a new nature that operates in harmony with the righteous requirements of divine law. He has made provision that sin should have no more dominion over us but that His grace should reign supreme in our lives (see Rom. 6:14, 5:21).

**II. Cain and Abel.**

“Cain came before God with murmuring and infidelity in his heart in regard to the promised sacrifice and the necessity of the sacrificial offerings. His gift expressed no penitence for sin. He felt, as many now feel, that it would be an acknowledgment of weakness to follow the exact plan marked out by God, of trusting his salvation wholly to the atonement of the promised Saviour. He chose the course of self-dependence. He would come in his own merits. He would not bring the lamb, and mingle its blood with his offering, but would present his fruits, the products of his labor. He presented his offering as a favor done to God. . . . Cain obeyed in building an altar, obeyed in bringing a sacrifice; but . . . the essential part, the recognition of the need of a Redeemer, was left out.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 72; read also pp. 71–77.

Cain exemplified the universal principle of false religion—that humans can depend on their own efforts for salvation and bypass the atonement. Cain would worship God but on his own terms and in his own merits. Cain might thank God for His bounties, but he would acknowledge no guilt, no need for a new heart, no need for the Lamb. Behind this obstinate self-sufficiency was pride and anger that drove him to kill his brother, whose gentle entreaties to offer the divinely required lamb were an intolerable affront to Cain’s self-esteem. And here we see how antagonism to the gospel rankles in sin-loving hearts.
Cain and Abel (Gen. 4:1-8).

For the past two days we’ve looked at the sin problem. What about the cure?

For starters, after Adam and Eve transgressed and the Lord banished them from the Garden of Eden, they maintained their contact with Him through worship that centered on looking to the promised Son, who would bring an end to the sin problem. While Scripture doesn’t elaborate on the system of sacrifices that Adam and Eve observed, it is evident from the worship activities of their first sons, Cain and Abel, that the sacrifice of the lamb, as an expression of repentance and faith in the coming Messiah, was central to their worship.

What attitudes did Cain cherish that made him refuse to offer the lamb sacrifice? Gen. 4:1-8, 1 John 3:11-15.

This story is often seen, and rightly so, as an early example of the contrast between those who accept Christ’s righteousness by faith and those who seek to earn salvation by their “good works.” Yet, there’s an irony here. Those who oppose salvation by faith in Christ alone, without the works of the law (Rom. 3:28, Gal. 2:16, 3:11), often claim that such a teaching leads to sin. After all, they reason, if people are told that good works can’t save, then why should people sweat through the self-denial needed to produce them (Rom. 6:1, 15)?

Read carefully Genesis 4:3-7 and 1 John 3:12. In both texts, what is being said about Cain’s works in contrast to Abel’s? What were Cain’s works, at least as shown in the Bible, and why were they depicted as they were? What do these texts tell us about the nature of trying to earn salvation?

Cain’s works were deemed evil, because they were wrought from an attempt to earn salvation, whereas Abel’s works, stemming from a heart that understood the need for a sacrifice for sin, were deemed righteousness. In other words, only those who understand their total dependence upon God for salvation, their total dependence upon a Substitute, can produce what would be deemed “good works.” The value of works must be seen, perhaps, in the motives that lead to them: Works done from a heart seeking to earn salvation are deemed evil, while works done from a heart expressing thanks for the salvation already rendered are deemed righteous. Why do you think that is so?
III. Abraham and Calvary.

Abraham’s statement, “My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering” (Gen. 22:8), reveals his essential grasp of the gospel.

Inductive Bible Study

Texts for Discovery: Genesis 22:8; Romans 5:5-8; Hebrews 9:27, 28.

1 “You’re all dirty!” Mother observes then requests, “Please wash up before you eat.” Sound familiar? As children, how often we washed our hands while forgetting our faces! Reflect on the ways in which sin has sullied your life. Romans 5:8 (NIV) encourages us to hope with the words “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” What does it tell you about the gift of salvation, considering God extends it to us even though we are totally undeserving?

2 Some Christians suffer from what might be termed the Cain Syndrome. Cain thought his gift from the work of his hands would be good enough for God. Have you ever found yourself relating to this way of thinking, especially in light of all the “good” things you have done in order to be right with God? Discuss why such a belief makes it so difficult, if not impossible, to personally accept the Lamb of God as sufficient to pay the price for sin.

3 If you had been with Abraham on Mount Moriah (Gen. 22:1-19), what list of excuses might you have given in order to justify not following through on God’s command to sacrifice your son? In light of this struggle, discuss what it must have been like for God to send His Son to our world.

4 Israel felt their complaints in the wilderness seemed perfectly justified. They anticipated a glorious future after their rescue from Egypt. Instead, they were on the worst camping trip ever as they wandered in the wilderness. God announces “in returning and rest shall ye be saved” (Isa. 30:15). How can we learn to trust in the simple, straightforward commands of God and accept His abundant salvation?

5 When the serpent was lifted up, “obedience was the object to be gained, implicit and blind obedience, without stopping to inquire the reason or the science of the matter. Christ’s word was, ‘Look and live.’ ” —Ellen G. White, Our High Calling, p. 20. As a class, discuss what makes it so difficult to follow this admonition. What is it about the prevailing attitudes, current in society, that make it so difficult to trust our God to fulfill His purpose in our lives? (See Isa. 30:15, NIV)
Abraham and Calvary (Gen. 22:1-19, Gal. 3:8).

One of the most moving and powerful stories in the Hebrew Bible is that of Abraham and Isaac on Mount Moriah. Three faiths, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, all for various reasons, cherish this story. Christians, of course, see in this story a type, a symbol, of the plan of salvation, of the substitutionary death of Jesus in our stead.

Read Genesis 22:1-19. Aside from the gospel element, what other lessons could you draw from this story that could be of value in knowing the Lord? What lessons do you think other faiths can draw from this episode?

Whatever powerful spiritual truths can be taught from this story, the gospel element, the lamb as sacrifice instead of the child, forms the core of the chapter. And one of the things that God was telling us here through the gospel is that even an act of total self-sacrifice—Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his own son (surely, What father wouldn’t have preferred offering himself instead of his child?)—wasn’t what was sufficient to atone for sin. The problem of sin was way too deep for anything any of us, as sinners, could do to solve it. Even an act such as what Abraham was willing do to, out of a heart of faith and submission, wasn’t enough. Only the Lord Himself could take care of the problem of sin; only He could provide the needed Lamb.

Read Genesis 22:8. How was the gospel revealed there? Do you think Abraham fully understood what he was saying? Or was he, perhaps, just trying to calm his son?

Galatians 3:7-9 says that the gospel was preached to Abraham, and that in his seed (quoting Gen. 22:18) all the nations of the world would be blessed. Clearly, whatever Abraham had understood about the plan of salvation beforehand, he understood more now. No doubt, it was a painful lesson to learn.

Though Abraham’s works couldn’t save him, in what ways did his works express his faith? What lessons can we learn from this about the relationship between faith and works?
God was not giving a precedent for human sacrifices. Rather, He was vividly exemplifying the paramount gospel truth that in the fullness of time He would allow His only begotten Son to die for the sins of the world. Before Abraham could consummate the sacrifice, God provided a ram in Isaac’s place.

To commemorate the marvelous occurrences of that day, Abraham named the place on Mount Moriah, Jehovah-jireh. Moriah means “God will instruct,” and Jehovah-jireh conveys the dual meaning “the Lord will see” and “the Lord will provide.” He clearly saw our dire need and provided His only begotten Son for our salvation.

Almost one millennium later, the temple at Jerusalem was built on Moriah (see 2 Chron. 3:1), with Calvary nearby. These concurrences of location and events exhibit the clarity and continuity of God’s purpose.

**IV. Moses and the Serpent in the Wilderness.**

God had fed Israel daily with manna (Exodus 16) and provided Witnessing

Sodom and Gomorrah. Nineveh. Tyre. Babylon. Any one of these ancient places—as well as a few modern ones—could vie for the dubious honor of being renamed *Sin City.* In such a city, residents and businesses boast that everyone can find any pleasure, any diversion, or anything the heart desires within its borders. Such a place is noted for its fast-living, hard-driving lifestyle—it is not a place for the faint-of-heart. The Sin Cities of the world do a thriving business—sadly, there seems to be no lack of takers for the pleasures they offer!

Yet, in such places Christ’s followers are witnessing and modeling to those with whom they come in contact. Their joy in the Lord is too great to keep to themselves—they are sharing with others the promise found in Romans 5:16, 19: “Adam’s sin brought death to all. But the gift of life prompted by grace comes through Jesus Christ who died and is alive. This gift is offered to anyone, no matter how much he has sinned, and when the gift is accepted in Christ, it brings about his acquittal. . . . If by one man’s disobedience, many were made sinners, then by one Man’s obedience, many will be made righteous!” *The Clear Word.*

God’s message cannot be denied; His plan of salvation cannot be expunged by Satan and his followers. Ask yourself whether you are doing enough to share the good news. If the answer is No, talk to God about it. Then, speak with others about what you can do together to witness to the citizens of the modern-day Sin Cities of the world, pointing them toward the riches of Christ.
The Serpent in the Wilderness \textit{(Num. 21:4-9)}. 

During Israel’s long travels and sojourn in the wilderness, God in His mercy had miraculously protected them from fiery serpents and scorpions \textit{(see Deut. 8:15)}. He had preserved their health and strength, given them water and nutritious food in abundance, as well as guidance on their journey and protection from hostile tribes. Still, the people as a whole found constant cause for dissatisfaction and complaint, especially against Moses. While their feet were moving circuitously toward the Promised Land, their hearts were steadily moving toward perdition.

\textbf{Some} of Israel’s complaints against Moses were, it would seem (at least on the surface), legitimate, were they not \textit{(see Num. 21:5)}? After all, food and water are pretty basic necessities. Why, then, the fiery serpents?

An interesting twist to this story is the fact that the people were to look at a copy of a fiery serpent in order to live. Why, of all things, a serpent, often in the Bible, as well as in much ancient literature, a symbol for evil \textit{(Gen. 3:1, Rev. 20:2)}? In contrast, Ellen White says that the serpent “was a symbol of Christ; and the necessity of faith in His merits was thus presented to their minds.”—Ellen G. White, \textit{Patriarchs and Prophets}, p. 430. Indeed, Christ’s own words in John 3:14, 15 give the same idea. Why, then, would a symbol of evil be used to represent something so good?

Some have speculated that the answer is found in the nature of Christ’s death itself. At the Cross He was our Sin-Bearer; He was the One who bore the sin and evil of the world, who even became sin, and a curse, for us \textit{(2 Cor. 5:21, Gal. 3:13)}. And it’s from this, His death in our stead, that we can look and find salvation from the evil that otherwise would destroy us. This is one of the great paradoxes of the Christian faith: Jesus, all goodness, became on the cross the focus of all evil. Hence, the symbol of the serpent as a symbol for Christ, the One who bore all the world’s evil.

\begin{quote}
Put yourself in the position of an Israelite who just got bitten by a deadly snake, which has already killed others around you. You’re told that the only way to live is to look at a copy of the snake. Why is this such a good example of what it means to live by faith, to trust in what you don’t fully understand, and to accept your own utter inability to save yourself?
\end{quote}
them with sufficient water in the wilderness (see Exod. 17:1-7). At the root, Israel chafed against God, not because they were in danger of dying from hunger and thirst but because they resented His high calling for them as a people (see Psalm 78). If we loathe what our carnal senses regard as the “light bread” (Num. 21:5) of divine counsel and instead lust for the pungent pleasures of sin, then we, too, will be smitten and bitten by the venomous elements of the world. But these elements cannot invade our lives if we abide in God’s fellowship and Word.

Only one antidote exists for the confusion and desolation brought on by sin—the cross of Jesus. Christ conquered evil by absorbing the whole of its force into Himself on Calvary. He who knew no sin became sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He died the death the devil and all his followers, human and demonic, deserve, so that repentant sinners might live the life that is His.

Life-Application Approach

Icebreaker: What memorable trip did you take with your father, or with a father figure?


Thought Questions:
1. According to Hebrews 11:17-19, why was Abraham able to make such an unusually harsh trip with his only son?
2. How were Abraham’s experience and attitude like that of God the Father?
3. How was Isaac’s experience and attitude like that of Jesus?
4. How does the lamb foreshadow Jesus?

Application Questions:
1. Why would God ask Abraham to sacrifice what was most precious to him? How often does God ask us to do things similar to what He asked Abraham to do? What might some of those things be? What dangers might there be in making a literal parallel between Abraham’s situation and ours?
2. Abraham was surrounded by an idol-worshiping culture in which it was not unusual for parents to sacrifice their children to their gods. Naturally, God condemns such sacrifices (see Lev. 20:1-5). So, how did Abraham know it was the true God speaking to him?

“Nothing but the righteousness of Christ can entitle us to one of the blessings of the covenant of grace. . . . We must not think that our own merits will save us; Christ is our only hope of salvation. ‘For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.’ Acts 4:12.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets,* p. 431.

“Cain and Abel represent two classes that will exist in the world till the close of time. One class avail themselves of the appointed sacrifice for sin; the other venture to depend upon their own merits; theirs is a sacrifice without the virtue of divine mediation, and thus it is not able to bring man into favor with God. It is only through the merits of Jesus that our transgressions can be pardoned.”—Ellen G. White, *Conflict and Courage,* p. 25.

“The same lesson that Christ bade Moses to give to the children of Israel in the wilderness is for all such souls suffering under the plague spot of sin. From the billowy cloud Christ spoke to Moses and told him to make a brazen serpent and place it upon a pole, and then bid all that were bitten with the fiery serpents to look and live. What if, in the place of looking as Christ commanded them, they had said, ‘I do not believe it will do me the least bit of good to look. I am too great a sufferer from the sting of the poisonous serpent.’ Obedience was the object to be gained, implicit and blind obedience, without stopping to inquire the reason or the science of the matter. Christ’s word was, ‘Look and live.’ ”—Ellen G. White, *Our High Calling,* p. 20.

Discussion Questions:

1. How do we understand the difference between the results of sin and sin itself? Is that even a fair distinction?

2. How do these Bible accounts help us understand that salvation has always been by faith alone, as opposed to by the works of the law? Why can salvation never be by anything other than what Christ has done for us?

3. Look at the final two sentences in the last Ellen White quote above. What is she saying there? Why is this concept so important, especially today, when the claims of science have such a powerful sway over human thinking?
Jesus and the Sanctuary

SABBATH Afternoon

Read for This Week’s Study: Exod. 24:5-8, 25:8, 29:12, 30:10, Lev. 10:18, Isaiah 53.

Memory Text: “By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities” (Isaiah 53:11).

In the context of war and devastation, the poet W. H. Auden wrote that humans were like children “lost in a haunted wood,” afraid of the night, and who “have never been happy or good.”

This depressing verse captures the human situation. Fortunately, God wants to lead us out of this moral and physical morass. Ellen White has said that the moment there was sin there was a Savior. Through the ages the Savior has revealed Himself and salvation, hope, and eternal life for lost and fearful beings who are neither very happy nor very good.

For centuries, the main way that He has revealed Himself and His thoughts was through the earthly-sanctuary service, which provided a model for the plan of salvation.

This week we look at that service and what the Lord was telling His people through it. This way, we can claim the hope that God graciously offers to us—we who, to some degree, are reflected in Auden’s verse.

The Week at a Glance: What was the meaning of those sacrifices? What was the purpose of the Old Testament sanctuary? How was Christ prefigured in the sacrificial rituals? Why was blood so central to the whole process?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 15.
The Pre-Sanctuary Sacrifices

Last week’s lesson sketched some of the earliest examples of sacrifice mentioned in the Old Testament. Interestingly enough (and perhaps you noticed), no real explanation of the origin or purpose of the sacrifices is given in the texts. The Bible just tells about them being offered.

\textbf{No matter} the different circumstances surrounding each account, the Cain and Abel story (Gen. 4:4), the Flood story (Genesis 6–8), and the account of Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 22:13), all have one crucial thing in common: What is it, and why is it so important?

In all these presanctuary accounts, the worship centered on sacrifice, on blood, on the death of an \textit{innocent} animal. Though the texts themselves say little about the purpose of the sacrifices, the death of the animal was still central. There was something about these deaths that made the act itself acceptable to God (contrast the Lord’s reaction to Cain’s offering with His response to Abel’s). This is seen also in Noah’s sacrifice right after exiting the ark.

\textbf{Read} Genesis 8:21, 22. Notice the link between the sacrifices Noah offered and the Lord’s intent never to “curse the ground any more for man’s sake” (see also Gen. 9:8-17). What’s implied in these texts, if not explicitly stated? How do we see the plan of salvation foreshadowed here?

Even here, long before the Cross, we are given a glimpse of the great plan of salvation, of God willing to forgive us, but only because of a sacrifice offered in our stead. God accepted—in behalf of the world—the sacrifice that Noah offered, even though “the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.”

\textbf{The Bible records} Noah’s first act after getting off the ark as one of building an altar and offering sacrifices to the Lord. What should that tell us about the importance of keeping the Lord first in our lives, not just in words but in concrete acts of worship, thanksgiving, and praise?

Teachers Aims:
1. To remind the class that the moment there was sin there was a Savior.
2. To present the sanctuary service as a parable of salvation history.
3. To invite the class members to accept atonement through the blood.

Lesson Outline:
   A. Our God wants to lead us out of sin and into salvation.
   B. Even before the earthly sanctuary was built, sacrifices were offered as an example of the price of, and antidote for, the sin problem.
   C. God is willing to forgive us through the sacrifice of Christ offered in our stead.

II. The Earthly Sanctuary Illustrates Hope in Action (Exod. 25:8).
   A. The sanctuary functioned as the meeting place between God and His people.
   B. The death of each sacrifice pointed to the death of Jesus.
   C. God was able to model His will for His people through the sanctuary services.

III. The Blood Cleanses and Saves (Lev. 17:11).
   A. The offering of innocent blood was central to the sanctuary paradigm of salvation.
   B. As sinners, we should be destroyed, but God provides a way of escape.
   C. Jesus became our Sin Bearer, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.

Summary: Even before the sanctuary services were instituted, the sacrifice of an innocent victim encapsulated the gospel story. Later, the sanctuary services modeled God’s desire to meet with, rescue, and restore His people to face-to-face communion with Him. In every bleeding sacrifice was typified “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). “Liberty is given to all to go directly to God through a personal Saviour.”—Ellen G. White, God’s Amazing Grace, p. 155.

COMMENTARY

Jesus and the Sanctuary.

Introduction. God designed ancient Israel’s sanctuary services, with its system of types and ordinances, to illuminate the hearts of His people with the gospel and keep alive their faith in the coming Messiah. Given for the same purpose, the prophecies delineated with photographic accuracy the leading events in the incarnate life
The Earthly Sanctuary

From the start, with the fall of Adam and Eve, we can see how one result of sin is separation between humanity and God. God is holy, humanity is unholy, and the question remains, How can a holy God come close to an unholy race? The earthly-sanctuary service helps provide an answer.

Read Exodus 25:8. Why does God ask the Hebrews to make a sanctuary?

The sanctuary functions as a meeting place between God and His people. The name of the sanctuary itself, the “tent of meeting” (often translated as “tent of the congregation”), carries this idea: The sanctuary was a place for the Lord, a holy God, to meet with sinful, fallen humanity. It was through the medium of the sanctuary that the Lord, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, interacted with His covenant people on a daily basis. Here is the place in which He issued judgments (Exodus 16), forgave sin (Leviticus 4), guided their journeying (Num. 9:15-21), cleansed them from impurity (Lev. 14:31), and communed with them (Exod. 25:22). It was the center of their worship, the center of divine revelation, and the place where the people came to in order to enjoy the benefits of this covenant relationship with God.

Was the sanctuary the only place in which God had interacted with His people in a special way? How do Exodus 12 and Exodus 20 help answer that question?

Of course, the Lord was not limited to interacting with His people via the sanctuary; nevertheless, that was the chosen means through which He tabernacled and communicated and interacted with them. Why He did it this specific way, Scripture doesn’t say: The crucial thing is that, through this medium, He, a holy God, was able to manifest Himself to the people in order that they would be able to meet and commune with Him in a manner that allowed them to understand His will for their lives.

Review the things that God did for His people by dwelling with them in the sanctuary. In what ways does Jesus, by having dwelt with us in the flesh (John 1:14), do the same things for us now?
of the Messiah from His birth to His sacrifice on the cross and His subsequent glory.

I. The Pre-Sanctuary Services.
Scripture characterizes the gospel as “everlasting” (Rev. 14:6). Long before Calvary, Christ, as the “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8) and the true Light that lightens everyone who comes into the world (see John 1:9), was mediating insight into His atonement, through the sacrifices He commanded to be given in worshiping God (see Gen. 8:20, 15:8-17, John 3:14-16).

II. The Earthly Sanctuary.
Every aspect of the sanctuary services presented the gospel in a tapestry of living metaphor. “In His temple, every whit of it uttereth, Glory” (Ps. 29:9, KJV, margin). To illustrate how sin was pardoned and removed from the life and thus restore the broken connection between sinners and God—this was the central aim of the sanctuary services (see Exod. 25:8, Lev. 26:11-13).

God gave directions for the sanctuary to be built after a distinct pattern He revealed to Moses (see Exod. 25:9, 21, 22, 40; Heb. 8:1-5). The lessons taught through the sanctuary were so vital to human development and destiny that nothing could be left to chance or the truth-beclouding effects of human imagination. It is only true worship that points the way back to God, not a hybrid of human and divine ideas. All the lessons taught in the sanctuary services on earth mirrored on a smaller scale the sanctuary in heaven, which the Lord pitched and not people.

III. The Blood and the Sanctuary.
To symbolize the centrality of the merits of the blood, God directed Moses to sprinkle blood on the altar of sacrifice, on the book of the covenant, and on the people themselves (Exod. 24:3-8). The tabernacle and priests were also consecrated to their functions with blood (Lev. 8:1-30). It was the application of blood that made atonement for the soul, and without the shedding of blood there was no remission of sins (see Lev. 17:11, Heb. 9:22). This profusion of blood is fully explained in the New Testament as symbolizing the outflow of Christ’s sacrifice for our salvation (see Matt. 26:28; 27:4, 6, 8, 24, 25; Rom. 3:25; 5:9; Col. 1:14, 20; Heb. 9:12, 14; 1 Pet. 1:2, 19; Rev. 1:5; 5:9; 7:14).

IV. The Sanctuary and Sin.
Notice that the repentant sinner brought a lamb or kid for a sin offering, but always under conviction rather than duress. By this action, the supplicant signified his faith in the atoning virtue of the coming Messiah’s sacrifice and his personal appropriation of the benefit. Before taking the life of the lamb, he confessed his sins
Blood and the Sanctuary

Yesterday’s study shows how the sanctuary was the means through which a holy God could dwell among and interact with sinners. Yet, it wasn’t as though the building itself provided some kind of special filter that enabled the people to approach, worship, and have fellowship with the Lord. Something else was involved, something that a building itself could never provide.

**Read** Leviticus 17:11. What is the crucial element here, and why is it so important in allowing sinful humanity to approach a holy God?

**Look** up Exodus 24:5-8, 29:12, 30:10, Leviticus 4:17, and 10:18. What’s the one point all have in common?

Even the most cursory reading of the Old Testament—sanctuary ritual reveals the centrality of blood to the entire ritual. Innocent animals—lams, bulls, goats—were slain in various services, everything from first ratifying the covenant between the people and God (Exod. 24:5-8) to making atonement for a priest who sins (Lev. 4:3-7) to purification rituals (Lev. 15:25-30), even to the communal offering on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16). What all this shows is how pivotal the sacrifices and blood were to the function of the earthly sanctuary. Whatever spiritual lessons were to be taught through the tabernacle service, the sacrifice of these animals, the spilling of their blood, was central to the whole process.

This shouldn’t be surprising. As sinners, we should be destroyed, because sin leads to death. Yet God, in His grace, has provided a way of escape: the innocent dying for the guilty (Rom. 5:8). Jesus Himself would lose His life; that is, spill His blood, in order that we, as sinners, could stand forgiven (Gal. 1:4, 1 Pet. 1:19). Because blood represented life, spilled blood represented death, and the death of each sacrifice pointed to the death of Jesus, the means by which sinful humanity could be restored, in full, with the Creator.

The sacrifice of innocent animals appears cruel, even crude. And maybe it’s supposed to appear that way. What should this tell us about how bad sin is, that it takes something so hard and harsh in order to deal with it?
over the spotless, innocent creature. It was not the penitent sinner but the priest who made atonement for the sins confessed. Both the sacrifice and the priest stood for the Messiah (Heb. 7:24-28, 8:4-8, 9:20-28; Selected Messages, book 1, pp. 340–344).

V. The Supreme Sin Offering.
Isaiah 53 blazes as a star of the first magnitude in Hebrew prophecy to exalt the Messiah’s mission and triumphant self-sacrifice. For the sake of those who do accept the Messiah’s salvation and appreciate the object of His unparalleled sufferings, He deems it worth-while to endure the anguish of the cross (see Isa. 53:11, 1 Thess. 2:19, Heb. 12:2). While Isaiah 53 clearly envisages the Messiah’s future trials, the prophecy conveys not the least hint of self-pity or resentment on God’s part. What a lesson for those who must endure sacrifice and injustice for Christ’s sake! (See 1 Pet. 2:21-24, Phil. 1:29, 2 Tim. 1:12, 2:9-12.)

Consider how Isaiah’s steadily developed theme of the expiatory

Inductive Bible Study

Text for Discovery: Isaiah 53.

1 When your car breaks down, have you ever wished you knew ahead of time it would happen? If a tow truck were already on the way to meet you when help was most needed, you definitely would be spared a lot of frustration. Ellen G. White tells us “as soon as there was sin, there was a Saviour.”—The Desire of Ages, p. 210. Discuss how this assurance might make your life more secure. Share a time when God met your need in a very personal and timely way.

2 In the narratives about Cain and Abel, the account of the Flood, and the history of Abraham and Isaac on Mount Moriah, we find hints of a sacrificial system. Worship centers around the death of an innocent animal. We live in an age in which the sacrifices of the earthly-sanctuary system met their fulfillment in the Cross. Discuss the elements of the worship services at your church. How could the worship service at your church better reflect an understanding of the plan of salvation, illuminated by the Cross?

3 When God met with the Israelites at the sanctuary, He interacted with them on many levels. It was a daily time of meeting with many purposes. He issued judgments, guided their journeys, cleansed them from sin, and communed with His covenant people. How has your daily devotional time allowed God to reveal Himself to you?
The Sanctuary and Sin

Through the sacrificial ritual, the sanctuary provided a means through which God’s covenant people could enter into His divine presence. Yet, the questions are: What were those sacrifices all about that allowed people this access to God? and How is all this a prefiguring of what Christ has done for us?

Read the following texts: Leviticus 5:1, 17; 17:16; 19:17; 20:17, 20. From the immediate context of these texts, what do you think the phrase about people or the individual “bearing . . . iniquity” means?

The basic idea presented here is that people are responsible for their own sin and iniquity. Excuses aren’t allowed. God called His people into a covenant relationship with Him; He has allowed them to participate in His holiness (Exod. 19:6, Lev. 19:2, 20:7), and they could do this by living in faith and obedience to Him (Lev. 20:8). Sin and impurity, violations of the covenant law, could disrupt this covenant relationship. Unless sin were dealt with, His people would be punished, for they would be left to bear their own iniquity. The Lord, however, through His grace, offered them a way of being forgiven iniquity and a way to be cleansed from it. This provision was at the heart of the sacrificial system that centered on the sanctuary.

In order to be forgiven, those who were bearing their own sin brought a sacrifice to the Lord (Lev. 5:5, 6). The exact type of animal or ritual depended upon numerous factors, but the basic idea was the same: The sin and iniquity that a person was bearing were transferred to the innocent animal, and the animal itself suffered the death that, otherwise, would have been the sinner’s. This is part of the process that’s called atonement.

What is atonement equated with in these texts? Lev. 4:20, 6:7, 19:22, Num. 15:25. How do the following texts help us understand what we have been offered through Jesus? Ps. 130:3, 4; Eph. 1:7; 4:32; Col. 1:14. How have you experienced for yourself the reality of this wonderful promise?
and substitutionary nature of Christ’s sacrifice for humanity undergirds the gospel lessons of chapter 53 (see Isa. 26:12, 13; 27:2-6; 40:1-11; 45:22-25; 54:11-17; 61:1-3, 10, 11; 63:7-9; 64:4-8). The Father declared, “By His knowledge shall My righteous

Witnessing

On September 11, 2001, following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and on the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., people in each city stood in line for hours in order to give blood. In the early aftermath of the attacks, hope still remained that hundreds, if not thousands, of innocent people would be rescued and, in the process, would require life-saving units of blood in order to survive. In cities all around the country, people volunteered blood in an outpouring of compassion. Giving blood symbolized the desire to save life. Though it became painfully clear, as the days wore on, there would be few survivors to accept their gifts of blood, those who so generously gave the gift of life had no regrets they made the offer.

As moving as this moment was, it does not compare to Christ’s offer of the gift of life. The Perfect One, God’s Holy Son, willingly offered His own precious blood in order to redeem sinful human beings. How is it possible that we sometimes ignore or minimize this incredible expression of supreme love? How is it possible we sometimes fail to share the full impact of this gift with others? What does it tell us about the vast magnitude of the Father’s love for His lost children that He would allow such an offering to be made by His own Son?

A loving parent is quick to offer his or her own life in order to preserve the life of a child. What loving parents would not willingly expose themselves to physical danger in an effort to shield a child? The parent who acts as a shield to his or her child, in a sense, substitutes himself or herself in the child’s place.

Jesus has offered Himself as our Substitute; He has paid the penalty of sin for us. All He needs from us is our acceptance. Our hearts should sing with this knowledge; when it does, others with whom we come in contact cannot help asking us what it is that lights us from within. If we truly believe and if we sincerely accept Christ’s gift of salvation, we will not be able to keep it secret. Our witnessing to others will be as natural as breathing in and breathing out.

Invite a co-worker, neighbor, or friend to join you in church this week. Explain that you want him or her to share in the blessings that are a direct result of Christ’s substitution for our sins. Help this person to understand how this is the most precious gift of life any person ever will be offered.
The Supreme Sin Offering

In light of yesterday’s study, where we looked at the idea of sin and iniquity transferred to the innocent animal as a means of forgiving the sinner, what are the following texts telling us about Jesus? Isa. 53:11, Heb. 9:28, 1 Pet. 2:2.

The message is clear: Jesus became our Sin Bearer, taking upon Himself our sins and being punished for them, the only means of salvation and forgiveness for fallen humanity. This is, in many ways, the great truth foreshadowed in the earthly-sanctuary service.

Read Isaiah 53. How does this chapter, in its own unique way, teach us the idea of Christ’s substitutionary death in our stead?

Isaiah 53, linked with the last three verses of the fifty-second chapter, encapsulates the gospel. Isaiah’s beautiful presentation of the Savior and of His redeeming work is set against the backdrop of humankind’s ingratitude. Woven through these verses is a very clear and unmistakable presentation of the substitutionary nature of Christ’s sacrifice, as prefigured in the earthly-sanctuary service: “This chapter [Isaiah 53] should be studied. It presents Christ as the Lamb of God. Those who are lifted up with pride, whose souls are filled with vanity, should look upon this picture of their Redeemer, and humble themselves in the dust. The entire chapter should be committed to memory. Its influence will subdue and humble the soul defiled by sin and uplifted by self-exaltation.”—Ellen G. White Comments, The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 4, p. 1147.

Read again Isaiah 53 and write down every place it talks about humanity. What kind of picture does it present? How accurate of a portrayal is it? In what ways do you see yourself reflected in there? At the same time, what hope is offered there for fallen beings such as ourselves?
servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities” and make “intercession for the transgressors” (Isa. 53:11, 12). Think what sort of “knowledge” is required to justify humans who, through sin, are in a naturally unjustified state. What must God be like to use His infinite knowledge for our salvation at such a high cost to Himself! For further insight, read Romans 4, 5.

Life-Application Approach

**Icebreaker:** If you could erase one event, what would it be? (This question is deliberately vague. Let your class members define *erase* and *event.*)

**Verses for Group Focus:** Isaiah 53:4-12.

**Thought Questions:**
1. Isaiah 53:10, 11 (NIV) speaks of the life of the “servant” as a “guilt offering.” Leviticus 5:14–6:7 describes this offering. What relationship is there between the offering described in Leviticus and the allusion to it in Isaiah?

2. List the words in Isaiah 53:4-12 that describe the human condition. How does God deal with the worst of human behavior and attitudes?


4. Isaiah 53:11 says the Suffering Servant will “justify many” (NIV). How does this justification occur? *Rom. 10:9, 2 Cor. 5:21, Eph. 4:22-24.*

**Application Questions:**
1. Isaiah identifies himself with those whose sins are placed on the Servant. He uses the inclusive pronouns *we* and *our.* How can we identify with the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53? What does this tell us about what Jesus has done for us?

2. Isaiah 53:6 says we are all like sheep who have gone astray. In what ways do people today, whether they are Christians or not, wander away from the divine Shepherd? How can we find our way back to Him?

3. In verses 7-12, we read how Jesus suffered for our sakes and bore our sins so we could be made acceptable to God. In practical terms, how should we respond to such love?

“To many it has been a mystery why so many sacrificial offerings were required in the old dispensation, why so many bleeding victims were led to the altar. But the great truth that was kept before men, and imprinted upon mind and heart, was this, ‘Without shedding of blood is no remission’ (Heb. 9:22). In every bleeding sacrifice was typified ‘the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world’ (John 1:29).

“Christ Himself was the originator of the Jewish system of worship, in which, by types and symbols, were shadowed forth spiritual and heavenly things. . . .

“A lesson was embodied in every sacrifice, impressed in every ceremony, solemnly preached by the priest in his holy office, and inculcated by God Himself—that through the blood of Christ alone is there forgiveness of sins.

“Anciently believers were saved by the same Saviour as now, but it was a God veiled. They saw God’s mercy in figures. . . . Christ’s sacrifice is the glorious fulfillment of the whole Jewish economy. . . . All can now approach God through the merits of Christ. . . . They need not depend on priest or ceremonial sacrifice. Liberty is given to all to go directly to God through a personal Saviour.

“The whole mind, the whole soul, the whole heart, and the whole strength are purchased by the blood of the Son of God.”—Ellen G. White, *God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 155.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. In what essential ways did the services of the tabernacle in the wilderness, and afterward, in the temple at Jerusalem, prophetically symbolize the gospel?

2. As Christians, we see the death of Christ foreshadowed in the earthly-sanctuary service. Yet, the earthly service was not limited merely to the death of the animal. The priests also ministered in behalf of the people in the earthly sanctuary after the sacrifice had already been offered. Discuss the implications of that important fact in light of our understanding of Christ as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary.
A Body You Have Prepared for Me

SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: John 1:1-3; Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 1:8, 9; 5:7-9.

Memory Text: “When He came into the world, He said: ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me’” (Hebrews 10:5, NKJV).

About twenty-four hundred years ago, Euripides wrote Alcestis, in which Admetus, king of Thessaly, was fated to an early death unless he could find a substitute to die in his place. He approached his father, mother, other kin, and friends, all who refused; only his wife, Alcestis, agreed to offer herself. After her death, Admetus bemoaned her loss: “I shall wear mourning for you, O my wife, not for one year but all my days, abhorring the woman who bore me, hating my father—for they loved in words, not deeds.”

Euripides’s drama covers the theme of self-sacrifice—what it means to give of oneself for another. As Christians, we see here a faint example of the story of Jesus, who offered Himself not for one king but for a planet of unworthy beings. This week we look at Christ’s coming here in human flesh in order to offer His life for ours.

The Week at a Glance: What was Jesus prior to His incarnation? After His incarnation, was He both God and Man? How does the Bible depict His humanity? His divinity? How could He have both natures at once? How important to us are both His divinity and humanity?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 22.
“Is the Universe Friendly?”

Even to begin to appreciate what Jesus Christ has done for us by taking upon Himself humanity, we first need to understand just who He is, where He came from, and what He was prior to His voyage into this world via the womb of Mary, His earthly mother. These themes aren’t always easy to grasp, because the ideas behind them are so incredible. All we can do, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is marvel at what we can know and rejoice in the hope that this God-given knowledge offers to us.

*Look* up these texts: Micah 5:2, John 1:1-3, 6:62, 8:58. What do they tell us about where Jesus was and who He was prior to His coming to earth as a human being?

These texts (and others) relate a crucial theme, that of the preexistence of Jesus prior to His incarnation (His coming in human flesh). What they teach us, among other things, is that Jesus is God and existed before coming to this earth. He was not just some great man, a great teacher and spiritual guide. He was God, and as God, He existed before He became a human being. Indeed, He exists eternally. The deity of Christ is a theme that runs through the Bible. Jesus came from the Father (John 16:28), was one with the Father (John 10:30), and exists eternally with the Father (John 1:2). There was never a time when Jesus didn’t exist; otherwise, He would be a created being, and the Bible does not teach that.

*Read* John 1:3. How does this verse shed light on the eternal preexistence of Jesus?

Think about what this great truth means, that Jesus, coeternal with the Father, became a human Being. Think how an understanding of this truth changes our perception, not only of ourselves but of our world, even of our whole existence. Someone once said that the crucial question facing humanity is, “Is the universe friendly?” Discuss with others how your understanding of the deity and preexistence of Christ helps answer that question.
**Key Text:** *Hebrews 5:7-9.*

**Teachers Aims:**
1. To present Jesus as the divine, eternally preexistent Son of God.
2. To encourage the class to reflect upon what Jesus’ sinless humanity means personally to us.
3. To invite the class to accept Jesus as the Author of our eternal salvation.

**Lesson Outline:**

I. **Jesus—God With Us** *(Phil. 2:5-8).*
   A. Jesus was coeternal with God before He became a human being.
   B. Our culture, steeped in the scientific methods, has a difficult time accepting this fact as reasonable.
   C. Jesus, who was in very nature God, became a servant on our behalf.

II. **Jesus Was Fully Human** *(Luke 2:7, 52).*
   A. Jesus was born as a baby and suffered fatigue, hunger, and thirst as we do.
   B. Jesus was tempted in every respect as we are, but He did not sin.
   C. Faith enables us to accept what we cannot fully understand.

III. **Jesus—the Source of Our Eternal Salvation** *(Heb. 5:7-9).*
   A. Jesus needed to be both fully God and fully man in order for the plan of salvation to succeed.
   B. A true knowledge of Jesus is possible only through revelation.
   C. Jesus invites us to believe and to be saved.

**Summary:** Our salvation is made available through Jesus. He “emptied Himself” and took “the form of a servant” *(Phil. 2:7, RSV).* Ellen White calls this a “wondrous combination of man and God!”—*Review and Herald,* Sept. 4, 1900. He lived a sinless life on earth and gave His life to purchase our salvation. Although we cannot fully understand this mystery of God’s grace, we are invited to accept it by faith and personally claim the salvation He offers.

**COMMENTARY**

**A Body You Have Prepared for Me.**

**Introduction.** Christ took our human nature to save us from sin. Without confusion or crossover, He became fully human and remained fully divine in His essential nature. He was simultaneously our Substitute and Example, our Sacrifice and Mediator. He stands as our Representative to redeem and restore us and to give us power to overcome Satan and sin in the great controversy between good and evil. By His incarnation He was perfectly adapted to carry out the great plan of redemption without compromise, duplicity, unfair
In the Form of God and Man

To the modern mind, the idea of Christ’s preexistence and then His incarnation into human flesh are all too far-fetched to be taken seriously. These are tales that belong to a prescientific, prerational age. For a world raised on the scientific method, where truth is viewed only as that which can be understood in a lab or by scientific inquiry, the incarnation of Jesus simply is not something that reasonable people can still accept, because it exists outside the common scientific and modern tools of inquiry and examination. This would be fine if all truth existed only within those parameters; but because it doesn’t, these methods will never bring us to the truth we really need to know. Instead, we learn these truths, because we have been told them.

Read Philippians 2:5-8. What is God telling us in these verses? What do they tell us about who Jesus was and what He became in order to save us? In what ways do these texts reveal the divine and human aspect of Jesus?

In verse 6, Paul says that Jesus was “in the form of God” but that He “emptied Himself” (vs. 7, NASB) and took the “form of a servant.” What’s interesting is that the word translated “form” (He was in the “form of God” [vs. 6], and the “form of a servant” [vs. 7]) comes from the same Greek word, morphe, which means the essential and basic characteristics of something, as opposed to merely incidental or changing characteristics. In other words, a circle might be green or red or made out of rocks; these are elements of the circle that are not essential to its being a circle, for they can all change and the circle remains a circle. In contrast, the roundness of the circle, its morphe, its form, can never change; it’s what it is in order to be a circle. This is what Paul is telling us here about Jesus: He was truly God, in that He had the essential characteristics of God; and then He humbled Himself and took on the essential characteristics of a human, a servant, and became fully human, as well. He was as truly God as He was truly a man.

Why is the great truth about Jesus’ divinity and humanity something that science or any other human inquiry can never teach us? What other important truths exist outside the realm of science and philosophy? What should this tell us about the limits of these disciplines in revealing to us crucial truth?
advantage, or the least lowering of the divine standard of righteousness. His coming to make complete provision for the salvation of all who accept Him in God’s appointed way is the supreme gift of the ages.

I. Is the Universe Friendly?

Christ’s eternal preexistence is a fundamental Bible teaching, as demonstrated in the texts that appear in Sunday’s lesson. Failure to recognize Christ’s coequality with the Father (John 10:30, Phil. 2:5-11, Heb. 1:1-8) can only stultify our concept of God’s glory and of the plan of salvation.

II. In the Form of God and Man.

Much fruitless debate has swirled about the topic of Christ’s humanity and divinity. When contemplating this subject, we are on holy ground. While we cannot decipher the fullness of this divine mystery, it is profitable to study the purpose of Christ’s coming in so unique a nature (see Rom. 1:3, 4; 8:1-4; Heb. 1:1-3; 2:9-14; 1 John 3:5-9).

Christ became one with us in every vital and needful way, to open the gates of salvation. As the Second Adam, He gained victory where our first parents failed and where all have failed since. He has made it possible for us to become partakers of the divine nature and victorious over all sin and temptation through faith in His atoning blood. If we receive Him with the simplicity and humility of a little child, we will be saved (Matt. 11:25, 18:1-3).

III. The Humanity of Christ.

“It would have been an almost infinite humiliation for the Son of God to take man’s nature, even when Adam stood in his innocence in Eden. But Jesus accepted humanity when the race had been weakened by four thousand years of sin. Like every child of Adam He accepted the results of the working of the great law of heredity. What these results were is shown in the history of His earthly ancestors. He came with such a heredity to share our sorrows and temptations, and to give us the example of a sinless life.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 49; see also p. 117.

IV. The Divinity of Christ.

“Christ had not exchanged His divinity for humanity; but He had clothed His divinity in humanity.”—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Oct. 29, 1895. “But although Christ’s divine glory was for a time veiled and eclipsed by His assuming humanity, yet He did not cease to be God when He became man. The human did not take the place of the divine, nor the divine of the human. This is the mystery of godliness. The two expressions ‘human’ and ‘divine’ were, in Christ, closely and inseparably one, and yet they had a distinct
The Humanity of Christ

In the context of yesterday’s study of Philippians 2, read the following from Ellen White: “Wondrous combination of man and God! He might have helped his human nature to withstand the inroads of disease by pouring from his divine nature vitality and undecaying vigor to the human. But he humbled himself to man’s nature. He did this that the Scripture might be fulfilled; and the plan was entered into by the Son of God, knowing all the steps in his humiliation, that he must descend to make an expiation for the sins of a condemned, groaning world. What humility was this! It amazed angels. The tongue can never describe it; the imagination can not take it in. The eternal Word consented to be made flesh! God became man! It was a wonderful humility.”—Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, Sept. 4, 1900.

Look up the following texts: Matthew 4:1,2; 8:24; 26:37; Mark 2:16; 3:5; Luke 2:7; John 4:6; 11:41; 19:28. How do they attest to the humanity of Christ?

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, however different their approaches to the life and death of Jesus, all in their own way testified to His humanity, for they depicted Him as one who ate, prayed, slept, and became thirsty, hungry, and tired. For them, His humanity never seems to be in doubt.

Yet, while testifying to His humanity, the Bible also makes it clear that Jesus never sinned, that in His human nature He never once succumbed to the temptations of the flesh and the wiles of the tempter. The epistle to the Hebrews states that Jesus “in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15, NRSV). Peter, who knew Jesus well, testified that He “did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth” (1 Pet. 2:22). John wrote that “in him is no sin” (1 John 3:5), and Paul said that Christ “knew no sin” (2 Cor. 5:21). Meanwhile, Christ’s own words in the following verses (John 8:29, 46; 15:10) all reveal the fact that, though human, He never sinned.

It’s not hard to understand why the humanity of Jesus is so important to us. After all, by taking upon Himself human nature, Christ linked Himself to the race in a remarkable way. Why, though, is His sinlessness so important?
individually. Though Christ humbled Himself to become man, the Godhead was still His own.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1129.

“When Christ’s indwelling glory flashed forth, it was too intense for His pure and perfect humanity entirely to conceal.”—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, May 10, 1899.

**Inductive Bible Study**

**Texts for Discovery:** *John 1:14, Philippians 2:6-8, Hebrews 5:7-9.*

1. If you have ever moved from one home to another, you know what it is like to settle into a new environment. Jesus left heaven and “made His dwelling among us” (*John 1:14, NIV*). Consider what it meant for Jesus, who was “full of grace and truth,” to live on earth. How have you allowed Him to “dwell” in your life?

2. One of the first wonders of nature we may discover as children is the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly. What a wonderful mystery! But it pales in comparison to the transformation involved in the incarnation of Christ. Jesus, who was fully God, became fully Man. He took the “form of a servant” (*Phil. 2:7*) to meet our need. Discuss the evidences that Jesus was human (*see Matt. 8:24; Luke 2:7, 52; John 4:6*). How does His humanity make His sinless life even more profound?

3. Our secular world does not fully comprehend a God who would live among men, and thus it discounts His relevance to life. Discuss how the prevalence of such an attitude affects your neighbors’ understanding of Jesus. Plan some tangible, practical ways you might share Jesus with them.

4. A hose does not provide the water a garden needs unless it is attached to the water spigot outside the house. Paul tells us that Jesus is the “source of eternal salvation for all who obey him” (*Heb. 5:9, NIV*). Why is it necessary to be connected to Jesus? Discuss why and how obedience is involved in our response to our Savior.

5. Jesus “has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin” (*Heb. 4:15, NIV*). He lived what He preached. He acts on the love He has for us. How can we have hope of following His example? *Consider Philippians 2:12, 13.* In what ways does knowing that Jesus understands our human journey make Him a more approachable Savior?
The Divinity of Christ

Read the following texts. After them, write how each one expresses the divinity of Jesus:

*John 8:58*

*John 20:28*

*Hebrews 1:8, 9*

While the Bible certainly makes plain the humanity of Christ, it’s also clear on His divinity. The God who existed prior to His assumption of humanity remained the same God, even though now He was clothed in humanity, a concept that is, indeed, hard for us to understand. Of course, the fact that we can’t understand something hardly militates against its being true. There are all sorts of things, even in the secular world, that are believed to be true though hard to understand. Quantum theory teaches that subatomic particles don’t really exist until someone looks at them. General relativity teaches that matter bends space and time. The very process of life itself is full of mysteries that we don’t understand, even though we know life is real. In short, all around us are mysteries, things that we can’t fully understand. Why, then, should we be surprised that we face them in our religion, as well? No wonder the Scriptures tell us to consider the mystery of God, even Christ (Col. 2:2, 3); no wonder, too, that Jesus tells us that a true knowledge of Him is possible only through revelation (Matt. 11:25-27, 16:17).

What other things, whether in the secular or spiritual world, do we believe that are true yet find hard, if not impossible, to understand? How should this fact (that there’s much we believe that we don’t understand) help us grasp, by faith, the great truth about Jesus being both God and Man? In other words, why should we not reject out of hand something that we cannot understand?
V. Author of Eternal Salvation.

We will be able to best appreciate the glories and wonders of Christ’s incarnation by keeping constantly in view His purpose in adopting human nature—to save us from sin. In order to achieve this goal, He suffered intensely from Satan, who strove with all his power and cunning to thwart Christ’s mission and bring it to shameful ruin. Jesus also suffered from the very ones He came to save, humans whose deeply entrenched love of sin made them recoil from the righteousness they saw in Christ and lash out to discourage and ultimately destroy Him. A body was prepared for Christ not to be shielded from trial and suffering but to shoulder the weight of the world’s need. In that body He resolutely did God’s will, not in His

Witnessing

Just how do we explain His “foreverness” to those who are beginning to learn about Him?

Quite simply, Jesus Christ has always been, and He will always be. His existence is without end—before the beginning—and eternal always. Yet, why is it so important for nonbelievers to accept His “existence without interruption”? Our lesson this week addresses these fundamental issues pertaining to Christ’s supreme sacrifice—forsaking the pure world of heaven to take on the responsibility of ensuring salvation to all who inhabit planet Earth.

To get a better idea of the impact of Christ’s transformation from eternal Lord into a humble human while still retaining His divinity, take a moment to do a quick word association exercise: Look at each word listed on the left then write down its opposite.

High _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
Best _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
First _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
Major _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
Exalted _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

This list describes Jesus’ experience in transitioning from first to last, exalted to reviled, high to low. Only His complete humility permitted such an adjustment for the King of kings.

Jesus, for all His humanity, never sinned. Never confused for a moment right and wrong, truth and untruth. He avoided what many today find so hard to do—to separate truth from lies.

Christ’s impact, manifested through you, can be profound and life enabling; touching hearts and lives on a daily basis. Never lose sight of the fact you are witnessing, consciously and unconsciously, at all times, about the preexistent One to those with whom you come in daily contact. His preexistence is actually a promise of power—for His eternal beingness means we serve One who never tires of aiding our efforts to touch lives.
Author of Eternal Salvation

Fortunately, we don’t need to know all the intricacies regarding the nature of Christ in order to benefit from what He accomplished for us. God has revealed enough for us to be saved.

**Read** carefully Hebrews 5:7-9. How is the humanity of Christ portrayed there? In what ways does our experience parallel His? At the same time, what did He accomplish for us that we never could have accomplished for ourselves?

In reading Hebrews 5:7-9, we can see so clearly the humanity of Jesus: His flesh, His tears, His suffering, His obedience. In so many ways, this all sounds so human—a godly person suffering and struggling through the toils of life, clinging in faith and reverence to the Father. All this we see in Jesus (read also Matt. 26:39, 27:46, Luke 22:42).

Yet, at the same time, He is also God. As God, He originated the plan of salvation and implemented it in His human form. He is called the “author of eternal salvation” (Heb. 5:9). Otherwise, either as an angel or as only a good man, He never could have atoned for the sins of the world. A created being, no matter how lofty, exalted, or holy, would remain just that: a created being. Only He, God Himself, could provide what was needed in order to save the race from destruction. Thus, in His humanity He created a perfect, inseparable bond and link to us, giving us an example of faith, obedience, suffering; meanwhile, as God, He could provide the only offering that would suffice to pay for the sins of the world. In short, Christ needed to be both God and man in order for the plan of salvation to succeed.

**Read again Hebrews 5:7-9.** In what ways have you, in your own personal walk with the Lord, experienced some of the things expressed there? For example, how has suffering helped you learn obedience? And though the word **perfection** comes loaded with all sorts of ideas and controversies, in what ways have you experienced character changes for the good as a result of your sufferings, your prayers, and supplications? How do these verses, in their own way, reflect your own Christian experience?
own strength but in that of the Father, “by the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb. 10:10; cf. Rom. 8:3, 4).

Life-Application Approach

**Icebreaker:** What is your favorite kind of car, and why? (We will return to this question later in the lesson study!)

**Verses for Group Focus:** Philippians 2:1-11.

**Thought Questions:**

1. What qualities does Paul encourage in verses 1-4? Why do you think he encourages these qualities for the Philippians?

2. Verse 7 says that Jesus “made himself nothing” (NIV). The original language says, literally, that He emptied Himself. What steps do you see in verses 6-8 that describe the emptying process Jesus went through? Verses 9-11 also describe an emptying process. Who is to go through this process, and what are the steps?

3. Last week we studied about the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53. What parallels do we find between Philippians 2:5-11 and Isaiah 53? What key characteristics of Jesus do verses 2:5-11 give us?

**Application Questions:**

1. How can we have the same attitude Jesus had (see vs. 5)? In what specific ways can we express this attitude?

2. In the end, God rewarded Jesus (see vss. 9-11). If we follow Jesus in emptying ourselves before the last judgment, what reward is there for us? Mark 10:29, 30.

3. What five factors does Paul use in Philippians 2:1 to motivate his readers? Discuss what each of these factors means. Which of these factors motivates you the most, and why?

4. How does your choice of a favorite car reveal the presence of, or the need for, the qualities Paul refers to in this passage? (Teachers: This question is quite self-revealing. If you are not comfortable leading off by answering it yourself with grace and humor, it might be best not to use it. However, if you do use it, you might find your group growing in intimacy and support of one another. Be sure to let the class know that one can answer this question only for themselves. You need to be sure no one tries to answer it for another class member.)
**Further Study:** “As one of us [Jesus] was to give an example of obedience. For this He took upon Himself our nature, and passed through our experiences. ‘In all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren.’ Heb. 2:17. 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 was ‘in all points tempted like as we are.’ Heb. 4:15. 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.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 24.

“The plan for our redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. It was a revelation of ‘the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal.’ Rom. 16:25, R.V. It was an unfolding of the principles that from eternal ages have been the foundation of God’s throne. From the beginning, God and Christ knew of the apostasy of Satan, and of the fall of man through the deceptive power of the apostate. God did not ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence, and made provision to meet the terrible emergency. So great was His love for the world, that He covenanted to give His only-begotten Son, ‘that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ John 3:16.”—Page 22.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Why does it sometimes take suffering in order to get us to obey?

2. Discuss the inherent paradox, or tension, regarding the divine-human nature of Christ. For instance, the One who upholds all things (*Heb. 1:3*) nevertheless grew in wisdom and stature (*Luke 2:52*); the One who was before Abraham (*John 8:58*) was born in a manger (*Luke 2:7*). What lessons can we learn from these points? How do they help us realize the limits of our understanding? Why is it important that we recognize these limits? In what ways is faith a recognition of the limits of knowledge? Discuss these issues in class.
SABBATH AFTERNOON


Memory Text: “John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’” (John 1:29, NKJV).

In The Bridge of San Luis Rey, a monk heard about a bridge that collapsed and killed five people. He determined to find out why those particular five were killed. Because He believed in an all-powerful God, there had to be a rational explanation. Unfortunately, he took his notes, acquired over years of inquiry, and cast them into the sea. What he found disturbed him immensely—he couldn’t find a good reason for their deaths.

Someone might have told Brother Juniper that he would not find rational answers. This side of heaven we don’t have them. What we have is the Cross—God suffering for the sin, evil, and hurt of this world. Here we find, if not answers to questions about suffering, hope that those answers exist and one day will be revealed.

The Week at a Glance: What was John the Baptist’s role in the ministry of Jesus? Why should the Cross be the center of our beliefs? Why did the disciples respond as they did to Christ’s warning about the Cross? How do we reflect the same attitude?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 29.
John the Baptist—Christ’s Forerunner
(John 1:29-34).

Though little is given in Scripture about John the Baptist, enough is given to show us his zeal, dedication, faith, and (most important) humanity. We have much to learn from this fiery, uncompromising preacher who heralded the first coming of Christ.

**What** foundational truth did God reveal to John about Jesus of Nazareth and what Jesus came to do? What do you think John meant by those words (John 1:29)?

Although John certainly did not fully grasp the import of his own words designating Jesus as the Lamb of God, he, nonetheless, spoke them under the prompting of the Spirit. His mission was to open the minds and hearts of people to the centrality of Christ’s atoning sacrifice in the plan of salvation. Whatever else Jesus came to do—the healing, the teaching, the preaching, the raising from the dead—it all was to point the people not only to who He was but to what He was going to do for them by His death. Because without that death and what it would accomplish for the world, in the end all His other work would have been in vain.

**Look** up the following texts. What do they tell us about how crucial the death of Jesus was to the plan of salvation? *Mark 8:31, Luke 24:7, 1 Cor. 15:13-18.*

“The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light which streams from the cross of Calvary, and in connection with the wondrous, central truth of the Saviour’s atonement. Those who study the Redeemer’s wonderful sacrifice grow in grace and knowledge.”—Ellen G. White, *Sons and Daughters of God,* p. 221.

**Why must the Cross and Christ’s atonement at the Cross be central to our message as Seventh-day Adventists?** What can we do as a church to make sure that we keep this great truth at the center? What will happen to us if we ever lose this focus?
Key Text: *Mark 8:31.*

**Teachers Aims:**
1. To open our minds to the centrality of Christ’s atoning sacrifice to the plan of salvation.
2. To invite us to ponder Jesus’ life of service, suffering, and sacrifice.
3. To point us to the promise of the Cross—eternal life in the new kingdom.

**Lesson Outline:**

I. The Cross—a Shadow of Salvation (*John 1:29*).
   A. John seeks to open our minds and our hearts to the Messiah’s identity and mission.
   B. Jesus’ atoning sacrifice is central to our salvation.
   C. All human need is addressed and answered in the hope offered by Jesus’ death on the cross.

II. Jesus Was God Come Down to Earth (*Acts 10:38, 39*).
   A. The Son of God served untiringly for fallen humanity.
   B. Even though He went about “doing good” (*vs. 38*), He was “hanged on a tree” (*vs. 39*).
   C. We are invited to join Peter in confessing Jesus as our Messiah.

III. The Cross Precedes the Crown (*Heb. 12:1-5*).
   A. The disciples were so focused on earthly issues they could not understand Jesus’ impending sacrifice.
   B. The Transfiguration should have given the disciples faith for the coming trial.
   C. We must look to the Cross as the answer to our human need, as our only hope of a heavenly kingdom.

**Summary:** Jesus came to earth as the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world. He lived a life of service, suffering, and sacrifice, providing the only remedy for sin. We are invited daily to contemplate the themes of the Cross so we might be strengthened in our understanding of the gift of salvation. In our Savior’s power, we, too, can go into our world to serve and share the plans of rescue for all humanity.

**COMMENTARY**

**In the Shadow of Calvary.**

**Introduction.** Jesus was gripped by His mission to seek and save the lost. Everything He did was impelled by that all-consuming aim. Clearly conscious that His work on earth would culminate on Calvary, He steadily moved toward that goal without flinching or

For about three and a half years, the Son of God toiled laboriously among fallen humanity. The Gospels are filled with account after account of the good deeds that Jesus accomplished through the power of God working through His humanity. Never did the world see such a Healer, such a Teacher, such a Lover of people! His life, from His earliest days, was dedicated to the service of fellow human beings.

**Describe Christ’s work and its effect.** *Matt. 4:23-25; 8:14-17; Acts 10:38, 39.*

If you read Acts 10:38, 39, you can see the most incredible paradox: Jesus goes around “doing good,” and what does He get for His effort but “hanged on a tree”? How could this happen? Why would someone, whose kindness, goodness, purity, and love were apparent to everyone, elicit such a negative, hateful reaction? Unless, of course, it was precisely His purity, love, and goodness that caused such a reaction.

**Read** John 3:19-21, 15:17-25, and Romans 8:7. How do they help answer the questions posed in the above paragraph?

Lest we be so quick to judge and condemn, we ought to look at our own wicked hearts (*Jer. 17:9*). Who among us, when confronted by someone whose lifestyle or kindness or love or faith or generosity or benevolence are contrasted to our weaknesses in any (or all) of these areas, has not felt twinges of guilt, resentment, even hatred? And if we would feel this way when contrasted with another sinner, imagine what we might feel when placed in the company of Jesus.

**Why do we sometimes feel anger, resentment, or guilt when placed around such people? What should those thoughts tell us about ourselves? What kind of warning signals are they? What’s the only remedy?**
morbid feelings or reckless abandon but sustained by His Father’s love and grace and His longing for our redemption.

I. John the Baptist—Christ’s Forerunner.

John’s teachings were a mirror of Christ’s own. (Compare Matt. 3:2 with 4:17; 3:6-12 with 7:13-23; John 3:11-21 with 3:27-35.) John’s teachings epitomized the message of all the Lord’s former prophets, with the additional emphasis of a focused identification of Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. He intuitively grasped the sacrificial nature of Christ’s mission.

Untainted by rabbinic traditions, rooted in Scripture, and filled with the Holy Spirit, John was heaven’s agent for calling Israel to repentance and preparation of heart for the Messiah. Spiritually receptive people from all walks of life responded to his call with great intensity of conviction (see Luke 3 and Matthew 3). His uncompromising message of truth, calling men and women to repentance and holiness, led to John’s death at the hands of truth-hating rulers. This foreshadowed the fate of his Master.

II. Christ’s Life of Service, Suffering, and Sacrifice.

If all the merciful deeds of Christ performed even in His few earthly years were woven into a pictorial tapestry, the richly illustrated fabric resulting would wrap itself around the world many times. Jesus did not perform His work in a laborious, lamenting manner but with kindness, courtesy, and good cheer. He was scorned not because of His works of compassion but because of the light of heaven’s purity that permeated His manners and instruction. On the whole, the masses that thronged about Him had a far greater craving for relief from physical suffering and political oppression than they did for release from the bondage of sin and ignorance (see John 6, whole chapter). His aim went much further than the alleviation of human suffering; He wished to transmute the dark and dingy hearts of humanity into temples for the indwelling of His kingdom. His greatest joy was to see souls respond to the heavenly invitation; His greatest grief was to see people turn away from that invitation with sullen disappointment that their selfish expectations were not met by His service and holy aims. Not desiring the fullness of His life, they went away as empty as they came.

“We must ask ourselves the question, Does Christ dwell in my heart by faith? He alone can show us our necessity and reveal the dignity and glory of the truth. At the altar of self-sacrifice—the appointed place of meeting between God and the soul—we receive from the hand of God the celestial torch which searches the heart, revealing its great need of an abiding Christ.”—Ellen G. White, Our High Calling, p. 21.
Warnings of the Cross


Many Bible scholars believe that it was in the summer before His crucifixion (August or September, A.D. 30) that Christ received Peter’s great confession of His Messiahship at Caesarea-Philippi. (*See The SDA Bible Commentary,* vol. 5, p. 231.) From that point on, Jesus wished to dispel the apostles’ false concepts of His essential mission and brace them for His rapidly approaching ordeal and the attendant trials that they would bear for His sake.

Why was it so difficult for the disciples to accept or even understand Christ’s explicit references to His impending sacrifice? *Mark 9:31, 32; Luke 9:44, 45.*

In both accounts, Mark and Luke say that the disciples feared to ask Jesus what He meant; that is, they didn’t want to know. How human a character trait: not wanting to hear bad news, not wanting to hear something that would go against our own cherished notions and hopes.

In many ways, we can find the key to this attitude in Mark’s account, a few verses later (vss. 33, 34), when they had been disputing among themselves who would be the greatest. In other words, those who were busy thinking about worldly honors weren’t really ready for the shame and degradation of the Cross. No wonder Mark twice refers to the dullness of the disciples’ comprehension of Christ’s words and deeds, because their “hearts were hardened” (*Mark 6:52, NRSV; 8:17*). This hardening was from the deceitfulness of pride and vainglory that conflicted with the spirit of the Cross. His disciples, at this stage, viewed self-sacrificing love as a rare medallion to adorn the mantle of life’s majestic moments, rather than as the proper spirit of everyday life. When they saw Christ turn aside in self-abnegation from opportunities to seize the reins of political power, they were offended by His apparent lack of gritty pragmatism and ambition.

How, even in our local church or even in our own heart, do we see this same spirit manifested? It’s only natural to want honor and glory, is it not? In what ways do you see it in yourself? Why, then, must we be broken at the foot of the cross?
III. Warnings of the Cross.

It is noteworthy that only toward the end of His earthly days did Christ increasingly emphasize to His disciples His impending sacrifice. This was not to elicit their pity or seek their advice but to strengthen them to meet the crisis and to overcome the vain, selfish ambitions that cumbered their way, beclouded their spiritual perceptions, and stunted their fellowship with Him. Christ longed for His disciples to see that the plan of salvation was rooted not in the

Inductive Bible Study


1. No matter what your academic career may have included, some classes stand out as more useful than others. What was your favorite subject? What practical applications has it had in your daily life? In Sons and Daughters of God, p. 221, Ellen White says, “Those who study the Redeemer’s wonderful sacrifice grow in grace and knowledge.” How can an understanding of the Cross bless your life? How might you share this good news with someone else?

2. Joy is a very personal experience. Some would describe it through the use of sight or sound; others through the sharing of a memory. In John 15:11, Jesus talks about obtaining a joy that is “complete.” How does the joy Jesus offers transcend any sight, sound, taste, touch, or memory we might have? How might you share your joy in Jesus with a neighbor or friend?

3. Jesus went about “doing good,” and yet, He was “hanged on a tree” (Acts 10:38, 39). His disciples were warned about His impending death on the cross, but they were too busy with earthly business to understand. What keeps us from comprehending Jesus’ atoning sacrifice? How can we live our lives following Jesus’ pattern of service and sacrifice?

4. When we have a difficult job to do, we often persevere by focusing on the rewards of a positive outcome. Hebrews 12:1-5 (NIV) talks about things that “hinder” or “entangle” our spiritual journeys. How does “looking unto Jesus” (Heb. 12:2) strengthen us during trying times?

5. What is the most spectacular thing you ever have seen? What made it so memorable? Jesus revealed Himself as God to the disciples at the Transfiguration. How does this glimpse into heaven help you anticipate a future glory?
Falling Shadows and Radiant Glory

Read Matthew 17:1-9, Luke 9:28-36. Write down what things happened that should have increased the faith of those who witnessed this incredible divine manifestation.

Christ knew that His disciples were altogether unprepared for the impending crisis. Burdened with the mounting opposition of the religious leaders, with John the Baptist’s recent beheading, and with Christ’s warning of His own imminent sufferings, they faced a certain foreboding. Hence, this incredible manifestation of divine power, including a voice from heaven affirming Jesus before the disciples. All this certainly should have increased their faith and strengthened them for the coming trials.

What did Moses and Elijah talk about with Christ? Luke 9:30, 31. Why do you think they discussed this topic?

It is fascinating that Heaven did not send mighty angels to the Savior at this time; instead, two human beings who themselves, in their own way, suffered the toils and trials of humanity came to talk with the Savior about His impending sacrifice on the cross. In other words, this incredible scene wasn’t just for these three disciples (who slept through part of the whole thing, anyway) but for Jesus, to strengthen Him in His humanity as He faced the Cross. “These men, chosen above every angel around the throne, had come to commune with Jesus concerning the scenes of His suffering, and to comfort Him with the assurance of the sympathy of heaven.”—Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 425.

Imagine yourself having the privilege of some incredible divine manifestation of heavenly power that strongly affirmed your faith in Jesus, just as what Peter, James, and John had here. You would never doubt again, right? Your faith would remain solid, right? You’d never need any other affirmation, right? Why was this not the experience of the disciples, even after the Transfiguration? What was their problem, and what is ours?
performance of miraculous deeds or in the manifestation of overpowering personal force but in self-sacrificing love interfused with the divine wisdom of regenerative grace.

IV. Falling Shadows and Radiant Glory.

Christ’s visible glory on the Mount of Transfiguration and the Father’s audible proclamation “‘This is My beloved Son . . . Hear Him!’” (Matt. 17:5, NKJV) were designed to strengthen the disciples’ faith in Jesus’ identity, mission, and teachings. Had the disciples more carefully listened to the words of Moses and Elijah as they spoke with Christ of “His decease” [exodus, in Greek], which He should accomplish [pleroo in Greek, i.e., perfect, finish, make full] at Jerusalem, then they would not have been thrown off balance by Calvary and the events leading up to it. The Passion Week would still have been filled with immeasurably poignant pathos for them; how-

Witnessing

We all have heard the saying, “Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.” Thank God we have the perfect life of Christ to imitate.

Jesus was a teacher. He exercised untiring efforts to educate the hearts and minds of all those with whom He came in contact. Those of us who are teachers witness and minister to those around us at any given moment, on any given day of the week.

Some of us emulate the principles of Christ’s life by serving as physicians, nurses, or other health-care professionals. Daily following Jesus’ example, we bend to the seemingly endless task of attempting to alleviate humanity’s pain and suffering—all brought on as a direct result of living in a sin-sick world.

There are those who have answered God’s call to the ministry. We help make available to others God’s plan of salvation, to be used as the all-enveloping shield against Satan and his hordes.

We are builders, farmers, business professionals, hairdressers, politicians, shopkeepers. No matter our earthly profession, we have set our goal on eternal life. Not only for ourselves but for all others. Not only with those with whom we work, ride the bus, or see in meetings. We are instructed by Christ to seek out all those who are lost so they may learn of the precious plan of salvation. That means we actively must reach out to strangers through the personal examples we set, through small tract distribution, invitations to evangelistic events, Sabbath School, or NET events. Maybe witnessing through prison ministries, drama, or volunteering in abuse shelters are means you prefer. Whatever milieu is right for you, even if you first have to push, prod, or literally force yourself, the important thing is that you get out there!

Thank You, Jesus, for Your perfect example, ever guiding us toward heaven.
Law of the New Kingdom *(Matt. 20:25-28).*

Christ’s ministry was moving toward its climax. He was leading His disciples on their last journey together. On the way, He told them plainly that at Jerusalem “all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished,” for “the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again” *(Luke 18:31, NKJV; Matt. 20:18, 19, NKJV).* This statement of coming events should have turned the disciples’ interest to the teachings of the prophets concerning these matters. But “they understood none of these things; . . . and they did not know the things which were spoken” *(Luke 18:34, NKJV),* not because Jesus’ words were unclear or enigmatic but because His purposes were so foreign to their aims and expectations. They simply didn’t want to hear what He had to say. Christ had, after all, commissioned them to proclaim everywhere that “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” *(Matt. 3:2, NKJV)* and promised that they would be given positions of high honor in it, enthroned as judges of Israel *(Matt. 19:27-30).*

**Stimulated** by this promise, James and John, with their mother, Salome, asked Jesus for what special favor? What did His reply reveal about the path to the throne of glory in His kingdom and the nature of His government? *Matt. 20:20-28, Mark 10:35-45.*

This request smacked heavily of self-serving ambition, but Jesus did not rebuke them or their mother for coveting personal honors that were so incongruous with His character and mission. Rather, He sought to deepen and purify their love for Him and their attachment to His cause. He wished them to see that the cross precedes the crown.

Fyodor Dostoyevski once wrote a story about Jesus coming to earth in the flesh, as He had come the first time. Before long, Jesus was arrested and thrown into jail, where He faced interrogation by the Grand Inquisitor, who wanted to know why Jesus came back and interfered with them and their plans. Now suppose Jesus were, in the flesh, to step directly into your life. In what ways would He be interfering with you and your plans? What does your answer tell you about yourself and how you are living?
Life-Application Approach

Icebreaker: Have you ever had to change your mind about someone? What was that like?

Verses for Group Focus: Mark 9:30-37.

Thought Questions:
1. Considering Mark 9:30-37 as a whole, what might be some of the reasons why the disciples were unable to understand what Jesus was telling them about His death and resurrection?

2. How might Jesus’ words about servanthood and welcoming children (vss. 35-37) relate to the place where the disciples were in their spiritual growth?

Application Questions:
1. What parallels might there be between this passage and areas of growth in our own lives? How might Jesus’ words about servanthood and welcoming children (vss. 35-37) relate to the place where you are in your spiritual growth?

2. The disciples were being typical humans in their argument over which one of them was the greatest (vs. 34). How does today’s world define greatness? Who among them really was the greatest, and what defined that person’s greatness? (vss. 35-37).

“The cross of Calvary is to be lifted high above the people, absorbing their minds and concentrating their thoughts. Then all the spiritual faculties will be charged with divine power direct from God. Then there will be a concentration of the energies in genuine work for the Master. The workers will send forth to the world beams of light, as living agencies to enlighten the earth.”—Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 44.

Discussion Questions:

1. Christ, the world’s best Teacher and Model of truth, consistently demonstrated, in every act, that He came “not to be ministered unto, but to minister” (*Mark* 10:45). Why did His disciples have such difficulty grasping His sacrificial, self-transcending mission and calling for their lives? What does this say about humanity in its fallen state? How only can this spirit be changed?

2. If Christ had grumbled about humanity’s lack of appreciation for His services and complained about His disciples’ unperceptiveness with regard to His essential aims and character, how would that have affected His influence and mission? Do we have any more right to grumble and complain than Christ had? What is the antidote to this all-too-common spirit and behavior? *John* 15:11, 16:33, *Heb.* 12:1-5.

3. The disciples, followers of Christ, were unprepared for the Cross, despite being given much light beforehand about it. What parallels can you find between them and their spiritual state and ours as a people and a church as we await the Second Coming?

4. Discuss the question at the end of Thursday’s section, though in the context of the church, as a whole, or in your local church setting. Would we welcome Jesus, or would He get in the way of our plans as a church?
SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: Mark 11:1-11, John 13:1-17, 15:9-17.

Memory Text: “Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him” (John 13:31).

A museum in Rome displays what might be the earliest picture of the Crucifixion. Unfortunately, it is a caricature, graffiti sketched on a wall. It’s a drawing of a man, with a donkey’s head, stretched out on a cross. Before the cross another man stands, his arms lifted in adoration. Below the picture these words, in Latin, were scribbled: “Alexander worships God.”

Though both Jews and Christians had been accused of donkey worship (the exact origins of that accusation is unknown), the derogatory nature of the picture should help us understand the shame associated with the Cross, something not easy for us to appreciate. After all, we adore the Cross, we sing songs about it, we place it on our churches, and we write books extolling it. Yet, how much sense does it make to worship a Man executed as a criminal in the most shameful and barbaric manner?

The answer, of course, is that it makes a lot of sense, once you understand who that Man was and what His death meant for the world.

The Week at a Glance: Why did Jesus not stop the outpouring of support for Him during the triumphal entry? What was the attitude of a majority of Jews toward Jesus? What was the significance of the foot-washing ceremony?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 5.
Outline of the Final Passover Week

About one-third of the material in the four Gospels deals explicitly with the final Passover week leading up to Christ’s crucifixion and His resurrection. This material includes some parables of the kingdom and of future judgment.

Today’s study presents a brief outline of the period often termed the Passion Week—from the Sunday or Monday prior to Christ’s crucifixion to the following Sunday, when He was resurrected. In accordance with the Lord’s original instructions, the Passover lamb was slain in the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month (originally called Abib in Hebrew and later Nisan, which came in the early spring). (See Exod. 12:1-6, 34:18, Esther 3:7.)

Below is a quick outline of the high points:

**Sunday (Nisan 9).** The triumphal entry; Jesus’ silent visit to the temple; and His return to Bethany.

**Monday (Nisan 10).** The fruitless fig tree cursed; second cleansing of the temple; Jesus heals the afflicted there; He returns to Bethany in the evening.

**Tuesday (Nisan 11).** Last day in the temple (Greek believers meet with Jesus in outer court); Jesus’ last day of public teaching; woes against religious elite; retirement to Mount of Olives and discourse there on the Second Coming; Judas clinches betrayal bargain with priests that night.

**Wednesday (Nisan 12).** Jesus in quiet retirement with disciples.

**Thursday (Nisan 13).** Preparation for the Passover; the Lord’s Supper; Judas’s betrayal; Jesus’ farewell discourse for disciples and high-priestly prayer; Gethsemane; His arrest. The events following the Lord’s Supper were at sundown and afterwards; consequently, the day was now the fourteenth of Nisan, or Thursday night.

**Friday (Nisan 14).** Jesus led to Annas, then to Caiaphas, and then to Sanhedrin; Peter’s denial; Jesus is brought to Pilate, then to Herod’s palace, and back to Pilate. He is scourged, condemned, and crucified.

Carefully read John 15:9-17. Against the background of the Passion Week, Jesus focuses here on one point. What is it, why is it so appropriate (especially in light of the Cross), and what is the message for us? How can you make that point real in your own life?
Key Text: John 12:32, 36.

Teachers Aims:
1. To explore the Passion Week for insights on salvation.
2. To present foot washing as a revelation of God’s character.
3. To invite us to trust fully in God and to allow His will to direct our lives.

Lesson Outline:

I. The Journey to the Cross (Mark 11:9).
A. Jesus came to do the Father’s will—to rescue humankind.
B. Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem at the time of the Passover celebration calls attention to His impending sacrifice.
C. We are invited to join in the praise offered to our Redeemer.

A. Many followed Jesus while others feared His influence.
B. Jesus enacts the character of God by washing the disciples’ feet.
C. We can reflect Jesus’ service of love by following His example.

III. Thy Will Be Done (Matt. 26:39, 42).
A. Satan attempted to discourage Jesus from completing His mission to rescue humankind.
B. Gethsemane underscores the magnitude and the consequences of sin.
C. We are invited to submit to the Father’s will for our lives, as our Savior did.

Summary: During the week before Jesus’ death on the cross, He cleanses the temple and rides triumphantly into Jerusalem. He wants the crowds to know of His death and resurrection. His desire is to save as many as would respond. Yet, even in the light of His obvious authority, power, and goodness, the religious leaders treat Him with contempt. His trial is noted for gross irregularities. The chief priests and rabbis do not seek the Truth but desire to do away with Him. Knowing all this would happen before it took place, Jesus washes the feet of His disciples, serving those who would misunderstand and desert Him. By a voluntary act, He gives Himself, submitting fully to the Father’s will, so we might receive the blessing of eternal life.

COMMENTARY

The Passion Week.

Introduction. The week leading up to Christ’s crucifixion is a richly instructive procession of events that magnify the Savior and illuminate His earthly mission so soon to culminate on Calvary. This week’s overview of these events seeks to highlight the impor-
Triumphal Entry; the Temple Cleansed

Read the story of Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem in Matthew 21:1-11 (see also Mark 11:7-11, Luke 19:29-40). What was so different about how He interacted with the people here as opposed to when He multiplied the fish and the loaves? (John 6:15).

Throughout most of His ministry, Jesus kept a fairly low profile. He didn’t encourage large demonstrations of fealty and loyalty. Knowing, as He did, the hatred and animosity of the leaders, He worked in a way that allowed Him to complete His work of healing, teaching, and preaching.

Now, however, He allowed this demonstration, knowing that it would lead Him to the cross. Plus, with such crowds mounting and the interest in Him growing into a fervor, many more would know of His death and resurrection than would have had He kept a low profile.

What did Jesus do the next day and with what results? Matt. 21:12-16.

During the triumphal entry, some in the crowds had shouted, “Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest” (Luke 19:38). Christ’s response to the Pharisees in the next few verses showed that not only did He acknowledge these acclamations and praises, He affirmed them. Then, as the Davidic king, the son of David, He cleanses the temple, calling it “My house” (Matt. 21:13), and as its rightful owner, He exercised His divine authority over it.

Thus, between the triumphal entry, the cleansing of the temple, and His final return to the temple, where He is challenged by the leaders (Matt. 21:23-27), Jesus, in an undeniable manner, has openly shown His own authority before the people and the religious teachers. In His own merciful way, He has given them even more evidence of who He was (see Matt. 21:15). The question now for them is, How would they respond?

Some leaders rejected Jesus because His claims threatened their power, prestige, and authority. In what ways do the claims of Jesus threaten your own power, prestige, and authority? How do you respond to those threats?
tant lessons Christ set forth regarding the meaning of His sacrifice and the glory that would follow.

I. Outline of the Final Passover Week.

Each of the events in the Passion Week is a critical element in the unfolding of the real-life drama that delineates the irreconcilable differences between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. No week in human history has been so full of defining moments and definitive results. No series of events has so intensely revealed the anger of sinners toward a holy God and the quenchless love of that God for angry sinners.

II. Triumphal Entry, the Temple Cleansed.

Aflame with envy, malice, and rage, as they saw the crowds of people adoringly gather about Jesus in the temple, the religious leaders commanded Jesus to silence the acclamations of the rag-tag mob. Jesus calmly replied, “I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out” (Luke 19:40). Entering Jerusalem, Jesus quietly surveyed the temple that more resembled a cattle yard and stock exchange than a house of worship. Unnoticed amid the hubbub, Jesus withdrew to Bethany.

But the next day, He returned to demonstrate with a rod of justice the purpose of the sanctuary, which the priests had corrupted in their pride and avarice (see Isa. 56:4-8, Jer. 7:8-15, Matt. 21:12-16, Mark 11:11-19). What a brutal irony that the very animals that symbolized Christ’s sacrifice were being sold by the priests for exorbitant profits! In their hunger for gain they smothered the glorious gospel lessons embodied in the sanctuary services. Grieved over the enormous spiritual loss thus inflicted, Jesus exerted His rightful authority to cleanse His Father’s temple of the unholy traffic that had turned His house of prayer into a den of thieves.

Read Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pages 589–600. Had the priests cherished the meaning of the temple services and the essence of true Judaism, what influence might they have borne for the spread of the gospel and what spiritual gifts might they have exercised! Apply this lesson to the church today (1 Pet. 2:6-9).

III. Jesus and the Jews.

Jesus’ teachings were so pure, clear, and logical that the common people heard Him gladly, at least until Christ began to progressively reveal more and more of the high cost of discipleship. This disclosure included not only the social ostracism and persecution the gospel would entail in a carnal world but also the call to self-denial and victory over sin. Those who live in a culturally Christian society should never forget the severe persecution to which Christians are now being subjected in many nations where Bible Christianity is the religion of the minority.
Jesus and the Jews

Immediately after putting the religious leaders in a bind (Matt. 21:23-27), Jesus told a few parables about the fate of those who would reject Him (vss. 28-46). Interestingly enough, in Matthew 21:45, the chief priests and Pharisees believed that Jesus had spoken about them; that is, the chief priests and the Pharisees themselves as opposed to a majority of the Jewish people, who, themselves, seemed supportive of Jesus.

Look up the following texts. What do they say was the attitude of most of the people about Jesus during His ministry? Matt. 26:3-5; Mark 14:1, 2; Luke 22:2; Luke 23:27, 28; John 11:48.

According to these texts, many of the people supported Jesus, which is why the chief priests and rabbis were so fearful of Him. If Jesus were just some inconsequential preacher who had no following, the leaders wouldn’t have had the attitude they had, so powerfully expressed in John 11:48, in which they said that if they let Jesus alone, “all men will believe on him.” Obviously, there were many Jews who believed in Jesus already, and unless Jesus were stopped, many more would become believers.

Scholars have noted gross irregularities in the trial of Jesus. First, it was held at night, which, according to traditional Jewish practice, should not have happened, especially in a case involving a capital offense. The fact is that the leaders had to hold the trial as they did in order to keep it from the people.

Of course, there was a rabble that promoted His death, but because this was during the Passover, when many Jews had come from other countries, it’s likely that these had never heard of Jesus or seen what He was like or what He had done. In Matthew 21:10, 11, when Jesus entered Jerusalem, some people asked, Who is this? The crowd answered them that it was Jesus. How could those people have not known? Possibly they were Jews who—coming from abroad (and were thus unaware of Jesus)—followed their leaders and called for His death. Once the truth about Jesus was known, many Jews became followers (Acts 2:41; 21:20, 21).
Christ’s whole life was a steadily unfolding benediction of divine love in constant action to meet people’s deepest needs. No one can be neutral about such love with its legitimate claims to our loyalty and devotion. Those who pride themselves on their religiousness but are determined to avoid a consecrated practice of the truth will be furious over the manifestation of true religion. So it was with the Pharisees, as reflected in their speedy and brutal inquisition against Jesus. They were tired of having their spiritual destitution and dereliction exposed by the inexhaustible riches of Christ’s goodness and truth, so freely distributed to every willing

**Inductive Bible Study**


1. In our media-saturated world, some events receive a lot of attention. This puts pressure on those individuals at the center of the media coverage. Why do you think it was important for Jesus to call attention to His impending sacrifice? Why is it so critical to use our voices to announce the Cross and the hope that it offers to our neighbors?

2. We often show our love to significant people in our lives by giving them cards, candy, and flowers. How do the gifts we give to others compare with the way Jesus showed His love for humankind? What keeps you from allowing Jesus to wash your feet? *(See John 13:6-8.)*

3. Jesus’ example of love and service was so shocking to the disciples that they, and we, have a hard time emulating it. Why did Jesus say we would be “blessed” *(John 13:17, NIV)* if we continued to celebrate the ordinance of foot washing? How can we make this tradition a value that affects all the relationships in our lives?

4. Gardens are usually bright, beautiful places. Why do artists paint Jesus’ struggle in the Garden of Gethsemane in such somber tones? Why is it important for us to reflect on this event? In what ways have you allowed God’s will to direct your life? Encourage your class to share with one another how this surrender has been a blessing.

5. John 15:16 records Jesus’ desire that we will produce “fruit that will last” *(NIV)*. Review your life. What things have you done that are of eternal significance? Make a list of people whom the Holy Spirit is inviting you to contact on behalf of the gospel.
Clean Feet

After a day’s interlude of quiet reflection with Jesus, the disciples made preparations for the Passover. Fully aware that He was the true Paschal Lamb who was to be sacrificed, Jesus wished to spend the few remaining peaceful hours with His disciples for their benefit. How moving are His words: “With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer” (Luke 22:15).

Read John 13:1-17. What was one of Christ’s last acts before His atoning death? What was the significance of that act? What does it tell us about the character of God?

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Just before the shame, the suffering, and the pain of the Cross, Jesus washes the feet of His own disciples! Here He is, God Himself, the One who made the worlds, washing the feet of His disciples? Only as we grasp who Jesus really is can we even begin to realize what an incredible act this was, what an incredible revelation of the character of our God. And, in its own indirect way, this act is a revelation about ourselves—we who, by nature, want to be served by others rather than to serve others. Christ’s act wasn’t a rebuke just to His disciples; it’s a rebuke to us every time we’re arrogant, proud, and selfish.

Besides giving His disciples a needed lesson in humility and servanthood, what theological lesson was Jesus teaching through the foot washing? John 13:10.

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By saying that he or she who has been bathed doesn’t need another full bath but merely needs his or her feet cleansed, Jesus was talking about what might be called postbaptismal sin. That is, those who have been baptized (bathed) don’t need to be rebaptized after each sin. Foot washing itself can be a symbol of repentance, cleansing, and forgiveness.

Most people don’t find foot washing pleasant (which is why many churches don’t practice it, despite Christ’s command in John 13:14, 15). Yet, it wasn’t meant to be pleasant. Why not? What other unpleasant thing does God admonish us to do?
recipient, including prostitutes, lepers, and tax collectors. What a slap in the face of priestly piety! Christ embraced those whom these guardians of decency excommunicated and shunned.

**IV. Clean Feet.**

“The whole life of Christ had been a life of unselfish service. ‘Not to be ministered unto, but to minister’ (Matt. 20:28), had been the lesson of His every act. But not yet had the disciples learned the lesson.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 642. Jesus taught them this lesson not by way of reiterated doctrine but by an illustrative example so full of meaning and potent suggestiveness that He hallowed it as an ordinance for His church throughout time (*see John 13:1-17*). Happy is the church, the Christian, that practices this ordinance with understanding!

**Witnessing**

Knowing His time on earth was drawing to a close, Jesus made the supreme effort, once again, to instill in His disciples abiding love for one another and for those with whom they came in contact. With tears, He gently washed their dusty feet. Imagine the love that must have flowed from His hands—it must have felt like a soothing balm, so vibrant and powerful was the moment. Yet, they failed to fully grasp the meaning of the example He was setting for them.

Are we any different? Do we remember His example at times when arrogance and pride threaten to creep into our souls? Do those around us witness His kindness, His compassion, and His love at times such as that? Or are they exposed to glimpses of Satan’s cunning and sly maneuvering?

Suffering humanity moves the heart of the committed Christian to minister as Jesus did to those around us. If you ever have been present when someone (either friend or stranger) encountered an agonizing moment in time, you saw into the inner workings, the core, of his or her struggle to understand, to accept, to grasp at a way to deal with the issue. Perhaps it was suddenly learning about a life-threatening illness affecting his or her very existence, or maybe it was hearing the news that his or her job had been lost, or maybe a long-term relationship with another had just been severed. Whatever the issue, it caused intense suffering. Could you assure this person that, through Jesus Christ and His death on the cross, he or she would prevail over sin, as He did? Through your witness, was this person able to see beyond the immediate problem and glimpse salvation’s promise? If you were able to represent Jesus at such a time, how blessed you are; and, if you failed to take advantage of such a moment, resolve to never miss another one!
Jesus entered Gethsemane with His three most intimate disciples and bade them pray and watch, lest they enter into temptation. What petition did He then plead before the Father three times? What did the cup signify? What paramount principle brought resolution to Christ’s heart? Matt. 26:36-44, Mark 14:32-42, Luke 22:39-44.

Even as Christ was pleading for strength to save lost and guilty humanity, a maelstrom of treason and treachery against Him was gathering momentum. Satan strove with all his cunning to discourage Him, Judas was leading a band of religious mobsters to arrest the Savior, and the disciples slumbered.

Christ’s heart was so deeply pierced with grief that He was already shedding His blood for the sins of humanity, even before the spikes of Golgotha bit into His flesh. He drank the gall of our guilt and shame that He might give us the nectar of His innocence and mercy. For us He drained the cup of wrath to offer in its place the cup of reconciliation.

What made Christ’s suffering in Gethsemane almost unendurable?
2 Cor. 5:21 (see also Isa. 53:10, Zech. 13:7).

“As the Son of God bowed in the attitude of prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, the agony of His spirit forced from His pores sweat like great drops of blood. It was here that the horror of great darkness surrounded Him. The sins of the world were upon Him. He was suffering in man’s stead as a transgressor of His Father’s law. Here was the scene of temptation. The divine light of God was receding from His vision, and He was passing into the hands of the powers of darkness. In His soul anguish He lay prostrate on the cold earth. He was realizing His Father’s frown. He had taken the cup of suffering from the lips of guilty man, and proposed to drink it Himself, and in its place give to man the cup of blessing. The wrath that would have fallen upon man was now falling upon Christ. It was here that the mysterious cup trembled in His hand.”—Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 2, p. 203.

Why do you think that Jesus, who knew all along that He had to die this death (John 12:27), would, nevertheless, ask that the cup be taken from Him? What does this tell us about His human nature? What comfort can we draw from the fact that even the Lord Himself, in His humanity, had such battles?
Only when the spirit of jealousy, contention, and self-elevation is cleansed from our hearts will the mind be capable of receiving the soul-enriching truths of the gospel that qualify us to serve in the spirit of Jesus.

V. Gethsemane.

Christ’s experience of measureless anguish in this garden of travail proves He was not living on a plane of exemption from human suffering. The thought of the awaiting cross filled Him with horror and dread; yet, for love’s sake, knowing that His vicarious sacrifice was our only hope, He resolved to carry out the plan of merciful intervention for us. He and His Father had formed this plan long before the need for it arose. Infinite mercy and love were now coming face to face with unbridled malice and hatred in full display.

Christ’s grief in Gethsemane was fathomless because the “cup” He drank there represented the collective guilt and woe and condemnation of a world full of sinners throughout its whole history, all gathered, compressed, and thrust upon His own innocent nature, as though He were the originator and perpetrator of all sin and its consequences. He endured the Father’s wrath against sin in order to spare us from this just sentence of doom; for the wages of sin is death, and the sting of death is sin. Read Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, pages 686–690.

Life-Application Approach

Icebreaker: During this coming week, what is one event you are anticipating? (Teachers: This can be either a positive or negative event. Summarize the discussion with observations about the role of anticipation.)


Thought Question:

How do you think Jesus was able to anticipate the events surrounding His death with the words of John 13:31? In what ways was Jesus’ death a means whereby God is glorified? (Teachers: This question will provoke some discussion. Encourage your class to think of many ways in which the Cross glorifies God.)

Application Question:

What aspect of Peter’s questions and supposed loyalty can you identify with (vss. 36, 37)? There are times when we love the Lord so fiercely and feel so close to Him that, like Peter, we think we would be able to die for Him. What advice does Romans 12:3 have for us regarding this?
**Further Study:** See also Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 685–694; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 200–205.

“Never before in His earthly life had Jesus permitted such a demonstration. He clearly foresaw the result. It would bring Him to the cross. But it was His purpose . . . to call attention to the sacrifice that was to crown His mission to a fallen world. While the people were assembling at Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, He, the antitypical Lamb, by a voluntary act set Himself apart as an oblation. It would be needful for His church in all succeeding ages to make His death for the sins of the world a subject of deep thought and study. Every fact connected with it should be verified beyond a doubt. It was necessary, then, that the eyes of all people should now be directed to Him; the events which preceded His great sacrifice must be such as to call attention to the sacrifice itself. After such a demonstration as that attending His entry into Jerusalem, all eyes would follow His rapid progress to the final scene.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 571.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Why do the Gospels focus so much on the last week of Christ’s life? Why is that so important for our understanding of the plan of salvation?

2. Read the quote from Ellen G. White taken from Thursday’s study. Write, in your own words, what she is saying. In class on Sabbath, let different people read what they wrote. What is her essential message, and why is that so crucial to all that we believe as Seventh-day Adventists? In what ways do these words catch the essence of the gospel?

3. If the disciples had imbibed more of Christ’s sacrificial spirit while He was with them, how would that have affected their ministry, their influence, and their capacity to appreciate His character and mission? What is the application for us today?
Passage to Calvary

SABBATH AFTERNOON


Memory Text: “But Pilate once more addressed them, wishing to set Jesus free. They, however, persistently shouted, ‘Crucify, crucify him!’” (Luke 23:20, 21, Weymouth).

In his book The Trial, Czech writer Franz Kafka wrote about a bank clerk named Joseph K. who was arrested, convicted, and executed on charges that were never explained to him. Throughout the story he faced an absurd and unjust labyrinth of interrogations, summonses, and delays. Though continuing to proclaim his innocence (even if not sure what he’s charged with), Joseph K. is at the end led to an abandoned quarry and executed.

However absurd and unfair Joseph K.’s experience, it pales in comparison to the absurdities and injustices attending the trial of Jesus. And though hauled before a biased court that had no intention of getting the facts (they were interested only in getting Jesus), Christ maintained the dignity, love, and compassion that marked His entire ministry. However much of a farce, this trial reveals what fallen humanity is capable of doing, even in the face of unconditional love.

The Week at a Glance: How, even in Gethsemane, did Jesus show His compassion for His enemies? How was the gospel prefigured in Christ’s arrest and trial? How did Christ respond to those who persecuted Him? What helped explain the blindness of the leaders toward Christ?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 12.
Arrest in the Garden

What opportunity did God provide to arouse the rabble to a sense of their crime in coming to arrest Jesus? John 18:2-9.

When they said that they came to seek Jesus of Nazareth, the Lord responded with two Greek words, *Ego eimi*, which means, “I am,” the same words He used when He said to the Jewish leaders, “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58). This simple phrase is linked in meaning to the Hebrew name for God, often translated “Yahveh” (Exod. 3:11-14), and it seems to come from a Hebrew root word that means “to be.” Thus, some believe the name means the “One is who,” or “the Self-Existing One.” By using that phrase, Jesus was, perhaps, subtly witnessing to them about His identity.

Immediately after Jesus says “I am,” the crowd falls backward, to the ground. “A divine light illuminated the Saviour’s face, and a dove-like form overshadowed Him. In the presence of this divine glory, the murderous throng could not stand for a moment. They staggered back. Priests, elders, soldiers, and even Judas, fell as dead men to the ground.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 694.


One would think that after seeing the crowd fall down before Christ’s “divine glory,” Peter would have realized that the Lord didn’t need the disciple’s weak sword to protect Him. By His words, and then by causing the unruly mob to fall to the ground, the Lord showed that He was allowing Himself to be taken. Even more so, by these acts, Jesus was still giving evidence of His divine character and nature, thus, in a way, witnessing to the mob that had come to take Him. Even here, amid the impending doom, Jesus was working for the salvation of those who hated Him.

Nothing in Scripture indicates that anyone in the mob, even after seeing this divine manifestation of power, changed his or her mind about Jesus. Why are our hearts so hard toward the Lord, even when faced with evidence of His existence and love?

Teachers Aims:

1. To allow us to consider the contrast between Jesus’ and Peter’s responses to questioning.
2. To review the scenes and issues in Jesus’ three trials.
3. To invite class members to consider whom they will emulate in their response to Jesus’ mission of rescue: Pilate or Pilate’s wife.

Lesson Outline:

   A. Judas betrays Jesus under the guise of friendship.
   B. Jesus witnesses to the rabble through word and deed.
   C. Jesus stands unwavering while Peter falters and fails.

   A. Jesus’ trials were motivated not by a desire to uncover the truth but to enact vengeance and justify murder.
   B. By His demeanor and responses, Jesus still sought to win people to Him.
   C. A correct understanding of prophecy and doctrine will help to prevent spiritual deafness to Jesus’ voice, calling us to eternal life.

III. Choices—Even the Truth Does Not Change Public Opinion (*Heb. 12:2, 3*).
   A. Pilate is convinced of Jesus’ innocence, but his political ambitions preclude him from interceding on Jesus’ behalf.
   B. Pilate’s wife has a dream of the whole plan of salvation.
   C. Pilate does not heed his wife’s warning; will we?

Summary: Jesus’ passage to Calvary is marked by choices. Judas, a friend, chooses to betray Jesus to the rabble. Peter denies his Lord while Jesus stands true to His mission. Pilate, Herod, and Israel’s leaders choose to ignore the truth. In the midst of this turmoil, Jesus still chooses to save the lost, even commissioning a vision to a Gentile woman, Pilate’s wife. We, too, are enlightened through God’s Word so we can choose eternal life.

COMMENTARY

Passage to Calvary.

Introduction. Throughout the agonizing ordeal of His betrayal, arrest, desertion, bogus trials, fiendish torture, and insults, Christ remained calm, steadfast, nonretaliatory. For our redemption’s sake He meekly endured every species of cruelty and blasphemous dishonor the devil could devise. Such towering love and courage, reverently considered, must surely conquer our hearts, win our eternal allegiance, and alienate us forever from sin.
Jesus Before Annas, Peter Before the Young Woman

**Read** John 18:12-23. Both Peter and Jesus faced questioning. What were the differences between the situations in which they were questioned, those who questioned them, and their responses to those questions? What can we learn from these contrasts?

What a powerful contrast between Jesus and Peter. Peter is outside, in an informal setting, before a person with no real stature or standing and, certainly, with no legal authority to do him harm. And yet, when questioned about his relationship to Jesus, Peter lies, saying “I am not.” In contrast, here’s Jesus, inside, before a high official in the Jewish nation, a leader with standing and power. And when asked about, among other things, His disciples, Jesus speaks openly and freely. Even when hit for His words, Jesus responded in a candid manner that showed He had nothing to hide.

**Read** carefully John 18:20-23, especially the words Jesus spoke to the officer who smote Him (vs. 23). How is this little account—that of Jesus being unfairly struck by the officer—a small example of the whole principle of the gospel? See Isa. 53:5, 2 Cor. 5:21.

Peter lies; Jesus is smitten for doing no wrong. What a powerful representation of the contrast between fallen humanity and the loving God who came to save humanity. In Jesus’ answer we see intimations of the gospel: His enemies can find no evil in Him; thus, it’s in His innocence that Jesus is punished.

How should this account of Christ’s treatment help us deal better with situations in which we ourselves are treated unfairly?
I. Arrest in the Garden.

When Christ led Adam and Eve forth from the Garden of Eden, He mercifully clothed them in protective raiment of fleece. When men thrust Jesus from the Garden of Gethsemane, they bound Him in cords of punishment and were soon to subject Him to the shame of nakedness and scourging.

At every stage of events leading to Calvary, Jesus gave His adversaries opportunity to turn from their evil course. In the brief but intense outshining of His glory when the mob advanced to arrest Him, and in His healing of Malchus’s ear, Christ gave unmistakable evidence of His divinity. But Satan, the god of this world, blinded their minds, “lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ . . . should shine unto them” (2 Cor. 4:4). “God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:17). “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). Thus, Christ observed on the night of His arrest, “This is your hour, and the power of darkness” (Luke 22:53).

II. Jesus Before Annas, Peter Before the Damsel.

Jesus was prepared for the ordeal into which He now was thrust with irreversible momentum. He had resolved to drink the cup of judgment in our place (see John 18:11). Prayer, submission to the Father’s will, and consecrated conformity to the Word fortified Jesus for this supreme crisis. “[He] hid not [His] face from shame and spitting” (Isa. 50:6).

But Peter’s drowsy, halfhearted prayer life, his bristling self-confidence, and his obtuse rebuttal of Christ’s warning words to him unfitted him to face this hour. His courage crumbles before a bantering girl. His vehement, profanity-laced denial epitomizes the cowardly abandonment of faith we are all capable of, unless Christ’s love and truth are so rooted in our hearts as to cast out all fear.

A great and shining reservoir of gospel grace is contained in the look of mercy Jesus cast upon Peter after that disciple’s shameful denial of his Lord. That look enkindled deep repentance in Peter, which opened the way for his reinstatement to divine favor and a far more consecrated level of discipleship than he had previously dreamed of (see Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, pages 712, 713).

III. The Evening Trial.

The Sanhedrin strained to formulate charges that would make Jesus subject to the death penalty by Roman law. His every word and action, if rightly represented, would redound to His vindication, attest to His Messiahship, and expose the vile animosity of His accusers. But the Sanhedrin were bent on His destruction. They overrode the
The Evening Trial

Read in Matthew 26:57-68 (also in Mark 14:53-65) the account of Jesus before Caiaphas, the scribes, and the elders. How do these verses show how unfair and prejudiced the trial was?

Why was it not necessary for Jesus to answer those who had accused Him? Mark 14:56-59.

Because they were getting nowhere in their trial, the high priest finally asked this question: “I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God” (Matt. 26:63). Christ fully recognized that His affirmative answer was His death warrant, but He would not deny His identity or His relation to His Father. He warned the court, however, that someday they would see Him in His divine authority.

How does Jesus respond to the high priest’s question?

How fascinating that in response to the high priest’s question, Jesus referred not to His atoning death for the sins of the world or to His resurrection or to His upcoming ministry in heaven as the true High Priest (the one that Caiaphas was supposed to represent). Instead, in a clear and unambiguous manner, Jesus talked about His second coming, when He’ll be seen by them, not as some itinerant preacher whom they can arrest, torment, abuse, and sentence to death but as the Son of man, “sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven” (vs. 64). All through Christ’s ministry, He talked about the Second Coming to His disciples; now, at this climactic moment, He talks about it to His enemies, as well. After this, they could never say, “We weren’t told.”

By referring to His second coming, Jesus—despite the immediate circumstances—pointed to the great and grand hope of all Christians everywhere. Why, particularly in trying times, does the promise of the Second Coming give us our only hope? Why, in the end, is it our only hope?
rabbinic principle that an accused man was innocent until proven guilty and undertook the perfidious challenge of proving a man guilty of capital offenses even though they knew Him to be holy and

**Inductive Bible Study**

**Texts for Discovery: Matthew 27:19; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 12:2, 3.**

1. Our identity is shaped by our life experience and the response of other people to us. Jesus’ identity is defined as “I Am,” “the Self-Existing One.” How does who Jesus is affect your life? Review His interventions on your behalf. How might sharing your testimony of Jesus bless someone else?

2. Gardens are usually inviting places. The Garden of Gethsemane has become a symbol of violence and injustice. What gave Jesus the courage to be calm in the turmoil that beset Him there? Why did He continue to witness to those around Him? How can Jesus’ example give you strength for the trials you are facing or may face in the future?

3. None of us welcomes an appearance in a court of law. What if all the evidence were falsely stacked against you? How would you prepare your defense? If you were granted a personal interview with the judge, how would you explain your religious convictions? Describe the evidence that would convict you of being a follower of Jesus Christ.

4. Dreams can be described as random firings of nerves during sleep. Pilate’s wife had a dream that seems to portray the whole plan of salvation (see Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 732). How did she know it was a purposeful message from God? How does her example, on behalf of Christ, give you a model for action? What have you learned about Jesus that you should be sharing? How will you begin this week?

5. Our “only hope” lies in having a true understanding of Jesus’ death on the cross and His plans for our salvation. When Jesus shared His mission with His unjust judges and with the crowd, He pointed to the culmination of that mission. How does the knowledge of the Second Coming impact your life? In what ways might “reviewing the life of Christ from the manger to Calvary” (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 374) strengthen your faith in Jesus’ soon return? Covenant with God to spend at least one hour each week considering Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection as a special mission to save you.
The Morning Trial

After the night trial, Jesus again faced the leaders, perhaps in an act to formalize the death sentence issued against Him the night before.

Of all the Gospel writers, Luke gives the most detailed account of this morning trial. Read his account (Luke 22:66-71). What similarities exist with what happened the night before? What differences?

With more people there, they ask Him basically the same question they asked the night before. Notice how Jesus responds (vss. 67-69). Knowing their hearts and knowing that they weren’t asking because they wanted to know truth but wanted only to condemn Him, Jesus doesn’t answer their question directly, though He does answer it. “If I tell you, ye will not believe” (vs. 67). Believe what? That He’s the Christ, what else? They certainly would have believed Him if He said that He wasn’t. Indeed, they had Him there because they didn’t believe that He was the Christ (otherwise they would not have been doing to Him what they were). Thus, Jesus revealed to them that He could see right through their farce of a trial. They weren’t interested in finding out the truth; they were interested only in making the Truth go away.

Then, before the whole group, Jesus repeated His reference to the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of God, alluding to His power and authority. The leaders, obviously assuming that He was talking about Himself, then asked Him flat out, “Art thou then the Son of God?” (vs. 70).

Here, too, Jesus, though not directly answering their question, answers it nevertheless, using in His answer the phrase “I am.” Their reaction shows that they clearly understood His claim to divinity. Again, as the night before, Jesus made it clear to them who He was. With all the evidence He had given through His ministry of His divine credentials, the leaders should have believed Him. Sadly, for them, they did not.

One reason the leaders were so blind to Jesus was that they had a false understanding of prophecy. They expected the Messiah to come in a different manner. This ignorance helped explain, though not excuse, their hostility to Him. What does this tell us about how important it is to have, as much as possible, a correct understanding of prophecy, or Bible doctrine, in general?
innocent (see Luke 20:14). They must fabricate charges that would make Him appear a disturber of the peace and an enemy of the state. First, they led Jesus to the retired high priest Annas, the wily father-in-law of Caiaphas, current high priest. Thus began illegal proceedings of darkness that these mock guardians of justice and holiness will face again at a new, infinitely authoritative trial (read John 18:12-28).

“It was a part of His mission to bear, in His humanity, all the taunts and abuse that men could heap upon Him. The only hope of humanity was in this submission of Christ to all that He could endure from the hands and hearts of men.”—Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 703.

IV The Morning Trial.

Ultimately, the Sanhedrin were forced to hire false witnesses, whose jumbled, contradictory charges exposed the naked treachery of the affair. Christ, the personification of truth and righteousness, must have found this total travesty of justice, these shabby, lying charges brought against Him, superhumanly difficult to endure. Yet, He bore

Witnessing

How powerful was Jesus’ example at all times during His ministry in circumstances that cried out unfair! Throughout His ministry, He was confronted with those who sought to treat Him as poorly and unfairly as possible. At no time was this more evident than during the last week of His life here on earth. The sham hearings and trials to which He was subjected in the hours prior to His crucifixion personified unfairness. Yet, over and over and over again, Christ gently responded to the false charges brought against Him by redirecting His questioners to the real purposes for His earthly sojourn. He brushed aside opportunity after opportunity to justify Himself or accuse them.

Jesus ignored the mob mentality that surrounded Him. He attempted to reach out to those who followed Him just out of curiosity and to those who were quickly whipping emotions of hate, fear, and lust into a frenzy rather than listening to their heads and hearts. He made every attempt to bring the plan of salvation into sharper focus for those who closely surrounded Him. Friends and foes alike were caught in the net of hope, love, and reassurance of His second coming that He cast to them time and time again. At no time did He cry out, “It’s unfair!” “I don’t deserve this treatment!” “I’m not going to put up with this any longer!” or “I’m outta here—fend for yourselves!” Thank God, Jesus’ refusal to stray off course guaranteed all of us the opportunity to choose eternal life!
Pilate’s Wife’s Dream

After the three religious trials, Jesus was herded off for three political trials before Pilate, Herod, and then back to Pilate again. What’s especially fascinating is what happened to Pilate when his wife warned him against bothering with Jesus. Notice the intensity of her warning (Matt. 27:19). Whatever she saw in her dream, it was real and convincing enough for her to tell her husband to stay away from Him completely, as opposed to just be nice to Jesus or to treat Him fairly. What did she see?

“In answer to Christ’s prayer, the wife of Pilate had been visited by an angel from heaven, and in a dream she had beheld the Saviour and conversed with Him. Pilate’s wife was not a Jew, but as she looked upon Jesus in her dream, she had no doubt of His character or mission. She knew Him to be the Prince of God. She saw Him on trial in the judgment hall. . . . She saw the cross uplifted on Calvary. She saw the earth wrapped in darkness, and heard the mysterious cry, ‘It is finished.’ Still another scene met her gaze. She saw Christ seated upon the great white cloud, while the earth reeled in space, and His murderers fled from the presence of His glory. With a cry of horror she awoke, and at once wrote to Pilate words of warning.”—Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 732.

Analyze her dream. Notice the three specific elements about Jesus that were shown to her (see the texts below). What are they, and how are they all related to one another? Also, what significance is found in the fact that Pilate’s wife wasn’t a Jew but a Gentile? Mark 14:62, Acts 1:11, Rom. 5:18, 2 Cor. 5:21, Phil. 2:8, Heb. 12:2.

In one sense, in that vision, Pilate’s wife was given a compressed version of the whole plan of salvation, from the righteous character of Christ to His second coming. Notice, too, the parallel between what she saw regarding the Second Coming and Christ’s words to the leaders in both the evening and morning trial. Besides receiving a clear vision of the Cross, she was shown the Second Coming, as well. So closely tied was the First with the Second that in this dream, the angel gave her images of both.

Look over the week’s lesson and review the ways in which Jesus, even amid the turmoil, was working to save all those with whom He came in contact, even those who were bitterly opposed to Him. What hope should that give you—who might be struggling with faith and assurance of salvation—about God’s desire to save you despite your struggles and weaknesses?
it all with patience and meekness as a lamb before her shearsers is silent. Finally, the high priest shrieked in desperation, “I adjure You by the living God that You tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God’” (Matt. 26:63, NKJV). Jesus’ telling reply (see Matt. 26:64, Mark 14:62) will pierce the hearts of His accusers when they stand before His judgment throne in due course. Those who bustled forward most ambitiously to smite and condemn Him on that infamous day will shrink back on the day of judgment.

V. Pilate’s Wife’s Dream.

Pilate’s case was most pathetic. He had enough remnants of human decency to long to set Jesus free. Three times He officially acquitted Him, but his ultimate failure to stand for the right testifies that neither a privileged position nor a clear sense of justice will give anyone the moral courage to stand up for Jesus. We must confess Him as our Redeemer and Lord, whose grace we value and under His authority we live, if we are to confess Him through every challenge to our faith and integrity.

Life-Application Approach

Icebreaker: How do you handle conflict? (Teachers: You may want to have your class divide into groups of twos or threes to discuss this. That will increase self-disclosure on the part of members and reduce the time it takes to answer this question. Do not ask your groups to report back to the entire class. Instead, ask a general question of the entire group, such as, “What are the common ways we handle conflict?”)


Thought Questions:
1. Contrast how Peter handled conflict with how Jesus did.
2. What types of things do people prefer to do in the dark? Why? Which of these things have moral dimensions? The events of John 18 occurred in the dark. Consider Judas, Peter, the high priest, Pilate, and the crowd. What do their actions teach us about the nature of sin?

Application Questions:
1. Imagine yourself in these scenes: (1) the garden, (2) the courtyard, and (3) the judgment hall. What would you have done in each scene, and why would you have done it?
2. When is it appropriate to withdraw or to be passive in times of conflict?
**Further Study:** Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 698–740; *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 1104, 1124.

“It will do you good . . . to frequently review the closing scenes in the life of our Redeemer. Here, beset with temptations as He was, we may all learn lessons of the utmost importance to us. It would be well to spend a thoughtful hour each day reviewing the life of Christ from the manger to Calvary. We should take it point by point and let the imagination vividly grasp each scene, especially the closing ones of His earthly life. By thus contemplating His teachings and sufferings, and the infinite sacrifice made by Him for the redemption of the race, we may strengthen our faith, quicken our love, and become more deeply imbued with the spirit which sustained our Saviour. . . . Everything noble and generous in man will respond to the contemplation of Christ upon the cross.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 374.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. In healing Malchus’s ear and in His accompanying rebuke to Peter, what did Jesus reveal concerning
   a. His attitude toward His enemies?
   b. the degree of freedom He could potentially exercise to liberate Himself from their clutches?
   c. His manner of dealing with the mistakes of His disciples?
   d. His own state of mind regarding the peril in which He was placed?
   e. His approved methods of defending and upholding His cause?
   f. His view of employing physical force in the realm of spiritual conflict?

2. When Pilate presented Christ and Barabbas side by side and offered to free the man of their choice, the mob pressed for Barabbas’s release. In what less dramatic ways do people today continue in principle to choose Barabbas over Christ?

3. Why do you think Pilate was given a warning when Herod wasn’t?
SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: Matt. 27:42, 45; Mark 5:33; Mark 15:31; Luke 23:44.

Memory Text: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46).

For those who will listen, nature speaks eloquently about the character of God. It’s a loudspeaker, suffusing our senses with sublime messages about the One who created it all. But even in their fullness and beauty, nature’s words are often muted, and, sometimes, because of static, the signals can be grossly misread.

In contrast, the Cross is the ultimate revelation to humanity about our Creator. Only as we grasp the incredible reality that the Man hanging on the cross was also God—the One through whom all things in both heaven and earth were created—can we begin to understand truths about this God that the most vibrant sunset or exotic plant could never reveal. As we grasp, too, what kind of death He in His humanity died, and why He agreed to do it, we learn lessons about our God that surpass what anything growing out of the ground or floating in the heavens ever could teach us.

The Week at a Glance: What irony is found in the leaders’ taunts against Jesus? What caused the darkness that surrounded Him? What was the meaning of His cry “Why hast thou forsaken me?” What does the Cross teach us about the nature of sin?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 19.
“He Saved Others!”

From the bogus trials, Jesus was led down the Via Dolorosa (“the Way of Pain”) to Golgotha, “the place of the skull,” where He was crucified. Little did His murderers know what they were doing. No doubt, His awareness of their ignorance was partly why Jesus cried out, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). Their ignorance, though, will not excuse them on the day of judgment, not when they had so many opportunities to know the truth. If those who, having never seen Jesus, will be condemned for disbelief (John 3:18), imagine the fate of those who rejected Him while He lived among them.

As Jesus hung on the cross, He faced numerous taunts, such as those depicted in Matthew 27:42, Mark 15:31, and Luke 23:35. Though meant as an insult, what great truth were these men uttering in their ignorance?

He saved others, but He couldn’t save Himself. That’s true: He couldn’t save others and Himself at the same time. It had to be one or the other but not both.

Jesus could have chosen not to offer Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world (see Matt. 26:39; John 10:17, 18; Gal. 2:20; Heb. 7:27), but then the world would have been lost. Only by offering Himself could He save others. There was no other way.

Though uttered in derision and hate, those words captured the greatest truth of all time: If Christ wanted to save the world, He could do it only at the Cross.

In Matthew 26:39, Jesus asked that if it were possible, let this cup pass. Obviously, it wasn’t possible, not in the sense that He had no choice in this matter (If He had no choice, why even bother to utter the prayer?) but in the sense that it was not possible for Him to be spared if the world were to be saved. With this idea in mind, read also Mark 8:31, Luke 24:7, John 3:14. What are these texts telling us about the necessity of Christ’s death for our salvation?
Key Text: Hebrews 10:19-22.

Teachers Aims:
1. To underscore that Jesus bore our sins so we might experience the fullness of life in Him.
2. To recognize the enormity of the price paid for our salvation, even though it is impossible to comprehend the fullness of the act itself.
3. To understand that grace is sufficient to save us, apart from our works.
4. To find in Jesus’ death on the cross complete assurance of salvation.

Lesson Outline:

I. Darkness—a Tangible Parable of Sin (Matt. 27:45, 46).
   A. God, who is Light, hung on the cross in darkness.
   B. In order that we might be saved, He would not save Himself.
   C. Will we choose eternal separation from God when we have been freed from the penalty of sin?

II. The Full Impact of Humanity’s Sin (2 Cor. 5:21).
   A. “The Father and I are one” (John 10:30, NLT).
   B. Sin mandated eternal separation.
   C. Until Jesus’ death on the cross, we could not fully understand God’s wrath against sin.

III. Jesus Stands in the Sinner’s Place (1 Pet. 2:24).
   A. The Hebrew sacrificial system pointed to a remedy for sin.
   B. The seriousness of the remedy is an indication of the seriousness of the offense.
   C. The thought that we can somehow earn salvation degrades the gift given on the cross.

Summary: At the sixth hour (see Matt. 27:45, Mark 15:33, Luke 23:44), darkness separated Jesus from the Father. The God who is Light became the Sin Bearer and endured the darkness of separation from His Father. He who was able to save others did not save Himself, in order that we might be saved. When we ponder the seriousness of the sin remedy, we cannot help recognizing the magnitude of the gift Jesus gave. Our feeble efforts at self-rescue give way to profound joy in the assurance of hope given through His sacrifice for us.

COMMENTARY

Darkness at Noon.

Introduction. In accordance with every feature of prophecy concerning this event, Jesus was crucified as our Sin Bearer. His suf-
Darkness at Noon

**Read** Matthew 27:45, Mark 15:33, and Luke 23:44. What do all three say happened? What is the spiritual significance of this event?

In the Bible, darkness is a symbol of evil, of separation from God, who is Light and in whom “is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). In fact, Jesus talked of “outer darkness” (Matt. 8:12, 22:13) as an expression for hell. In a sense, Jesus at the cross went to hell for us; that is, He suffered the penalty of sin that those in hell will have to face themselves.

**Look** up these few texts. What do they say happened at the cross that could help explain the meaning of this supernatural darkness that appeared during the crucifixion of Christ? Isa. 59:2, 2 Cor. 5:21, Gal. 3:13.

The darkness, then, is an outward symbol of the spiritual darkness that was surrounding the Son of God as He bore the full brunt of God’s righteous wrath against sin. With the accumulated sin of the world not only falling on Him but being punished in Him there at the cross, with the Father, who is light, hiding His presence from Jesus—it’s not hard to see why the darkness would sweep over the land as a powerful manifestation to the world and to the universe of what was happening at the cross, of the great punishment that Jesus was taking upon Himself in order to save humanity from the condemnation that sin would otherwise have brought. “The dense blackness,” wrote Ellen White, “was an emblem of the soul-agony and horror that encompassed the Son of God.”—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 3, p. 164.

At times, who hasn’t felt oppressed by spiritual darkness? What caused it? How did it go away? And what advice would you give to someone who says that he or she feels enveloped in spiritual darkness?
fferings borne on Calvary, though beyond our comprehension, are the means by which the gates of everlasting life are opened to us, if only we accept His sacrifice and our need for it. For love’s sake, Jesus willingly endured the Cross. As illuminated by the Holy Spirit, the Cross lays bare our inner depravity and reveals God’s absolute hatred of sin, His uncompromising justice, as well as His infinite mercy and grace to redeem us from evil.

I. “He Saved Others!”

Every utterance and action of the ungodly on Golgotha was calculated to shame and discourage Christ. Behind it all was Satan’s frantic effort to provoke Jesus into descending from the cross, thus aborting the plan of salvation. But Christ was riveted to His purpose to redeem us. Had He so chosen, He could have freed Himself from the cross as easily as He freed His hands to heal Malchus’s severed ear. But the raging storm of repudiation that howled about His exposed body could not strip from His soul the love He bore to a lost world whose only hope lay in the sacrifice that they now scorned. “[He] gave himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father” (Gal. 1:4; cf. John 10:17, 18). Read Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 746, 749.

II. Darkness at Noon.

Christ endured the horror of great darkness so that we could walk in the wonders of His great light. He suffered burning thirst so that we could drink from springs of living water. He suffered blood-stained nakedness so that we could be clothed in His spotless righteousness. He suffered the hiding of His Father’s face so that we could someday see His face with no darkening veil between (see Rev. 22:4). He bore the epithets of scorn and blasphemy so that He could give us a new name in glory. He suffered the pain of thorns so that death for the Christian would lose its sting. He let His face stream with the foul spittle of rejection so that we might have our blood-guiltiness and tears wiped away by the hand of God. He bore vile blows so that we might receive His healing touch in the depths of our being. He accepted abandonment so that we might receive the glorious adoption of sons and daughters of God. “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isa. 53:5). “Love so amazing, so divine, demands my life, my soul, my all.”—Watts.

III. The Father Hidden.

It was as painful for the Father to separate from Christ as it was for the Son to endure His Father’s withdrawal. Jesus did not cry, “O God, O God, why have You forsaken me?” but “My God, My God . . .”;
The Father Hidden

“And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46).

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? What could Jesus—who had said “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30) and that “Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me” (John 16:32)—have meant by those words? Was not this the same Jesus who stood on the banks of the Jordan when the Father uttered, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17)? Was not this the same Jesus who had prayed “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee” (John 17:21)? Was not this the same Jesus who had prayed to the Father, “Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world” (vs. 24)?

Of course, it was. What, then, could He have meant by that cry?

Go back over the texts from yesterday’s section (Isa. 59:2, 2 Cor. 5:21, Gal. 3:13); read them in the context of Christ’s lament. How do they help explain what is happening here and why He uttered what He did?

However difficult for us to understand, Jesus—who had been One with the Father since eternity—now felt the complete separation from God caused by sin. God’s wrath, which would otherwise fall on us, fell on Him so that none of us would ever have to face it ourselves.

“It was necessary for the awful darkness to gather about His soul because of the withdrawal of the Father’s love and favor; for He was standing in the sinner’s place, and this darkness every sinner must experience. The righteous One must suffer the condemnation and wrath of God, not in vindictiveness; for the heart of God yearned with greatest sorrow when His Son, the guiltless, was suffering the penalty of sin. This sundering of the divine powers will never again occur throughout the eternal ages.”—Ellen G. White Comments, The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 924.

Have you ever met someone who felt forsaken by God (or perhaps you have felt that way yourself)? What happened to Jesus on the cross that offers you, or anyone, a way out of the seemingly bottomless pit? Why, because of the Cross, should no one ever feel that God has abandoned him or her?
thus expressing His invincible faith in the Father, a faith that, at that
time, could receive no comforting reward.

We can hardly overemphasize that the reason the Father forsook Him was to allow His Son to experience in our stead the full punish-
ment for our sins. The essential pain of that punishment is the spirit-
ual anguish of total separation from God. Even the most rebellious of
sinners still is surrounded at present with an atmosphere of wooing

Inductive Bible Study


1 In our homes and offices, we do everything we can to dispel
darkness. Jesus came to this earth to confront spiritual darkness. He
who was Light (see 1 John 1:5) bore the full accumulation of
the world’s sin. This sin was made visible in the darkness that sur-
rounded the cross and separated Him from His Father. How do
you feel when you recognize that your sin was part of Jesus’ bur-
den? Describe how Jesus’ sacrifice has freed you from spiritual
darkness.

2 Take a moment to remember a major project you have accepted
and successfully completed. How did you feel when it was done?
When Jesus cried out “It is finished” (John 19:30), He did not die
in defeat. His death signaled the consummation of the Hebrew
sanctuary parable. He conquered sin and its consequences for us.
How would you explain the joy of the Cross? Who in your sphere
of influence needs to hear your testimony?

3 Jesus’ sacrifice for sin (see Heb. 7:27) was sufficient to pay the
price for our sins. Why, then, do we work so hard at our salvation
when Jesus has provided the perfect remedy for our horrendous
offense? Discuss how we might learn to be comfortable with our
hope in Jesus. How can we give up working for our salvation and,
instead, allow Jesus to “will and to act according to his good pur-
pose” (Phil. 2:13, NIV) for our lives?

4 Maybe we do not understand how despicable sin really is. The
debt the world owed God because of sin was so great only God
Himself could pay for it. How does the price Jesus paid for your
rescue affect how you see yourself? How valuable is your neigh-
bor, friend, or work associate to Jesus?

5 Think about the best news you ever have had to share. How
does the good news of salvation compare? Why and when should
we involve our lives in letting everyone know?
“It Is Finished!”

Christ did not die in defeat but as a conqueror over sin—a spotless sacrifice of perfect innocence and virtue, infinite in moral power and love. His words “It is finished”signified not merely the termination of His human life but the consummation of His sacrifice and assurance of its success. Nothing could negate the completeness of the provision thus made. That which had so long been prophesied was now an accomplished fact of history. Henceforth His paramount task, and that of all heaven, would be to apply the saving merits of His sacrifice to the sin-stricken inhabitants of earth till the close of probationary time.

Those words, “It is finished,” uttered by the One who created all things by His word, echoed throughout the universe, ensured that the stability of its moral order and the joyous harmony of its fellowship are forever guaranteed.

**How** does Christ’s cry “It is finished” shed light on what happened to the veil of the temple at His death? *Matt. 27:51.*

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Every animal sacrifice—from the one offered by Abel (*Gen. 4:4*), up through the beasts slain in the temple precincts on the day of Golgotha—pointed to Christ’s death. The rending of the temple veil, then, betokened the accomplishment of that death. It symbolized the end of the old Hebrew system and pointed to the inauguration of a new and living way into God’s presence through His torn body (*Heb. 10:19-21*), once and for all ending the need for any other animal sacrifices (*Heb. 9:26*).

**What** do the following texts say that relate to the veil being torn at Christ’s death? *Pss. 49:7, 15; 51:16-19; Heb. 10:1-5.*

No animal could ever atone for sin. Just look at the havoc that sin has wreaked upon our world—the suffering, the misery, the loss, the disappointment, the death. And to think that all it would take to atone, or to pay, for all this suffering would be the death of a goat, or even of a thousands goats?

No wonder the veil was torn. In the end, it was a symbol, a picture, and thus in and of itself it couldn’t save one soul any more than staring at a picture of a salad could fill an empty stomach.
grace (see Ps. 68:18, Rom. 10:21, Rev. 22:17). When that drawing influence ceases, how great a chill of darkness and isolation shall descend upon the rejectors of mercy. Christ felt this, and more. He felt in our place the wrath of God against sin and recalcitrant sinners, so we could benefit from His reconciling mercy and grace. May God spare us from a languid, perfunctory response to this greatest of vicarious interventions dared and done for our everlasting good.

**IV. “It Is Finished” (John 19:30).**

What a word of irrevocable assurance! In Greek Scripture it is one word: _Tetelesmai_! Christ, whose wisdom is unsearchable, whose resources are boundless, whose grace is inexhaustible, declares that the most significant transaction of time and eternity is finished. It was His meat and drink to do His Father’s will and finish the work He had given Him to do (see John 4:34, 5:36, 17:4).

**Witnessing**

Close your eyes for a moment. Imagine you have been informed you would never again see, speak to, or come into contact with your closest loved ones. Focus solely on this news. Suppose you are now told you will experience complete and absolute separation from Jesus. Let the terrible finality of this sink in. Now share with the group your _honest_ reaction—physical, emotional, spiritual, mental—to such news. Did you experience any of the following: shock, disbelief, grief, anger, fear, abandonment, pain, horror, agony, displeasure, or loss?

If so, you have gained a glimmer of what our Savior experienced as He hung on the cross and the full weight of humanity’s sins fell on His shoulders. He cried out to His Father, from whom He felt totally alienated. He could not see past the terrible present. Yet, He refused to save Himself. He knew that if He gave in to the taunts slung at Him to save Himself, humanity would be lost to eternity.

His example of self-sacrificing love can never be duplicated. Yet, we are able to hold up Christ’s example before others when we minister to those in great physical, emotional, and spiritual pain. While volunteering at your local hospital, you will find more than ample opportunity to share Christ’s plan of salvation with those coping with physical pain. Share the story of the Cross with them; remind them the pain they are experiencing is short-lived; they will pass through it. Perhaps they will fall asleep as a result of sin, but you can help them prepare to meet Jesus when He comes again.

Whatever the circumstances you encounter, your witness to others in uplifting the story of Christ and His victory on the cross over pain, despair, and sin provides peace and hope to those in greatest need of it.
“God Was in Christ”

“To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them” (2 Cor. 5:19).

We can look at the world all around us and see the cost of sin. Every one of us, to one degree or another, faces its sad results.

In what ways has sin (not just your own but sin in general) impacted your life and brought you sorrow?

Yet, it is only at the Cross that we can see just how terrible sin really is, because it took something as extreme, something as incredible, as the Cross to atone for it. The seriousness of the remedy is a way to judge the seriousness of the offense. If someone had to do five hours of community service as a punishment for a crime, you could guess that whatever that crime was, it wasn’t too bad. In contrast, if that person faced death, you’d assume that whatever he or she did, it was deemed serious. Thus, nothing has revealed the horror and gravity of sin like the Cross, where God, “in Christ,” suffered the ultimate consequences of sin so that we don’t have to ourselves.

Read prayerfully and carefully 1 Peter 2:24 and 2 Corinthians 5:19 in the context of Philippians 2:6. How do they help us understand how bad sin is?

The gulf caused by sin between humankind and God was so serious that it took God’s inflicting the punishment of sin upon Himself in order to save us from sin, in order to reconcile us to Him. Whatever the mysteries of the Godhead, we must never forget that “God was in Christ” on the cross, bearing in Himself the penalty of sin. Sin is so bad that it took this, the Cross, in order to save us from it. The debt that the world owed God because of sin was so great that only God Himself could pay for it.

How have you experienced personally the reconciliation talked about in 2 Corinthians 5:19 that has come through “God . . . in Christ”? What does this reconciliation mean on a practical level? How does it impact your view of yourself and others? How should it impact every relationship you have?
On Calvary He left nothing wanting to complete the provisions for the salvation of the whole world, thus making possible the salvation of all who are willing to believe and receive Christ as Redeemer. Provision to save all who desire life in Him—that’s authority; that’s love universal; that’s grace in its fully effective application.

V. God Was in Christ.
Calvary was the pivotal point of suffering and sacrifice, where “mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace kissed each other” (Ps. 85:10). Without compromising the integrity of His law or the stability of the divine government, Jesus took all our sin so we would be filled with all His righteousness. In the glorious ocean of this grace Paul bathed his mind and fashioned his understanding of salvation that ploughs through every wave of doubt, denial, and disputation. For him and every true believer the accomplishments of Christ on Calvary are the Everlasting Year. Though He hid His face from His Son for several eternity-freighted hours at the junction of Deliverance and Doom, “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them” (2 Cor. 5:19).

Life-Application Approach

Icebreaker: Were you afraid of the dark when you were a child? If so, why? How do you handle the dark during a bad storm? When you hear a strange noise? When you are alone?


Thought Questions:
1 What do you think was the intent of the words spoken by the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders in verses 42 and 43? What were they trying to accomplish when they spoke this way? Imagine the effect these words must have had on Jesus.

2 Do you think Jesus’ words in Matthew 27:46 were a cry of doubt or an earnest appeal to God? Explain your answer.

Application Questions:
1 Did God forsake Jesus? Does God ever forsake us?

2 What is the difference between discouragement and despair?

3 How does Jesus’ experience with literal and spiritual darkness impact your life and your feelings?

4 What difference does the Cross make in your life as you deal with literal and spiritual darkness?

“When our Redeemer consented to take the cup of suffering in order to save sinners, His capacity for suffering was the only limitation to His suffering. . . . By dying in our behalf, He gave an equivalent for our debt. Thus He removed from God all charge of lessening the guilt of sin. By virtue of My oneness with the Father, He says, My suffering and death enable Me to pay the penalty of sin. By My death . . . His grace can act with unbounded efficiency.”—Ellen G. White, *That I May Know Him*, p. 69.

“Christ felt much as sinners will feel when the vials of God’s wrath shall be poured out upon them. Black despair, like the pall of death, will gather about their guilty souls, and then they will realize to the fullest extent the sinfulness of sin. Salvation has been purchased for them by the suffering and death of the Son of God. It might be theirs, if they would accept of it willingly, gladly; but none are compelled to yield obedience to the law of God. If they refuse the heavenly benefit and choose the pleasures and deceitfulness of sin, they have their choice, and at the end receive their wages, which is the wrath of God and eternal death. They will be forever separated from the presence of Jesus, whose sacrifice they had despised. They will have lost a life of happiness and sacrificed eternal glory for the pleasures of sin for a season.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 210.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. **In our place Christ experienced His Father’s wrath against sin. Explain how divine wrath against sin is perfectly consistent with God’s character of love. If God had no wrath against sin, what moral climate would that create for the perpetuation of rebellion?** *John 3:16-21, 36; Rom. 1:16-19; Eph. 5:1-8.*

2. **Why is the idea that we can somehow earn our salvation an idea that subtly degrades the Cross? How does the Cross prove the futility of our works to save us?**
He Is Risen

SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: Matt. 28:9, John 11:1-46, 20:10-18, Rom. 6:4-6, 1 Cor. 15:3-8.

Memory Text: “Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen” (Luke 24:5, 6).

His name was Rebbe (for Rabbi) Menachem Schneerson, and at the time of his death in 1994, speculation was rife among thousands of Lubavitch Jews that the 92-year-old spiritual leader was the long-awaited Messiah. After all, they said, he claimed lineage to King David (and such a righteous man as the rebbe would not lie). His physical sufferings fulfilled, they said, the predictions of Isaiah 53; and the intravenous tubes in his body were a fulfillment of the predictions that the Messiah’s hands and feet would be pierced. All that remains, they believe, is for him to be resurrected from the dead.

So far, though, Rebbe Schneerson is still resting quietly.

Contrast this rebbe and his death to another Rebbe and His death, almost two thousand years ago. It’s obvious which one is the real Messiah.

The Week at a Glance: What specific miracles did Jesus do that should have prepared people for His resurrection, were they open to it? How convincing is the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus? How does the resurrection of Christ form the foundation for our own? What happened at the Cross that has paved the way for our resurrection?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 26.
Precursors

Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus performed numerous miracles: healing those who were blind, feeding the 5,000, turning water into wine, curing leprosy, walking on water, casting out demons, mending deformities, stilling a storm, raising the dead, and so many other acts that, as John said, the world itself couldn’t contain the books “that should be written” about what Jesus did (John 21:25).

Read the following texts. What miracles did Jesus perform here, and how do these acts fit in with the miracle of His own resurrection from the dead? See also Matt. 11:5.

Mark 5:35-43

Luke 7:11-17

John 11:1-46

What’s so important about these accounts is they prove that the power attending Jesus and His ministry is so great that even the dead could be raised. Numerous times prior to the cross, Jesus talked about not just His death but His resurrection from that death (see Matt. 12:38-40; 17:22, 23; 20:19). Under normal circumstances, one could (and should) be a bit skeptical about someone who claimed that although he or she was going to die soon, three days after death he or she would be resurrected. Of course, Christ’s situation was hardly “normal”; even more so, by doing what He did in raising the dead, Jesus gave His followers and all those who had heard about Him undeniable demonstrations of the power of God to raise the dead, thus making the promise of His own resurrection something that should have been easier for people to believe.

Read John 11:25. What’s so important about what Jesus said here? Why, in the context it was given, were those words so powerful and so full of hope?

Most household dust is composed, really, of us; it’s dead skin. Run a finger across a counter, and you’ll be staring at your future, at least in the short term. What, however, is your long-term hope, and how is that linked to the resurrection of Jesus?
Key Text: Romans 6:4-6.

Teachers Aims:
1. To review the convincing evidence that Jesus is the true Messiah.
2. To find in Jesus the power to remove the fear of death.
3. To see Jesus’ resurrection as a relevant and timely truth to proclaim.

Lesson Outline:
I. Jesus—the Author of Life (John 11:25).
   A. Jesus performed numerous miracles that proclaimed His power over disease and death.
   B. These miracles were intended to make it easier for others to believe in His coming resurrection.
   C. The disciples proclaimed Jesus’ victory over death at the cost of persecution, even death.

II. A Belief Founded on Jesus (Matt. 27:52, 53).
   A. Jesus asked the disciples to believe, based on who He was and what He had done.
   B. Martyrs, raised at Jesus’ resurrection, joined in proclaiming His victory over death.
   C. The disciples became bold witnesses of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection.

   A. We are no longer the captives of Satan; Jesus has redeemed us.
   B. This good news becomes the foundation of our hope now, as well as for an eternal future.
   C. A radical change can be experienced when Jesus is the center and focus of our lives.

Summary: During Jesus’ ministry on earth, His miracles gave evidence of His identity and the power to provide life-saving changes in human lives. He raised people from the dead to foreshadow His own resurrection. This is our great hope of freedom from the fear of, and the focus on, death that Satan uses to hold us captive.

COMMENTARY

He Is Risen.

Introduction. Christ’s resurrection, ascension, and subsequent work as our High Priest in heaven immortalize Calvary and apply its inexhaustible power to attract and save every soul who cooperates with God’s redeeming grace.

I. Precursors.
   Christ’s several acts of raising the dead—Jairus’s 12-year-old
The Resurrected Christ

Leo Tolstoy wrote his great novel *War and Peace* about a number of aristocratic Russian families during the time of Napoleon’s war against Russia in the early 1800s. The story itself, the characters, their lives, were a fabrication. He made them all up.

Now, imagine Tolstoy insisting that these people were, in fact, real and that they actually lived and did what he said they did. Imagine, too, that he was told by the authorities to stop telling people that his characters were real or that the police would throw him in jail or even kill him. Unless Tolstoy were insane, he’d stop, would he not? Why die promoting as truth a story you made up and know is a lie?

In a sense, this is the dilemma that the critics of the resurrection of Jesus face: Why would the Bible writers make up the story that Jesus was raised from the dead when He wasn’t? It’s not as if they became wealthy, popular, or successful by promoting this story; on the contrary, they faced ostracism, persecution, torture, jail, and, in some cases, death. Why go through all that for a story that you purposely concocted?

Below are some accounts of Christ’s postresurrection appearances: Matthew 28:9, Luke 24:33-49, John 20:10-23, John 21:1-14, Acts 1:4-9. What transpired at these meetings? What hope did Jesus give them? Why would it make no sense for these people to have made up this story?

Jesus appeared numerous times to His followers. He obviously wanted them to be strong in their belief in whom He was and what He had done. It worked, too. They went from a band of dejected, scattered, and frightened people (Matt. 26:56, Mark 14:50, Luke 24:17, John 20:19) to a spiritually powerful group of men and women who boldly proclaimed the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the Messiah of Israel and the world. Obviously, they believed that Jesus had been resurrected, for they dedicated the rest of their lives to proclaiming that truth. See also 1 Cor. 15:3-6.

Most of the world, however, has not seen the resurrected Jesus. Yet, we are asked to believe anyway. If someone were to ask you, Why do you believe in the resurrection of Christ, what would you answer?
daughter, the widow of Nain’s son, and Lazarus—clearly attest that His claim to be “the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25) was no deception or delusion. Jesus asserted that He not only had inherent power to resurrect the good and the evil but to judge all humans according to their deeds (see John 5:24-29).

“Satan cannot hold the dead in his grasp when the Son of God bids them live. He cannot hold in spiritual death one soul who in faith receives Christ’s word of power. God is saying to all who are dead in sin, ‘Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead.’ Eph. 5:14. That word is eternal life. As the word of God which bade the first man live, still gives us life; as Christ’s word, ‘Young man, I say unto thee, Arise,’ gave life to the youth of Nain, so that word, ‘Arise from the dead,’ is life to the soul that receives it. God ‘hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.’ Col. 1:13. It is all offered us in His word. If we receive the word, we have the deliverance.”—Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 320.

II. The Resurrected Christ.

The mighty events surrounding Christ’s resurrection—the earthquake, His coming forth from the tomb in radiance so dazzling that the Roman guards fell as dead men at the sight, the coming forth of resurrected saints from their tombs, the changed demeanor of the disciples from despondency to dauntless courage and zeal—all bore undeniable witness to the reality of Christ’s resurrection.

“The priests, in putting Christ to death, had made themselves the tools of Satan. Now they were entirely in his power. They were entangled in a snare from which they saw no escape but in continuing their warfare against Christ. When they heard the report of His resurrection, they feared the wrath of the people. They felt that their own lives were in danger. The only hope for them was to prove Christ an impostor by denying that He had risen. . . . The priests and rulers were in continual dread, lest in walking the streets, or within the privacy of their own homes, they should come face to face with Christ. They felt that there was no safety for them. Bolts and bars were but poor protection against the Son of God. By day and by night that awful scene in the judgment hall, when they had cried, ‘His blood be on us, and on our children,’ was before them. Matt. 27:25. Nevermore would the memory of that scene fade from their minds. Nevermore would peaceful sleep come to their pillows.”—Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 785.

III. Witnesses From the Grave.

Christ resurrected these saints, and they circulated throughout Jerusalem, not to frighten people but to reinforce the great and noteworthy reality that Christ Himself was indeed the Resurrection and had the keys to death and the grave (Rev. 1:18). To miss this
Witnesses From the Grave

“And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many” (Matt. 27:52, 53).

At the moment Christ died, Matthew records three events: (1) The veil in the temple was torn (Matt. 27:51), (2) the earth quaked and rocks split (vs. 51), (3) and graves were opened (vs. 52). It was, however, only after Jesus Himself had been resurrected early on the first day of the week that “many bodies of the saints which slept arose” (vss. 52, 53).

**Why** was it only after Christ’s resurrection, and not before, that these saints rose?

How appropriate that only after Jesus was resurrected would some of these saints be resurrected, as well: His resurrection was the guarantee of theirs (and ours). Through this act, the Lord has given the world (not to mention those who saw these people) even more reasons to believe in the power of His resurrection.

**What** did Matthew say that these resurrected saints did after they arose?

Outside of Matthew’s few verses, Scripture says nothing else explicitly about these saints. Who were they? What happened to them? What impact should they have made on those who saw them? (Remember what Jesus said in Luke 16:30, 31?) Ellen White writes that these were martyrs who had given their lives for the Lord and that they had been “raised to everlasting life” (unlike those whom Jesus had raised from the dead earlier, who were still subject to death) and that when He ascended to heaven He took them with Him: “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.”—Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 786.

“Nevermore to see death or experience sorrow.” Dwell on what that means. Using your imagination (you’re going to need it), write a paragraph on what life will be like without death or sorrow. (See Rev. 21:1-5 for some hints.)
central fact is to have a greatly diminished and grossly inaccurate idea of Christ that would reduce His sacrifice to a mere act of martyrdom endured for misguided ideological purposes. But if it could be demonstrated (as it very effectively was by the manner of Christ’s resurrection and the after-events) that He had the power to come forth from the tomb and to resurrect His saints, then the seal

**Inductive Bible Study**


1. When someone has a special surprise planned for you, how does this person’s action or demeanor give you suggestions of what is to come? Jesus ministered to people, performing amazing miracles. He even raised the dead. How was He using these miracles to prepare His disciples for His resurrection? Why were they so oblivious to what was about to take place? Which of your preconceived ideas stand in the way of your fully understanding what Jesus wants to do in your life?

2. Silk flowers give us a hint of what the never-fading flowers in heaven will be like. Jesus is more than a hint of salvation; He is the real Messiah. With so many people and ideologies competing for our allegiance, how would you share Jesus as the real Source of help and change? What part of your personal testimony would be most convincing?

3. When Jesus died on the cross, an earthquake shook the ground, the veil in the temple was torn, and graves were opened. At His resurrection, those dead martyrs were raised to life and went into the city as witnesses. What has it taken to direct your attention toward Jesus? Why is it so often hard for Him to reach us or our neighbors and friends?

4. Paul proclaimed Jesus as the Lord of life, the One and only Foundation of the whole Christian hope. In light of our fear of death, why is Jesus’ triumph so critical? How has this good news changed the focus of your life? Discuss ways you could share your hope with a friend or neighbor.

5. When someone hands a gift to the person next to you, do you anticipate you will receive one too? What is it like when you are given something you really wanted? Jesus extends the ultimate gift, new life in Him, both now and eternally. How can we see our acceptance as more than a one-time event? What does it mean to continually experience newness of life?
Paul and the Resurrection of Jesus

Though the apostle Paul speaks very little about the life of Christ, the death and resurrection of Jesus are constant themes in Paul’s letters. These events are for him the foundation of the whole Christian hope.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 and then answer these questions:

- What did Paul consider of first importance?

- Paul said that both Christ’s death and resurrection were “according to the Scriptures.” See also Acts 17:2, 3. Why is that so important? Who else tied these specific events to the Scriptures? See Luke 24:25-27.

- In verses 5-7 Paul spends a lot of time on one subject. What is it, and why do you think he emphasizes it so much?

In the rest of 1 Corinthians 15 Paul stresses one point: Our hope of the resurrection from the dead rests on Christ’s resurrection from the dead. As humans, we have no natural immortality (1 Tim. 6:15, 16). Death is an unconscious sleep (John 11:11, 1 Thess. 4:13), not some ascent or descent into another existence. The Lord is the Lord of life; death, therefore, is the enemy (1 Cor. 15:26), against which we, as humans, have, on our own, no hope of defeating. In the end, if death is not conquered, all for which we have lived ends in the grave. Paul says that without the resurrection, our faith is in “vain” (1 Cor. 15:17), from a Greek word that means “useless” or “of no purpose.”

On the other hand, Christ was raised from death, He conquered death, and we can by faith become partakers of that same victory. He paid the penalty for our sin—which is death itself. Because that penalty has been paid, we don’t have to face it ourselves; instead, as He was raised, we will be raised, too, and given the eternal life that was lost through sin but regained for us through Jesus. All we face now is a temporary sleep; the final punishment, the eternal punishment that sin already brings, has been taken care of for us at the Cross. The redeemed, either awake or asleep, are simply waiting for the consummation of what Christ has done for them. Our resurrection to eternal life is that final consummation.
would be forever set to the validity of His Messiahship and His gospel. By virtue of His resurrection, death had no more dominion. Indeed, Christ, by His own death “abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10) and delivered them “who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. 2:15).

**IV. Paul and the Resurrection of Jesus.**

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. What a grand declaration and definition of the gospel we find in this passage! This apostolic credo places Christ’s resurrection as the authenticating seal of the gospel (hence the full development of that theme in the whole fifteenth chapter). To Paul, the Resurrection invests Calvary with redeeming power, for Jesus’ resurrection imparts efficacy to His life-giving, sin-destroying work on the cross *(see 1 Cor. 15:17, 2 Cor. 4:10-14, 5:14-16)*. Hence, for Paul, the Cross was the tree of life, the fountain of grace, the sword of spiritual authority, the searchlight of the soul, the ploughshare of truth, the pulse beat of divine love, the song of redemption, the throne of mercy, the bar of justice, the refuge of the repentant, the emblem of Christian discipleship, the key to all wisdom, the scepter of divine government, the pathway and pledge of eternal life.

**Witnessing**

This week we discuss the concept of born-again Christians. How do others recognize in each of us born-again Christianity? Is it because of the things we avoid, or is it because of the things we embrace? Is it a combination of both?

The apostle Paul writes it is necessary for Christians to experience the true death of sin in our lives. We bury sin forever when we choose to believe in Jesus Christ and accept without conditions His plan of salvation. If we have truly accepted Christ as our personal Savior, we will be unable to keep the pure joy of this good news to ourselves. We will be incapable of holding in the story of His plan of redemption. We will search for ways to share His love with others, and we will willingly live a life in harmony with His teachings. Witnessing to others through our deeds and actions will be as natural as breathing. Others will know in an instant that we live our faith.

So, if you question whether others see in you a positive example of the full Christian experience, you might want to ask yourself this question: Am I perhaps missing a portion of God’s blessings He freely bestows to His children? By taking inventory and making any necessary adjustments, you will become the born-again Christian He leads you to be.
Resurrection, Now and Then

Read John 5:24,25. Jesus seems to be talking about two types of eternal life here. What are they, and how are they tied together?

The Bible talks about a resurrection that believers can experience even prior to death. The one who believes in Jesus now has passed from death to life. What is a passage from death to life other than a resurrection? In other words, those who believe in Him go through a radical change, not just when they are brought from the grave, but they go through a change now, a born-again experience in which Christ becomes the center and focus of their life. It’s such a radical life-changing experience that Jesus Himself links it with something as radical as the dead being raised to life at the end of time.

Read Romans 6:4-6. What is Paul saying here that parallels Christ’s words in John 5:24, 25? Why does Paul use the imagery of Christ’s resurrection?

For Paul, the death and resurrection of Jesus weren’t just historical events, such as the death of Mary, Queen of Scots, is to us. Instead, they are living symbols of what we, ourselves, as followers of Christ, must experience in our own lives now.

Paul is saying that we, in a sense, must spiritually go through what Christ did: a death, not in a literal sense, but a death to self, a death to sin, a death to living for the flesh. But not only that, the same power that brought Jesus from the grave can bring us into “newness of life,” a life where we are no longer under the dominion of sin and of the flesh. This is a crucial, inseparable part of the whole Christian experience.

If someone were to ask you, “Have you gone through what Jesus and Paul both talked about in the above verses?” what would you answer? If your answer were Yes, and you were then asked “What was that experience like?” what would you say? Also, is what Paul talked about a one-time experience, or is it something that must go on continually? Explain your reply.
V. Resurrection Now and Then.

It is every believer’s privilege to walk and work in the resurrection power of Jesus. (See Eph. 1:17-20.) In order for that power to freely operate in our lives, we must be dying to sin and coming alive to Christ’s righteousness continually (see Rom. 6:1-8, 1 Cor. 15:31-34, Phil. 3:9; Ellen G. White, The Upward Look, p. 78).

Life-Application Approach

Icebreaker: What was one of the biggest surprises in your life?


Thought Questions:
1. How did Jesus convince the disciples of the reality of His resurrection? (Teachers: If your class does not mention the evidence from Scripture, press them until they see that aspect of Luke 24:33-49.)

2. Touching, feeling, and eating are not as convincing and as important as Scripture. Why not?

Application Questions:
1. Jesus used Scripture to help His disciples understand He had risen. Why is it important to go to the Bible to support the claims of our faith?

2. What might convince your neighbor or co-worker of the reality of Jesus’ death and resurrection?

3. How does the death and resurrection of Jesus put our own lives and deaths into perspective?

4. The disciples were terrified and doubting. Yet, they became powerful advocates for Jesus. What made the difference for them? (See vs. 48, John 20:22.) We tend to be frightened and unsure, just as they were. What might make the difference for us?

5. Jesus is our example. In Luke 24:48, Jesus instructed His disciples to witness to the things they had seen and heard that day and all the days they had been with Jesus. Jesus’ instructions are for us also. How can we be good witnesses?
Further Study: “During these days that Christ spent with His disciples, they gained a new experience. As they heard their beloved Master explaining the Scriptures in the light of all that had happened, their faith in Him was fully established. They reached the place where they could say, ‘I know whom I have believed.’ 2 Timothy 1:12. They began to realize the nature and extent of their work, to see that they were to proclaim to the world the truths entrusted to them. The events of Christ’s life, His death and resurrection, the prophecies pointing to these events, the mysteries of the plan of salvation, the power of Jesus for the remission of sins—to all these things they had been witnesses, and they were to make them known to the world. They were to proclaim the gospel of peace and salvation through repentance and the power of the Saviour.”—Ellen G. White, The Acts of the Apostles, p. 27.

“The miracle which Christ was about to perform, in raising Lazarus from the dead, would represent the resurrection of all the righteous dead. By His word and His works He declared Himself the Author of the resurrection. He who Himself was soon to die upon the cross stood with the keys of death, a conqueror of the grave, and asserted His right and power to give eternal life.”—Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 530.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why didn’t Jesus reveal Himself immediately to Cleopas and his friend as they walked mournfully to their home in Emmaus? Why did He first give them such a detailed study from the Scriptures concerning His death, burial, and resurrection? *Luke 24:13-32.*

2. Consider what a difference it made in the lives of the apostles that they served a risen Savior and not just a martyr whose memory they could revere. What difference does it make to you personally that you serve a risen Savior and are not merely honoring a deceased hero of ancient fame?

3. How do you understand the idea that those who believe in Jesus have eternal life now? What does that mean to you? How would you explain it, for example, at the funeral of a good Christian?
SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: Gen. 18:22-33; Rom. 3:9-20; 5:12, 15, 18; 2 Cor. 5:14.

Memory Text: “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18).

“The sin bearer, and priest and representative of man before God, He [Christ] entered into the life of humanity, bearing our flesh and blood. The life is in the living, vital current of blood, which blood was given for the life of the world. Christ made a full atonement, giving His life as a ransom for us. He was born without a taint of sin, but came into the world in like manner as the human family. He did not have a mere semblance of a body, but He took human nature, participating in the life of humanity. . . .

“Jesus Christ . . . clothed His divinity with humanity. . . . By coming as man Christ could die. By death He overcame death. The death of Christ bore to the death him who had the power of death, and opened the gates of the tomb for all who receive Him as their personal Saviour”—Ellen G. White Comments, The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, pp. 925, 926.

The Week at a Glance: What happened at the Cross? Why did Christ have to die? How was the concept of substitution prefigured in the story of Abraham in which he and the Lord discuss the destruction of Sodom?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 5.
For the Sake of the Righteous

Though the Cross has stood at the center of the Christian faith from the earliest days up through today, debate has raged in the church over such basic questions as What happened at Calvary? Why did Jesus die? Did He have to die? What killed Christ? What did His death accomplish? Who was benefitted from His death? Though Paul said that he was determined not to know “any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2), the followers of Christ in the following centuries have not always agreed on just what “Jesus Christ, and him crucified” means.

Read Genesis 18:22-33 (if not familiar with the story, read the whole chapter). Notice the specific interaction between Abraham and the Lord. What principle is being expressed here that, in a powerful way, teaches an important truth about the Cross?

To understand the significance of these texts, it’s crucial to see what Abraham didn’t ask the Lord. He didn’t ask that the righteous be spared instead of the wicked. He didn’t say “Lord, let the righteous go; destroy the wicked.” Instead, He asked that the Lord “spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein” (Gen. 18:24). And the Lord responded that “I will spare all the place for their sakes” (vs. 26). All the way through the dialogue, this same idea comes back: “for the sake of” the 45, the 40, the 30, the 20, or the 10 the Lord would spare the whole city, the wicked and all.

Here’s the Bible’s first clear explication of the crucial theme of the Cross: Because of the righteous, the wicked are spared. It was going to be the righteousness of another, of someone other than the “wicked” themselves, who would spare the wicked from the punishment that they deserved. For the sake of someone else, others are saved.

Read again the dialogue between Abraham and the Lord. Notice how readily the Lord agreed to lower the terms of the agreement. What does that tell us about God’s desire to save us?
Key Text: 2 Corinthians 5:12, 15, 18.

Teachers Aims:
1. To discuss what Jesus’ death accomplished and whom it benefited.
2. To contrast our sinfulness with Jesus’ righteousness.
3. To invite class members to marvel at, and to accept, God’s willingness to take upon His sinless self the punishment for our sins.

Lesson Outline:

I. By Death Christ Overcame Death (1 Cor. 2:2).
   A. A study of the Cross is central to Christian faith.
   B. As foreshadowed by Abraham’s dialogue with God, the wicked are spared for the sake of the righteous.

II. The Human Condition (Rom. 3:9-20).
   A. Every human being is born a sinner; every human being has violated the law of God.
   B. We have reaped the consequences of Adam’s fall.
   C. Christ’s righteousness alone is sufficient to spare humanity.

III. A Substitute (Isa. 53:5).
   A. Only God Himself could provide the righteousness needed to save a fallen world.
   B. The Old Testament sacrificial system presents a very personal message of hope to each of us.

Summary: Jesus clothed His divinity with humanity in order to become a Substitute and Surety for us. When Jesus accepted the punishment we deserved for our sins, He became our Substitute as prefigured by the Old Testament sacrificial system. God’s mercy met the needs of His just requirements. We have reaped the benefits of His amazing accomplishment. This is the central truth of the Cross.

COMMENTARY

The Heart of the Cross.

Introduction. Christ’s all-sufficient sacrifice on the cross meets the spiritual need of the human race. The effective value of His sacrifice is no more bound by time or place than is His sovereignty over all the universe. The Cross of Jesus achieves results that are vast as eternity and deep as His wisdom and love.

I. For the Sake of the Righteous.
   God spared the human race for the sake of one righteous Man, the God-Man, Jesus Christ. This truth is crowningly brought to
The Human Condition

Yesterday’s study opened up a crucial theme: the wicked saved for the sake of the righteous. In the story of Sodom, however, the righteous who were needed to save the city were not found. There weren’t even ten people whose righteousness would have been deemed sufficient to spare these sinners from destruction.

In a sense, the inhabitants of the whole world are like the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. Maybe our sins aren’t as outrageous or as violent as were those of the Sodomites (Gen. 19:5), but they’re bad enough. (On the other hand, considering some of the horrendous crimes through which the world suffers now, maybe we’re worse.) And, in a sense, too, the whole world faces the same judgment that Sodom and Gomorrah did.

The Bible is abundantly clear: Whether one lived in Sodom or elsewhere, every human being is a sinner; every human being has violated the law of God. No one, anywhere, has the righteousness to save himself or herself, much less anyone else, from judgment.

Read Romans 5:12, 15, 18. What was the cause of our human sinfulness?

How is this sinfulness manifested in humanity? Rom. 3:9-20.

We are sinful, not only because of what we have done but because of what Adam had done. We are naturally the children of Adam. When he sinned, his nature became corrupted, fallen, sinful, and we inherited this same nature from him, somewhat in the same way that we inherit traits from our parents. We weren’t literally in Adam when he sinned (as though we had some form of preexistence prior to our birth); we have simply reaped in ourselves the consequences of his fall, which is why we, having inherited sinful natures, commit sin. It’s because of this connection with Adam that we all face the condemnation that sin brings.

Peel away all social, cultural, and even religious façades and look at yourself: Are your natural tendencies, your natural drives, toward good or toward evil, toward God or toward self? How does the answer confirm the Bible teaching about human sinfulness?
view in Romans 5, a chapter that merits the closest study. “When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly” (vs. 6). This work of redemption Christ alone could accomplish (under the blessing of the Father and the Spirit). See how often and in what senses the word one is used in Romans 5, especially with reference to Christ’s unique and all-paying sacrifice for our redemption from sin and restoration in His righteousness through the power of His grace.

II. The Human Condition.

For the sake of justice and love, sin—this massive leprosy of spreading evil—must not be permitted to run rampant. “Through sin the whole human organism is deranged, the mind is perverted, the imagination corrupted. Sin has degraded the faculties of the soul. Temptations from without find an answering chord within the heart, and the feet turn imperceptibly toward evil.”—Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 8, p. 312; see also Isa. 1:2-6. In order to appreciate the powerfully curative effects of the gospel, we must have a clear concept of the magnitude and severity of the moral disease it remedies.

III. One Man’s Righteousness.

Long before sin assumed its present monstrous forms, the Lord foresaw the whole extent of the problem and made provision for evil to be eradicated from the sinner’s heart without eradicating the sinner. (See 1 Pet. 1:18, 19.) God would not, and could not, compromise His standard of moral perfection to accommodate our fallen nature, but He could, and did, offer an effective plan whereby humanity’s lost perfection might be restored through grace and evil be rooted out of the universe forever. Christ shouldered the whole burden of our need. He brought to bear the whole weight of His righteousness and reconciling love to redeem us from our condition as enemies of God, enemies of one another, and enemies of ourselves. What He did was so vast and complete as to need no supplementation but, simply, application to our acceptant hearts. Read and absorb Romans 5:8-21. This chapter is an observatory into the limitless expanse of the gospel.

IV. The Justice of God.

“God’s love has been expressed in His justice no less than in His mercy. Justice is the foundation of His throne, and the fruit of His love. It had been Satan’s purpose to divorce mercy from truth and justice. He sought to prove that the righteousness of God’s law is an enemy to peace. But Christ shows that in God’s plan they are indissolubly joined together; the one cannot exist without the other. ‘Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.’ Ps. 85:10.
One Man’s Righteousness

What do these texts say about the character of Jesus? John 8:46, Rom. 5:18, 2 Cor. 5:21, 1 Pet. 2:22, 1 John 3:5.

Yesterday we looked at the universal problem of humanity, and that’s sin. In contrast to every other person, however, there’s Jesus, whom the Bible teaches did not sin. In other words, He was the only Person not tainted or infected by sin in any way. He kept the law of God perfectly, always obeyed the Father’s will, and never once fell. In this sense, He stands out as different from every other human being.

Now, let’s go back to the principle we looked at Sunday: that of the guilty being spared for the sake of the righteous. There were no righteousness men found in Sodom and Gomorrah, nor are there any found in the world at large. Jesus, however, is the exception, and the Lord will accept Christ’s righteousness alone as sufficient to spare the world. It’s as though, instead of ten righteous men to save Sodom and Gomorrah, the Lord allowed for one righteous Man to save a guilty world—and that Man was Jesus. See John 3:17.

Romans 5:17-19 says that everything Adam had done through sin, Christ came to undo. Adam brought sin, death, condemnation, and disobedience; Christ brought righteousness, life, justification, and obedience. Thus, just as it was only through Adam that we all became sinners, it’s only through Christ that we become righteous. Hard as it is to understand, His righteousness was so perfect, so complete and satisfactory, that it was enough to cover the sins of the whole world. And that’s because His righteousness was “the righteousness of God” (Rom. 3:21). Because Jesus Himself was God, and only God Himself could provide the righteousness needed to save a fallen world.

Sure, you’re a wretch, and even if you hide that fact from everyone else, you can’t hide it from God. But no matter how bad you are, isn’t God’s righteousness, which can cover the sins of the whole world, enough to cover even you? Think about the implications of your answer.
“By His life and His death, Christ proved that God’s justice did not destroy His mercy, but that sin could be forgiven, and that the law is righteous, and can be perfectly obeyed. Satan’s charges were refuted. God had given man unmistakable evidence of His love.”

Inductive Bible Study

**Texts for Discovery:** Psalm 89:14; Romans 5:12, 15, 18; 1 Corinthians 2:2; 2 Corinthians 5:21.

1 When Abraham initiated his dialogue with God in Genesis 18:22-33, he likely could not see forward to the outcome. It points to a crucial theme of the Cross: Because of the righteous, the wicked are spared. How does God’s willingness to save us encourage and inspire you? How does this help you forgive and serve those who have falsely accused or hurt you?

2 Among siblings, at times, it seems that parents punish everyone to be sure they have not missed anyone! We deserve the consequences of Adam’s choice; yet the Cross provides a benefit we do not deserve. What does it mean “the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow[s] to the many!” (*Rom. 5:15, NIV*)? How would you explain this amazing gift to an unchurched friend or neighbor?

3 When we discuss the politics of our world, one subject that often surfaces is “balance of power.” As you consider the attributes of God, compare and contrast His mercy and His justice (*see Ps. 89:14*). How have you been blessed by His mercy? Why is His justice regarding sin and salvation so important to you, both now and in the future?

4 Paul, in 1 Corinthians 2:2, presents his most important doctrine: “I resolved to know nothing . . . except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (*NIV*). How does this compare with the topics or ideas that provide the focus for your life? In what ways could you learn to join Paul in his passion for proclamation?

5 The Old Testament sacrificial service pointed to a substitute for the unrighteous (*see Isa. 53:5*). Because sin had to be punished, God punished it in Himself through Jesus on the cross. Every human deserves what Jesus experienced. How does your undeserved innocence, granted by Jesus’ death, improve your self-concept? What words or actions will you use to share the wonder of Jesus’ love in a practical way?
The Justice of God

So far this week we’ve seen that God will spare sinners for the sake of another’s righteousness and that Jesus alone had the righteousness to cover the sins of the world. But if that’s true, then why did Jesus have to die? Wasn’t His righteousness alone enough? Why the terrible death at Calvary?

These are good questions, and part of the answer lies in the limits of the Sodom and Gomorrah story, which gives only one aspect of the principles involved in the science of salvation.

Suppose, indeed, that there were ten righteous people in Sodom and Gomorrah, and, as a result, the cities were spared destruction. We would have seen here a great manifestation of God’s mercy, for certain. Out of mercy, He spared these people the punishment that was justly theirs.

Now, in somewhat the same way, we’ve also seen that Christ’s righteousness alone was enough to spare the whole world from the punishment of sin. This, too, represents an act of mercy.

Mercy, however, is only part of the picture. There’s another element that cannot be overlooked regarding the character of God and His dealing with sin.

Look up the following texts. What point are they making about the Lord? How can we reconcile them with our understanding of a merciful God? *Exod. 34:7, Job 8:3, Ps. 89:14, Jer. 23:5, Acts 7:52.*

All these texts touch on a crucial issue regarding the plan of salvation: the justice of God. The Bible says that God is just, and this leads to an important point: Again, suppose there were ten righteous people in Sodom and Gomorrah and the places were spared. That would be mercy, but it certainly wouldn’t be justice, would it? There were some pretty vile, crude, violent people in those cities, were there not? Should they have gotten off free, with no punishment for their sins? Christ’s righteousness is enough to cover every sin of every sinner in the world, no matter how vile, violent, and rude. If all were to go free, with no divine punishment, that would be mercy, but would it be justice?

Put yourself in a situation in which you need to execute judgment. And though you want to be merciful, fairness and responsibility also demand justice. How does such a dilemma reflect the issue before God: how to be both merciful with fallen sinners and yet, at the same time, be just with them, as well?
Witnessing

*RANSOMED!*

What a strongly evocative word, igniting a full range of emotions and passion in the hearts of human beings. To be ransomed, one must first be captured. A mental picture immediately forms: a captive, hidden from loved ones, lost to those who love and care deeply about him or her. The victim experiences confinement; movements may be restricted. Despair sets in, numbing in its intensity. The captive feels violated, grief-stricken, frightened, and so very much alone. Despondency and a sense of hopelessness engulf the captive, who is held long enough. The future seems to be a black void; a sense of gloom permeates the very soul.

And then, the longed-for happens—the captive is ransomed! Freedom has been arranged. Liberation takes place. Release occurs. Rescue happens!

Two thousand years ago, humanity was ransomed; the death sentence was lifted, and the sweet gift of eternal life took its place. Who paid the ransom? Jesus Christ paid the ransom! His sacrifice on the cross of Calvary was full punishment for our sins.

Who was to be ransomed? You. The man up the street. The woman in the next town. The convict in prison. All have been offered eternal life. Life everlasting is available to everyone living—good or bad. It does not get better than that!

So, how is it that everyone is not absolutely thrilled beyond measure at this good news? Is it possible those of us who are blessed with the full knowledge of this inestimable gift are not sharing the good news adequately with those who know nothing about it? Should we question some of our methods? Or, perhaps it is our lack of commitment? Do we think we will have plenty of time to witness when our lives calm down a bit, the children are grown, or we move into retirement? Are we squandering our resources (time, money, energy) in other ways that really do not matter in the long run? Or is it possible we simply do not realize the magnitude of the gift we have been given?

Whatever the rationale we use, we cannot make excuses any longer for our inactivity. Take a step in a new direction toward witnessing today. Invite your co-worker to the church picnic as an ice-breaker. Keep a handful of little witnessing pamphlets on hand at all times—share one with your seatmate on the plane, give one to the baby-sitter, along with payment, or tape a card with an inspiring message on it to the garbage bags when you put them on the curb. We need to get out there and share the good news. Target not only the easy ones to witness to but especially those who are the most difficult to reach with the message that heaven can be theirs, that the ransom has been paid, and sin has been vanquished—for Jesus Christ fulfilled all the requirements of the plan of salvation.
One Died for All

Here’s where we get to the heart, the mystery, the majesty, the shame, the justice, and the glory of the Cross.

God wanted to forgive sinful humanity, but to do it in a just manner, one that would not condone sin or leave it unpunished. But how could He do that? Only one way: He poured out against Him—in the Person of Jesus—His own righteous wrath against sin. In other words, because sin needed to be punished, He punished it in Himself through Jesus at the cross. That’s what the Cross is all about: God taking upon Himself the punishment for our sins.

A just God will not let sin go unpunished, but the good news is that God punished all sin in the Person of Jesus, who died there in our stead. Every human being deserved what Jesus faced at the cross; but now, because of the Cross, no human being should, ideally, ever have to face this punishment.

“One died for all, and therefore all died” (2 Cor. 5:14, NIV). What Paul’s saying is that Christ died as our representative; He died the death that we deserve. In that sense (and that sense only), Paul could say that we all died. What he means is that Christ’s death stands as our death, the death we deserve for our sins but don’t have to face because Jesus, as our representative, died it for us.

In the end, God would either inflict punishment on others for their sins, which would have resulted in their eternal death, or He would take that punishment upon Himself and save others from it. The Cross shows that which He chose to do: face His own judgment against sin.


Read each of these texts: Isaiah 53:5, Romans 5:8, Galatians 3:13, Ephesians 5:2, 1 Thessalonians 5:10. In what ways do you see revealed in these texts the substitutionary aspect of what Christ has done for us?

It’s so important that we understand what the Cross is about. God took upon Himself the punishment of sin that we deserve. Whatever imagery or symbolism or metaphor is used to talk about the Cross, we must never get away from this fundamental truth, that of substitution. Any theology that downplays or marginalizes the substitutionary aspect of Calvary downplays and marginalizes the heart of the plan of salvation.
Life-Application Approach

**Icebreaker:** Imagine you are in traffic school. Everyone has to tell how they got their ticket. Tell us about a ticket you received.

**Verses for Group Focus:** Romans 5:15-19.

**Thought Questions:**
1. Based on Romans 5:15-19, create a chart contrasting Adam’s act and its results with Jesus’ act and its result.

2. What was Jesus’ “one act of righteousness”? (vs. 18, NIV; see also Rom. 3:25, 26).

**Application Questions:**
1. We usually deserve the traffic tickets we receive; yet, no one deserves to die in an accident or suffer from incurable cancer. Likewise, it is not fair that any of us should suffer because of Adam’s sin. What does Romans 5:15-19 tell us about how God dealt with such injustices?

2. Could someone pay your traffic fine for you? What would it be like if someone did? What if he or she paid the increased cost of your insurance also? How would you feel about someone who did this? How would you respond to that person?

3. Jesus took our sin that we might have His righteousness. He became our Substitute. In what ways does a Christian act as a substitute for those around him or her?
Further Study: “Our sins were laid on Christ, punished in Christ, put away by Christ, in order that his righteousness might be imputed to us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Although sin was charged to his account on our behalf, yet he remained perfectly sinless.”—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, May 30, 1895.

“Hating sin with a perfect hatred, He yet gathered to His soul the sins of the whole world. Guiltless, He bore the punishment of the guilty. Innocent, yet offering Himself as a substitute for the transgressor. The guilt of every sin pressed its weight upon the divine soul of the world’s Redeemer. The evil thoughts, the evil words, the evil deeds of every son and daughter of Adam, called for retribution upon Himself; for He had become man’s substitute. Though the guilt of sin was not His, His spirit was torn and bruised by the transgressions of men, and He who knew no sin became sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 322.

Discussion Questions:

1. Think about this whole idea of substitution. What aspects of this concept do you find disturbing? How fair is it that someone else should suffer the penalty for your wrongdoing? At the same time, considering the perfect holiness of God in contrast to the sinfulness of humanity, why is substitution the only way the Lord could have forgiven human beings their sins while, at the same time, maintaining His justice?

2. Why is the deity of Christ so important in order to understand the Cross? After all, even if Jesus were only a man, why would the death of a single man, even one who was sinless, not be adequate to atone for the sins of the world?

3. Go back and review the Old Testament–sacrificial system. Where do you see the concept of substitution prefigured in those sacrifices?
The Cross and Justification

SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: Rom. 3:20, 28; 4:13; 5:14-18; 6:23; 8:33, 34; 9:31, 32; 2 Cor. 9:15; Gal. 2:16; 3:8-11; Eph. 2:7-9.

Memory Text: “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Romans 3:28).

Paul wrote that Jesus “was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification” (Rom. 4:25). Few topics are more controversial among Christians than that of “justification.” From the time of Paul, who struggled with this issue in the early church, up through Martin Luther, whose battle with the papacy first arose over the question of justification, up through even today among Seventh-day Adventists (not to mention other Christians), the question of justification still foments discussion and debate.

It’s a crucial, powerful topic, one that we need to approach in humility, not just before the Lord but before one another. It’s a topic that we need to approach on our knees, our hearts and minds open to the Spirit, who alone can teach us from the Word.

This week we explore this rich and fruitful teaching, which stems directly from, and only because of, the Cross.

The Week at a Glance: Why must salvation be a gift from God to us? What is the meaning of to justify? Why weren’t Abraham’s works good enough to justify him? Why can the law not save us? What does it mean that Christ’s righteousness is imputed to us?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 12.
The Gift

Last week we saw that, at the cross, God bore in Himself the punishment for sin. That is, to be true to Himself and to the grand principles that He Himself had established, sin had to be punished. This is God’s justice. But in order to be merciful (for God is also merciful), He took that punishment on Himself, in the Person of His Son, thus satisfying the claims of justice while, at the same time, rendering mercy and forgiveness to those who deserve neither (Rom. 3:26). This amazing provision forms the basis of the Cross, the foundation upon which we are forgiven our sins, cleansed from our sins, and ultimately given a new body in a new world.

With this background in mind, can you see why salvation has to be free? Think about it: If salvation is based on anything that we can do, then God’s Son taking on human flesh, living in that flesh a life of perfect obedience to the Father, and then going to the cross, where He faced divine wrath against sin, where all the sins of the world fell on Him, where He became sin for us, where He was judged and condemned in our place, where He died as a substitute for all the world—all this still wasn’t good enough? Was it still lacking something that we, as sinners, can add in order to finish what Christ’s life, death, and resurrection didn’t complete? Please! The mere idea of earning our salvation automatically weakens in our minds just what God accomplished for us. What could anyone—that is, any sinner—do to add to what was done for him or her at the Cross?

Look up these few texts. Write out what they’re saying about salvation: Rom. 5:14-18, 6:23, 2 Cor. 9:15, Eph. 2:7-9.

“Every soul may say: ‘By His perfect obedience He has satisfied the claims of the law, and my only hope is found in looking to Him as my substitute and surety, who obeyed the law perfectly for me. By faith in His merits I am free from the condemnation of the law. He clothes me with His righteousness, which answers all the demands of the law. I am complete in Him who brings in everlasting righteousness. He presents me to God in the spotless garment of which no thread was woven by any human agent. All is of Christ, and all the glory, honor, and majesty are to be given to the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.’ ”—Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, book 1, p. 396.

Rephrase in your own words what Ellen White wrote.
Key Text: Romans 5:16-18.

Teachers Aims:

1. To emphasize that Jesus delivers us and heals us from sin by His imparted and imputed righteousness.
2. To describe justification as our opportunity to be acquitted of the penalty of sin through the gift of Jesus’ blood.
3. To invite class members to accept and to rejoice in the wonderful provisions of the gospel.

Lesson Outline:

I. Delivered From Our Offenses (Rom. 8:33, 34).
   A. God’s justice demanded that sin be punished; thus, He took the punishment on Himself through His Son.
   B. Salvation must be free; the idea of earning salvation weakens what God did for us.
   C. God’s righteousness answers all the demands of the law; I am complete in Him.

II. Justification—a Legal Pronouncement (Rom. 4:1-8).
   A. To be justified, or acquitted from our sins, means that Jesus has ruled in our favor and has overturned the verdict of condemnation.
   B. Only two options exist for humanity in the cosmic conflict between Christ and Satan, leaving no middle ground.
   C. Jesus’ perfect life is credited to us as though it were our own.

III. The Wonderful Provision (2 Cor. 9:15).
   A. The sinner is incapable of rendering the righteousness the law demands.
   B. Not only does Jesus forgive our past sins, but He imparts the power of His righteousness to us to overcome temptation.
   C. In the plan of salvation, the center of our attention is removed from human weakness and is placed on Jesus, the only Solution to sin.

Summary: Second Corinthians 9:15, NIV, describes Jesus’ grace as an “incredible gift!” Jesus, God’s Son, who knew no sin, took sin and its penalty on Himself. This amazing provision is the basis of the Cross. It allows us to be declared acquitted, or justified, when we deserve condemnation.

COMMENTARY

The Cross and Justification.

Introduction. “The gulf that was made by sin has been spanned by the cross of Calvary. A full, complete ransom has been paid by Jesus, by virtue of which the sinner is pardoned, and the justice of
Justified

“By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities” (Isa. 53:11).

Read the above text. How does the righteous Servant justify many? How does that answer fit in with what we have studied so far?

Two words translated “justify” are sadaq (Hebrew) and dikaioo (Greek), and they have basically the same meaning. They are legal terms. Both are to be understood in the context of a pronouncement that a judge renders in a court case. If the judge rules in favor of the accused, the accused is “justified”; if the judge rules against the accused, the accused is condemned. “Justification” is, therefore, a legal declaration. A person is justified when he or she is declared acquitted by the judge.

Look up the following texts; notice the contrast expressed in them between being justified and being condemned. How does this contrast help us understand what justification means? Deut. 25:1; Prov. 17:15; Matt. 12:37; Rom. 5:16; 8:33, 34. (Read also John 3:17: What does the contrast between condemnation and being saved teach us about the meaning of justification?)

In all these examples, there are only two options. There’s no gray area, no middle ground, no compromise. People are either declared justified; that is, acquitted, or they are condemned. By its nature, the concept of justification (as well as condemnation) doesn’t allow for degrees. You can’t be partially justified or partially condemned. A decision can be changed, a person’s status can be reversed, but in the end a person is either justified or condemned.

Keeping in mind today’s study, what do these words mean to you: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom. 8:1)? How would you explain this to a non-Christian?
the law is maintained.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 363.

I. The Gift.

The vastness of our need as sinners and the impossibility of meeting that need cry out for a divine solution. God’s answer to humanity’s moral plight is the Cross, the emblem of the whole plan of atonement. It is folly and confusion to try to supplement God’s complete and perfect plan with “meritorious” deeds of our own, as though they could liquidate any portion of our moral debt as transgressors. We have no righteousness of our own by which to generate acceptable works, much less to compensate or atone for our evil natures and deeds (see *Isa. 64:6*).

To attempt, however indirectly, to accrue righteousness through creature merit is to profane and depreciate the atoning sacrifice of Christ; it is to underestimate the high cost of our salvation and the humanly incurable nature of sin. It also reveals ignorance of the infinite holiness of God and His moral standard for all beings (*read Titus* 3:5-7).

II. Justified.

Jesus did not often use the word *justification* in the theologically analytic way He taught His future apostle Paul to use the term. Even so, one of the most penetrating and comprehensive references to gospel justification comes in the setting of Christ’s parable about the two worshipers (*Luke* 18:9-14). Jesus declared that the repentant publican, who acknowledged himself a sinner and cried out to God for mercy, went down to his house justified rather than the conceited Pharisee, who regarded himself as a paragon of virtue and piety (see Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 157–161).

“The moment true faith in the merits of the costly atoning sacrifice is exercised, claiming Christ as a personal Saviour, that moment the sinner is justified before God, because he is pardoned.”—Ellen G. White, *Our High Calling*, p. 52.

III. The Reckoning of Righteousness.

The essential condition for being righteous is to believe God on His own terms and accept the gift of salvation for just what it is—a divine bestowal of mercy, infinitely valuable, indispensably needed, and readily available to all who believe. Paul speaks of this as “the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference” (*Rom. 3:22*).

It is just this open and nondiscriminatory access to righteousness that offends the pride of all who want to be credited with some of the merit for their own redemption (*see Rom. 9:30-33*). We are justified solely through the merits of Christ’s righteousness. Yet, those
The Reckoning of Righteousness

So far, in looking at the Cross, we’ve see that God Himself, in the person of Jesus, bore the penalty for our sins. Jesus paid the penalty; we, therefore, don’t have to. We are spared what’s due us, because Jesus took what’s due us upon Himself.

Yet, there’s more to our salvation. The good news is that we can stand justified before God—not on the basis of our good works (for however good they are, they aren’t good enough) but because of the righteousness of Jesus. Jesus alone lived a sinless life, and His perfect life is credited to us as if it were our own. In other words, not only did Jesus take our sins, our filthy rags, upon Himself, but He offers us the opportunity to be dressed in His perfect robe of righteousness (Matt. 22:1-14).

Read prayerfully Romans 4:1-8 and then answer the following questions:

● What is Paul’s reasoning in the first five verses? Why, if justification is by works, can it not be by grace? Why can it not be both?

● How was Abraham justified? What does it mean that “it was counted unto him for righteousness”?

● Read Paul’s use of Psalms in verses 6-8. What elements are found there when God “imputeth righteousness without works”? How are sins forgiven and covered?

The great news of these verses is that if the works of someone as holy and righteous and faithful as Abraham aren’t good enough to save, what about the rest of us? And that’s Paul’s point: Even Abraham, esteemed among the Jews as a great man of God, needed a righteousness to be “imputed” to him, a righteousness credited to him, in order for him to be justified before God.

All through the Bible Abraham is exalted in Scripture as a faithful man of God (see, for instance, Gen. 18:19, 26:5). And yet he didn’t have the works to stand before God alone? What should that tell you about yourself and your only hope of being accepted by God?
Inductive Bible Study


1. We work to earn wages. We never would expect our bosses to give us a paycheck when we had not worked the hours necessary to receive it. On the cross, Jesus died to deliver us from sin. He imputed His righteousness to us when we did not deserve it. We could not even work hard enough to earn it. How would you explain God’s mercy to a neighbor who has heard only about God’s justice (as in how He punishes sin)?

2. Think back to the best birthday gift you ever received. How would you describe your feelings when you received it? How did you express your gratitude? Paul calls God’s grace an “indescribable gift” (2 Cor. 9:15, NIV). Write a Thank-You note to God telling Him how you feel about this most precious of all gifts.

3. Abraham is considered the father of the faithful (see Heb. 11:11). When we review his story, we can see that even he struggled with sin. He did not have the works to stand before God alone. If we cannot ever live up to the demands of the law, why did God give it? How does seeing our sinfulness through the “mirror of the law” help us recognize our need of Jesus? How can we join Paul in saying, “‘Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him’ ” (Rom. 4:8)?

4. We inherited our sinfulness from our father, Adam, much the same way our children inherit their traits from us. We inherited and deserve death because of our trespasses. How does Jesus’ grace “overflow” (Rom. 5:15, NIV) to you? In what ways has it changed your inherited traits? How would you describe this blessing to someone who is struggling with personality flaws?

5. If you were asked to define the word wonderful, what words would you use? When we consider salvation as “God’s wonderful provision,” how does it expand the words necessary to describe wonderful? Why is it necessary to include the concept of justification by faith as part of the definition? What adjectives would you include as you share what God has done to save you from sin? For example, John Stott, in The Cross of Christ, has called it the “sweet exchange.”—(Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1986), p. 200.

who do accept God’s righteousness as a gift live in harmony with its standards, not through self-generated effort but through the
Christ Our Righteousness

Abraham, no matter how pious and faithful, still wasn’t pious and faithful enough to be justified before God. If he were to be saved, it would have to be because of something other than his own works or his own righteousness. And here again is where Jesus comes in. Not only did He die as our Substitute, paying the penalty for our sins, but the Lord offers to all who will claim it the perfect righteousness of Jesus in place of each person’s sinful record. This is the wonderful provision of the plan of salvation: Not only are our sins forgiven, but the righteousness of Jesus is credited to us as if it were our own!

**Read** Romans 3:25,26. Whose righteousness allows for the remission of sins, and by whose righteousness are we justified?

In Romans 3:21-26, Paul makes it clear that the righteousness of Christ is the righteousness of God Himself, and this is the righteousness that allows sinners to be justified before God. No human being’s attempt to keep the law can save him or her, for the righteousness that obedience produces is never the righteousness of God Himself.

**Read** Romans 10:1-3 and Galatians 2:21. In what way are both texts saying the same thing? Why can righteousness never come about by our obedience to the law?

“The law demands righteousness, and this the sinner owes to the law; but he is incapable of rendering it. The only way in which he can attain to righteousness is through faith. By faith he can bring to God the merits of Christ, and the Lord places the obedience of His Son to the sinner’s account. Christ’s righteousness is accepted in place of man’s failure, and God receives, pardons, justifies, the repentant, believing soul, treats him as though he were righteous, and loves him as He loves His Son. This is how faith is accounted righteousness.” —Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 367.

Look at your own self, and your own attempts, however sincere, at obedience and righteousness. Can’t you see how futile salvation by the law is? In what ways does your own experience show to you the great truth of Christ’s merits, instead of your own, as the basis of salvation?
power of the new birth, which invests believers with grace to live “soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:12).

IV. Christ Our Righteousness.
Righteousness does not come to us as an abstract quality. It is the fruit of accepting Christ as our Substitute and Surety and the accompaniment of having Christ in our lives. Christ and His right-

Witnessing

What promises can be found in Romans 5:1! Let your heart absorb the message as you read the words: “Now that we have been put right with God through Jesus Christ, don’t we have something that others don’t have? Of course, we do! We are justified by faith in God and are at peace with Him because we know how much He loves us” (The Clear Word). Our text tells us four things: (1) Christ’s sacrifice on the cross has bridged our full reconciliation with our heavenly Father; (2) God has now acquitted us from our sins; (3) we are now at peace with our heavenly Father; and, last, (4) we are assured of His great love for us.

What if you were to tell as many new people you meet as possible you have the inside scoop on how to achieve total peace in their lives? Are you prepared for their reactions? Some will immediately tune you out. Others won’t hesitate to express their skepticism. A few might ask you to explain; those few are in for a true blessing!

You can begin by sharing the plan of salvation, by outlining Christ’s willing sacrifice on the cross. Let them know Christ substituted His life for theirs—that His death sets them free from sin and guarantees everlasting life to all humanity. Explain that because Christ lived a perfect life, we benefit and, in fact, are accepted by God as if we also have lived a perfect life. Caution them to be sure to accept this gift of eternal life as it is offered. Make sure they clearly understand this gift comes with boundless love from the Father. Be sure to emphasize this is a gift; it can’t be bought, bargained for, or earned. No actions or good works will guarantee everlasting life—God asks only for our total and complete surrender and dependence on Him. Help those to whom you witness to understand that by fully committing their hearts to God, they will naturally want to follow His law.

Assure them that though they may stumble and fall as they journey on the road to heaven, they have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ. Assure them that if they seek forgiveness and strength from Him, no matter what obstacles they encounter, heaven will be theirs.

As you help them with their journey, they’ll be helping you with yours. Be prepared to visit with them again—in heaven!
Justification by Faith

So far, what we have seen is that we are all sinners, incapable of ever achieving the righteousness needed to be justified. Jesus, however, has that righteousness, and through the wonderful provision of the gospel, that righteousness is available for all those who make it their own—by faith.

Read Romans 3:20, 28; 4:13; 9:31,32; Galatians 2:16; 3:8-11. Notice the contrast Paul places there between the law and faith. What point is he making? Why can the law never save us? Why must salvation be by faith?

These texts are so often misread as teaching that Christians are no longer obligated to keep the law (see next week’s lesson); yet, that is not Paul’s point. The immediate issue here isn’t obedience (at least our obedience); it’s salvation, something that the law can never produce in sinful human beings. Indeed, it’s precisely because humans have violated the law that they face death, and it was to spare us from this death that Jesus came, obeyed the law perfectly, and offers us His record in place of our own. In the context of fallen humanity, the law isn’t the solution—Jesus is.

Look at the above verses again. What evidence do we have there that salvation by faith was taught in the Old Testament, as well as in the New?

From Adam onward, all human beings (with the exception of Jesus) have been under the condemnation of the law, because all have violated the law. Hence, salvation always had to be by faith, because no one, even in the Old Testament times, could find salvation in the law; on the contrary, the law is the very thing that condemns sinners. Seeking salvation in the law is like trying to douse a fire with gasoline.

However, by centering salvation on Jesus and what He has done for us, God has shifted the center of attention off ourselves, who are the problem to begin with, and places it upon Jesus, the only solution. By realizing our total inability to do anything to save ourselves, we’re forced to rely upon something outside of us, something greater, holier, and more powerful than we are, which is, of course, “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jer. 23:6).
eousness are inseparable (see Jer. 23:6, 1 Cor. 1:30, 2 Cor. 5:21).

“Then come, and seek, and find. The reservoir of power is open, is full and free. Come with humble hearts, not thinking that you must do some good work to merit the favor of God, or that you must make yourself better before you can come to Christ. You are powerless to do good, and cannot better your condition. Apart from Christ we have no merit, no righteousness.”—Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, book 1, pp. 333, 334.

V. Justification by Faith.

“It is important that we understand clearly the nature of faith. There are many who believe that Christ is the Saviour of the world, that the gospel is true and reveals the plan of salvation, yet they do not possess saving faith. They are intellectually convinced of the truth, but this is not enough; in order to be justified, the sinner must have that faith that appropriates the merits of Christ to his own soul.”—Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, book 3, p. 191. James speaks forthrightly of this appropriative, living faith in James 2:19-26. His position does not contradict that of Paul but simply clarifies it and guards against turning faith into a fantasy.

Life-Application Approach

*Icebreaker:* What is your favorite story of forgiveness?

*Verses for Group Focus:* Romans 8:1-5.

*Thought Questions:*

1. What did God accomplish by sending Jesus as a sin offering?

2. What do Romans 8:1 and 3 tell us about condemnation?

3. In verse 3, Paul states that the law is unable to produce righteousness in us because our flesh is weak. Does this mean he is against the law? Explain your answer.

*Application Questions:*

1. Does the action in this passage occur within us or outside of us? Does it happen in the past or in the present? Explain your answer.

2. What has God accomplished in you that the law was powerless to do?

3. People are always condemning us, sometimes for things we are guilty of. How can we meet condemnation? Accept it? Reject it? Or some other way?

“Moreover, Christ became sin for us, in order that ‘in him we might become the righteousness of God.’ In other words, our sins were imputed to the sinless Christ, in order that we sinners, by being united to him, might receive as a free gift a standing of righteousness before God. Christian disciples down the centuries have meditated on this exchange between the sinless Christ and sinners, and have marvelled at it. The first example is probably in the second-century *Epistle to Diognetus*, chapter 9: ‘O sweet exchange! O unsearchable operation! O benefits surpassing all expectation! that the wickedness of many should be hid in a single Righteous One, and that the righteousness of One should justify many transgressors.’ Then here is Luther writing to a monk in distress about his sins: ‘Learn to know Christ and him crucified. Learn to sing to him and say “Lord Jesus, you are my righteousness, I am your sin. You took on you what was mine; yet you set on me what was yours. You became what you were not, that I might become what I was not.”’ —John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, p. 200.

Discussion Questions:

1. Read the above section. What is it saying? How does this help us understand the concept of justification by faith? How do you understand the “sweet exchange”? What is that, and why is it “sweet”?

2. Imagine being in a school in which there are only two grades, pass and fail, and the only way to get the passing grade is to have a perfect score on every test, every quiz, every time. Even one question wrong on any text, and you get the same failing grade as someone who got every question wrong on every test. It makes no difference: If you get all the questions wrong or only one wrong, you still fail. How, in a sense, does this analogy help us understand why, as sinners, we need the righteousness of Jesus (who was the only Person ever to get every question right on every test) credited to us in order for us to be just before God?
The Cross and Sanctification

SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: Rom. 6:1-16, 1 Cor. 6:11, Gal. 5:16-25, Col. 3:1-4.

Memory Text: “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification” (1 Thessalonians 4:3).

A few years ago, a young man read these famous words by Ellen White, “Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His.”—The Desire of Ages, p. 25. Imagine if gratitude and happiness for the wonderful news of this glorious and costly provision prompted one man to say, “Because I am accepted through His righteousness alone, now I can go out and do whatever I want. Wow! The good news is better than I thought!”

Instead, this is what the young man really said: “Wow! Because of what Jesus did for me, because I am accepted through His righteousness alone, I so hate the sin that is in me. O, Lord, I love You so much; please change me, purify me, make me more like You!”

This week we’ll take a look at another aspect of the Cross: what it does to the life of the one who accepts it as his or her own.

The Week at a Glance: What is cheap grace? What does sanctification mean in the Bible? In what ways is sanctification complete at conversion? In what ways is it an ongoing process? How are we sanctified? What role does the law play in the Christian life?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 19.
Cheap Grace and the Cross

Last week we studied justification by faith, the good news that the perfect life of Jesus, His perfect righteousness, is credited to us as though it were our own, as though we ourselves have lived His sinless life even though we haven’t even come close. We saw, too, that this declaration of righteousness in our behalf is by faith, not by works. We believe—and Christ’s righteousness becomes our own in the sight of God. Aware of our own utter need, we come to the foot of the Cross and claim something that’s not ours; and we get it, not because we’re worthy but because God is a God of grace and, through Christ’s death, gives us what we never could earn ourselves, no matter how faithfully and diligently we sought to obey the law, or even the spirit of the law.

Yet, the good news of salvation doesn’t end with the declaration of righteousness. God doesn’t just declare a sinner righteous and then is done with that person. On the contrary, this declaration of righteousness is only the beginning. Something else happens to a person who has been justified. It’s what’s known as sanctification, and it’s an inseparable part of the gospel.

Read the following texts and then summarize the essence of what they are saying: Romans 6:1-16, 1 Corinthians 6:11, Galatians 5:16-25.

There’s no question that those who are justified by faith will have a new life in Christ, a life of obedience and sanctification. Justification by faith, without sanctification (which is by faith, as well), is a false justification, a false gospel. It’s cheap grace, which is not God justifying the sinner but the sinner justifying sin. It’s a gospel that, in the end, saves no one.

Imagine two people. The first person believes that she has to strive with all her God-given might to achieve the righteousness she needs to be saved, because she’s not quite sure she has that salvation to begin with. Thus, she strives for a life of obedience. The second works from the premise that she is already saved in Christ, that His righteousness covers her, and now out of love and gratitude she strives with all her God-given might for a life of obedience. Who’s more likely to succeed in the Christian life, and why?
**Key Text:** Colossians 3:1-4.

**Teachers Aims:**
1. To declare that the good news of salvation does not end with justification.
2. To present sanctification’s two facets.
3. To underscore the relationship between the law and the gospel.

**Lesson Outline:**

I. The Cross Changes Our Life Journey *(Gal. 5:16-25).*
   A. Justification is the beginning of a new life of sanctification and obedience.
   B. Cheap grace is the sinner’s way of justifying sin.
   C. Sanctification is by faith; it is God-given power to live a life of obedience.

II. Sanctified—Set Apart and Growing *(Rom. 6:1-16).*
   A. The idea of sanctification contains two facets:
      1. The relational sense concerns our being set apart and belonging to God for a holy use.
      2. The moral sense embodies the idea of growing in grace.
   B. Sanctification is the process of a lifetime.

III. The Law and the Gospel *(2 Cor. 5:17).*
   A. The Cross inspires us to follow the Lord in faith and obedience.
   B. The law illuminates our minds with a knowledge of how our lives are to reveal love for God.
   C. All our good works are dependent on God’s power—a power outside ourselves.

**Summary:** God’s gift of righteousness does not end with justification. Salvation includes a total life transformation, a turning toward heaven. Sanctification includes two aspects: being set apart by God for His holy purposes and growing in grace. Both aspects preclude cheap grace.

**COMMENTARY**

**The Cross and Sanctification.**

**Introduction.** Christ’s death on Calvary fully satisfies the claims of divine justice and mercy and sets both those qualities on a majestic footing that ensures the moral health and stability of the universe without tension or stagnancy.

I. Cheap Grace and the Cross.
   God’s gift of salvation, though established at infinite cost to Himself, is free to us. This glorious truth is susceptible to abuse by a nominal, easy-going acceptance with little regard to the cost of
Set Apart

“By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb. 10:10).

In the Hebrew language, the word often translated “sanctify” (kadosh, or hakodesh) appears in various forms more than eight hundred times in the Old Testament. In the Greek, hagaizo or hagios, often translated as “to sanctify” and “holy” and “saint” appears about two hundred-forty times in the New Testament. In both cases, the words are translated not only as “sanctify” but also as “holiness,” “to make holy,” or “holy.” Thus, through the original meanings alone, we are given a powerful indicator that sanctification is tied to the idea of holiness.

But what is holiness? In Hebrew, the basic meaning is “to set apart for holy use,” or even “to be set apart from sin unto God.” Thus, those who are sanctified belong to God and to His service.

With this understanding of the word in mind, read Leviticus 19:2; 20:7, 26. How do these texts help us understand the meaning of holiness?

It’s interesting that in the Bible, not just people are sanctified, or made holy. The place where God manifests His presence is on “holy ground” (Exod. 3:5); the Sabbath is holy because it was a day set apart by God (Exod. 20:8-11); the sanctuary is called the “holy place” because it, too, was set apart by God for His use (Exod. 26:33).

It’s important to note, however, that none of these things has holiness, or is sanctified, by anything internal to them. The seventh day, were it not deemed holy by the Lord, would be just any other day. Holiness, or sanctification, is something bestowed by a holy God; it’s something that God Himself does, either to a person or to a thing. In the case of ancient Israel, for instance, He set them apart, called them away from slavery and even from the influence of the pagan nations around them in order that they could be a people that He could use in His service, that of teaching the world about the true God (Exod. 19:6).

In what sense is the church today sanctified (see 1 Cor. 1:2)? Also, look at your own experience with the Lord. In what ways have you been set apart for holy use by God? How do you understand this idea in practical, everyday terms and experiences?
salvation to God or the cost of discipleship to the believer. The riches of Christ’s grace are unsearchable (see Eph. 3:8). By studying the source of grace (Christ’s atoning sacrifice), the purpose of grace (our redemption and sanctification), and the fruits of grace (godly living in this present world and capacity to bear fruit to God’s glory), we will be spared from turning the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ into frivolousness and lasciviousness. Grace is not something to waste but to invest “as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Pet. 4:10). Grace, most commonly defined as unmerited favor, has multiple qualities that merit study and exercise in every believer’s life. Grace is characterized by the following descriptors: great (Acts 4:33); regnant (Rom. 5:21); rich (Eph. 1:7, 2:7); exceeding (2 Cor. 9:14); all-sufficient (2 Cor. 12:9); instructive and empowering (Titus 2:9-12); all-abundant (Rom. 5:5, 17, 20); true (1 Pet. 5:12); glorious (Eph. 1:6). Grace is the dual power by which our sins may be pardoned and we may be transformed to overcome sin through earnest cooperation with God.

II. Set Apart.

By His sacrifice on the cross Jesus staked a legitimate claim on the whole human race. God has set us apart from the humanly unassailable authority of Satan and has posted notice through the gospel that all who will may be free in Christ. He has “called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Tim. 1:9). “Everyone who will humble himself as a little child, who will receive and obey the word of God with a child’s simplicity, will be among the elect of God.”—Ellen G. White, Our High Calling, p. 77. He wishes to indelibly record our emancipation by writing every truth of the gospel on our hearts with the same finger that cast out demons in Judea and wrote the law at Sinai.

III. The Sanctified State.

Paul states the comprehensiveness of God’s plan for our sanctification in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, and in the next verse he points out that God will provide the power for His sanctifying will to be fulfilled in us.

“True sanctification is an entire conformity to the will of God. Rebellious thoughts and feelings are overcome, and the voice of Jesus awakens a new life, which pervades the entire being. Those who are truly sanctified will not set up their own opinion as a standard of right and wrong. They are not bigoted or self-righteous; but they are jealous of self, ever fearing, lest a promise being left them, they should come short of complying with the conditions upon which the promises are based.”—Ellen G. White, My Life Today, p. 248; see also Heb. 4:1, 10, 11.
The Sanctified State

Read 1 Corinthians 1:2. Notice that Paul calls the church “sanctified in Christ Jesus.” The Greek word for “sanctified” appears in a tense that means a completed action in the past that has continuing results in the present. Yet, if you read about the Corinthian church, you discover that it struggled with many serious ethical and theological problems (see 1 Corinthians 5, 6). How, then, are we to understand that this church has been “sanctified”? How does the definition of sanctification we learned yesterday help answer this question?

In the Bible, there is no such thing as partial sanctification. We belong to Christ entirely from the moment we are born again, and we remain that way as long as we stay connected to Him by faith. Sanctification always signals a total experience of God’s ownership. This ownership is complete at conversion and should continue this way throughout the Christian life.

How, then, do we understand the idea that “sanctification is the work of a lifetime”?—Ellen G. White, The Acts of the Apostles, p. 560.

There are different facets to the idea of sanctification. In the relational sense, that of our being set apart by God, the work is complete. We belong to God. We have been sanctified by Him. Because of what Christ has done on the cross, the Lord has the right to claim us as His own.

But in a moral sense, in the sense of growing in grace, we are still in the process of being sanctified. In these two verses—“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17) and “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly” (1 Thess. 5:23)—the verb for “sanctify” appears in the present tense, as in a continuous process by which we partake of Christ’s holiness in a distinct moral and practical sense. Through faith, and in total dependence upon God, we are changed by the power of God working in us, to cleanse us, to purge us of sin, so that the character of Christ is formed within us.

In the context of today’s study, read Galatians 4:19. What is that text saying to you?
True sanctification is accomplished by the Spirit’s making the Word of God effective in our lives (see John 17:17; Eph. 5:26; 2 Thess. 2:13, 14).

IV. Your Life Is Hid With Christ in God.
For Paul, the gospel was a vivid, operative reality, not an academic theory. As one whose heart dwells in the realm of heaven, he exhorts us to turn our affection away from the distractions and

**Inductive Bible Study**


1. God’s grace is not a license to abandon His desire for us to reflect His character. Paul in Romans 6:4 presents a death to the old, rebellious way of life and a resurrection to a life hid in Christ. How is your life in Jesus different from the one you lived before you met Him? How would you describe your joy at “no longer be[ing] slaves to sin” (Rom. 6:6, NIV)?

2. Cheap usually means “worthless” or “easily broken.” How do you react to the concept of “cheap grace”? How would you explain to a friend or neighbor that God’s grace came at the cost of a priceless gift, the death of His Son on the cross? Why is this grace so valuable to you?

3. Sanctification includes two profound concepts. One is to belong to God for His holy purposes. The other is to grow in His grace. Ask one of your Sabbath School classmates to share how he or she sees the fruit of the Spirit (see Gal. 5:22) reflected in your life. Why does Paul say that “against such things there is no law” (vs. 23, NIV)?

4. When a sprinter runs a race, he or she focuses on the finish line. Why is the focus of our spiritual energies so important? Paul invites us to set our “minds on things above” (Col. 3:2, NIV). Why are we so inclined to direct our thoughts to earthly challenges and failures? In your class, share the ways God has helped you to focus heavenward.

5. Jesus pointed sinners to a new life with a new direction (see John 8:11). He invites us to accept the possibility of victory in our lives by faith in His power to bring it to pass. Why is it so easy for us to accept our acquittal, or justification, and then, in our own strength, work so hard on a new life of sanctification? Why must sanctification be by faith, as well? (See Acts 26:18.)
“Your Life Is Hid With God in Christ”

_**Read**_ Colossians 3:1-4 and summarize in your own words what is being said about the Christian life.

These are such beautiful verses, and they so clearly capture the relational aspect of our new life in Christ. We are risen with Jesus, because we first died with Him. That is, at the moment of conversion, we died to our old self and now live a new life in Jesus, a life in which we, by faith, through the power of the Holy Spirit, manifest, in our own flesh, our own heart, our own words and deeds, the character of Christ, “who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30).

**Where** do you see in these verses the hope of the Second Coming? How is that hope tied in with the basic theme of these verses? Why would it be mentioned there in this specific context?

Last week we looked at the concept of *imputed righteousness*, that is, a righteousness that is credited to us. But these texts are talking more about the experience of *imparted righteousness*; when the righteousness of Jesus is revealed in us. We’re not talking here about a slavish obedience to rules or laws but the experience of having died to the old man in order that God can impart to us His own character. It’s crucial to remember that we are fallen beings, and our fall included more than condemnation by God because of sin. Our fall included the degeneration of the race—morally, physically, and spiritually. Christ died and rose and is ministering in heaven in order to restore us to what we were before the Fall. Sanctification, which begins the moral restoration of the image of God in humans, is part of the process.

_**Read again Colossians 3:1-4.**What does it mean that we should seek those things that are “above”? In what practical ways can we do this? How do what we read, watch, dwell upon, and talk about influence how well we will succeed in following this biblical admonition?_
allurements of the world and, instead, fix our interest on the glorious realities of heaven. By single-mindedly seeking what’s above, we are enabled, through the Spirit’s blessing, to perceive more and more of divine truth. We are enabled to die to the sinfulness of our nature and come increasingly alive to the grace and goodness of Christ. This is a quiet work, done without fanfare or boasting, but the work is deep, real, and enduring.

All who are making true spiritual progress have no boast to make about their own character perfection or superior holiness. It is their aim to glorify God in all their activities and relationships. They wish to love as Jesus loves and serve as He serves. It is their joy to

Witnessing

Owned by God + Loved by God + Set apart by God + Made holy by God + Growing with God = Sanctified by God!

How is that for a compact equation that defines sanctification? Sound too simple? It is simple! Believers and nonbelievers must hear and understand the simple truths of God’s plan of salvation. They need to become intimate with the God who “loved the world so much that He freely gave His only Son to come here and die, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but will be given eternal life” (John 3:16, The Clear Word).

God bought humanity with the spilled blood of His precious Son, blood that was willingly shed in order to save humanity from certain death. As you witness, ask others if they can imagine the following: agreeing to a plan whose success depends solely on sacrificing the life of your only child; allowing that child to be placed in harm’s way time and time again; watching from a great distance as that child is ridiculed, mocked, tortured, and finally put to death in the most horrible manner possible. Imagine that the whole reason for the entire plan is to save a group of sinful human beings. Ask those to whom you are witnessing whether they would have done it for that reason. Help them understand this demonstrates the depth of God’s love for them.

Our relationship with God is like one with our parents. Once children have become truly His, once they have given their hearts fully to Him, the Father-child relationship begins its maturing process. Trust grows. The Father guides. He listens. Sometimes He says No; other times His answer is Yes. Always the answer is given with love and understanding. Rules are lovingly kept, because they are for the best. The child becomes changed as a result of the relationship. This is the process of a sanctified life.

The very best way to describe the sanctified life to others is to live our own lives, through Christ, in such a way our actions will illustrate the truth of sanctification incontrovertibly.
The Law and the Gospel

We love God because of the salvation that is ours through the Cross. And, as a result, we want to follow the Lord in faith and obedience. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can do this, resulting in a new life in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).

Yet, the questions remain: How do we know if we really are obeying God? How do we know if the Spirit is leading us in a particular way or if we are being prompted by some other power? If we love God because we have been justified by faith and we want to obey Him (Matt. 7:24, Rom. 1:5, 16:26, Gal. 3:1, Heb. 5:9, 1 Pet. 4:17), we should know what God expects from us.

Read the following texts. What’s the one clear message they have for us as Christians? John 8:11, 34; Gal. 2:17; John 8:34; Rom. 6:13; 1 John 2:1; 3:8; Heb. 3:13; 12:4.

How could there be all these admonitions against sin for the Christian, unless there was a law to define sin (Rom. 7:7, 1 John 3:4)? The existence of sin automatically means the existence of the law. You can’t have sin without law, any more than you can have a crime without law. For the New Testament to demand that we refrain from sin, and yet to weaken or nullify the law, makes about as much sense as a nation demanding that citizens not steal cars while, at the same time, annulling or weakening laws against auto theft.

God’s law is spiritual (Rom. 7:14), and it is made for spiritual beings, beings who are moved by the Holy Spirit to obey the Lord. The law was made not to save anyone but to frame, as it were, safe borders for us, to help us understand how we are to reveal in our lives the love for God that we profess. Anyone can profess that he or she loves God, and people through the years, claiming to be “led by the Spirit,” have sought to express this “love” in some very strange and even hurtful ways. The Bible, however, without ambiguity, tells us how we are to reveal that love: “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3). The Spirit is going to lead us, not contrary to the law but in a way that “the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom. 8:4).

Why do you think, based on your own walk with the Lord, that God wants us to keep His law? How is God’s love revealed to us through His law?
Life-Application Approach

Icebreaker: What is your favorite conversion story? It may be your own story or one from the Bible. It may be from someone you know or from a figure in history.


Thought Questions:
1 Romans 6 is about the Christian experience. It describes our experience as intertwined with Christ, His death, and His resurrection. List the things Paul says are true of Christians in their present experience. Then list the things Paul tells Christians to do.

2 According to this passage, what are the essential elements of conversion? (Encourage class members to find some of these elements: (a) conviction of sin; (b) repentance [turning away from sin]; (c) union with Christ [trusting; belief]; (d) new life; (e) freedom from the rule of sin [not that one ceases to sin, but that one can now say No to sin]; (f) obedience.)

3 How important is each of these elements to a genuine conversion? Are they all important? Do they have to occur in some order? Are there other important elements?

Application Questions:
1 Where do you think Christians struggle in the process of being converted? (Let your class reflect on this question then share something from your own experience. That will encourage them to share their experiences also.)

2 What good things might God have in store for you as you grow in your Christian experience?

“In order to receive help from Christ, we must realize our need. We must have a true knowledge of ourselves. It is only he who knows himself to be a sinner that Christ can save. Only as we see our utter helplessness and renounce all self-trust, shall we lay hold on divine power.

“It is not only at the beginning of the Christian life that this renunciation of self is to be made. At every advance step heavenward it is to be renewed. All our good works are dependent on a power outside of ourselves; therefore there needs to be a continual reaching out of the heart after God, a constant, earnest confession of sin and humbling of the soul before Him. Perils surround us; and we are safe only as we feel our weakness and cling with the grasp of faith to our mighty Deliverer.”—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 455, 456.

“With many, sanctification is only self-righteousness. And yet these persons boldly claim Jesus as their Saviour and Sanctifier. What a delusion! Will the Son of God sanctify the transgressor of the Father’s law—that law which Christ came to exalt and make honorable?”

—*Faith and Works*, p. 29.

Discussion Questions:

1. A man (let’s call him Stanley) said that a leader of a small religious group kept on trying to win him over to Jesus, but he refused to listen. Then the leader of the community gave Stanley his wife for the night. Stanley later gave his testimony, saying, “That night changed my life, for that was when I learned about God’s love for me.” Stanley and his pastor may have been sincere in their faith, but sincerity alone is no safeguard against error and presumption. The pastor’s so-called generosity in sharing his wife undermines the very principle it claims to uphold: the sacrificial love of Christ. A true understanding of the gospel leaves no room for condoning or engaging in such a practice. In particular, what would the law of God say here to Stanley? How could the law have helped him form a better judgment about his experience? What does this story tell us about the importance of the law for all Christians?

2. Most Christians understand that justification is by faith. Why must sanctification be by faith, as well? See Acts 26:18.

3. Ellen White wrote that all our good works are dependent upon a power “outside of ourselves” (see above). What is the key we need in order to have this outside power work in our lives?
The Cross and the Great Controversy

SABBATH Afternoon

Read for This Week’s Study: Job 1, 2, 42; Isa. 53:4; Matt. 4:1; John 12:31-33; 1 Pet. 5:8, 9; Rev. 5:11-14; 12:7-19.

Memory Text: “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:31, 32).

However central our salvation was to the Cross, we limit our understanding of the Cross if we limit its import to humanity. Only in the context of the great controversy can we fully understand the Cross and why Christ died. Were it not for issues involving the unfallen universe, the Lord instantly could have wiped out Satan after his rebellion, or He could have chosen to save humankind without resorting to sacrificing Himself. However, because the questions surrounding sin, salvation, God’s law, and love go beyond this world, the Lord chose to demonstrate what principles and issues are at stake in this cosmic drama. He not only exposed Satan for what He was but revealed to unfallen worlds, in a way never seen before, what their Creator is really like.

At the center of that revelation is the Cross. If we, who see through a “glass, darkly” (1 Cor. 13:12), marvel at the Cross, what about those who knew Jesus face to face, before His incarnation and humiliation? Christ’s death was for the benefit of them, as well.

The Week at a Glance: How does the Bible reveal the great controversy? What are the issues? What did Jesus experience at the cross? How were His sufferings greater than what we could know? How does the Cross answer issues in the great controversy?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 26.
The Cosmic Conflict

Read the following texts and write out what they reveal about the great controversy, such as who is involved? In what different ways is the controversy being made manifest? What are some of the issues? Where was, and is, it being fought? Who wins? See Gen. 3:15; Job 1:6-12; Isa. 14:12-15; Zech. 3:1-10; Matt. 4:1; 25:41; Rom. 16:20; 1 Cor. 15:57; Eph. 6:12; 1 Pet. 5:8, 9; Rev. 12:7-17.

Along with the powerful and insightful views given to us by the Lord through the ministry of Ellen White, there are scattered all through the Bible, in both Testaments, allusions and references to the great controversy. It’s there! Indeed, the above verses are only a sampling of what Scripture says about what can be deemed only as a “cosmic conflict,” a literal battle that began in another part of the cosmos and that is now being waged here on earth.

Manifestations of this battle are seen from the beginning to the end of Scripture, from the enmity between Satan and God’s people first implanted by the Lord in human hearts (Gen. 3:15), up through the satanic wrath manifested at the end of time against those who “keep the commandments of God” (Rev. 12:17).

The great news, though, is that the outcome of this battle was assured from the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4, Rev. 13:8). The question facing God wasn’t whether He was able to defeat Satan but rather how He was going to defeat him and at what cost to Himself. The Cross, more than anything else, reveals what that cost to Himself really was.

In what ways in everyday life do you experience the reality of the great controversy? How should the knowledge that the outcome is assured help you stand firm amid your own struggles in this often painful, trying conflict?
**Key Text:** John 12:31-33.

**Teachers Aims:**
1. To explore how the great controversy magnifies the Cross.
2. To recognize how Jesus has exposed, conquered, and ultimately will destroy our accuser.
3. To help cope with the dilemma of human suffering by considering the scope of Jesus’ suffering on behalf of our salvation.

**Lesson Outline:**

**I. A Revelation for Humanity and the Universe (Job 1, 2, 42).**
A. To more fully understand the Cross, we have to view it in the context of the great controversy.
B. The Lord chose to reveal the principles of His kingdom to humankind and to un Fallen worlds.
C. The outcome of this cosmic conflict was assured from the foundation of the world.

**II. The Accuser Exposed (Isa. 14:12-15).**
A. Satan attempted to exalt himself above the Creator.
B. Only when the Savior died in order to pay the penalty for sin could the consequences of Satan’s rebellion be fully exposed.
C. Jesus upheld the validity of God’s law and His justice while demonstrating His mercy.

**III. The Cross and Human Suffering (Isa. 53:4).**
A. Jesus died for humanity, taking on Himself the sins of the world; all its guilt and suffering.
B. The great-controversy theme reveals the battle between good and evil, the cause of all suffering.
C. Because of the Cross, all sin and suffering will end.

**Summary:** God, in the Person of His Son, demonstrated to humanity and the unfallen worlds His justice and mercy at the Cross. He is vindicated by taking upon Himself the sin and suffering of the world. Only through the lens of the great-controversy theme can we begin to understand the scope of what Jesus bore for us. O, matchless love! Let us ardently give thanks and praise to our magnanimous Savior.

**COMMENTARY**

**The Cross and the Great Controversy.**

**Introduction.** Satan’s treacherous warfare against the government of God is laid bare by the penetrating searchlight of Calvary, for in
The Cross and the Defeat of Satan

Read  John 12:31-33, Hebrews 2:14, 1 John 3:8. How do these texts relate the Cross to the final destruction of Satan in the great controversy?

At the cross, the pivotal moment in the great controversy arrives. Satan has been “cast out,” repudiated, exposed. In vision (Rev. 12:10) the apostle John heard “a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.” Only when the Saviour died “for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2) could heaven proclaim that Salvation has now come. At Calvary the divine promise, first mentioned in Scripture back in Genesis 3:15, became a reality.

How do we relate Christ’s sacrificial death to the great controversy?

As we saw earlier, though Christ Himself was sinless, He died under divine judgment as our Sin Bearer (Isa. 53:6, 11, 12; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18). At the Cross, God assumed His own judgment on sin. The Creator took upon Himself our humanity so that His life—more than equal to lives of created beings—would atone for the sins of all humanity. In this manner the death of Christ upheld the validity of the moral law and demonstrated that God could be both just and merciful in character. The apostle Paul explains the significance of the Cross, particularly in light of the great controversy, with these points: “God [the Father] presented him [Christ] as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate [before humanity and unfallen worlds] his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished [that is, moral sin in Old Testament times could not really be atoned by animal blood (Heb. 10:4)]—he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus” (Rom. 3:25, 26, NIV).

At the Cross, Jesus upheld the validity of God’s law, provided a sufficient substitutionary sacrifice for every sinner, exposed Satan’s true character to the universe, and provided the means in which everyone could be saved. What does each one of these things mean to us as individuals immersed in the great controversy? Which one of these accomplishments do you believe is the most important, and why?
the Cross are distilled all the principles of mercy and justice—unmeasured mercy to the repentant, unmitigated justice to the rebellious. In the Cross also is the power of regeneration and recreation that guarantees the abolition of sin and the vindication of eternal righteousness.

I. The Cosmic Conflict.

As profound as Satan’s scheme of deception was, and as varied were his lines of attack, God from the outset had the one all-sufficient answer to sin and rebellion—the everlasting gospel. So far beyond belief were the depths of evil as it took an ever more elaborate and sinister form in Satan’s mind, that the nature of the divine remedy and the need for it could be understood only as Satan’s program was allowed to manifest itself in its complete character.

“God’s dealings with rebellion will result in fully unmasking the work that has so long been carried on under cover. The results of Satan’s rule, the fruits of setting aside the divine statutes, will be laid open to the view of all created intelligences. The law of God will stand fully vindicated. It will be seen that all the dealings of God have been conducted with reference to the eternal good of His people, and the good of all the worlds that He has created. Satan himself, in the presence of the witnessing universe, will confess the justice of God’s government and the righteousness of His law.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 338, 339; see also *Isa. 45:22, 23; Rom. 14:9-13.*

II. The Cross and the Defeat of Satan.

By inciting wicked men to torment and crucify the Prince of Peace, Satan fully exposed his remorseless character of malicious rebellion.

At the Cross, “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.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 761; see also Ellen G. White, *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 244.

III. The Cross and Human Suffering.

The great scene brought to view in Revelation 5 calls for deep study. In this chapter the record of human history, interfused with a revelation of God’s intervening providence, is produced in a seven-sealed scroll. So full of anguish and agony is the record of human suffering and injustice, so profound is the revelation of God’s intimate
The Cross and Human Suffering
(Part 1)

The Cross, and the salvation offered to us because of the Cross, are key to the great controversy. The means by which the Lord upheld the validity of the law, while at the same time saving those who had transgressed that law, were crucial in answering Satan’s charges against Him before intelligences in the universe, which themselves have a stake in the outcome of the great controversy (see Rom. 8:22).

**Read** Revelation 5:11-14. Where is this scene taking place? Who is involved? Whom are they praising, and why? How do these verses help show the centrality of the Cross to the great controversy?

However deeply involved and interested the universe is in the Cross and the great controversy, we must never forget that redemption was accomplished here on earth, for the sake of human beings. Christ took upon Himself a human, not angelic, nature (Heb. 2:16), because He came to save humans, not angels. Without the Cross and all that it entails (including the Resurrection), all humanity would, one way or another, face only eternal oblivion.

**In** John 12:32, Jesus talked about His death drawing all men toward Him. What does that mean? What was it about the Cross that draws us to Jesus?

Christ’s assumption of humanity, of human nature, however crucial to the plan of salvation, wasn’t enough to save humanity. According to the eternal plan (2 Tim. 1:9), Christ would die for the world, taking on Himself, in His Personhood and in His deity, the sins of the world, and all the guilt and suffering inherent in those sins. Every sin was there, at the Cross, falling on the Son of God. What an incredible spectacle to the universe, to see their sinless Commander suffering in Himself for a fallen race. Though the main purpose of the Cross was to save us, it also revealed much about the character of God to the universe.

**All our suffering, as humans, results from sin, does it not? Keeping that thought in mind, what do Paul’s words that “he hath made him [Jesus] to be sin for us, who knew no sin” (2 Cor. 5:21) tell us about what Christ suffered on the cross in our behalf? How does this knowledge help draw us toward Him?**
and truly caring involvement in earth’s history, that no created being has the emotional stamina, the intellectual prowess, or the depth of moral perception to lift the weight of that record and bear the disclosure of its contents. But Christ in the guise of the slain Lamb has the right and the power to open the record, interpret its contents, and bring all the issues disclosed in it to final and glorious resolution. His

### Inductive Bible Study


1. **Isaiah** allows us to step into the broad themes of the universe. One of those themes encompasses the rebellion of Lucifer, the chief among Jesus’ created angels, who sought to exalt himself above God. The Scripture declares, “How you have fallen” (*Isa. 14:12, NIV)*! When have you tried to exalt yourself, only to have fallen? How often has your failure been because you have rebelled against God’s purpose and His leading in your life?

2. Books, movies, and other medias use a plot of good triumphing over evil to gain our attention. The Bible allows us to look into a cosmic conflict we call the great controversy in order to understand the real issues in our world. How does God’s sharing this big picture with us help you trust Him more? Why is this so necessary to help us more fully understand the issues at stake at the Cross?

3. Jesus bore all the sin and suffering of the world (*see Isa. 53:4, Heb. 2:14*). In what ways have you experienced suffering? How has Jesus’ sharing in our humanity helped you to have faith to persevere during trying times? Share the good news of a final end to suffering with a friend or neighbor who is experiencing trials.

4. As you consider the Cross, have you ever wondered why Jesus would be willing to die for us knowing how few would appreciate His gift? Paul tells us that Jesus endured because of “the joy set before Him” (*Heb. 12:2, NIV*). He had plans for your rescue, for your friendship for eternity. How does this help you value yourself more? How will you share the wonderful, good news of the Cross with your friends and neighbors this week?

5. Revelation 5:11-14 contains an amazing worship celebration. All the creatures of heaven and earth praise the wonders of God’s matchless love. Imagine yourself at that worship service. In what ways have you found Jesus to be worthy of praise? How do the themes of salvation and your personal rescue impact your worship of God, here and now, as you wait for that heavenly assembly?
The Cross and Human Suffering (Part 2)

One of the greatest challenges that Christians face is the question of suffering. Why, if there is an all-powerful and all-loving God, does so much suffering exist? What Christian hasn’t at some point felt the power of that daunting question assault his or her own faith?

Of course, the great controversy motif, with the battle between good and evil explained to us, certainly helps us understand the big picture behind suffering. And we know, too, that one day it will all end, and in a way that will vindicate the character of God. Even so, the question of suffering continues to confront us simply because so often there are no real answers to it, at least not answers that make sense to us now.

Read Job 1, 2, and 42. How does this story help us understand the background of the great controversy that’s such a part of human suffering? Yet, what questions about Job’s sufferings were left unanswered that still don’t make sense?

If you look at the sufferings of Job, or of any human being, one point mustn’t be missed: All human suffering is individual suffering. Whether we are weeping for ourselves or for others, it’s only our own tears that we shed. We can never splice into other people’s nerves to feel a spasm of their pain, a prick of their woe, no matter how close or intimate we are. Other people’s pain comes to us only as our own; our own, then, is all that we can ever know. Each of us experiences only our own pain, only our own suffering, never another’s. Whether we are suffering and dying alone or en masse, our pain can never exceed what our personal metabolism allows; we will never experience more suffering than what our own delirious cells can carry. No one ever ached beyond what he or she, individually, could; the moment the threshold was crossed, death struck.

We’re often horrified, and rightly so, by the great numbers of people who suffer in tragedies. Yet, no matter the numbers (whether one or one million), each person’s suffering is limited by the fact that he or she could suffer no more than an individual could suffer. How does this idea help you understand better the question of human tragedy?
cross enabled Him to bear the whole supernatural weight of human woe and bring in a resistless tide of healing and restoration in the lives of all who welcome His saving grace and power. This inspires the praise and thanksgiving of the whole universe. Look for thematic links between Revelation 5 and Romans 8:19-28.

IV. The Cross and Human Suffering (continued).

It is the Cross of Calvary that makes our suffering not only tolerable but also creative, in effect, if we are committed to having fellowship with Christ’s sufferings and are willing to suffer for His glory. This is not a morbid process or one that makes our own sacrif-

Witnessing

When you are looking for the perfect opportunity to share the wonderful plan of salvation with a nonbeliever, think about extending an invitation to this person to accompany you to a local planetarium (if there is one—if not, point him or her to a clear night sky). What a backdrop for the story of the great controversy! As you are watching the spectacular night-sky show, you have an exceptional opportunity to explain the epic battle going on right now that has attracted sweeping cosmic interest—a cosmic battle of good versus evil that is more comprehensive, more vast, than any Star Wars installment. Share with this person that Christ’s victory on the cross not only redeemed all earth’s inhabitants but was very carefully viewed by countless perfect beings located on planets far removed from earth’s sinful environment. Talk about how Satan (and sin) has been exposed for what he truly is, while, at the same time, God has been shown for what He truly is—loving, merciful, and just, and that all this is playing out right before these other worlds and their inhabitants. Let the nonbeliever know that free choice will determine the ultimate outcome for humanity.

When you are asked (and you will be if you haven’t already faced the question) why a loving God can permit such suffering here on earth, you can respond by explaining the depth of suffering Christ experienced. He bore the scourge of every illness; every disease; every physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual hurt known to humankind. Put in those terms, it is impossible to understand the depth of suffering, pain, grief, and despair He experienced. No one has ever suffered as He did, and no one ever will again. He knows firsthand what the worst suffering is like, and He will allow no one to bear more than he or she is able.

During times of great distress, Jesus will hold and comfort and soothe. He will never let one who calls on Him go through any experience alone. At the time of His choosing, He will be there to welcome all home, to live with Him forever!
The Cross and Human Suffering
(Part 3)

“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows” (Isa. 53:4).

So far we have seen that all human pain and suffering come from sin. We saw, too, that, as humans, we experience only our own pain, only our own suffering, never another’s. Human suffering is always, and only, individual suffering. And finally we saw that, at the Cross, the sins of the whole world (and the cause of the whole world’s suffering) fell on Jesus, the Sin Bearer.

With these few points in mind, read Isaiah 53:1-12. Notice particularly verse 4. In the context of what we’ve been studying the past few days, what does this chapter, especially verse 4, tell us about what God Himself suffered in the great controversy because of sin?

The point is that although we know only our own pain, only our own suffering, at the Cross, God felt it all, at once. What we know only individually, the Lord felt corporately, at the Cross. At Calvary, the Lord linked Himself to us through the essence of our humanity; that is, through our pain—only the level He experienced was greater and more intense than any other human being has ever known.

Thus, when the great controversy is over and all the issues resolved, no human being ever will be able to say that he or she suffered worse than did God Himself. At the Cross, the Lord showed humanity and the onlooking universe that in order to deal with the issues raised by Satan in a just, fair, and merciful manner, He Himself was willing to suffer worse than any fallen being ever had or ever could. He bore our griefs and our sorrows—that is, all our griefs and all the sorrows that we feel only as individuals, He felt at once!

Who can even begin to comprehend this incredible reality? No wonder the universe looks upon the Cross with awe, praise, and wonder (Rev. 5:11-14).

How does this idea, that God in Christ, at the Cross, suffered worse than any human ever could, put the whole question of human suffering in a perspective that helps us better understand it?
Life-Application Approach

Icebreaker: When have you felt most like a citizen of the world, and why? Watching an event on TV? Visiting a place outside your country? Hearing a report on Mission Spotlight?

Verses for Group Focus: Revelation 5:6-14.

Thought Questions:
1. According to the first song sung in His honor (Rev. 5:9, 10), why is the Lamb worthy of worship?

2. Three different groups sing songs of worship to the Lamb. Who composes each group, and what might be some of the reasons these three groups are represented in this way?

Application Questions:
1. What do the songs in Revelation 5:9, 10, 12, 13 teach us about the Cross and the great controversy? How might we join in these songs of worship?

2. Revelation 5: 8, 14 points to Jesus’ rule as King. In what way is Jesus your King? What difference does He make in your life?
Further Study: “It will be seen that He who is infinite in wisdom could devise no plan for our salvation except the sacrifice of His Son. The compensation for this sacrifice is the joy of peopling the earth with ransomed beings, holy, happy, and immortal. The result of the Saviour’s conflict with the powers of darkness is joy to the redeemed, redounding to the glory of God throughout eternity. And such is the value of the soul that the Father is satisfied with the price paid; and Christ Himself, beholding the fruits of His great sacrifice, is satisfied.”—Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, p. 652.

“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. The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken.”—Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 761.

Discussion Questions:

1. As a class, discuss the idea presented this week about the individuality of human suffering as opposed to what Christ suffered corporately at the Cross. What does this idea tell us about the character of God? What does it mean that God Himself would suffer all the woes of the whole world? What would this truth reveal about God to unfallen worlds, as well?

2. How should the idea of Christ as our Sin Bearer—as the innocent One suffering for the guilty—impact how we treat others? How does the idea of bearing “one another’s burdens” (Gal. 6:2) reflect, in a small way, what Christ did for us at the Cross?

3. There are many Bible-believing people who attempt to understand sin, suffering, and salvation apart from the great-controversy motif. Put yourself in their shoes and try to explain some of these things another way, apart from the great controversy. How well does it work?