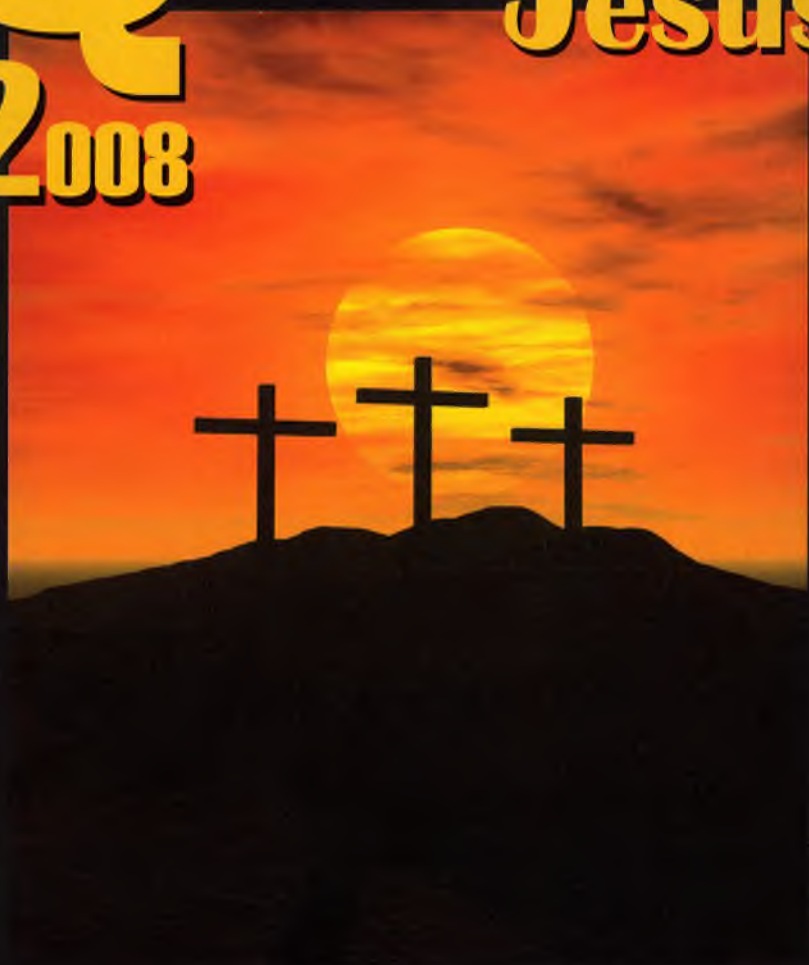


APRIL-JUNE

**EQ**  
**2008**

# The Wonder of Jesus



**A Devotional Bible-Study Guide  
for Young Adults**



<http://cq.adventist.org>

# The Wonder of Jesus

APRIL—JUNE 2008



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## This Quarter's Illustrator



Ian Kitney

I live in Somerset West just outside Cape Town, South Africa. I have always had a fascination with graphics, animation, and 3-D. I studied Theology at Helderberg College. While I was studying Theology I learned about Maya 3-D animation software. I played around with different 3-D packages and figured that this technology could be used to further God's message in a visual format. I studied 3-D animation for two years at Universal Computer Arts Academy in Cape Town. After that I worked at the Adventist Media Centre for two years doing graphics, animation, and special effects for programming for the Hope Channel. Currently I am working for Moroff and Khine engineering consultants, where I do 3-D visualization and modeling.

I am passionate about two things: using the talents that God gave me to the honor of His name by using 3-D animation to tell people about Him and about my family. I have a wife, Melanie, and a 19-month-old daughter, Jennifer, who mean the world to me and who are a great source of inspiration, comfort, and support for me. I also appreciate the way that my parents raised me to love and respect God. The way that they raised me was always a guide to how I would want to raise my children—to love Jesus.

# Getting the most Out of CQ

## FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW

*CQ* is based on the conviction that the Word of God offers transforming power and that group study is one important way to tap into that power. *CQ*'s purpose is to provide Seventh-day Adventist young adults with a resource for devotional study on mutual topics, which can then be discussed each week in Sabbath School. Many who use the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* find that because *CQ* deals with the same topics, it enriches lesson study and discussion as a supplemental aid.

Four hundred Adventist young adults contribute to *CQ* each year. The wide variety and occasional repetition of the content reflects the great diversity of its contributors around the world as they respond creatively and individually to the subject.

Circulation of *CQ* is about 70,000.

## POINTERS FOR STUDY

1. Through prayer, open your mind to the Holy Spirit's guidance as you study.
2. The Bible passages on which each week's lesson are based appear in bold type in the "Logos" portion of the lesson. Read these entire passages.
3. The Bible passages for the week are usually divided into sections on the "Logos" pages. When studying these sections, carefully reread the Bible passages indicated in bold headings before reading the comments beneath the headings.
4. Read the other sections for the week with the perspective you have gained from your own study of the biblical passages.
5. Keep in mind the purposes of each section of the Bible study guide:
  - "**Introduction**" is designed to stimulate your interest and focus your thinking on the week's theme.
  - "**Logos**" is a guide for direct study of the Bible passages for the week.
  - "**Testimony**" presents Ellen White's perspective on the lesson theme.
  - "**Evidence**" approaches issues raised by the lesson from a historical, scientific, philosophical, or theological perspective.
  - "**How-To**" discusses what the abstractions in the lesson mean for day-to-day living.
  - "**Opinion**" is a personal viewpoint on the lesson meant to encourage further thought and discussion.
  - "**Exploration**" provides the reader with a variety of open-ended, creative ways to explore the topic of the week's lesson.

## CQ AND THE CHURCH

*CQ* is the General Conference–approved Bible study guide for the young-adult age group. It upholds the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. However, its contents should not be regarded as official pronouncements of the church.

# Who Was Jesus?



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**“When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say the Son of Man is?’ ”  
(Matt. 16:13, NIV).**

# Impact!

## INTRODUCTION

Matt. 1:21

As a human, our Savior had His own name—*Jesus*. It means, “‘He shall save his people from their sins’ ” (NIV). Did His earthly family and friends ever stop to think about the meaning of His name? How often do we stop to reflect on the treasure contained in this meaning?

When many of us think of His death on the cross, we think of His work in heaven as Intercessor. But do we realize that He is a living Person who thinks of us each day, who longs to reveal Himself to us, who values our praise of Him?

We pray to Jesus to save us from our sins, but we know very little about how this blessed work is done. The living Christ reveals Himself to us, and through the power of His love, our love of sin is expelled. It is essential to have a personal fellowship with Him in order for Him to save us from our sins.

Two thousand years ago, Jesus came to this world to save humanity from evil and its eternal consequences. “Though he was in the form of God, [Jesus] did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross” (Phil. 2:6–8, NRSV).

**No other person has  
inspired so many positive  
changes in people's lives.**

Throughout history, Jesus' influence on the lives of people has never been surpassed. No other person has inspired so many positive changes in people's lives. People who encounter the risen Christ are totally transformed. Their outlook on life is altered forever. Staying true to their faith, they do not hesitate to face hardship, persecution, and even death. They consecrate their lives to serving others, minimizing their own needs and desires.

You may also wish to encounter the living God and experience His transforming power. Christ's desire is to enter your heart and give you a new life in Him. This quarter, make it a point to reflect on the meaning of His name and to experience the transformation that is possible only through Him.



# Following the Pattern

## LOGOS

Matt. 16:13–16; John 3:17; 20:26–28; 1 Cor. 1:18–27; 15:3–7

The name *Jesus* is the Greek form of the Hebrew name *Joshua* which was originally *Yehoshu'a*. After the Exile, it assumed the form *Yeshua*, from which *Jesus* comes. The name was given to our Lord to denote the object of His mission to save. An angel told Joseph (His foster father), “ ‘You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins’ ” (Matt. 1:21, NIV).

## The Life of Jesus (Luke 2:52; 3:23)

The life of Jesus on earth may be divided into two great periods: (1) His private life, until He was about thirty years of age; and (2) His public life, which lasted about three years.

In the “fullness of time” He was born at Bethlehem, during the reign of the emperor Augustus, of Mary, who was betrothed to Joseph, a carpenter (Matt. 1:1; Luke 3:23; compare John 7:42). His birth was announced to shepherds (Luke 2:8–20). Wise men from the East came to Bethlehem to see Him who was born “King of the Jews,” bringing gifts with them (Matt. 2:1–12).

Herod’s cruel jealousy led to Joseph’s flight into Egypt with Mary and the infant Jesus, where they

waited till the death of this king (Matt. 2:13–23). Then they returned and settled in Nazareth, in lower Galilee (2:23; compare Luke 4:16; John 1:46).

At the age of 12, Jesus went up to Jerusalem to the Passover with His parents. There in the temple, all that heard Him were “amazed at his understanding and his answers” (Luke 2:47, NIV).

As a human, Jesus experienced the same types of temptations we experience (Heb. 2:18). He suffered physical pain, and He also experienced emotional pain. He even wept over the city of Jerusalem (John 11:35). He was ignored, unappreciated, unloved, misunderstood, and despised—even though He did nothing wrong, and always loved everyone (1 Pet. 2:23). Not only is Jesus Christ the greatest Person who ever lived, He is our Creator. As such, He deserves glory and honor!

## Life in Christ Jesus (John 14:26)

Sometimes, we feel that we cannot understand. We think we are alone. If only



---

there were someone to study with. We might even feel that if our life is greatly changed, our friends will ridicule us or reject us. Satan causes these feelings, for he knows well the power of such feelings. So, in spite of how you might feel, seek knowledge which is from above and be set free to experience life in Christ Jesus. This life is unlimited and motivated by the true power of God.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to reveal to us what life in Christ Jesus is all about. It was Jesus, Himself, who said, " 'But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you' " (NIV).

### **When We Walk With Jesus (Rom. 8:1, 2)**

We must remember that Jesus does not condemn us even when we make mistakes. He is our heavenly Parent who stands ready to help us. He turns our mistakes into stepping-stones instead of stumbling blocks. Jesus said, " 'For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him' " (John 3:17, NIV).

### **The ABC's of Decision (John 4:4-42)**

Jesus accepted men and women where they were. He ministered to them in the condition in which He found them. He did not work for change before He established a relationship of confidence with them. We should do the same.

Jesus believed that people sincerely desired to know the truth and wanted to follow Him, that they are winnable to Him and His cause, that they were honest and desired to make the right decision. We also should have such belief in people.

This acceptance and belief gives us confidence and trust that He will guide us in helping people draw near to Him and in making right decisions.

### **Watch God Work Through You (John 1:12)**

Through the ABC's of decision, we are able to come into a personal relationship with the Lord. Such a relationship is to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, the One who died for your sins, who was buried and was raised from the dead. It is to receive Him as your Savior and Lord. When we believe this, we become God's children. John promises this in his Gospel, when he wrote, "To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12, NIV).

### **REACT**

1. What attitudes prevent people from deciding to follow in the steps of Jesus?
2. Which of these attitudes might you have, and what can you do about them?

## Centered on Jesus

### TESTIMONY

1 Cor. 15:57

Jesus “spoke of heavenly things as One to whom everything heavenly was familiar. He spoke His intimacy and oneness with the Father as a child would speak of its connection with its parents. He never patronized the schools of the rabbis; for He was the Teacher sent by God to instruct mankind. As one in whom all restorative power is found, Christ spoke of drawing all men unto Him, and of giving life everlasting. In Him there is power to heal every physical and every spiritual disease.

“When the plan of redemption was laid, it was decided that Christ should not appear in accordance with His divine character; for He could not then associate with the distressed and the suffering. He must come as a poor man. He could have appeared in accordance with His exalted station in the heavenly courts; but no, He must reach to the very lowest depths of human suffering and poverty, that His voice might be heard by the burdened and disappointed.”<sup>1</sup>

“But our faith must be centered in Jesus. Looking unto Him, clinging to His strength as sufficient for every emergency, our heart joins His heart, our life is knit by hidden links to His life, and because He lives, we shall live also. This is a practical religion: for we are to be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. No one of us can be safe save as we join the

**“This is a practical  
religion. . . .”**

Lord in a perpetual covenant; Thou shall not be forgotten by us.”<sup>2</sup>

Would you like to know Jesus personally? You can! Because of God’s deep love for you, He has already made all the necessary arrangements. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, you can enjoy a personal relationship with Him. He made it possible to bridge the chasm which separates us from God.

### REACT

1. Is Jesus still interested in us?
2. What does it mean to have a personal relationship with Christ, and in what way does it impact our lives? And how does someone go about making that kind of commitment?

1. *The Signs of the Times*, June 24, 1897.

2. *Review and Herald*, March 14, 1893.

# Who Really Is Jesus?

## EVIDENCE

Matt. 4:1–11; John 11:35; Heb. 2:18; 1 Pet. 2:23

Sooner or later, every Christian and non-Christian has to ask, “Who *really* is Jesus?” Despite the relativity of our postmodern era, most of us have a sense that we want to know what type of person He really was when He walked this earth. So how do we really go about learning this?

We must, first of all, understand that historical facts are often interpreted differently by different people. So where do we begin? We begin with how Jesus responded to life and to people who both loved and hated Him. We begin with His reactions as they are enshrined in the texts we have.

One huge difference between Jesus and every other person, is that Jesus was (and still is) sinless. We humans are full of sin. We sin every day. Jesus never did anything wrong. No matter what temptations came to Him, He refused to sin. He has always remained pure and perfect (Matt. 4:1–11).

As a human, Jesus experienced the same types of temptations that come to us (Heb. 2:18). He suffered the same kind of physical pains we suffer. He also experienced emotional pain. He even wept over the death of a beloved friend (John 11:35). He was ignored, unappreciated, unloved, misunderstood, and even despised—even though He did nothing wrong. Yet He always loved everyone (1 Pet. 2:23). Not only is Jesus Christ the greatest Person to have ever lived; He is our Creator. He deserves all glory and honor!

**Yet He always loved everyone.**

Most likely, you are aware of how people treated Him so cruelly. He had the power to stop their torture and taunting at any time. His power is awesome beyond anything we can understand. Yet He did not defend Himself. He let Himself be like an innocent little lamb that hurt no one. Thus, He was sacrificed for the sins of the people.

He did this for us, because He loves us. Only He could pay the price for our sins. Only He could save us from the punishment we deserve. He suffered for us (1 Pet. 2:21; 3:18).

## REACT

1. Based on the texts in today's lesson, how would you describe Jesus to someone?
2. Think of other texts which show us how Jesus responded to life and to people who loved or hated Him. Based on these texts, how would you describe Jesus?

# Confidential! Top Secret In-4-mation!

## HOW-TO

Ps. 46:1; Eph. 1:7; Titus 1:2

When we watch, listen to, or read the news, we learn about the problems and brutality taking place in the world. And sometimes we wonder, "Who can bear all these things?" Certainly no human being can, no matter how great, how rich, how educated, or how powerful a person might be. But the Bible tells us there is One who can bear these things, and His name is Jesus. He is able to answer every need, meet every situation, and solve every problem. The world is full of all types of people—young, old, poor, rich, educated, uneducated, kind, brutal, et cetera. Regardless of these differences, however, all people have the same basic needs—forgiveness of sin, strength, guidance, and hope.

Here are two steps to help us meet these needs.

1. *Turn to Jesus.* Some people turn to fortune-tellers, self-help books, and material possessions to have their innermost needs fulfilled. But nothing worldly can completely satisfy us. Only Jesus knows our past, present, and future, and when the cares of this world overwhelm us, He is just a prayer away.

**He is just a prayer away.**

2. *Hope in Him.* Christians may have very little of this world's glamour and riches. But Jesus is abundantly rich in hope—hope for the Second Coming, which is free. He

has promised never to leave or forsake us. He is the King of the universe. He has conquered all. With Jesus by our side, we will always have hope.

A soldier once showed a chaplain in France three pictures. The first picture showed a man standing in the middle of a war-torn city. The picture's caption read, "The past has deceived me."

The second picture showed a serpent trying to climb a slick pole—an impossible task. The caption read, "The present overmasters me."

The third showed a canon with a man looking into it. This picture's caption read, "The future appalls me." All these captions are true if we do not know Jesus. But if we do know Him, the past is covered by His blood; we have a present help for each day; and we have bright prospects for the future.

Remember that God's ways are not our ways. His way may look like failure, but His way is the only way to true success.

# Seeing Jesus Personally Is Not Enough

## OPINION

1 Cor. 15:3–8, 11

For millennia, Jesus was the most widely known figure of human history. The Scriptures (John 1:1–3, 14; 10:30; 14:9; Col. 1:15–20) and extra-biblical records testified to His existence. Although He was not as popular as the Caesars, historians of the first century included Him in their annals.<sup>1</sup> However, another challenge Christians faced was Jesus' identity in terms of His nature. Church councils debated it.

The question "Who is Jesus?" was debated in His lifetime and throughout the rest of history. It is still being debated today. People from all races, cultures, and educational and financial backgrounds are still wondering who He really was and is. Some people are persecuted and even killed for their belief that He is God's Son. Others live certain lifestyles, believe specific doctrines, and pursue particular types of education because they believe He is their Savior.

Many people during Jesus' life on earth rejected Him due to their selfish prejudice and spiritual pride.<sup>3</sup> This proves that the truth was unpopular during Jesus' time. The truth is that Jesus was here on earth, lived, died, rose again, ascended to heaven, mediates on our behalf, and will come again to reign forever. This is what His disciples preached in the past, and is what they preach today. It was and is their testimony, a testimony strengthened by the blood of the martyrs. It is our responsibility to carry on with this testimony.

**Are we Jesus' hands, feet,  
and heart?**

Are we still on fire, preaching about who He is and what He does for us? Or are we just seated comfortably in the pews, happily imprisoned by our theological pride, while rejecting Him as Lord of our lives?

Not only that, are we showing who He is by how we treat others? Knowledge alone is never enough. Are we practicing what we believe? Are we Jesus' hands, feet, and heart?

1. Murray J. Harris, *Three Crucial Questions About Jesus* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House Co., 1994), pp. 13–29.

2. Laurence Freeman, *Jesus: The Teacher Within* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2000), p. 40.

3. *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 240, 242.



Friday  
April 4

# Who Is Jesus?

## EXPLORATION

Matt. 16:13

## CONCLUDE

Who is Jesus? During His life on earth and through the millennia since He returned to heaven, those who saw or have heard of Him ask that same question. Those who grew up with Him wondered who He was. His earthly teachers, from Mary and Joseph onward, marveled at His questions and insight. His disciples deeply sought the answer. Jewish leaders feared to know the answer. Pontius Pilate asked if Jesus was King of the Jews. Jesus answered in John 18:37: “You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me” (NIV). Which brings us to you. Who do you say Jesus is? How do you show His life through yours?

## CONSIDER

- Compiling a list of answers to the question, “Who is Jesus?” Conduct a survey of your church leaders and members, asking them to give a short response to the same question. Create an adult Sabbath School program to present and discuss the responses.
- Investigating how one’s view of Jesus affects the way they live their life.
- Contemplating who Jesus is, thinking of Him in terms of His Godness in His prehuman form.
- Using examples from nature and finding similarities between God’s creative handiwork and who Jesus is—a mother duck leading her brood to safety is like Jesus leading us from a sinful world to safety. Illustrate these examples with photographs, clippings from magazines, drawings, or videoclips.
- Comparing and contrasting various ways in which Jesus revealed who He is from Gospel accounts or the writings of Ellen G. White.
- Recording in a journal for one week your reflections on who Jesus is as evidenced by examples you’ve seen in nature, in the lives of others, and in your own life.

## CONNECT

“In Pilate’s Judgment Hall,” *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 723–740.

*Rick Blondo, Clarksville, Maryland, U.S.A.*



# The Mystery of His Deity



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“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:1–3, NIV).

# Is It Mystery or Mystifying?

## INTRODUCTION

John 10:30; Phil. 2:6

Was Jesus Christ God or was He simply claiming to be God?

Was He divine? Or was He mere mortal flesh?

From conception, to birth, to manhood, to death, the very life of Christ seems shrouded in mystery and has mystified many. For example, He was conceived by a virgin; and virgins, through reason of logic, do not usually bring forth children.

Being born in a manger among animals, His birth defied the usual customs of the time. His life, one of humility and humbleness, did not take Him to the school of the prophets. Rather, He labored in His earthly father's shop as a carpenter.

The miracles that Christ performed while He lived on earth were no doubt performed in a nature far greater than the nature of humanity.

And His death, the death of an innocent Man, to this day cannot be justified from a legal point of view!

In John 10:30, Christ Himself said, "I and the Father are one" (NIV). And in

Philippians 2:6, we read that Jesus was in the form of God (KJV, NKJV).

The Greek word translated as "form" is *morphē*, and refers to "all the essential characteristics and attributes of God. In this sense, *morphē*

**His birth defied the usual  
customs of the time.**

represents the manner in which God's eternal qualities and characteristics have manifested themselves. Whatever form that manifestation has taken, it was possessed by Christ, who thereby existed as One with God. This places Christ on an equality with the Father, and sets Him far above every other power. Paul stresses this in order to portray more vividly the depths of Christ's voluntary humiliation."<sup>1</sup>

"Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense. He was with God from all eternity."<sup>2</sup>

Yes. Christ was indeed God. Is the mystery of His Deity really a mystery? Or is it mystifying? Find out as you read this week's lesson.

1. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 154.

2. *The Review and Herald*, April 5, 1906.

# The Mystery of His Deity

## EVIDENCE

Isa. 9:6; John 1:1, 14

Today more than ever, Christ's divinity is under attack. Books such as *The Da Vinci Code* and *The Gospel of Judas* question His divine nature. But the Bible is clear that Jesus is God (Isa. 9:6; John 1:1, 14). All of Scripture speaks of Him and points to Him. For a Bible believer, this is where the question ends and faith begins. But what about those who do not believe in the Bible? What evidence do we have outside of the Bible that testifies of the existence, let alone the nature, of Jesus?

Literary sources mention Jesus. This fact on its own is important. Three Roman sources mention Jesus: Suetonius, Tacitus, and Pliny the Younger. From a Roman perspective, Jesus would have been relatively insignificant to warrant any mention. He was from a small, distant part of a huge empire, from an ethnic minority, and was a religious, not a political, leader. A Syrian philosopher, Mara Bar Sarapion, also mentions Jesus stating that the Jews had killed their King. Flavius Josephus, a Jewish historian, signifies that Jesus was influential and controversial. Other rabbinical texts also point to Jesus as a controversial figure. Hence, despite His humble background, Jesus was significant enough for the Jews to question and the Romans to document.\*

Once prisoners, we are  
now free.

Nothing testifies more powerfully to the divinity and power of Jesus than a changed life. The early apostles preached on what they had experienced (1 John 1:1–4). It is the same for us today. A living relationship with Christ entails turning the world's values upside down. Our lives become the fingerprints of Christ's divinity. We are no longer bound by selfishness, greed, envy, strife, or malice. Because of our transformed hearts, we are free to live abundant lives. No longer bound by fear, we are free to be loved and to love.

The difference is night and day. Once prisoners, we are now free.

## REACT

1. What experiences have you had that testify of Jesus?
2. What are some of the challenges of witnessing to an atheist or non-Christian?

\*Darrell L. Bock, *Studying the Historical Jesus: A Guide to Sources and Methods* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002).

Monday  
April 7

# The Clearest Mystery Ever

## LOGOS

Isa. 9:6; Mic. 5:2; Matt. 16:13–17; John 1:1, 14, 18; 8:58; 17:5; 20:28; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 13:14

### Was Jesus God? (Isa. 9:6; Mic. 5:2)

Why create a mystery from the truth that Jesus was fully human and fully divine? The actual mystery is why some people can't see the plainness of Scripture's teaching about this.

The rub is whether Jesus was God.

Paul took care to forestall any discussion of Christ's humanity by calling Jesus the Second Adam (1 Cor. 15:47). To say that He was not a human would be to say that the Model T was not a Ford.

As to the divine question, the Old and New Testaments clearly agree about the Godhead. Micah says the Messiah is One "whose goings forth have been from . . . everlasting" (Mic. 5:2). Isaiah is even more emphatic, saying the Messiah is so like God the Father that He is in the most crucial sense—in His divinity—one and the same as the Father. Isaiah calls Jesus, "The mighty God, The everlasting Father" (Isa. 9:6). This Messianic concept was obviously not mysterious to the prophets.

**You know which argument  
will win.**

### The New Testament Agrees (Matt. 16:13–16; John 1:1, 14, 18)

Peter and Matthew agree with the prophets (Matt. 16:13–16). Like a crystal ball, John gives the clearest statement of Jesus' divinity anywhere in Scripture, summoning us upward to the sublime truth echoing from everlasting to everlasting: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). The beloved disciple then asserts that Jesus is so much God that He was the Creator of the universe (verse 3). The prophets and the apostles are in harmony; no, in unison. Where is the mystery?

Allied with John's teaching about divinity is his assertion that Jesus was human: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). Where—can someone tell me—is the mystery? Jesus was God, and He was Man. Could anything be clearer? If it is a mystery, it is the clearest mystery in all eternity.

### God Is Love (1 John 4:8)

Christians, from at least Paul onwards, have marveled at the "mystery" that God

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loved us “while we were yet sinners” (Rom. 5:8). And you know in your original sinful bones that they are right. But the fact that Jesus is divine and part of the only Divinity, the Trinity, explains this “mystery.” Or at least it would be more of a mystery if the Trinity did not love us, if the Father Almighty were not willing to sacrifice His only Son, if the Holy Spirit were unwilling to come down into Mary’s sinful flesh and implant a sinless baby, and if Jesus were not willing to die on the cross for us. The mystery of God’s love in Jesus completely neutralizes the mystery of iniquity, because the mystery of love is that it has always, always, always been and did not need to be created because there are Three Beings who have always loved. The only thing in the universe that did not need to be created by Christ is love, because it always, always, always has existed: “for God is love” (1 John 4:8). The Trinity is Love. We call these Three by one name—God. And this God calls Himself Love through the inspired word of the beloved disciple. They were practicing love from everlasting. For an entire eternity—from a time before time began, They loved and were Love.

### **“I Change Not” (Mal. 3:6)**

Then what is the one factor that both time and eternity share? They share the existence of a loving God—a plural Person, a single Divinity. What is the probability that a Three-Person God who had practiced love among His Three-Person Godhead for an eternity would suddenly change to not loving?

“‘I am the Lord, I change not’” (Mal. 3:6). God is so unchanging that He defines Himself grammatically in the eternal present tense: “‘I AM THAT I AM’” (Exod. 3:14). Jesus claims, “‘Before Abraham was, I am’” (John 8:58).

Paul emphatically endorses Him, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever” (Heb. 13:8). That yesterday was from everlasting. When He entered time (the womb), that “holy thing” (Luke 1:35) did not change. When He died on the cross, He did not change. He was still Love. When He ascended again into eternity to sit on the right hand of God the Father, Christ was unchanged. He was still Love. When He pleads against the mystery of iniquity, His argument is the mystery of Divinity, the Love that never had a beginning.

You know which argument will win.

In some sense, there is no mystery about Christ’s divinity, about His everlasting love. That is posited on a plural-person God. How could it be otherwise? It’s all perfectly logical, unbegotten, and unending.



Tuesday  
April 8

# Not an Afterthought

## TESTIMONY

John 1:1, 14

Both the Bible and the writings of Ellen White are clear about the preexistence of Christ. In fact, they both make it quite plain that this is a vital concept in trying to understand both the nature and identity of Jesus and the sacrifice He made for us in the plan of salvation.

"There are many who deny the preexistence of Christ, and therefore deny his divinity; they do not accept him as a personal Saviour. This is a total denial of Christ. He was the only-begotten Son of God, who was one with the Father from the beginning. By him the worlds were made."

In the epistle of John the preexistence of Christ is unmistakable. It is shown that long before He took on the form of humanity, Jesus existed as an equal with God the Father.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1, NIV). "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14, NIV).

**"This is a total denial of  
Christ."**

It is plain from these texts that it is the same "Word" that was One with the Father, and the "Word" that became human and eventually paid the ultimate sacrifice on the cross of Calvary. Ellen White refers to the

epistle of John to add more depth to this same concept.

"But while God's Word speaks of the humanity of Christ when upon this earth, it also speaks decidedly regarding his preexistence. The Word existed as a divine being, even as the eternal Son of God, in union and oneness with his Father. From everlasting he was the Mediator of the covenant, the One in whom all nations of the earth, both Jews and Gentiles, if they accepted him, were to be blessed. 'The Word was with God, and the Word was God.' Before men or angels were created, the Word was with God, and was God."<sup>2</sup>

God has obviously gone to great effort to tell His children both through biblical prophets and through Ellen White that He has loved them and planned for their eventual reunion with Him long before He actually came to earth.

1. *Signs of the Times*, May 28, 1894.

2. *Lift Him Up*, p. 74.



# Knowing Jesus, Our God and Savior

Wednesday  
April 9

## HOW-TO

John 1:1; 1 John 4:2

One afternoon during our lunch break, my Muslim workmates asked me questions about Christianity. To them the Roman Catholic Church is the standard of Christianity. So as we were talking, they were surprised to learn that there are other Christian groups whose beliefs are somewhat close to what they as Muslims believe. As we were going back to work, they told me, "We believe much of what you believe. But why are you worshipping three Gods?"

So I explained to them that we worship one God who reveals Himself in Three Persons, and that Jesus is the Son of God not because of birth but because of title. However, they did not seem convinced. So I just left it to the Holy Spirit to help them understand.

Later, as I was contemplating my conversation with my colleagues, I asked myself, *Do I know the Lord I am worshipping? Who is Jesus to me? Was I too eager to explain the difference among Christian groups instead of lifting up Jesus to my friends and letting Him draw them to Himself?* I concluded that even I needed to know more of my Lord before I could reveal Him to others.

*Who is Jesus to me?*

So how do we get to know Jesus, our God and Savior?

1. *Meet Him.* We establish relationships as we meet with others. These meetings can be physical, or they can be phone calls, or just chatting over the Internet. We meet Jesus by reading about Him from the Bible, seeing Him through nature, and listening to Him as He talks to us in that "still, small Voice."

2. *Talk to Him.* We talk to Jesus through prayer. In prayer, we tell Him how we feel, and we reason with Him (Isa. 1:18). We can also ask Him questions and share with Him our daily experiences.

3. *Listen to Him.* We can hear what Jesus has to say to us, how He loves us, and is interested in our well-being.

4. *Walk with Him.* Our will becomes His will as a result of walking with Him. Then people can't help but see Him in us. Just as people said of the disciples, people will say that we too have been with Jesus (Acts 4:13).

The best testimony we can give is to tell others what Jesus has done for us personally as our God and Savior.

What has Jesus done for you?

Thursday  
April 10

# The Call to Radical Identity

## OPINION

Phil. 2:7, 8

Generally, we are concerned about our social standing. This concern sometimes leads us to measure ourselves against other people. This causes us to use our blessings as a way of differentiating ourselves from others rather than as a way of participating in radical identity by sharing. What is radical identity? The writer of Philippians says it thus, "Taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness . . . he [Jesus] humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!" (Phil. 2:7, 8, NIV).

Historically, these verses have been used within the context of Christ emptying Himself of His divinity to take on human form, a philosophical argument with limited applicability to the daily Christian walk. However, I contend that these verses on radical identity are essential for the community of believers if they are truly to live out the kingdom in anticipation.

Radical identity is the divine identification with people who have low or no social standing. These are the people we generally do not invite to our homes for

### We could risk alienation.

Sabbath lunch. They are our brothers and sisters in the community of believers who do not hold positions within the church that define spirituality based on church duty. They are

also the people we love to show our largesse to because they are poor. But we refuse to question the structures that create the need for them to receive our charity. Is this because our charity makes us look and feel good?

One could argue that the message in Philippians 2:7, 8 is to teach us how to become a human being by separating ourselves from our social world. As we accept our identity as human beings and live out that identity in the social world through radical identification, we participate in the divine. The more we participate in the divine, the more courage we receive to take risks. We might not risk physical death, but we could risk our status. We could risk alienation. We could risk comfort. It is through such risks that we truly understand what it means to be human and to participate in the divine. Herein lies the crux of the message of Philippians.

## REACT

How do we live life in radical identification when our social world says that if we do, we will experience social disgrace?

# The Mystery of His Deity

## EXPLORATION

Heb. 13:8; Rev. 22:13

## CONCLUDE

Since the day He created Adam and Eve, people have known God by many names. These names are generally based on genealogy (Exod. 3:16) or deeds (Ps. 111:7–9). But when Moses asked what name he should give the Israelites when they wanted to know who sent him, God answered: “I AM” (Exod. 3:14). This is the name God has given Himself. Those two little words sum up the unfathomable greatness of God. Whenever we call on God, He is always there for us. Whatever our needs, His name says it all: I AM.

## CONSIDER

- Taking a walk and focusing on natural elements that are analogous of our relationship to God. (Example: a grain of sand on a beach.)
- Conducting a crystalline study using a variety of minerals. Note how each mineral always stays true to its own inherent shape. How does this law of constancy reflect God’s character?
- Seeing how many ways you can finish the statement: God is \_\_\_\_\_. How do the descriptions you use indicate your relationship with Him?
- Seeing how many of God’s names you can find in the Bible. Make a list of the names you find and keep it in your Bible along with the texts.
- Creating a portrait of God that doesn’t use human form, such as mathematical equations, musical lines, colors, or natural phenomena.
- Answering the question: How do *you* know God exists? What methods would you use to prove your own existence?
- Singing a song or melody that reflects your understanding of God. Use this music as part of your devotional time.

## CONNECT

*The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, nos. 21, 79, 90, 100, 114.  
Max Lucado, *Traveling Light*, chap. 2.

# The Reality of His Humanity



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**“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14, NIV).**

# Ouch!

## INTRODUCTION

Heb. 4:15, 16

Pain is defined as “acute mental or emotional distress or suffering” and “localized physical suffering associated with bodily disorder.”\* It is also the one thing that makes us know we are human. Whether physical or emotional, pain lets us know our limitations. It lets us know that we aren’t invincible, devoid of emotion, or isolated from the effects of the world.

All of us have experienced pain in some way or another. And all of us would, no doubt, decline to experience it again. However, because we do not easily forget pain, it can be an important learning tool. It is through this same harsh instrument that we can understand Christ’s humanity.

Many people question whether Jesus was indeed human when He lived on earth. Or they debate the ratio between His humanity and His divinity. But how can one measure another’s humanity? If we were to look at the pain inflicted upon Christ during His life on this earth, His humanity would become evident.

The pain Christ experienced wasn’t just physical. It also was emotional—knowing that all the sins of the world before, during, and after His life on earth were to be laid on His shoulders and carried with Him until His death. This pain was a partial result of knowing that many people actually fight to remain in sin even though He came to give His life for them.

**Pain ... can be an important learning tool.**

Imagine God telling you one night that someone you know was about to have something terrible happen to them; and then you tried to warn them of the danger, but to no avail. The pain that would envelope you in knowing they would be hurt and the sorrow of possibly losing them would be horrible. This is probably how Christ felt some of the time while on earth.

By watching the film *The Passion of the Christ* or reading about Christ’s crucifixion in the Bible, we learn how Christ was tortured and condemned. Truly, the Crucifixion is the greatest example of His love for us. Through His pain on the cross, many people learn for the first time just how much He really does love us.

Yes, pain sometimes is the best teacher. And Jesus suffered pain on our behalf. This is His humanity. This week, we will learn more about Jesus and what it meant for Him and for us that He was human.

\*Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 10th ed. (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, 1993).



# The Divine Bridge of Flesh and Blood

## LOGOS

Gal. 4:4; 1 Tim. 2:5; 3:16; Heb. 4:15, 16; 1 John 4:1-3

### God's Timely Intervention (Gal. 4:4)

When we read Galatians 4:4, we can trust and know that God has always had a plan through His Divine Providence. After approximately four thousand years of human depravity, God sent Jesus at just the right time. Jesus came down from infinite perfection to live as our Example in an imperfect human body, in a polluted atmosphere filled with pain and vice, so that through the symbolic application of His blood in our lives, we can overcome sin!

All who have lived on the earth from Adam and Eve to the present have experienced the effects of sin. "Adam and Eve were given a probation in which to return to their allegiance; and in this plan of benevolence all their posterity were embraced. After the Fall, Christ became Adam's instructor. He acted in God's stead toward humanity, saving the race from immediate death. He took upon Him the

work of mediator between God and man. In the fullness of time He was to be revealed in human form. He was to take His position at the head of humanity by taking the nature but not the sinfulness of man."\*

**This is a mystery even to  
the angels.**

Galatians 4:4 says that He was "made under the law." So we can look at His life and see in one sense that He was affected by natural laws (gravity, heat, etc.). He also obeyed His Father's commandments while still giving to Caesar what was Caesar's (Matt. 22:21).

### The Supreme Nexus (1 Tim. 2:5)

The rhetorical question, "Who's da man?" is a popular ebonics/patois cultural expression denoting the authority and uniqueness of a man with accomplishment. This definition is reminiscent of Jesus in 1 Timothy 2:5: "For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human" (NRSV). That Man, Christ Jesus, is our Mediator—not His mother Mary, not the pope, not your pastor, priest, or parish councillor—because Jesus is the *only* Man who is also the "I AM," the Eternal God. "A mediator supposes a controversy. Sin created a war between us and God; Jesus Christ is our Mediator who undertakes to make peace, to bring God and us back together, in the nature of an umpire or arbitrator who lays His hand upon both us and God (Job 9:33). Indeed, Jesus is the Supreme Nexus between God and earth!



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## A Great Mystery! (1 Tim. 3:16)

It's important to keep in mind that it was God (not a created being) who manifested Himself in the flesh in the form of Jesus Christ. This is a mystery even to the angels. Our guardian angels don't understand our humanity the way Jesus does! Jesus is a divine bridge of flesh and blood between God and earth. The most exhaustive exegesis of biblical passages cannot explain the mystery of God manifesting Himself in the flesh. To ponder the mystery of how this can be possible is like trying to quote the highest number! (Don't try this at home!)

Christ was challenged with our temptations. "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; *but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.* Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:15, 16, emphasis supplied).

If a visitor were to put me on the spot in the Sabbath School class and ask, "How can Jesus fully identify with the human sexuality gift He created for marriage if He never married?" I'd say that any answer to that question would more than likely have to contain multiple dimensions and considerations, including His leaving heaven (something better than the physicality of marriage), His exemplary life of blessing the wedded and single life, etc. Suffice it to say that we'd have quite a profound discussion which would factor in Christ's overcoming human nature, thereby receiving the same help available to us through prayer.

## Through the Spirit—in the Flesh (1 John 4:1–3)

"By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God" (1 John 4:2, NKJV). The Holy Spirit felt it appropriate to impress the apostle John to stress in Holy Writ how important it was for us to believe that Jesus Christ came and lived in the flesh insofar that a warning is given to anyone or any system which seeks to deny this fact (see verse 3). Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus lived and triumphed over sin in the flesh. Satan hates the fact that Christ conquered sin in this way. Ultimately, we can triumph over sin in this flesh, because Jesus did so on our behalf!

All we have to do is accept Him and ask Him to live out His life within us. Then, as long as we stay in His will, the merits of His record will be applied to us to the end of this life and forever.

## REACT

Do you think God is willing to give us as much power from the Holy Spirit as He did with Jesus? Why? Why not?

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\*The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 912.

Monday  
April 14

# "Jesus Entered Imperfect Flesh and Blood"

## TESTIMONY

Heb. 2:18; 4:15

"As one of us He was to give an example of obedience. For this He took upon Himself our nature, and passed through our experiences . . . [cf. 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. As man, He met temptation, and overcame in the strength given Him from God.'"

"He who seeks to transform humanity must himself understand humanity. Only through sympathy, faith, and love can men be reached and uplifted. Here Christ stands revealed as the master teacher; of all that ever dwelt on the earth, He alone has perfect understanding of the human soul. . . .

"Christ alone had experience in all the sorrows and temptations that befall human beings. Never another of woman born was so fiercely beset by temptation;

never another bore so heavy a burden of the world's sin and pain. Never was there another whose sympathies were so broad or so tender. A sharer in all the experiences of humanity, He could feel not only

**"Wondrous combination of  
man and God!"**

for, but with, every burdened and tempted and struggling one."<sup>2</sup>

"The whole treasure of heaven was poured out in one gift to save fallen man. He brought into his human nature all the life-giving energies that human beings will need and must receive. 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."<sup>3</sup>

## REACT

Jesus never married. So how can He relate to the passionate love that He created for the divinely ordained relationship of marriage?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 24.

2. *Education*, p. 78.

3. *The Review and Herald*, July 5, 1887.

# In His Image

## EVIDENCE

Gen. 1:26–28

I believe that when God created us in His image He gave us the same core values and feelings that make Him who He is. For example, isn't it amazing that the very act of creation is enveloped in love? Does God not also create in love? Is God not love?

And so when we talk about Jesus being fully God and fully human at the same time, the two are not quite so far removed as it may seem, because the one is a replica of the other. Of course, by the time Jesus walked this earth, His image in us had been warped by centuries of sin. And yet as Jesus lived out His sinless life, we cannot help but be drawn to the character traits He revealed. This was not just a revelation of God's original plan for us. Jesus' life also revealed to us God's true character.

So was Jesus really that human? Let's look at some of the evidence the Bible gives us. It tells us that Jesus developed (Luke 2:52), and became hungry, thirsty, and tired (Matt. 4:2; John 19:28; 4:6) just as we do. Jesus was a man not only in the physical sense, but also in the emotional sense (Matt. 9:36; Mark 3:5; 10:21; John 11:35; 12:27; 15:11). So was He really God? Yes. The Father Himself calls Jesus God (Heb. 1:8, 9), and John 1:1 says that Jesus was with the Father since eternity.

**So was Jesus really that human?**

Ellen White wrote a wonderful observation about Christ's humanity and ours: "By His life and His death, Christ has achieved even more than recovery from the ruin wrought through sin. It was Satan's purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen. In taking our nature, the Saviour has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken."<sup>\*</sup>

## REACT

What do Jesus' feelings, emotions, and actions in His human form reveal about what God is like? Do you like the image you see? Would you want to spend eternity with Someone like that?

<sup>\*</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 25.

# What Is That to Me?

## HOW-TO

Heb. 4:14–16

This week we've been looking at Jesus' humanity. So how does this affect our life?

1. *Jesus had human experiences.* The devil didn't leave Him with a peaceful life (Heb. 4:15). He is in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Because of that, He is our High Priest. He can explain to God what we are going through (not that God doesn't already know), but it gives me comfort that Jesus can identify with me in this way.

2. *Humanity has new potential.* "Christ clothed His divinity with humanity that humanity might be clothed with the righteousness of Christ. . . . Humanity is honored because Jesus assumed humanity to reveal to the world what humanity may become. He came to bring life and immortality to light, to fill the commonplace, homeliest pursuits of life with brightness." Without God taking on the form of man in Jesus, there is no way we would be able to experience the righteousness and goodness of God's kingdom. We would have been doomed forever to hopelessness and darkness.

**We would have been  
doomed forever . . .**

3. *We have a real-life example of who God is and what He requires of us.* "By coming to dwell with us, Jesus was to reveal God both to men and to angels. He was the Word of God,—

God's thought made audible. In His prayer for His disciples He says, 'I have declared unto them Thy name,'—'merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,'—'that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them.'"<sup>2</sup> Nothing in Jesus' earthly ministry "just happened." Life lessons can be gained and a greater relationship with God can be attained from living out the life of Jesus.

Jesus came to earth to show us what God is like and to save us from sin. Because of that, He brought us hope, joy, light, and an example of how we are to live.

## REACT

1. Do we need to prove to the world that Jesus was God? Why or why not?
2. How did Jesus say the world would know that the Father had sent Him (John 17:21)?

1. *That I May Know Him*, p. 47.

2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 19.

# One Hundred Percent Human!

## OPINION

Heb. 4:15, 16

For some Christians and onlookers, Christ's humanity only was shown in the events leading up to His crucifixion and the fact that He died on the cross. But what evidence do we have that Christ is fully human? Galatians 4:4, 1 Timothy 2:5, and 3:16 speak about Christ being born to a woman, being a man, and being made manifest in the flesh. But how do we know that God feels what we are feeling or has felt what we have felt?

Hebrews 4:15, 16 says, "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (NKJV). Thus the question, Can Christ be fully human since He did not sin? Sinning is one aspect of humanity, but sinning is not the embodiment of humanity since humans also do good. So that does not make Christ "unhuman." In every other aspect, Christ was human. He wept over Jerusalem, He felt hungry, and He even got angry without sinning, so there is hope for us. We can live a sin-free life not through our power, but through the Holy Spirit dwelling in us.

**There is hope for us.**

Jesus' ability to perform miracles showed that He knew how it felt to suffer, whether suffering the loss of sight, limbs, or ultimately death from which He raised Lazarus. In the Bible, there is enough evidence that Christ became flesh. However, this evidence is inconsequential if we don't believe it through faith.

A God who created us because He is God has to know what it is like to be human or He would not be God. He knows that as humans, we would not be able to appreciate our salvation if He did not send His Son to die.

Let us rest in the thought that Christ knew it was possible for Him to sin. What prevented Him from sinning was not His divinity, but His humanity, His closeness to the Father. Ellen White reassures us, "Our Saviour took humanity, with all its liabilities. He took the nature of man, with the possibility of yielding to temptation. We have nothing to bear which He has not endured."\* That settles it for me.

\**The Desire of Ages*, p. 117.



# Jesus: Bridging Heaven and Earth

## EXPLORATION

Gal. 2:20

## CONCLUDE

While in heaven, Jesus was exalted above the angels. To reveal the character of God and contrast it to Satan's character, Jesus stooped lower than the angels to enter our human experience. He was hungry, thirsty, and weary. He wept at the tomb of a friend, suffered pain and rejection, and sought the company of close associates. He was tempted by Satan like we are today. Yet throughout His life, He remained sinless. He knows our struggles. He feels our pain. Amid the storms of life He is our Companion on whom we can always count.

## CONSIDER

- Making two columns on your computer or on a sheet of paper. Label column 1 "Divinity" and column 2 "Humanity." As you review the lesson, write words or phrases that indicate Jesus was fully God in column 1. In column 2 write words or phrases that indicate He was fully human.
- Listening to music on a Christian radio station for half an hour. Count the number of songs in that time period that use words to describe Jesus as One who is either loving, merciful, gracious, long-suffering, or abundant in goodness and truth.
- Choosing your favorite artist's conception of Jesus from one of the images at <http://picturesofjesus4you.com/store1.html>. Ask yourself why you selected that particular representation.
- Creating a reader's theater script appropriate for use in worship services that makes Matthew 4 and Luke 4 relevant for today.
- Contrasting Jesus' character as displayed while on earth with Satan's character as he roams earth to this day. Analyze and chart the variables between the two. Use your chart to self-check which character you most often reflected to others this week.
- Writing a prayer naming a temptation you struggle with that has the same cause as one Jesus experienced while on earth. With a red pen write "mercy and grace" over the words on your paper. Then shred the paper.

## CONNECT

Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew*; J. R. Zurcher, *Touched With Our Feelings: A Historical Survey of Adventist Thought on the Human Nature of Christ*.

# The Wisdom of His Teachings



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**"The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law" (Mark 1:22, NIV).**

## Wisdom for Everyday Use

### INTRODUCTION

Gen. 3:5, 6; Matthew 5–7

There is a sticker where I work that strikes me with sad irony every time I see it. It proudly proclaims that “The wisdom is within.” Why the irony? It’s on the door of the mental health assessment room. Those passing through this room are psychotic, suicidal, manic, depressed, or just plain bad. They are the last people in the world one would approach when seeking wisdom.

Wisdom. What is it? *The Macquarie Dictionary* defines it as “knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action.”\* But this definition then begs the question, What is true and right?

As a race, we have sought wisdom from the time of Eden. Eve ate the forbidden fruit because she chose to believe the serpent’s claim. Read Genesis 3:15.

We still desperately seek wisdom in all sorts of likely and unlikely places. We exalt those whom we believe possess wisdom and consult them when we’re faced with difficult decisions. Indeed, there have been many acclaimed wise men and women who have graced earth’s history. But at best, theirs is still merely human wisdom.

**His words. His wisdom. For  
everyday use.**

Through Jesus’ teachings, we know for certain what is true and right wisdom in God’s eyes. Unlike the teachings of every other wise person on the planet, His wisdom comes from outside the realm of humanity.

But even though Jesus’ wisdom comes from God, He spoke it in a language that the simplest person could understand. He used everyday imagery such as light, salt, birds of the air, and lilies of the field. He taught about issues that to us in our human wisdom may not appear to be important, but are of utmost importance in the eyes of God—issues such as trust, sin’s loathsomeness, prayer, relationships, greed, and purity of mind. Through His use of everyday analogies, He taught that God’s wisdom is meant to be used everyday.

Most importantly, His wisdom is inclusive. “*Everyone* then who hears these words of mine *and acts on them* will be like a wise man who built his house on a rock” (Matt. 7:24, NRSV, emphasis supplied). Nobody is excluded.

His words. His wisdom. For everyday use.

\**The Macquarie Dictionary* (n.c., New South Wales, Australia: Macquarie University Press, 1996).

# Don't Worry . . . Be Happy?

## EVIDENCE

Matt. 6:25–34

It is 8:50 A.M. The day you've been anticipating and dreading. In ten minutes, you'll sit for your driving test. You need this license. It's the final condition to secure the job you've applied for. Just as you resolve that no one has noticed the commotion going on inside your body, your friend leans over and says, "Don't worry, you'll be all right."

Worry. Along with the buzz of doubt in your head, your body goes into overdrive. Scientists refer to this as our "fight-or-flight" response, where the sympathetic nervous system floods the body with chemical compounds like adrenaline. The heart, muscles, lungs, and brain are supercharged—translating to a desire to run and hide from everything you're facing.

Jesus spoke about worry. He understood that we experience these physical and mental symptoms in certain situations. He also saw us getting caught up with juggling the details of life as we contemplate work, study, money, and pressure to succeed. When we focus on keeping control of our lives, we live in a prolonged fight-or-flight state, an unhealthy revving of our nervous system.

God offers us real peace . . .

In response, Jesus doesn't offer wise counsel about how to manage stress or glib statements about "being happy." He lived His philosophy. Indeed, Jesus' life demonstrated that God offers us a way of living above and beyond human understanding or wisdom.

Consider this: "The Peace of God lies deeper than all knowledge of earth's wisdom. In that quiet realm of the Spirit, where dwell all who are controlled by *My Spirit*, there can all secrets be revealed, all Hidden-Kingdom-Truths be shown and learned. Live there, and *Truth* deeper than all *knowledge* shall be revealed to you."<sup>2</sup>

God offers us real peace, allowing a quiet trust in His leading in our lives. He doesn't say we won't face difficulties that make us uneasy, but He reminds us to seek Him and His righteousness *as a way of life*. Just as the Father cared for Jesus, the birds, and the lilies, so, too, will He care for you.

1. J. H. Wilmore & D. L. Costill, *Physiology of Sport and Exercise* (Champaign, Ill.: Human Kinetics, 1994).

2. A. J. Russell, ed., *God at Eventide* (United Kingdom: Arthur James Ltd, 1953), pp. 180, 181.

Monday  
April 21

## Teachings for the Exam of Life

### LOGOS

Matthew 5–7; 20:25–28; John 4:22–24; 8:2–11

#### Don't Beat Around the Bush (Matthew 5–7)

Jesus' sermon on the mount took place relatively early in His ministry. He chose not to ease Himself into public preaching with gentle, inoffensive messages. He did not beat around the bush or teach with euphemisms and comforting platitudes. Instead, the Sermon on the Mount is full of direct, power-packed statements that are straight to the point.

For example, read Matthew 5:20. This statement must have been mind-blowing for His listeners of the day. Also read Matthew 6:15. This is still a hard-hitting challenge for listeners of today.

#### Jesus and the *TARDIS*® Truths (Matthew 5–7)

Although Jesus did not beat around the bush, He did present many of His truths in *TARDIS* format. The *TARDIS* is the spaceship of choice of Doctor Who, the time-traveling Time Lord from the British television series *Doctor Who*. What's intriguing about the *TARDIS* is that viewed from the outside, it looks like a public phone box. Once you step inside, however, it is about the size of a house. It's bigger on the inside than the outside. So it is with many of

**It's bigger on the inside  
than the outside.**

Jesus' teachings—they contain enormous, universe-sized challenges tucked into small pockets of earthling words. For example, read Matthew 7:12 and 5:44.

#### Wisdom for Sinners, Seekers, and Believers (Matthew 5–7)

In line with the *TARDIS*-like nature of Jesus' teachings, much of the Sermon on the Mount is presented in Matthew as a series of sound bite-like chunks of information, instruction, or wisdom. Most of these sound bites are directed specifically at believers and the type of lives they should live: being the salt of the earth and the light of the world, having certain attitudes regarding murder, adultery, and divorce; loving one's enemies in order to be like our heavenly Father, praying a certain way, and much more. However, some of these sound bites are relevant to all sinners, not just those who have chosen to follow God. Matthew 5:25, for example, advises quick settlement of conflict, before it goes to court, in order to reach a better outcome—good advice for anyone! Additionally, some of Jesus' wisdom is par-



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ticularly pertinent to “seekers”—those looking for the road to meaning in life. Read Matthew 7:13, 14.

## **God’s Kingdom (Matt. 5:3–12)**

Jesus revealed that God’s kingdom operates on a different set of values than do worldly kingdoms. The Beatitudes (Matt. 5:3–12) extol characteristics normally despised by people with worldly ambitions—characteristics such as humility, mercy, meekness, and purity. Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus challenged normal human behavior and responses. He told us to turn the other cheek, walk the second mile, love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us, stop worrying about our lives and our clothes, and do to others what we would have them do to us. Jesus further turned things upside down by asserting that to become great, His followers must become as servants (Matt. 20:25–28).

## **Righteousness (John 4:23, 24)**

Jesus told us that true spirituality is also about our hearts (inward righteousness) and not just our behavior (outward righteousness.) In Matthew 5, He tells us that being angry (inward) is like murder (outward) and that lust (inward) is the same as adultery (outward) (verses 21, 22; 27–30). In chapter 6, He tells us three times to do things in secret (giving, praying, fasting), and starts by saying, “‘Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them’” (verse 1, NRSV; verses 1–16). In chapter 7, He refers to people who prophesy, drive out demons, and perform miracles (outward), saying, “‘I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you’ ’” (inward) (verses 21–23, NIV). It is little wonder then that He told the Samaritan woman that God seeks worshipers who will worship the Father in spirit and truth (John 4:23, 24).

## **God’s Approach to Us**

Much of Jesus’ teaching and life helps paint a picture of God and His approach to us. We hear that God wants to provide for our needs. Read Matthew 6:30. Moreover, God wants to give us good gifts. Read Matthew 7:11.

## **REACT**

1. Much of the Sermon on the Mount contains instructions on correct behavior for followers of God. How do we reconcile this emphasis on behavior with the parallel emphasis on inward righteousness?

2. Read Matthew 7:17–20. Do you sometimes feel like a bad tree trying to bear good fruit? How can you be sure that you are a “good tree”?

## Be a Lifelong Student

### TESTIMONY

Ps. 72:6

"'He . . . taught them, saying, *Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*' Matthew 5:2, 3. As something strange and new, these words fall upon the ears of the wondering multitude. Such teaching is contrary to all they have ever heard from priest or rabbi. They see in it nothing to flatter their pride or to feed their ambitious hopes. . . . His words fall like 'rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth.' Psalm 72:6. . . . [H]ere is One who reads the secrets of the soul, yet who comes near to them with tender compassion. Their hearts open to Him, and, as they listen, the Holy Spirit unfolds to them something of the meaning of that lesson which humanity in all ages so needs to learn."<sup>1</sup>

They liked the certainty, the simplicity, and the openness of Christ's teaching. They heard truth in its purest form. "The work of Christ was to give again to the world the truth in its original freshness and beauty. He represented the spiritual and the heavenly, by the things of nature and experience. He gave fresh manna to the hungry soul."<sup>2</sup>

**"[H]ere is One who reads  
the secrets of the soul . . ."**

Never before had people "perceived such a depth of meaning in the word of God. . . . He spoke as one having authority. This characteristic set His teaching in contrast with that of all others. . . . Whatever His subject, it was presented with power, as if His words could not be controverted. . . . He was bringing to view the realities of the eternal world. In every theme God was revealed."<sup>3</sup>

Nothing has changed about His way with words. That is why we do well to remember that "in the school of Christ, students are never graduated. . . . Those who give heed to the instructions of the divine Teacher constantly advance in wisdom, refinement, and nobility of soul, and thus they are prepared to enter that higher school where advancement will continue throughout eternity."<sup>4</sup>

### REACT

Familiarity can lead to complacency. What can we do to ensure Jesus' teachings remain relevant in the church and in our personal lives?

1. *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 6.
2. *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 237.
3. *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 254, 255.
4. *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 51.

# Know It? Do It!

## HOW-TO

Ps. 18:30

To have a positive effect on this world, Jesus' teachings cannot merely be acknowledged and left to gather dust. They must be acted upon. So how can we act upon Jesus' teachings to change ourselves, others, and the world for the better?

1. *Study them.* If you're studying for an exam, reading the material only once isn't a good idea. The more complex and the more important a subject is, the more you should read it. Jesus' teachings are so important and beneficial that we should constantly study them to remember them, to learn what they mean, and to discover new insights. While Jesus' teachings can be understood by a child, His wisdom also can be explored on a much deeper level by theologians. Ultimately, however, it is by inviting the Holy Spirit to be with you during your study that will yield the most amazing discoveries of truth.

2. *Apply them.* Though written long ago in such a different culture, Jesus' teachings still apply to us today. Even so, try to modernize different teachings, especially the parables, to see if that helps you grasp their meaning even more. Change quantities and measurements to modern amounts you can comprehend. Change worker roles in parables to modern-day employment positions. Also, see if you can fit yourself into each teaching and how it applies specifically to your life situation.

**Imagine a world that  
studied and lived by Jesus'  
teachings.**

3. *Live them.* Having the teachings, knowledge, and theory in your head is one thing. However, most benefits only come by living what He taught. This is another challenge altogether. In everything you do, make sure it matches what Jesus taught. This isn't only a recipe for a happy life. It also speaks a thousand Bible studies to those watching you who don't yet believe.

4. *Share them.* To get the most out of Jesus' teachings, we must share them. This doesn't mean telling people off for not doing what He taught. Share Jesus' teachings with love. Always share His wisdom with others when opportunities arise.

Imagine a world that studied and lived by Jesus' teachings. What an amazing world this would be! Until this earth is made new, not everyone will take hold of His teachings. But those who do will see a big difference in their lives and in the lives of the people with whom they share Jesus. It's definitely worth the effort.

Thursday  
April 24

## Not *What*, But *How* and *Why*

### OPINION

Luke 18:9–14

Most people have heard about a tax collector and a Pharisee who went to the temple to pray: the “religious” Pharisee with his puffed up chest, and his voice filled with self-assurance and pride; the outcast tax collector, who dared not even to look toward God, so great was his humility. The primary message of this parable was to let the Pharisees and religious officials know that their tradition of pride was not right. It is easy to see the application of this story in the past, in the way people prayed then. But could it not also be true that many of us today fall into this same trap of pride?

When the religious leader in this story prayed, he stood alone in the middle of the temple. He said all the right words, recited the right memory verses, thanked God for the blessings in his life, and reminded God and all those present of his devotion to keeping the feasts.

**The wisdom of Jesus makes us look at life and faith in a different way.**

If you stop to think about it, it wasn't *what* he said that was wrong. It was *how* and *why* he said it. It wasn't wrong for this man to thank God for His life-changing abilities. It wasn't wrong for him to say, “I keep the feasts.” What *was* wrong was the

time, the place, and the audience.

An elder can stand in front of the church and share an inspirational story about how God is working in his life. He may have healed ten cancer patients through God's power, brought 57 souls to Jesus, and fed a whole orphanage. But if that elder stands with pride and speaks to let you know that God thinks he's better than you because he's done all this, then that elder is in the wrong.

Simultaneously, there was the tax collector who stood at a distance, just one face among the crowd; a man who with humility reflected on his failures and cried out for mercy; a man who knew nothing of his own power, but everything of God's power. In Luke 18:14, Jesus tells us that it was *this* man who went home right with God. The wisdom of Jesus makes us look at life and faith in a different way.

# Wisdom From Above

## EXPLORATION

Matthew 5–7

## CONCLUDE

Jesus taught heavenly wisdom using language that ordinary people could understand. He used simple illustrations from nature and everyday life. He also taught people by the way He lived. The teachings of Jesus show us the values of God's kingdom. In order for His teachings to have a positive effect, we need to continually study God's Word, apply it to our lives, live the way God instructed, and share these words of wisdom with others. When we do that, we will find ourselves with a different outlook on life and faith.

## CONSIDER

- Creating a collage of sayings that you like from the teachings of Jesus. Also find pictures to use in your collage that depict these sayings.
- Listing five everyday items Jesus used in His teachings and the lessons He drew from them. What items do you have that might illustrate the same teachings?
- Listening to a recording of one of the Gospels as you take a walk in nature. Smell the flowers, watch the birds flying overhead, and learn from the teachings of Jesus.
- Working with a friend to create a short skit based on one of the parables or sayings of Jesus.
- Drawing a poster illustrating one of Jesus' teachings and placing it where you will see it on a regular basis.
- Reflecting on what it means to be a lifelong student of God's Word.

## CONNECT

*Christ's Object Lessons*, chap. 1; *The Desire of Ages*, chap. 31.



# The Wonder of His Works



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**“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matt. 9:36, NIV).**

# What Do You Expect From Jesus?

## INTRODUCTION

Matt. 4:22–25; James 4:2

When was the last time you saw someone miraculously healed? If you do not feel surprised at the lack of healings, maybe you need to reexamine your expectations of Jesus.

If you have read the suggested Bible verses, which you definitely should do this week, you will notice the emphasis on Jesus' miraculous works. He healed people from demons, seizures, pain, and even death. This part of the story is not surprising to many of us; we know this. But there is an important detail we may be missing—the role of expectation.

In Matthew 4:22–25, we notice the demons leaving and the resurrection of the dead, but what we might not notice is the following: “News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill” (Matt. 4:24, NIV). People brought Him the sick because they expected Him to do something for them. Their hearing led to expectations of future miracles. It led them to take action, to step out of their comfort zone, and give Jesus the opportunity to move miraculously in *their* lives. Their expecting Jesus to act actually enabled Him to heal them.

Today we are faced with the reality that God doesn't always heal. That “always” will be a reality as long as we live on this imperfect planet. But what could God do differently if we changed our expectations of Him?

**Their hearing led . . . them  
to take action.**

We've heard about Jesus, we've heard that He performs miracles and dramatically changes lives. But do we think Jesus has changed over the years? Or do we have an internal expectation that God is still the God of the Bible, that He still performs miracles and turns that expectation into action which can allow God to act miraculously on our behalf or on the behalf of those for whom we are praying?

Yet miracles alone are not what we should be striving for. Having a dynamic personal relationship with us is the most important thing in the world to God. But He hasn't stopped performing miraculous signs and healing the sick. Perhaps, though, we have stopped expecting Him to.

“You do not have, because you do not ask God” (James 4:2, NIV).

Sunday  
April 27

# The Works of His Heart

## LOGOS

Matt. 4:23–25; 8:25–27; 11:2–6; 12:22, 23; Acts 3:19–21

### Practical Works (Matt. 4:23–25)

Jesus taught, preached, and healed. The people's reaction to His message was to bring more vexing problems to His attention. Jesus attracted people with real need from everywhere. Whatever type of illness or oppression people had, in Jesus they experienced a Potent Healer.

Practical solutions and works have a way of transcending barriers of language, race, or culture. How interesting that this should be the first lesson to the first four disciples of Jesus. Have we learned this first step to successful disciple making?

### Marvelous Works (Matt. 8:25–27)

Jesus' works were practical works, but they were also marvelous works. Take the example of the disciples in the storm. At their wits' end, they sought His assistance. After rebuking them for their immature faith, He stilled the storm. Jesus silenced waves. That day, He proved to His disciples that He had total control over emotions and elements.

This work of Christ was so outside the realm of the ordinary that it left the disciples at a loss for categorizing the type of person He was. He is qualitatively different. Marvelously different. Jesus had the faith to sleep through the storm as well as to silence it, and He expected His disciples to have the same faith.

**He is . . . different.  
Marvelously different.**

### Unsettling Works (Matt. 11:2–24; 12:22, 23)

John thought Christ wasn't doing enough, while the Pharisees thought He was doing too much. It seems so easy for Christian and critic alike to set God's agenda, to tell Him what should be done, to whom, and when. Then we get bent out of shape when God refuses to stick to our program.

John and the disciples were puzzled that Jesus would not continue in the spirit of Elijah, raining fire and brimstone on Herod and the leaders of the people, demanding that all surrender to God's will now. Instead, Jesus stayed under the radar, healing and asking that His marvelous works be kept secret. In His ministry, Jesus "never needlessly spoke a severe word."\* John was puzzled, thinking surely

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the Messiah would be more like him.

The Pharisees, on the other hand, were motivated by blind jealousy. The people recognized Jesus as the Son of David. But the Pharisees read in Jesus' exaltation their fall.

How each dealt with doubt is instructive for us today. John checks his doubts secretly with Jesus, but the Pharisees publicly slander Him. He is the son of Satan, they hiss. Afraid the people have it right, the Pharisees strike out at the Savior rather than submit to His agenda.

Believer and skeptic alike find in Christ's work a stone of stumbling. Believers lose their footing for a while, but after the skeptics' fall is broken, they are crushed by the Rock (Matt. 21:44; Rom. 9:33). John, the faithful messenger to Jesus, could profit from a reminder. Focusing on the heart of Christ refreshes his vision of God's agenda. But the critics, the Pharisees, and others who feel their influence ebbing away, do not know how to decrease as Christ increases (John 3:30).

## **Restorative Works (Acts 3:19–21)**

Acts 3 details the story of Peter and John healing a lame man who sat begging daily by the temple gates. Short on cash, Peter and John were overflowing with a new mandate to continue the work Jesus began on earth. The complete healing of the man became an attention-getter for Peter's sermon and a paradigm for Christ's work on a cosmic level.

Peter describes Christ's work as refreshing and future restorative. Christ's work is as refreshing as a cool breeze on an oppressively hot day. Through repentance and reformation, we experience a new era of refreshing relationship with God. In His presence, we are promised a season of refreshing peace in a world of constant strife.

Then Peter turns from the now to the future and ultimate work of restoration. Christ ascends to put all things back in order. He ascends to bless this cosmos, now under the curse of sin, with "perfect soundness." We anxiously await the unveiling of the Universe Mender's most glorious work of heart—a new heaven and a new earth.

## **REACT**

1. How different would your life be if today you surrendered your agendas and ambitions to God?
2. What excites you most about Jesus' cosmic restorative work: (a) universal peace, (b) abounding health, or (c) forever fellowship? Why?

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\**Gospel Workers*, p. 117.

## "Except Ye See Signs and Wonders"

### TESTIMONY

Matt. 8:5-13; John 4:43-54

"Like a flash of light, the Saviour's words to the nobleman laid bare his heart. He saw that his motives in seeking Jesus were selfish. His vacillating faith appeared to him in its true character. In deep distress he realized that his doubt might cost the life of his son. He knew that he was in the presence of One who could read the thoughts, and to whom all things were possible. In an agony of supplication he cried, 'Sir, come down ere my child die.' His faith took hold upon Christ as did Jacob, when, wrestling with the Angel, he cried, 'I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.' Gen. 32:26."<sup>1</sup>

"Christ had said to the nobleman whose son He healed, 'Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.' John 4:48. He was grieved that His own nation should require these outward signs of His Messiahship. Again and again He had marveled at their unbelief. But He marveled at the faith of the centurion who came to Him. The centurion did not question the Saviour's power. He did not even ask

Him to come in person to perform the miracle. 'Speak the word only,' he said, 'and my servant shall be healed.'"<sup>2</sup>

**"His doubt might cost the  
life of his son."**

Both the nobleman and the centurion came to Jesus with a request for healing. One came with a "when-I-see-it, I'll-believe-it" attitude, while the other came with an "I-know-You-can-[and-will]-do-it" attitude. One nearly lost the blessing he sought, while the other was commended by Christ for his faith. What caused the difference between the two men's views? "He [the centurion] trusted not to his own goodness; his argument was his great need. His faith took hold upon Christ in His true character. He did not believe in Him merely as a worker of miracles, but as the friend and Saviour of mankind."<sup>3</sup>

### REACT

1. What place is there in our faith for miraculous works from God?
2. Is there ever a time when we deserve a miracle from God?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 198.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 315.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 317.



# His Works of Forgiveness and Healing

Tuesday  
April 29

## EVIDENCE

Mark 2:10–12

In Capernaum, Jesus healed many of the diseases of body and mind, thus giving evidence that God's kingdom was at hand. Yet when it seemed that His popularity would cloud the true significance of His work, He left Capernaum. "Jesus was not satisfied to attract attention to Himself merely as a wonder worker or a healer of physical diseases. He was seeking to draw men to Him as their Saviour. . . . *Mere worldly success would interfere with His work*" (emphasis added). He left to return again (Mark 2:1, 2) when the hunger for spiritual healing would take center stage over the desire for physical restoration. Jesus wanted His hearers to understand that forgiveness of sin is paramount in His work. He must first free the sin-bound soul before curing the sin-scarred body.

Recently, scientists and psychologists have become acutely aware of the cost emotional stress has on human physiology. Studies correlate the impact of major life changes, life's daily hassles, catastrophic events, and chronic societal stressors on our ability to function in full health. A new field, psychoneuroimmunology, has been developed to explore this mind-body link.<sup>2</sup>

**Studies correlate the impact of major life changes . . . on our ability to function in full health.**

In Capernaum, Jesus illustrated the wonder of His forgiveness and healing for mind and body. He understood that the paralytic needed to be released in his mind before he could ever enjoy the benefits of freedom in his body. "There are today thousands suffering from physical disease, who, like the paralytic, are longing for the message, 'Thy sins are forgiven.' . . . The peace which He alone can give would impart vigor to the mind, and health to the body."<sup>3</sup> Jesus got the people's attention through healing wonders and taught them the truth about forgiveness and sin. No wonder they exclaimed: " 'We have never seen anything like this!' " (Mark 2:12, NIV). An understanding of the fundamental doctrine of forgiveness was necessary for them to accept the ultimate purpose for Jesus' ministry of wonders—salvation through His death on the cross to secure our deliverance from sin.

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 260.

2. Philip G. Zimbardo, *Psychology and Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), pp. 472–487.

3. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 145.

## HOW-TO

Matt. 20:28; 28:20; Col. 2:17

Have you witnessed a miracle or had a defining moment where there was no other explanation except God was at work?

I will never forget sitting on the bank of a small, cold river in rural Mongolia where I witnessed 18 traditional Arvayheer townspeople surrender their lives to Jesus in baptism. It was one of those times when I knew God had done His thing. During my time in Mongolia, I did not see the sick healed or the dead raised to life. But I did see miracles. I saw God transform the lives of Mongolian men, women, and children. This was an awe-inspiring experience. But I see Him doing the same miracles in my world too. I see sight given to the spiritually blind, direction to the lost, mobility to the downtrodden.

The Jesus who walked this earth, preaching, teaching, and healing people everywhere is the same One who transforms lives today! Here is how we can be more open to the wonders of His works in our lives:

### We can become miracle-makers!

1. *Have a relationship with the Miracle-Maker.* When we accept Jesus as our Savior, He becomes our Friend. He is real and gives life-changing power. We are to draw nourishment from God so our faith

can be rooted in Him (Col. 2:17). Faith grows your relationship and opens your eyes to the wonders of His works. These wonders may surprise you!

2. *With God's power, you too can be a miracle-maker.* Once we have a relationship with Jesus, we are His disciples. We become more like Jesus and can do what He did. When we live and speak the gospel, we can be miracle-makers! Don't underestimate the wonders of His works and the part you can play. For Jesus said, "I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:20, NIV).

3. *Remember, it's all about service.* Jesus did not perform miracles for His own glory. He performed them for the glory of God and for the service of humanity. "For even I, the Son of Man, came here not to be served but to serve others, and to give my life as a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28, NLT). Miracles can happen if our focus is right and we are building the kingdom of God.

What miracles do you see happening as you grow in Christ?

# Complications of Cowardice

## OPINION

Matt. 8:25–27

“‘Master, save us! We’re going down!’” (Matt. 8:25, *The Message*). We have all at different stages on our spiritual journey experienced storms that have threatened to capsize our dreams. The deliverance provided yesterday—no matter how dramatic—seems irrelevant to today’s peril. Blinded by panic and tired from bailing out water, we cry to God for a miracle, wondering in the process why He seems oblivious to our desperation. Jesus’ response to His disciples’ plea provides pause for thought. Jesus diagnosed a deficiency of faith complicated by cowardice (Matt. 8:26). The fact that the disciples sought Jesus’ intervention in the face of a storm seems commendable and is in keeping with numerous sermons that have as their punch line “When the storms of life are threatening you, cry out to God.” To do so seems to require a degree of faith. Yet Jesus dismisses this notion and brands His disciples as cowards. Why?

Implied in Jesus’ response is this: “Seeing what you have seen of My miracles, why are you afraid? If you say you believe, then why don’t you act like you believe?” Faith and doubt have been referred to as twin sisters. Often on our spiritual sojourn we find ourselves accompanied by both. We know God can, but we question whether He will. Soon our doubt morphs into cowardice, and we start asking ourselves, “Suppose God doesn’t come through this time, what then?” We quickly forget yesterday’s miracles as we cry out to Jesus for a new miracle, all the while preparing ourselves for disappointment—just in case He goes on sleeping.

**Imagine the possibilities.**

Jesus’ awesome wonder is that He acts in spite of His disciples’ inadequacies. Yet we are left to ponder how this situation might have unfolded differently had they not been found wanting. With increased faith and confidence, might they have been able to harness the power of heaven to calm the storm?

Jesus admonishes us today to not simply believe that He is able, but to believe that He will. Imagine the possibilities.

Friday  
May 2

# Jesus the Miracle-Worker

## EXPLORATION

Matt. 9:36

## CONCLUDE

When people heard about Jesus healing the sick, they flocked to Him from miles away. Jesus did not want fame as the wonder-worker, but as the Savior. He still wants to be known as a Healer of hearts.

God is still ready and willing to do whatever it takes to get our attention. We like to try to tell God how and when and where to work. But then we get annoyed when He doesn't do it our way. God, unlike us, knows the best ways to accomplish His ultimate goal—a new heart for each of His children.

## CONSIDER

- Drawing a chart of Jesus' miracles, including each person's response to those miracles.
- Creating a sculpture that represents your understanding of the miracles God does today.
- Memorizing one or more Bible texts that remind you of Christ's mission when He came to earth.
- Collaborating with some of your friends in a small group experience that explores who God is. Discuss such topics as experiencing God and consider contrasting Christ's actual purpose with what people thought His purpose to be.
- Journaling the miracles Christ has performed and is performing in your life.

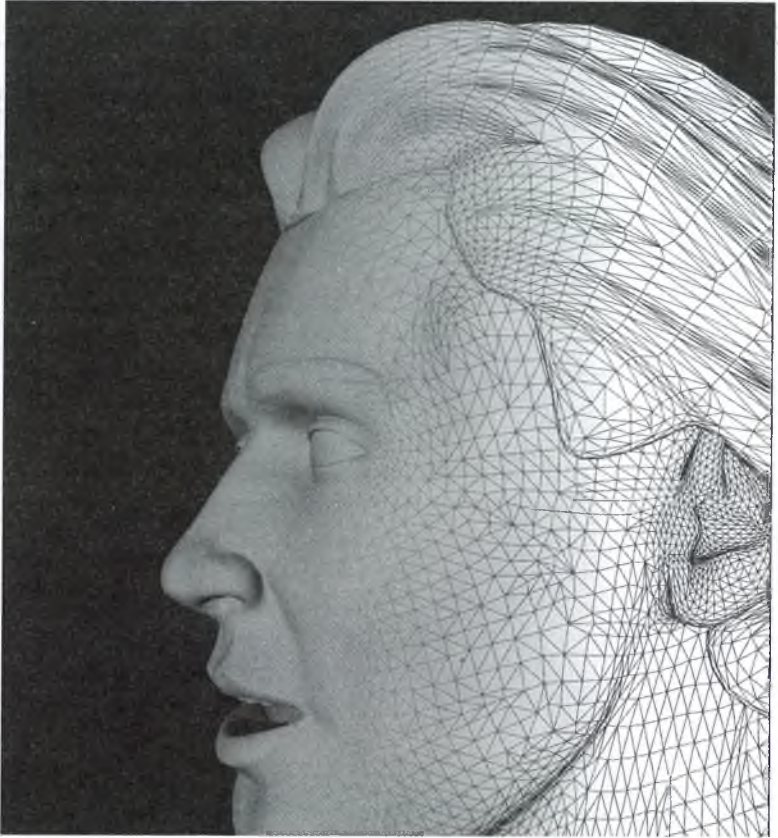
## CONNECT

*The Message*, Hebrews, chap. 11.

*The Ministry of Healing*, "A True Knowledge of God," pp. 409–426.

John Ortberg, *The Life You've Always Wanted: Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary People*.

# The Challenge of His Sayings



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**" 'No one ever spoke the way this man does' "**  
**(John 7:46, NIV).**



# Chasing the Freedom of Perfection

## INTRODUCTION

Matt. 7:1–6; John 8:1–11

Have you ever felt bad and hopeless about yourself? I often have, especially after leaving the church for some time due to a “moral problem.” Walking back into the church after being away for a while brought a lot of attention upon myself. Most of it was curiosity and suspicion. Others reacted with criticism, judgment, humiliation, and a precious few with compassion and joy. With all these reactions from my church family, I wondered and questioned: What does it take to live a perfect and righteous life on this earth? How are Jesus’ teachings relevant in such situations? And how many times do we as Christians know, follow, and actually put Jesus’ teachings into practice?

The answers become clearer by reading John 8:1–11. Jesus never gave the accused woman in this story any reaction of curiosity, suspicion, judgment, criticism, humiliation, or hate. Instead, His response to the Pharisees and scribes was:

“ ‘He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first’ ” (John 8:7, NKJV).

**What does it take to live a perfect and righteous life on this earth?**

As Christians, we know very well that we are all sinners and that we all fall short of God’s glory. Therefore, as a sinner, I personally feel encour-

aged and well-defended by this teaching of Jesus. God does not categorize our sins. All sins committed under the sun are of equal value, weight, depth, breadth, and height to His eyes. We are all bound together under the shadow of sin. There is no point in judging and criticizing each other’s failures and weaknesses. As Jesus stated in Matthew 7:1: “ ‘Judge not, that you be not judged’ ” (NKJV).

These powerful teachings of Jesus are often easy to quote but hard to live up to.

The point is that Jesus’ teachings are wise, powerful, and practical; and that as sinners, if we are faithful and seriously abide by His teachings, our lives will be much easier, happier, successful, and simpler. Jesus lived, died, and was resurrected for us sinners. He defended, forgave, and set free the accused woman brought to Him by the religious leaders (John 8:11, NKJV). Therefore, as individual Christians we have hope that:

1. Jesus’ blood makes us whole—the scars in His hands prove it.
2. He died for us to be saved.
3. He rose that we all may live with Him for eternity.

# **“ ‘Behold Your Mother!’ ”**

## **EVIDENCE**

John 19:27

Mothers are very important in the development of a child. Even older children can be influenced by a mother's soft voice. Even though He was God, Jesus was one hundred percent human, and therefore needed someone to cherish Him, care for Him, and train Him in a way pleasing to God. Mary was the one who provided Jesus with the motherly love and care He needed. According to my culture in Papua New Guinea, when parents grow old, it's the responsibility of the eldest son (with help from other siblings) to care for them. When the father dies, it's the eldest son who takes the responsibility of caring for the family's affairs. It was similar in Jewish custom.

Jesus was Mary's eldest (and some think only) Son. Jesus understood His mother's need and dying before her was just too hard for either of them to bear. Therefore, He said to His mother, " 'Woman, behold your son!' " and to John " 'Behold your mother!' " (John 19:26, 27, NKJV). Jesus gave the responsibility to take care of His mother to John because the "relationship between John and Jesus was more intimate than that between Jesus and the other disciples."\*

**Jesus' words have a powerful application for our lives.**

The fact that Jesus entrusted His mother to John is evidence that Joseph no longer lived. Mary could not bear Jesus going through such agony. How she must have wanted to comfort her Son. When the spikes were driven through His flesh, Mary fainted. But she remained at the foot of the cross. She could not bear to be away from her Son; and John, knowing that the end was near, stayed by her. Jesus, looking at her grief-filled eyes, said, " 'Behold your son!' " and to John, " 'Behold your mother!' " The tender, loving care of a mother lasts; Jesus never forgot His mother and will never forget her in His kingdom.

Most of the time, we tend to forget how valuable our mothers are. When our parents are aging, we often care even less. There is a saying that goes, "Cherish your mother while she may be found, for you do not know her value until you see her chair empty." If Jesus, the Creator of the whole universe, could feel a heartfelt pain for His mother, who are we to ignore our mothers and fathers?

\* *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1063.

# The Matter of Perfection

## LOGOS

Matt. 5:48; 18:21, 22; 19:3–12; Luke 12:32–34; John 19:25–27

### Does Jesus Want Perfection? (Matt. 5:48)

When Jesus spoke, it was not the worn-out sayings of others. “‘No man ever spoke like this Man!’” (John 7:46, NKJV), a group of temple security guards once observed—men who surely had ample opportunity to hear all kinds of speeches.

So when He said to “‘be perfect’” (Matt. 5:48, NKJV), what did He mean? The parallel passage in Luke’s Gospel (6:36) uses the word *merciful* rather than *perfect*. The context stresses God’s impartiality, showing that His way of dealing with people goes far beyond the way humans treat each other.

Jesus invites us to grow toward that ideal in a number of areas. When He speaks

of forgiving others, relating intimately with one another, lifestyle choices, and the problem of human suffering, we begin to see the breadth and depth of His challenge. We then start to see that being “perfect” (listed in

Isn’t the latest crop of  
techno-gadgets wonderful?

most Greek lexicons as meaning simply “mature”) is part of the essence of truly being made in the image of God.

### Generous Forgiveness (Matt. 18:21, 22)

Peter was a generous soul. When he asked Jesus about the appropriate number of times to forgive someone, Jesus more than doubled the accepted norm of the day. A generous person in those days would have considered three repeat offenses enough before bringing in the law enforcement officers. Jesus’ answer must really have surprised him. Seventy times seven! Is that what it means to be perfect like God? Peter’s attempts to be generous were rather limited. If God does not set limits to His generous forgiveness, then who are we to become judgmental when others wrong us?

### Love and Affection (Matt. 19:3–12)

Jesus’ high ideals for us also are illustrated in the account of the Pharisees asking Him about divorce. In this incident, we are again given a glimpse of the divine dimension inside an everyday life situation. Initially, the discussion centers on the

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technicalities of divorce, but after an affirmation of the divine origin of marriage, Jesus again becomes revolutionary, saying that singleness is OK too. In fact, it's more than OK. It seems He is suggesting here that in the divine pattern for a "perfect" life, there are other priorities than passion, intimacy, and sex. How would that sit with Hollywood? How does that sit with us? Is God really in the prime place in my life?

### **Living Simply (Luke 12:32–34)**

Being perfect (or spiritually mature) does not mean I have to take vows of poverty, chastity, obedience, and live like a peasant from the Middle Ages. God expects me to live in the twenty-first century, not in a time warp. It does mean, though, that I need to evaluate the clutter in my life. Jesus is expounding the virtue of simplicity—an anti-materialistic approach to life that frees us from the trap of gadget-collecting, house-cluttering, limitless wardrobe expansion, or whatever else takes prime spot for my affections and resources.

God's greatest desire is to give us His kingdom and to share eternity with us in the most meaningful and personally satisfying existence possible. Jesus invites us to pass on to others the same blessings God has given us—another picture of spiritual maturity, of God's view of perfection.

### **Human Need Versus Human Suffering (John 19:25–27)**

The last example of spiritual maturity we shall consider is that of Jesus caring for His mother's needs while He was on the cross. Despite His own incredible suffering, He was not oblivious to the intense anguish of His mother. More to the point, He needed to act quickly to ensure that His mother was not relegated to the scrap heap of society, ending up as a prostitute or beggar after His death.

### **Therefore, Be Like Your Father**

It is obvious that in these selected sayings of Jesus, there is no hint of earning the salvation already made available to us. Instead, Jesus encourages us to be generous in our attitudes toward those who really annoy us. He reminds a sex-crazed world that human beings can exist as singles, and that there are even more satisfying pastimes (believe it or not) than pursuing passion. He challenges a materialistic culture to keep life simple and uncluttered; and in the midst of all human existence—some of it quite agonizing—He urges us never to forget the needs of or niceties for the significant others around you. All this is spiritual maturity. It is being perfect.

### **REACT**

1. How can one live a simple life in the twenty-first century?
2. When might your own needs ever override the needs of people around you?

Tuesday  
May 6

## **"Adventists: The Remnant Witnesses"**

### **TESTIMONY**

Zech. 8:12

I believe that we, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, are the remnant of the people in Zechariah 8:12. We have been entrusted with the responsibility to carry His Word to all corners of this world, to tell every person the truth about Christ. "In proclaiming the truths of the everlasting gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue and people, God's church on earth today is fulfilling the ancient prophecy, 'Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.' Isaiah 27:6."

As the remnant, we the Adventists, are challenged to uphold the writings of the prophets, "'Go forth,' / To those who are in darkness, 'Show yourselves'" (Isa. 49:9, NKJV).

"Thus in the night of spiritual darkness God's glory is to shine forth through His church in lifting up the bowed down and comforting those that mourn. . . .

"The message of hope and mercy is to be carried to the ends of the earth. . . .

"Christ has made every provision that His church shall be a transformed body, illumined with the Light of the world, possessing the glory of Immanuel. It is His purpose that every Christian shall be surrounded with a spiritual atmosphere of light and peace. He desires that we shall reveal his joy in our lives."<sup>2</sup> "The wants of the soul

**" 'Go forth,' / To those who  
are in darkness, 'Show  
yourselves.' "**

only the love of Christ can satisfy. If Christ is abiding in us, our hearts will be full of divine sympathy. The sealed fountains of earnest, Christlike love will be unsealed."<sup>3</sup>

While trying to carry the light worldwide, we must be aware of what Ellen White tells us: "In marked contrast to the teachers of His day was the Saviour to conduct Himself among men. In His life no noisy disputation, no ostentatious worship, no act to gain applause, was ever to be witnessed. The Messiah was to be hid in God, and God was to be revealed in the character of His Son."<sup>4</sup>

### **REACT**

As Adventists, how can we interpret the command to "go forth and show ourselves" to the world?

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 703.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 718–720.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 719.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 693.



# How to Understand His Teachings

## HOW-TO

John 16:12-14; James 3:13

Heaven's first school on earth was established in the Garden of Eden. The studies were well understood by the pioneer students, Adam and Eve. However, that institution ended because of their disobedience.<sup>1</sup> But that was not *the* end. Christ came to earth to reestablish heaven's learning environment for His lost people. He did so by using visual aids found in nature. The miracles that accompanied His teachings recultivated a good relationship with His people.

However, the strategies Christ used were understood by only a few. Most did not understand Him at all. The barriers that stopped them from understanding His teachings were their worldview, ignorance of the Scriptures, and peer influence.

Even today, "the enemy is working with all his might to overcome those who are striving to live the Christian life. He comes to them with temptations, in the hope they will yield."<sup>2</sup> Therefore, how can the teachings of Christ be understood? Here are a few steps:

1. *Spend time in prayer.* If you are to understand Christ's teachings, you must have good communication with Him. Better communication builds a better relationship. Without communication, a relationship ceases to progress.

**Most did not understand  
Him at all.**

2. *Study the Bible.* Read John 5:39 and Revelation 1:3. In order to understand the teachings of Christ, you need to completely surrender to God's will. Studying the Bible will help you do that.

3. *Understand the situation that prompted Christ to give His teachings.* For example, in Matthew 18:22, when Peter asked Christ how often he should forgive someone who sinned against him, Christ said, " 'up to seventy times seven' " (NKJV). To understand what Christ meant, it is helpful to read the rest of the chapter to determine the situation they were in at that time.

4. *Understand the implications of Christ's teachings.* You have to read between the lines in order to understand Christ's intention and the implication of His words. Then, as you come to understand the wonderful work of God in supplying the needs of His great family and how you are to cooperate with Him, you will have more faith in Him and will realize more of His power in your daily life.

1. Ellen G. White, *True Education* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Publishing Assoc., 2001), p. 14.

2. *Messages to Young People*, p. 81.

Thursday  
May 8

# Thirst for Friendship

## OPINION

John 19:28

Did the plea for water by the dying Savior have any significance to the jeering and taunting crowd back then? Does it have any deep implications for us as twenty-first century Christians?

Ellen White linked Christ's plea for water with the physical suffering He endured that Friday. "When the darkness lifted from the oppressed spirit of Christ, He revived to a sense of physical suffering and said, 'I thirst.'"<sup>1</sup> Remember that His last drink was probably during His Last Supper Thursday evening. After the scorching Friday heat and the terrible beatings, His humanity was now giving way. He wanted to drink before He died. Here is the Source of living water—who had earlier promised to give such water to those who came to Him—actually pleading for water Himself. "In the hot countries of the East, the assuaging of thirst is one of the most delightful sensations that can be felt; and every attention which humanity and hospitality can suggest is paid to furnish travellers with water."<sup>2</sup> This quote associates friendship, acceptance, and tender compassion with humanity and hospitality. Hence, when Jesus pleaded for water, could it be that He was craving friendship, acceptance, and tender compassion from the onlookers?

### Are you willing to give Jesus water to drink?

Remember, "He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him" (John 1:11, NKJV). He was betrayed, denied, and deserted by His closest human friends. Many of the people He came to save demanded His death. What is more, He was deprived of His Father's glory and presence. Oh, on His lonely, dying cross, could it be that our beaten, spat-on, whipped, ridiculed, abused, and rejected Savior longed for friendship, acceptance, and tender compassion? Absolutely!

Jesus is still pleading for you to accept Him today. While many people are establishing friendships with the world, Jesus is asking for your friendship. Are you willing to give Jesus water to drink? The giving of the vinegar by the soldier was a sign of utter rejection of Jesus. Please, don't reject the Savior. Give Him water to drink *now*.

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 754.

2. McClintock and Strong's, *Encyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publisher, 1881), vol. 10, p. 885.

# Living Fully With Jesus

## EXPLORATION

John 7:46

## CONCLUDE

It is one thing to say we've received Christ as our Savior. But how do we live with Him and show that life to others? We do it by accepting the forgiveness He died to give us. We do it by valuing our relationships with family and others. We do it by living simply and appreciating what God gives us. We also do it by appreciating our church's role as the remnant and by cherishing the teachings found in the Bible. And we do it by being Jesus' friend today—showing that we love Him by showing others that we love them.

## CONSIDER

- Painting a picture of the woman taken in adultery (John 8:1–11) and how Jesus responded to her situation.
- Discussing the public failings of a prominent person and how society and the media at large reacted. What did these reactions do to the person? How could you offer encouragement to someone in a time of crisis?
- Making a small "bridge" out of construction paper and writing words such as *forgiveness*, *hope*, *encouragement* on it. Display the bridge as a symbol of how people can be led to Christ when bridges of understanding are built.
- Interviewing a willing class member about how they value the members of their family and how they honor their mother and father.
- Keeping a journal for a week, detailing how you react to the Bible teachings you're studying.
- Making posters featuring Bible verses on how to love God and others. Illustrate your posters with pictures from magazines or your own drawings. Display the posters in your Sabbath School room.

## CONNECT

*The Desire of Ages*, chaps. 7, 15, 78.

George R. Knight, *I Used to Be Perfect: A Study of Sin and Salvation*; Max Lucado, *He Chose the Nails: What God Did to Win Your Heart*.

# The Puzzle of His Conduct



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“ ‘The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, “Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and ‘sinners’ ” ’ ” (Matt. 11:19, NIV).

# A Father's Hidden Check

## INTRODUCTION

Isa. 64:4

From ages past no one has heard,  
no ear has perceived,  
no eye has seen any God besides you,  
who works for those who wait for him (Isa. 64:4, NRSV).

A young man from a wealthy family would soon graduate from high school. In his affluent neighborhood, students received cars for graduation. Along with his father, Bill had spent months looking at cars. Finally, the week before graduation, they found the perfect one.

But imagine Bill's disappointment when, the night before he was to graduate, his father presented him with a Bible! This made Bill so angry that he threw the Bible down and fled the house. He never saw his father again, except when he returned home to attend his funeral.

One night, while he was sorting out his father's possessions, he came across that Bible. He opened it to find a cashier's check which was dated the day of his graduation. The check was for the exact amount of the car he and his father had chosen all those years ago.\*

**He never saw his father  
again. . . .**

Even though this father and son had been close, the son couldn't understand the father to the extent his father wanted him to understand. That's why the son rejected the Bible. So often, we want events to go exactly as we want them to go. And if they do not go according to our desires, we become angry.

Jesus, however, always likes to do things differently—in an unexpected manner. His unorthodox approach toward some of the day-to-day events makes Him unique. This week's lesson looks at several experiences in the life of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—experiences which help us to see Him in a different way.

When the Lord's parents were worried about His disappearance from the temple, Jesus calmly responded, " 'Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?' " (Luke 2:49, NIV). His silence regarding the imprisonment of John the Baptist, the way He chased the merchants from the temple, and the way He walked and worked among sinners and outcasts can be puzzling to many of us. But rather than have His unexpected reactions confuse you, remember that once the pieces of the puzzle fit together, you will have a clearer picture of your loving, wonderful Savior.

\*Adapted from Beckah Fink, "The Bible," in *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul*, p. 78.



Sunday  
May 11

# The Pleasure of His Company

## LOGOS

1 Cor. 1:28, 29

It was a program few present could ever forget. I wanted to hit them between the eyes with another view of what it meant to follow Jesus. But when the quiet afternoon hush was interrupted by the loud snarl of motorcycles outside, I began to wonder if I had miscalculated.

The doors opened and in strode John Smith and 20 of his fellow “God Squad” motorcyclists. They proceeded to the front of the auditorium. Now things were very quiet. What had I done, bringing them here on the Sabbath to talk about witnessing for Christ?

Two hours later, when they tried to leave, no one wanted to let them go. Instead, they wanted to hear more of how these Christian bikers were able to talk about Jesus with criminals, prostitutes, drug addicts, and other bikers. John presented a Christ that too many of us in our sheltered communities had not realized existed.

The Christ who still changes lives—  
the Christ who meets people where  
they are.

Would we have it any other  
way?

**A Friend of Sinners (Matt.  
11:18, 19)**

Many false things were said about Jesus—charges that contributed to His crucifixion. But in reality, many of these charges were correct. It was the understanding of what He was doing that was lacking. For example, some said He was a friend of tax collectors and sinners. Well yes, praise God, He was and is. But no, He was not a glutton and a drunkard! Jesus was meeting people where they were.

It is important to see Jesus as a visualization of God reaching out to receptive hearts no matter where they are. He was not rejecting the pious. If “respectable folk” knew God, then they should be happy He was calling the sinners to repentance. If they were hypocrites, then His altruism was designed to shame them into response.

It is important not to see Jesus as some sort of heavenly provocation or imagine that He needed to experience the downside to be a better Savior. No, Jesus was pure and holy—and determined to share that with sinners.

## The Good Son (Luke 2:49)

Because I had been taken with Rousseau’s *Emile* when I read it years ago, I

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imagined that a child was a moral blank slate and easily inclined toward good. That was before I had children. And of course, the idea of a “noble savage” is not biblical. We are all biased toward self and disobedience. Not so Jesus. He was the good Son in every regard. We get some insight into His care for His mother at the beginning and at the end of His ministry. At her request, He turned water into wine, and on the cross He assigned His mother to the care of His friend John (John 2:1–11; 19:25–27). But when confronted by His probably upset parents when He lingered in the temple, He reminded them that He had to be about His Father’s business.

If Jesus had been just a charismatic preacher, then we might have expected Him to show a little reticence in associating with the spiritual riffraff. After all, it has surely crossed the minds of many Christian leaders that it is not always good for attendance at their events if they cultivate the wrong crowd. What Jesus reminded us of is that a heavenly Father cares for all His children. Would we have it any other way?

### **How Do You Spell Irony? (Luke 5:31)**

The Pharisees were determined to trip Jesus up. When He celebrated Levi Matthew answering the call to “Follow Me,” they complained that He kept bad company. When Jesus replied that He had not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners, He skewered them on an irony most people miss. The Pharisees were demonstrating that they were actually anything but righteous. The “sinner” Levi was now a regenerate saint. Jesus was not in the business of moving in with sin. He was in the business of reclaiming people from sin.

### **“No Flesh Should Glory” (1 Cor. 1:26, 27, 29)**

It is invigorating to read the powerful witness of Peter and John as they healed the lame man at the Gate Beautiful. But it’s sobering to read that while the leaders were impressed by their witness of Jesus, they still saw that they were uneducated, common men (Acts 3; 4). What had changed was not their essential humanity but their spiritual nature. Knowing Jesus had changed them. They had no embarrassment in proclaiming the power of the Man put to death by the authorities.

There is a great and wonderful distinction between the injunction that “no flesh should glory in His presence” (1 Cor. 1:29) and the call to “glory in the Lord” (verse 31). Because of what He did for and in me, I can confidently cry out in praise. As the hymn says, “Jesus paid it all.” Sinners need to know that.

### **REACT**

Is your religion Christ-centered or is it more of a lifestyle? How can the two be combined?

## Sweetness Out of Bitterness

### TESTIMONY

Judg. 14:14; Matt. 8:28–34

I like creating minisculptures. Whenever somebody damages or breaks them, I don't get angry because I know how to restore them. This is how Jesus deals with us. As the Creator, He too knows how to restore His handiwork. Read Matthew 8:28–34 and the parallel story in Mark 5:1–20 to see how this is so.

Upon seeing this situation, “the disciples and their companions fled in terror; but presently they noticed that Jesus was not with them, and they turned to look for Him. He was standing where they had left Him. He who had stilled the tempest, who had before met Satan and conquered him, did not flee before these demons. When the men, gnashing their teeth, and foaming at the mouth, approached Him, Jesus raised that hand which had beckoned the waves to rest, and the men could come no nearer. . . . With authority He bade the unclean spirits come out of them. His words penetrated the darkened minds of the unfortunate men. They realized dimly that One was near who could save them from the tormenting demons. They fell at the Saviour's feet to worship Him.”<sup>1</sup>

**“The people flocked about  
Him.”**

“In His presence they felt secure from the demons that had tormented their lives and wasted their manhood. . . . But Jesus bade them go home and tell what great things the Lord had done for them.

“Here was a work for them to do,—to go to a heathen home, and tell of the blessing they had received from Jesus.”<sup>2</sup>

“In causing the destruction of the swine, it was Satan's purpose to turn the people away from the Saviour, and prevent the preaching of the gospel in that region. But this very occurrence roused the whole country as nothing else could have done, and directed attention to Christ. Though the Saviour Himself departed, the men whom He had healed remained as witnesses to His power. . . . When Jesus returned to Decapolis, the people flocked about Him, and for three days, not merely the inhabitants of one town, but thousands from all the surrounding region, heard the message of salvation.”<sup>3</sup>

1. *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 337, 338.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 339.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 340, 341.

# The Three G's and a Miracle

## EVIDENCE

Matt. 8:28

Archaeology enlightens our understanding of the setting in which some biblical events occurred. For example, the place where Jesus encountered the demoniacs is said in various readings to have been Gergesa, Gerasa (Mark 5:1), and Gadara (Matt. 8:28). There are three sites where this story could have taken place, and each site is hereby examined in the light of archaeology.

Excavations at Gerasa (modern Jeresh), lie about 35 miles (56 km) southeast of the Sea of Galilee. Hence Gerasa can hardly be the place where the demoniacs were healed because the swine could not have run off a cliff into the sea from this location. Excavations done at Gadara (modern Umm Qeis), a Decapolis city of Jordan, lie about 6 miles (9.5 km) southeast of the Sea of Galilee. So neither can this place be the location of this miracle for the same reason that Gerasa cannot be.

The solution to the problem, however, came to light in 1970 when the ruins of a Byzantine church were excavated. The Byzantines marked the sites of Christian tradition by constructing churches. And since this is the only recorded visit of Jesus to the "other side of the

sea" (Mark 5:1), His encounter with the demoniacs probably occurred at the site of the Byzantine church at modern Kursi. Kursi lies at the latitude of Magdala, on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Magdala was ancient Gergesa. It is the only place on the entire coast where a cliff comes out to the sea and tombs have been found in the adjacent hills.

"A short distance to the south of the village of *Kursi* . . . is a steep bluff that descends abruptly to a narrow shore. . . . Jesus and the disciples may well have disembarked to the south of this bluff, where the beach widens and the hills recede from the lake.

"The limestone hills in the region about *Kursi* abound in caverns and rock-hewn chambers. Dug out of the comparatively soft limestone, chambers such as these were commonly used as burial places in ancient Palestine."\* The demoniacs could easily have seen Jesus and His disciples from one of these chambers in this hill.

**The demoniacs could easily  
have seen Jesus . . . from  
one of these chambers . . .**

\* *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 603.

# Louder Than the Loud Voice

## HOW-TO

Luke 5:27–31

Jesus behaved differently from what people expected. This week's lesson teaches how this is so. Once again, today's lesson shows us how Jesus handled situations differently from the way people thought He should have. As you read this article, think about how Christians today can effectively emulate these same behaviors.

1. *Jesus made silence speak.* John the Baptist was in serious trouble because of his stand against Herod having married his brother's wife. Even though he didn't have any intentions of putting John to death, his wife convinced him to do so (Mark 6:14–29). Regarding this event, Jesus said and did nothing (Matt. 14:12, 13). Why? Because to do so would have put Him in enemy hands, thereby jeopardizing His mission.\*

2. *Jesus made actions speak.* Generally, before discipline is administered, the person giving the discipline will discuss with the person receiving it why the discipline is necessary. But this was not the case when Jesus went to the Jerusalem temple and, without a word, overturned the table of the money changers (Matt. 21:12–17).

This was a case in which actions spoke louder than words. Furthermore, when Jesus did finally speak to the money changers, you can well imagine they were ready to listen, considering what He had just done!

3. *Jesus made His critics speak.* In India, the caste system is still a social evil. A Brahmin (an upper-class Indian) cannot eat with a Shudra (a lower-class person). Even though there was no caste system during the time of Jesus, people such as tax collectors were outcasts. Yet Jesus called Levi—a tax collector—to follow Him! In response, Levi arranged a feast for Jesus and among the guests were other tax collectors and sinners (Luke 5:27–29). This infuriated the “critics’ club” of Pharisees and Sadducees; but to them Christ replied that He came to call sinners to repentance, not the righteous (Luke 5:32).

## REACT

How can you make silence, actions, and the critics of Christianity speak for the good of your mission as a Christian?

\* *The Desire of Ages*, p. 224.



# My Fearless, Compassionate, and Forgiving Jesus

Thursday  
May 15

## OPINION

Matt. 15:32; Mark 10:33; Luke 23:33, 34

Many Christians believe that the nature of Christ cannot be understood completely. That Christ could be fully human and fully divine at the same time really puzzles us. The amount of knowledge we can accrue as humans to help us understand this phenomenon is microscopic. Yet we do know that Christ willingly came to this earth as a human. For today's study, let me share a few reflections on the mystery of His behavior.

*My Fearless Jesus.* Jesus was completely aware of His mission. Moreover, He was fully committed to it without any fear. One of His statements to the disciples clearly testifies to this fact, when He told them that " 'the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death' " (Mark 10:33, NKJV). Also, Jesus did not fear to scatter those who were buying and selling in the temple (Mark 11:15–18).

*My Compassionate Jesus.* After the multitude listened to Him for three days, Jesus said, " 'I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way' " (Matt. 15:32, NKJV). Jesus' healing, teaching, and counseling always reflected His compassionate nature.

**Jesus was completely aware  
of His mission.**

*My Forgiving Jesus.* When the scribes and Pharisees brought a woman to Jesus and told Him that they had caught her committing adultery, Jesus responded by saying, " 'He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first' " (John 8:7, NKJV). Then He said to the woman, " 'Go and sin no more' " (John 8:11, NKJV). When Jesus was crucified, He asked His Father to extend mercy to His executioners: " 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do' " (Luke 23:34, NKJV). He forgave the sins of others and also forgave those who troubled Him to death.

## REACT

If you are hurt because of the words or the actions of someone close to you, how will you be able to forgive him or her?

Friday  
May 16

# The Unexpected Jesus

## EXPLORATION

Isa. 64:4

## CONCLUDE

Sometimes the words and actions of Jesus confused those closest to Him. Sometimes they are confusing to us as well. How can you explain His decisions to stay silent or take action when it seems counterintuitive to us?

The good news is that we don't have to understand everything to have a deepening friendship with Jesus. We just have to trust, and He will gradually increase our understanding as we spend time with Him.

## CONSIDER

- Singing the hymn "Jesus Paid It All" (no. 184 in *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*) with a group of friends and piano or guitar accompaniment.
- Observing items in nature that don't seem to make sense according to God's plan and decide why God might have created things that way. Or have they been distorted by sin?
- Color coding your Bible with texts that confuse you about Jesus' ministry. Then, after praying for guidance from the Holy Spirit, look for answers in the Scripture to help you understand.
- Brainstorming, in your class or in a small group, ways in which Jesus can bring good out of evil.
- Locating on a map the places described in Tuesday's lesson where the story of the demoniacs probably took place.
- Thinking or journaling about how God has worked in unexpected ways in your life.

## CONNECT

*Christ's Object Lessons*, " 'This Man Receiveth Sinners,' " pp. 185–197; *The Ministry of Healing*, "Saved to Serve," pp. 95–107.

Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew*.

# The Intensity of His Walk



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**“Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did”  
(1 John 2:6, NIV).**

# It's Not About the T-Shirt

## INTRODUCTION

1 John 2:6

Richard Wurmbrand (March 24, 1909–February 17, 2001) was a Romanian Christian minister, author, and educator. He also founded The Voice of the Martyrs. He spent 14 years in a Communist prison in Romania, during which he was tortured for preaching about Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Mother Teresa (1910–1997) said, “God didn’t call us to be successful, just faithful.” She gave her life to the poor in India.<sup>2</sup>

Corrie ten Boom (1892–1983) hid Jews in her home to protect them from the Nazis during World War II. She stated, “It is not my ability but my response to God’s ability that counts.”<sup>3</sup>

Janani Luwum (1922–1977) said, “I am prepared to die in the army of Jesus. . . . Whenever I have the opportunity I have told the president the things the church disapproves of.” In 1977, Luwum was arrested for defying the cruelties under Idi Amin’s regime in Uganda and shot to death.<sup>4</sup>

These people were revolutionaries and martyrs. They were devoted disciples of Jesus. And they are not alone. Wearing the badge of courage for Christ does not require us to live in an area that is openly hostile to Christians. But being consistently courageous and steadfast requires a mind and heart that is being transformed by the Holy Spirit. It is more than wearing

**These people were revolutionaries . . .**

T-shirts with Christian slogans, attending church on Saturday, not having sex until after marriage, listening to Christian music, participating in small group Bible study classes once a week, being actively involved in ministry work, or any of the dos and don’ts you integrate into your culture and lifestyle.

Transformation blossoms only through a relationship with our spiritual Father—the very same relationship that would give Jesus the courage and serenity to be publicly humiliated, beaten to within an inch of His life, disowned by His close friends, and finally, nailed by His hands and feet to die an excruciatingly painful death.

Come, take this journey of discovery, and your life will never be the same again.

1. Wikipedia, “Richard Wurmbrand,” [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard\\_Wurmbrand](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Wurmbrand). Retrieved Jan. 30, 2007.

2. dc Talk, *Jesus Freaks*, vol. 2, p. 49.

3. Ibid., p. 49.

4. Ibid., p. 55.

# "Bread of Life" for All

## EVIDENCE

Matt. 4:4

The Jews in Jesus' time wanted a Savior who would free them from the rule of the Romans and establish an earthly kingdom. However, Jesus' kingdom is a heavenly kingdom, not a worldly kingdom. According to R. T. France, "Matthew's gospel, more clearly than the others, presents the view of Jesus as himself the true Israel, and of those who have responded to his mission as the true remnant of the people of God . . . . To be the true people of God is thus no longer a matter of nationality but of relationship to Jesus."<sup>\*</sup>

While Jesus met the physical needs of His people by performing the miracle of feeding the five thousand (Matt. 14:13–21), He really desires us to know His source of strength, which is the Word of God (Matt. 4:4). Jesus resisted the devil with the Word of God. While on this earth, He depended on His Father. Likewise, we should depend on Jesus to provide for our needs.

In Matthew, Jesus also challenges us about morality (the Sermon on the Mount, chapters 5–7), evangelism (the mission of Jesus to the twelve apostles, chapter 10), and relationships (chapters 18, 19). And He points us to the end of time (chapters 24, 25). Jesus warns us to be ready for His coming (chapter 25), a task not to be taken lightly. The preparation to become a citizen of heaven starts now.

In Matthew, we see that Jesus often retreated to a quiet place to spend time with God. In chapter 17, Jesus brought along Peter, James, and John to pray on a high mountain. Do we also desire to be close to God?

As we answer the call to share the gospel, we must remember where our strength comes from. Jesus is our Bread of Life. He provides for all our needs.

He provides for all our  
needs.

## REACT

How can we prepare for heaven while we are in this world?

<sup>\*</sup>*New Bible Commentary* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1994).



Monday  
May 19

# Unlimited Power

## LOGOS

Matt. 4:4; Luke 2:40; 6:12; John 4:17, 34; 1 John 2:6

### The Power of the Word (John 1:1)

The book of John begins by declaring that the Word is God. In Greek philosophy, the Word was the principle of reason that governed the world, while in Hebrew thought, the Word was another expression for God. In John 1:1, Jesus is clearly described as the Word. Thus, the Word is acknowledged as the gospel—the good news of Jesus Christ.

Do we truly understand the significance of this? We will, at all costs, find ways to feed ourselves by filling our stomachs with food we enjoy. But how often do we starve for want of spiritual food—the Word?

Jesus fasted in the desert for 40 days and 40 nights, so He was quite hungry when Satan came to tempt Him. Read Matthew 4:4. If Jesus, the Son of God, needed and obeyed Scripture in order to resist the temptations He faced, how much more do we need Scripture?

**Often . . . we starve for want of spiritual food.**

God has given us the privilege to be filled with His power—the power of the Word. As 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 states, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking,

correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (NIV).

### The Power of Purpose (John 4:34)

In John 4:34, Jesus once again uses “food” in relationship to His ministry on earth.

The “food” mentioned here refers to the spiritual nourishment He receives when He does God’s will and ministers to the people. In the same way that all of us require food to sustain our well-being, Jesus also thrived on the spiritual nourishment He received by doing God’s work.

Proverbs 19:21 says, “Many are the plans in a man’s heart, / but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails” (NIV). Jesus had a very strong focus on the purpose God has for the world. In fact, Jesus’ passion for the people fueled His ministry. He knew He had to preach the gospel to the people and die for their sins so that they might be saved.

When we truly understand the purpose God has for every one of us, there can

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be simply no excuse for us to not engage in His work. Jesus said: “I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do” (John 17:4, NIV).

## **The Power of Prayer (Luke 6:12)**

Prayer is the most powerful weapon God has given us. It's a power we can use to seek guidance, wisdom, and strength from God. Read James 5:16.

In times of temptation, trial, or decision-making, Jesus always took time to pray alone. In Luke 6:12, we read that He spent the night praying before choosing His disciples. This was an important decision because they would constitute the inner circle He would train and send out under His own.

All of John 17 is one of Jesus' prayers. It depicts the constant battle Satan wages against God's children. (Also read Ephesians 6:12, 13, 18.)

We read that Jesus prayed for Himself that He would be with God (John 17:1–5) and that He prayed for His disciples to be united and to spread the gospel (verses 6–19). He also prayed for future believers that they would all be one (verses 20–25).

The power of such prayer is always available to us. We simply need to come to God and ask for it! (James 1:5, 6).

## **The Power of Discipleship (1 John 2:6)**

“If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin” (1 John 1:6, 7, NIV). These verses call for action. We can claim to follow Christ, but unless we impact the lives of people around us with the love Christ demonstrates to us, it will just be cheap talk! Hence, 1 John 2:6 says, “Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did” (NIV).

Read Matthew 16:24. The cost of discipleship is high, but the consequences of not following God are even higher.

We truly have free access to the unlimited power God has provided. But God also has given you the freedom to decide if you will take up your cross. The only thing stopping you from becoming all that God wants you to be is *you*.

## **REACT**

1. Which power are you most lacking in your life? Why is that so and how can you receive more of it?
2. List specific steps you will take from today onward to walk as Jesus did.

## Live Life Anew

### TESTIMONY

Luke 2:40; 1 John 2:6

"From His earliest years He was possessed of one purpose; [Jesus] lived to bless others. For this He found resources in nature; new ideas of ways and means flashed into His mind as He studied plant life and animal life. Continually He was seeking to draw from things seen illustrations by which to present the living oracles of God. The parables by which, during His ministry, He loved to teach His lessons of truth show how open His spirit was to the influences of nature, and how He had gathered the spiritual teaching from the surroundings of His daily life."

"By His own example He taught that it is our duty to be industrious, that our work should be performed with exactness and thoroughness, and that such labor is honorable. The exercise that teaches the hands to be useful and trains the young to bear their share of life's burdens gives physical strength, and develops every faculty."<sup>2</sup>

**"His quiet and simple life . . .  
teach an important lesson."**

"His quiet and simple life, and even the silence of the Scriptures concerning His early years, teach an important lesson. The more quiet and simple the life of the child,—the more free from artificial excitement, and the more in harmony with nature,—the more favorable is it to physical and

mental vigor and to spiritual strength. . . .

"He was doing God's service just as much when laboring at the carpenter's bench as when working miracles for the multitude."<sup>3</sup>

### REACT

1. How can you make your life simpler so that minimal distractions exist?
2. How can you find ways of doing things that will be beneficial to you and helpful to others?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 70.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 72.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

# How to Walk Like Jesus

## HOW-TO

Matt. 26:42

Gethsemane was the last stop before Jesus would be arrested, mocked, and eventually crucified. He knew what was ahead of Him. Yet despite every fiber of His body telling Him to just back out, His walk with God was strong enough to help Him overcome. This close relationship was not something that popped out of nowhere. It was an intimate relationship with God. Let's see how we can strive to have a walk like His.

1. *Close relationships don't happen overnight.* Every good relationship requires quality time. Jesus spent thirty years preparing for His three years of ministry. He didn't chuck God into any leftover pockets of time He might have. Praying only the night before an exam won't help you trust God to assist you unless you've been depending on Him all along.

2. *Find out more about God firsthand.* Most likely you know much more about your best friend now than when you first met him or her. Trust cannot be built on ignorance, but on the truth. God wants you to trust Him with the most important item you have, your life. Do you think you know enough about Him to confidently let Him take control? If not, start finding out more about Him. Read about Him. The Bible is His book. And talk to Him. He'll listen to your problems when you feel no one else cares. Listen to Him. He wants to have two-way conversations with you.

**Trust cannot be built on  
ignorance . . .**

3. *Practice and apply.* After finding out so much about God, it's time to walk the talk, even though it can be tough. Otherwise, everything you've learned will be wasted. It's like deciding not to show up for a race you trained hard for. God wants us to exercise our spiritual muscles. Even after knowing so much about God, Jesus went to the desert to learn more about relying on His Father. He didn't answer Satan with human determination, such as "I do not want your riches," or "Who says I should listen to you and turn the stones into bread?" Instead, He clung to His Father's promises.

## REACT

1. Why is it so hard to become close friends with God even though He's always there for us?

2. How drastic would the change in your lifestyle be if God were removed from your life?

Thursday  
May 22

# Surviving Persecution

## OPINION

Matt. 26:39

Many of us today have yet to experience extreme persecution. In most parts of the world, people are able to worship freely. However, there are places where religious persecution does exist. Such is the case in Muslim countries where conversion from Islam to Christianity is punishable by the death. (For specific information concerning religious persecution, visit [Persecution.org](http://Persecution.org): International Christian Concern at <http://www.persecution.org/suffering/index.php>.)

Yet despite persecution, many people become Christians every day. As a child, I was told how in the future we will face torture and threats of death because of our loyalty to Christ. Of course, this terrified me! Then in Matthew 24:19–21, I would read, “‘How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again’” (NIV).

### This terrified me!

What is the secret to surviving persecution? How can the thousands of Christians in China be willing to go to prison for their faith? In Acts 16:25, we see Paul and

Silas unafraid of their plight. In fact, they were even singing hymns while they were in jail. What was their secret to standing firm? They walked with God.

Jesus walked so closely with God that even in the hours before His crucifixion, He turned to God in prayer. Time and time again throughout the Gospels we notice that Jesus left early in the morning to spend quality time alone with His Father. He was so close to God that when the time came for Him to die, He could say, “‘Yet not as I will, but as you will’” (Matt. 26:39, NIV). In the face of torture and certain death, Jesus willed His life to God. He walked so closely with God that His life was less important than God’s will.

Unless you walk with God, unless you have a close relationship with Him, there is no reason to face persecution for His sake. While many of us may not face torture and death, we might face persecution in other ways. Standing up for what is right is not easy, especially when our friends urge us to behave contrary to our beliefs. Doing the right thing when it would make us the laughingstock of our school isn’t easy. But if we are walking with God, if we consistently spend quality time with Him, He will give us the strength to do His will.



# Walking . . . Even Through a Gauntlet

Friday  
May 23

## EXPLORATION

1 John 2:6

## CONCLUDE

It is easy, enjoyable even, to take a walk on a beautiful day. Better still to have someone walk with you. Our lesson this week looked at walking not as a stroll in the sun, but rather as a journey with the Son. Our walk with Jesus takes us through experiences of all types, even struggles that could lead to death. Especially for those who did or who will face a choice that could lead to death, it is the assurance that Jesus is "with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20, NASB) that gives courage and peace.

## CONSIDER

- Comparing the experience of the invitation given to Peter to walk with Jesus on the water (Matt. 14:24–32) with an experience in your life when you've had to choose to walk with Jesus during a turbulent time.
- Analyze the words of "O Let Me Walk With Thee" (hymn no. 554 from *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*) and determine if you can claim those words for yourself.
- Composing alternate words for hymn no. 554.
- Drawing, painting, or sketching a picture that illustrates Jesus' words in John 8:12. Interviewing some longtime church members regarding times in their lives when they have felt that their walk with Jesus was especially memorable.
- Listening to "You'll Never Walk Alone," the inspirational popular song written by Rogers and Hammerstein for their musical *Carousel*. Discuss if it would be a stronger song if it more overtly referred to Christian themes or to Jesus Himself.

## CONNECT

*Steps to Christ.*

Douglas Cooper, *Living God's Love*; Corrie ten Boom, *The Hiding Place*.

# The Tenderness of His Love



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**“But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd” (Matt. 9:36, NKJV).**

# His Healing Love

## INTRODUCTION

John 8:11

She was so humiliated. Dragged into the dusty street to stand in front of a Man she knew to be of utmost quality, she felt frighteningly exposed and defeated. A lifetime of heartache welled up inside her as she realized that she had been deliberately trapped and used by supposedly religious leaders. Huddled against the ground, she waited for the first crushing blows of the stones she knew would end her miserable life. How startled she must have been when the Master stooped down and started to write on the ground with His finger.

As the crowd slowly dispersed one by one, leaving this obviously guilty woman alone with the Man among men, Jesus straightened up and asked her, “ ‘Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?’ ”

“ ‘No one, sir,’ she said. ‘Then neither do I condemn you,’ Jesus declared. ‘Go now and leave your life of sin’ ” (John 8:10, 11, NIV).

How amazing! The guilty not condemned! That’s the miracle of His healing love. Jesus was not one to delve into profundities. Rather, He focused on people, and at that moment He focused on this poor woman, who had been stripped of her self-worth. She needed to experience the genuineness of unconditional love.

**How amazing! The guilty not condemned!**

Through His noncondemning posture, Jesus allowed this emotionally scarred individual to regain a measure of dignity. And with His gentle command for her to leave her life of sin, He expressed His faith in her capacity to live within the nurturing power of His love and acceptance. She need never experience again a life lived apart from God. As you study this week’s lesson, ask yourself how you, too, can experience the same miracle she experienced.

Sunday  
May 25

## Love at Work

### LOGOS

Matt. 5:43–48; 19:13–15; 23:37; Luke 10:38–42; John 8:2–11; Acts 6:7

"It was compassion that brought Christ from heaven. It was compassion that led Him to clothe His divinity with humanity, that He might touch humanity. This led Him to manifest unparalleled tenderness and sympathy for man in his fallen condition."

### We, as Sinners (John 8:2–11)

While Jesus taught in the temple, "the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, 'Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act' " (John 8:3, 4, NKJV). They wanted to stone her as commanded by the law of Moses, but He said to them, " 'He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first' " (verse 7, NKJV).

Jesus' tender love for sinners is ever present. Just like the sinful woman, there's always a second chance waiting for us. Though we fail Him, He never gets tired of helping us. " 'How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings' " (Matt.

**We are all as a precious child  
in His sight.**

23:37, NKJV). Thus, He expresses His compassion and shows us how sinners can return to Him and sin no more.

### As a Precious Child (Matt. 19:13–15; Luke 10:38–42)

During Jesus' ministry in Judea, mothers brought Him their children to be blessed. This irritated the disciples, who wanted to send them away. "But Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven' " (Matt. 19:14, NKJV).

"Jesus was ever a lover of children. He accepted their childish sympathy and their open, unaffected love. . . . Wherever the Saviour went, the benignity of His countenance, and His gentle, kindly manner won the love and confidence of children."<sup>2</sup>

Many people ignore the role children play in a society. Jesus, however, respected them and cared for them. He showed them the same love He showed Mary when He visited her home. Martha asks Jesus to make her sister Mary, who was listening to Jesus, help her in the kitchen. But He praised Mary for doing the right thing. "The 'one thing' that Martha needed was a calm, devotional spirit, a deeper anxiety for knowledge."<sup>3</sup>

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Mary is just like the little children wanting to be blessed and Jesus doesn't fail her.

We are all as a precious child in His sight. He is ever waiting for us to come to Him. Let us remember that His love will never fail us.

## **Flowing Through Us (Acts 6:7)**

After Jesus' ascension, the early Christians continued their ministry. Drawn by the love of Jesus, they preached the gospel. Many were converted not only because of the truth but because of God's love through the messenger.

Here is an example of Christ's love: "Keen and searching had been His denunciation of sin; but He spoke no words of retaliation. He had a holy wrath against the prince of darkness; but He manifested no irritated temper. So the Christian who lives in harmony with God, possessing the sweet attributes of love and mercy, will feel a righteous indignation against sin; but he will not be roused by passion to revile those who revile him. Even in meeting those who are moved by a power from beneath to maintain falsehood, in Christ he will still preserve calmness and self-possession."<sup>4</sup>

We are commissioned to be representatives of God and His love. Christ's compassion should be flowing through us. The big difference we can make with others is through our character. Many preachers today claim they have the light, but they do not show Christ's love.

As we interact with others from all walks of life, let us remember that our Savior "makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:45, NKJV). Because every soul is precious in His sight, we should show all people with whom we come into contact the same love Jesus would show them if He were on earth today.

## **REACT**

1. What would you do if a criminal entered your church one Sabbath?
2. What would you say to a friend who says he is not a sinner and doesn't need Jesus?
3. How would you convince a church of the need to give priority to their children's education?

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1. *The Signs of the Times*, August 25, 1898.

2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 511.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 525.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 619, 620.



# Love Your Enemy

## TESTIMONY

Matt. 5:43–45

"The Jews held that God loved those who served Him,—according to their view, those who fulfilled the requirements of the rabbis,—and that all the rest of the world lay under His frown and curse. Not so, said Jesus; the whole world, the evil and the good, lies in the sunshine of His love. This truth you should have learned from nature itself; for God 'maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.'"<sup>1</sup>

"It is not because of inherent power that year by year the earth produces her bounties and continues her motion round the sun. The hand of God guides the planets and keeps them in position in their orderly march through the heavens. It is through His power that summer and winter, seedtime and harvest, day and night follow each other in their regular succession. It is by His word that vegetation flourishes, that the leaves appear and the flowers bloom. Every good thing we have, each ray of sunshine and shower of rain, every morsel of food, every moment of life, is a gift of love."<sup>2</sup>

**The "whole world . . . lies in the sunshine of His love."**

"While we were yet unloving and unlovely in character, 'hateful, and hating one another,' our heavenly Father had mercy on us. 'After that the kindness and love of God our

Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us.' Titus 3:3–5. His love received, will make us, in like manner, kind and tender, not merely toward those who please us, but to the most faulty and erring and sinful."<sup>3</sup>

"The children of God are those who are partakers of His nature. It is not earthly rank, nor birth, nor nationality, nor religious privilege, which proves that we are members of the family of God; it is love, a love that embraces all humanity. Even sinners whose hearts are not utterly closed to God's Spirit, will respond to kindness; while they may give hate for hate, they will also give love for love. But it is only the Spirit of God that gives love for hatred. To be kind to the unthankful and to the evil, to do good hoping for nothing again, is the insignia of the royalty of heaven, the sure token by which the children of the Highest reveal their high estate."<sup>4</sup>

1. *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 74.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 74, 75.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

4. *Ibid.*

# Evidence: The Greatest Miracle

## EVIDENCE

John 11:1–45

Bethany today is “identified with the modern *el-‘Azariyeh*, meaning ‘Lazarus’ [village].”<sup>1</sup> The name *Lazarus* comes from the Hebrew *‘El’azar*, “signifying probably ‘whom God helps,’ ‘whose help is God,’ or ‘God helps.’”<sup>2</sup>

“Among the most steadfast of Christ’s disciples was Lazarus of Bethany. From their first meeting his faith in Christ had been strong; his love for Him was deep, and he was greatly beloved by the Saviour. It was for Lazarus that the greatest of Christ’s miracles was performed.”<sup>3</sup>

As soon as Martha heard that Jesus was on His way, she hastened to meet Him. Then it was that with “human and divine pity Jesus looked into her sorrowful, careworn face. Martha had no inclination to recount the past; all was expressed by the pathetic words, ‘Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.’ But looking into that face of love, she added, ‘I know, that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee.’

“Jesus encouraged her faith, saying, ‘Thy brother shall rise again.’ His answer was not intended to inspire hope of an immediate change. He carried Martha’s thoughts beyond the present restoration of her brother, and fixed them upon the resurrection of the just. This He did that she might see in the resurrection of Lazarus a pledge of the resurrection of all the righteous dead, and an assurance that it would be accomplished by the Saviour’s power.”<sup>4</sup>

To Martha, and to us today, Jesus said, “‘I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?’” (John 11:25, 26, NRSV). If our answer to Jesus’ question is Yes, then we can claim the name of *Lazarus* (whom God helps) and Bethany as our home.

“ ‘Do you believe this?’ ”

1. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1011.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 524.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 529, 530.

# How to Love Like Jesus

## HOW-TO

Luke 10:30–36

The story of the good Samaritan perfectly illustrates our situation today. While some of us profess to follow Jesus, we don't really practice His teachings of love. For example, we seldom see any of the people who live near our church actually come to our church. Why is this? Might it be because our outreach and evangelism usually focus on far-away places? Perhaps it's time to discuss our neighborhoods as mission fields. In your work place, do others see that you're a Seventh-day Adventist Christian? Do they see the good Samaritan in you?

Practicing the following teachings of Jesus will help us become good Samaritans where we live and work.

1. *Love others as you love yourself (Matt. 22:39)*. This "means that in the same way we take care of ourselves and are concerned about our own interests, we should take care and have concern for the interests of others."<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps it's time to discuss  
our neighborhoods as  
mission fields.

2. "If anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also" (Matt. 5:39, NRSV). "On the cross Christ manifested the spirit of which He here spoke when He called upon the Father to forgive those

who tormented Him (Luke 23:34)."<sup>2</sup>

3. *Love your enemies (Matt. 5:44)*. "Jesus freely acknowledges that we *will* have enemies, yet we are to respond to them in love, trusting that God will protect our cause and destroy our enemies in the best way possible, by transforming them into our friends."<sup>3</sup>

In any time period, it's hard to do these three things; but through constant communion with God through prayer, meditation, and reading His Word, we can receive the power to do so. As we draw closer to becoming like Christ, we will translate more and more of His words into actions of love.

1. David Guzik, "Matthew 22—Jesus Answers and Asks Difficult Questions," Enduring Word Media, <http://www.enduringword.com/commentaries/4022.htm>. Retrieved March 19, 2007.

2. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 339.

3. David Guzik, "Matthew 5—The Sermon on the Mount," Enduring Word Media, <http://www.enduringword.com/commentaries/4005.htm>. Retrieved March 19, 2007.

# Stubborn Love

## OPINION

Matt. 5:43–48

Our text for today reminds us that we must love and do good even to our enemies. Instead of responding to them with hatred, we should show them the love of Jesus.

Our example in this manner is Jesus and our heavenly Father. God is fair; and He is just (Matt. 5:45). Even though our sin is red as blood, He still loves us. He invites us to reason with Him so we will understand that He is able to make our sin as white as snow or wool (Isa. 1:18). In Matthew 11:19, we read that Jesus spent time with sinners and made them feel accepted.

In 2 Samuel 18, Absalom and his forces fight against David and his men. David asks his general Joab to be gentle with Absalom, but Joab assists in killing Absalom. Two runners take the news to David. The first runner tells him that his forces have won the battle. The second runner breaks the news that Absalom is dead. David is shaken, and as he leaves the room, he cries out in mourning, “O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you . . .!” (2 Sam. 18:33, NIV).

Based on his reaction to the death of Absalom, we can say that David acted as a father, not as a king. He failed to see Absalom as a traitor and a rebel whose actions caused great harm to the welfare of the kingdom.

When we are about to give up on someone else, let's remember how God keeps loving us even when we are rebellious toward Him. He's always willing to forgive us and to be reconciled with us, just as David longed to forgive Absalom and to be reconciled to him. Remember, we reflect God's love when we are long-suffering with others.

Jesus ends by saying, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt 5:48, NIV). He is not referring here to “absolute sinlessness in this life. . . .”<sup>2</sup> Rather, He is saying “that, in the kingdom He came to establish, it is the inner attitudes and motives that determine perfection of character, and not the outward acts alone. Man may look on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart (1 Sam. 16:7).”<sup>3</sup> Let us learn to see others as God sees them.

**Jesus spent time with sinners.**

1. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 341.

2. *Ibid.*

## EXPLORATION

Eph. 5:1, 2

## CONCLUDE

While on earth, Christ was a living example of love in action. He demonstrated how we should treat those around us—friends and enemies alike—with empathy, dignity, humor, and forgiveness.

While we can imitate Jesus' actions, doing so is not enough. Until we begin to see people through His eyes, our actions will lack conviction. It is only when we open ourselves to His viewpoint that we become true examples of His love to the world around us.

## CONSIDER

- Meditating on Ephesians 5:1, 2. Ask God to show you specific ways you can live a life of love the way Jesus did.
- Creating a chart or graph to compare the number of times Jesus talked about how to treat people and the times He demonstrated those principles by His actions.
- Presenting an improvisational program based on this week's lesson.
- Using a Bible atlas or encyclopedia, look up the historical and social environment Jesus experienced while on earth. (QuickVerse software incorporates a variety of resources covering the customs, mores, and political climate of biblical times and has versions for most platforms.)
- Creating a collage that represents the way Christ interacted with people.
- Forgiving someone who has hurt you. If possible, speak with this person or write a letter expressing forgiveness.
- Finding a way to connect with people by getting involved in activities that demonstrate Christ in practical ways, such as Maranatha Volunteer International, the Institute for Creation Research, an environmental group, or handing out sack lunches to the homeless.
- Reading *Forgiving the Dead Man Walking*, by Debbie Morris.

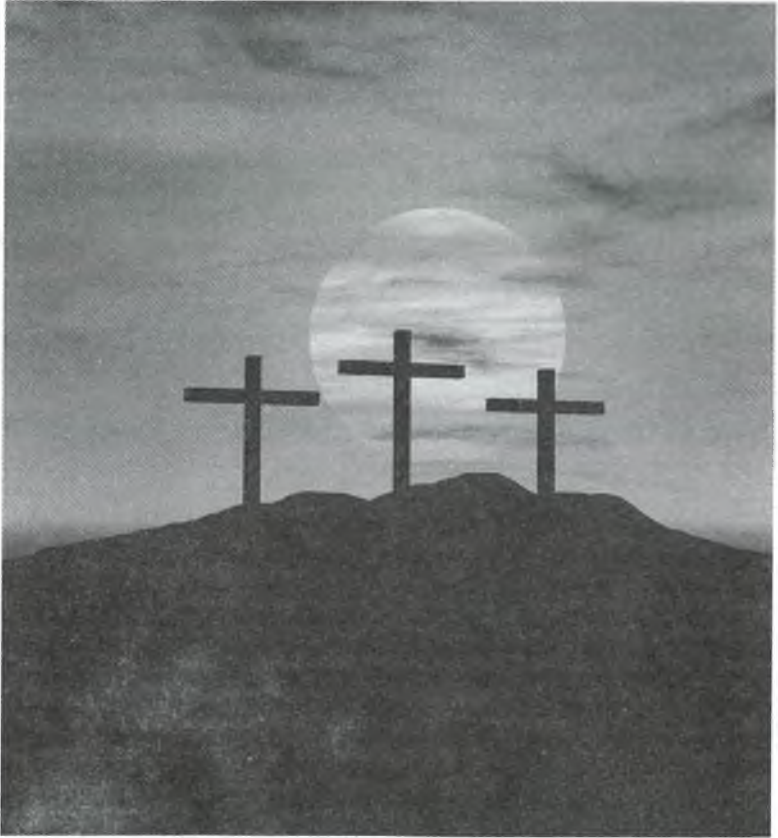
## CONNECT

*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 504, 505.

Max Lucado, *Just Like Jesus*, chap. 2; Charles Sheldon, *In His Steps: What Would Jesus Do?* chap. 1.



# The Meaning of His Death



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“ ‘For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many’ ”  
(Mark 10:45, NIV).

# Choosing to Die

## INTRODUCTION

Isa. 53:5

Down through the ages, people have been willing to become martyrs for a cause. Joan of Arc was a national heroine of France and is a Catholic saint. At 19, she was burned at the stake after fighting against English domination of France in the fifteenth century. As the flames licked around her, she is purported to have said, "Everything that I have done was by God's order."<sup>1</sup>

When we think of martyrs today, we usually think of terrorists and suicide bombers and the devastation they cause to the well-being of a country and to individual lives. What motivates their decision to become a martyr?

Some social scientists suggest these martyrs are "suffering" from recognition disorders. We all have an inherent desire to be recognized by others. Such recognition gives us our identity and helps us to understand who we are. However, when a person consistently believes that he or she is not being adequately recognized in affirming ways, that person could become the next headline in a news broadcast.<sup>2</sup>

When Jesus cried, "It is finished" (John 19:30), He concluded a profound act of martyrdom which began from the moment He understood His mission on earth.

The reasons behind His death cannot be fully explained or understood within a rationalist social scientific framework, because His martyrdom was a mysterious act of love that resonates and impacts the

**His martyrdom was a mysterious act of love.**

life of every human being that has lived or will ever live. Isaiah 53:5 expresses that His wounds, bruises, chastisement, and stripes enable our complete healing.

We often fail to really focus on the passion that compelled Jesus to sacrifice Himself for us. Because it is a divine passion, it defies social explanations, and therefore, we cannot fully understand it. Nevertheless, we should accept this gift of life and make it a focus of our study and meditation. Let us seize the opportunity this week to personally grasp the reasons why He chose to die for you and me.

1. "St. Joan's Notable Quotes," Saint Joan of Arc Center, <http://www.stjoan-center.com/quatable/>. Retrieved March 7, 2007.

2. Robert Fuller, "Recognition Disorders: The Hidden Syndrome Behind Martyrdom." Dignitarian Foundation, <http://www.dignitarians.org/recognition.html>. Retrieved March 7, 2007.

# Dying to Live

## EVIDENCE

John 3:16

On November 25, 2005, Irish football (soccer) player George Best died. Prime Minister Tony Blair said about Best that he probably was "the most naturally gifted footballer of his generation, one of the greatest footballers the UK has ever produced."<sup>1</sup>

It is known that some thirty thousand "children die of preventable diseases every day."<sup>2</sup> Former prime minister of Britain, Margaret Thatcher, said of President Reagan at his death, "He will be missed not only by those who knew him and not only by the nation that he served so proudly and loved so deeply, but also by millions of men and women who live in freedom today because of the policies he pursued."<sup>3</sup>

Whether we die gracefully, tragically, or from lifestyle habits, we die nevertheless. Death is a natural process. Our response to death reflects the situation of death. The celebrity factor of George Best was the focus of the British people's response, even though his lifestyle was a major factor in his demise. The world's response to President Reagan's passing were acknowledgments of his contribution to humanity, while over thirty thousand children dying daily from preventable diseases goes much unnoticed. Nevertheless, all these deaths represent a separation of our loved ones from us.

"Take, eat."

God prepared us for this separation when He reminded the post-Flood generation that their life span was limited (Gen. 6:3). But the initial seal of death began when the serpent told Eve to "Take, eat" (see Gen. 3:1-6).

God did not create the world for evil to triumph, and that is where Jesus comes in. At the Last Supper, He also said, "Take, eat," offering us a way, not to escape the death of sin, but to accept eternal life through His death on the cross (Mark 14:22).

Yes. Our cells are programmed to die, but if we "Take, eat" that which Jesus offers, our cells will be reprogrammed to live. There will be no more separation. No more death.

1. "Football legend George Best dies." BBC News. Retrieved November 7, 2007 from [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi.uk\\_news/4380332.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi.uk_news/4380332.stm).

2. "30,000 Children die unnecessarily each day: UNDP." Retrieved November 7, 2007 from <http://www.doh.gov.za/docs/news/2003/nz0708.html>.

3. MSNBC. "World marks Reagan's death." Retrieved November 15, 2007, from <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/5145581/>.

Monday  
June 2

# The Threefold Death of Christ

## LOGOS

Matt. 27:45, 46; Luke 2:25–35; 1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:18–21; Gal. 6:14; Heb. 2:17

Christ was born to live and die for humanity. He carried His cross from the manger to Calvary. He demonstrated the necessity of the threefold death that sin brought upon humanity: death to self, the first death, and the second death.

### Death to Self (Heb. 2:17)

When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, they placed self, desire, and human reasoning above the clear wishes of their loving Creator. Christ's life demonstrates the meaning of a daily death to self. He never placed His personal preferences, desires, or reasoning powers above God's will. His life motto was, "I must be about My Father's business" (Luke 2:49, NKJV).

When faced with death, He exclaimed, "Yet not what I will, but what you will" (Mark 14:36, NIV). When some Greeks came to inquire regarding the way to life, His response to them was, "Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies,

it remains only a single seed" (John 12:24, NIV; Rom. 6:5–10). Christ's life teaches that in order to really live, we must first die, then die daily. Truly, we are saved by His life (Rom. 5:10), for His life is a perfect

**And this He did for you  
and me.**

example of living and dying.

### The First Death (Matt. 27:45, 46)

The first death is the natural consequence of separation from God, the Source of life. Sin causes decay and death. It poisons our minds against the holiness and justice of God and makes us enemies of everything that is God (Rom. 5:10; 8:7; Col. 1:21). The history of humanity and the life of Christ demonstrate that sin and sinners would, if it were possible, destroy God and the principles of His kingdom. But the gates of hell will not prevail against His kingdom (Matt. 16:18).

Sin causes our bodies to die from the moment we are conceived. We progress from birth to adulthood only to die. This fallen world teaches us that the wages of sin is truly death. There can be no life apart from God. Even Jesus, the Son of Man, had to experience the curse of sin, which was physical death. The Gospels revealed, however, that a sin-cursed world and demonic forces did not grant Him

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the dignity of a natural death. Like a magnet, Christ's righteous life attracted the full force of sin and evil, resulting in His brutal death. He was crucified, not by God, but by evil men. Sin is an assault on God, His family, and His kingdom.

Hence, as the Second Adam, Christ suffered the first death which is the natural outcome of sin. Separation from God leads to this first death and eternal separation leads to eternal death—the second death. When Christ cried out from the cross, “‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’” (Matt. 27:46, NIV), He began to experience the horror of the second death—eternal separation from God.

### **The Second Death (1 Cor. 15:3)**

The primary wages of sin is a death from which there is no return. It is total and eternal annihilation. The good news is that God so loved the world that Christ became the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). God promised humanity that Christ would become humanity's Substitute and experience the second death (1 Cor. 15:3; Rev. 21:8). He would enter the realm of no return, the realm of nonexistence, on behalf of all sinners. But because only God has life un borrowed, underived, and original, because He is the Source of life, He can exist were nothing or no one else can. Only God can exist in and leave the realm of the second death and return to the created universe. And this He did for you and me (Rom 5:6, 8; 1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:15; 1 Thess. 5:10).

### **The Meaning of Christ's Death (Gal. 6:14)**

Christ's death means abundant and eternal life for anyone who has faith in God through His Son and who is willing to die to self in order to live for God. We do not understand the pain and suffering Christ experienced in dying the second death for us, but we can be eternally grateful to God, for He was in Christ reuniting the world to Himself (2 Cor. 5:18–21). We praise God that because of Christ's three-fold death, we have the opportunity to live. With Paul, we exclaim, “May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Gal. 6:14, NIV).

### **REACT**

1. What must we do in order to experience death to self as Christ did?
2. Only God could judge Christ and sacrifice Him as our Substitute. What then does the Crucifixion tell us about our judgment of God?
3. What do you think Christ experienced while going through the second death?



Tuesday  
June 3

# They Killed Him; Yet He Forgave Them

## TESTIMONY

Luke 23:34

"The Son of God was rejected and despised for our sakes. Can you, in full view of the cross, beholding by the eye of faith the sufferings of Christ, tell your tale of woe, your trials? Can you nurse revenge of your enemies in your heart while the prayer of Christ comes from His pale and quivering lips for His revilers, His murderers—'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do' (Luke 23:34)?"<sup>1</sup>

"When we study the divine character in the light of the cross we see mercy, tenderness, and forgiveness blended with equity and justice. We see in the midst of the throne One bearing in hands and feet and side the marks of the suffering endured to reconcile man to God. We see a Father, infinite, dwelling in light unapproachable, yet receiving us to Himself through the merits of His Son. The cloud of vengeance that threatened only misery and despair, in the light reflected from the cross reveals the writing of God: Live, sinner, live! ye penitent, believing souls, live! I have paid a ransom."<sup>2</sup>

"Let the repenting sinner fix his eyes upon 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world' (John 1:29); and by beholding, he becomes changed.

**"Live, sinner, live!"**

His fear is turned to joy, his doubts to hope. Gratitude springs up. The stony heart is broken. A tide of love sweeps into the soul. Christ is in

him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life. When we see Jesus, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, working to save the lost, slighted, scorned, derided, driven from city to city till His mission was accomplished; when we behold Him in Gethsemane, sweating great drops of blood, and on the cross dying in agony,—when we see this, self will no longer clamor to be recognized. Looking unto Jesus, we shall be ashamed of our coldness, our lethargy, our self-seeking."<sup>3</sup>

## REACT

1. How is the Cross central to forgiveness?
2. Discuss the necessity of Christ having to die in such a gruesome way and what bearing that has on our redemption.

1. *That I May Know Him*, p. 65.

2. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 333.

3. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 439.

# How to Die and Live Forever

## HOW-TO

1 Cor. 15:12–26; Heb. 9:27

The opening lines of the Abbey Insurance sales blurb say, “Let’s talk about one of the most untalked about subjects there is. No one likes to talk about death. It’s hardly a pleasant thought, but suppose you were to die unexpectedly, how would your family manage without you?”

People have control over many situations, but there is one thing that is beyond their control—death. Death may be delayed through quality of life and good accessible medical resources, but even good doctors die. For various reasons, many people are afraid to die. Death frustrates love and claims faith. Death separates people. It causes controversy within the church. It murders great hope. It destroys families. It turns children into orphans and happy homes into empty shells (Job 14:1, 2). In fact, there is nothing more certain in the world than the fact that all of us will eventually die (Heb. 9:27).

But the Bible offers concrete hope through our Lord Jesus Christ, who came to die in our stead. He has indeed conquered death. John 14:1–3 gives assurance to all those who accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior of eternal life.

*See death for what it is.*

Maybe even you are among those who do not want to die. Here, then, are steps one could take to live forever:

1. *Repent from your sins.* Ezekiel 18:20 tells us that “the soul who sins is the one who will die” the second death (NIV). Therefore, repent of your sins and let the Ten Commandments be your guide. Proverbs 4:4 says if you follow God’s teachings, you will have eternal life.

2. *Build a good relationship with Jesus.* This is an ongoing process which involves such activities as daily Bible reading and prayer, service to others, meditating on God’s Word, etc.

3. *Accept Christ.* He longs to be your Savior. Believe in Him, and you will live eternally (Acts 16:31).

4. *Help others to understand the meaning of Christ’s sacrifice.* Christ died for the ungodly. Remember that no one is righteous except in Christ. It is a gift climaxed and sealed with His death on the cross for anyone who will accept it.

5. *Prepare for death.* Plan ahead for your funeral. But most of all, make sure your relationships with God and with others are always in order. We never know when we will die the first death.

6. *See death for what it is.* It is a transition from sleep to eternal life.

Thursday  
June 5

# The Meaning of His Death

## OPINION

1 Cor. 2:14

In our postmodern society, telling people that Jesus died for their sins can be offensive. The idea that they may need to be saved from their sins is intolerable, especially as the true meaning of sin is forgotten. The mantra now is “survival of the fittest,” and the meaning of life is self-gratification supported by the theory of evolution. This renders any moral code unnecessary and makes ethics relative to culture, time, and personal decision. This way of thinking is creeping into Christian churches. In their desire to attract members, churches have become accustomed to dressing down the gospel. But perhaps one of the most dangerous errors infiltrating Christianity is the idea that sin is not wrong and that Jesus did not die to save us from the second death—a penalty we fully deserve—but that His death was just a reflection of how much He loves us.

As Seventh-day Adventist Christians, we hold firmly to the belief that Jesus' sacrifice is the only way fallen humanity can be saved, and His death is far more than just a demonstration of His love. If Jesus only died to show how much God loves us, we could liken His death to meeting a stranger while out on a cliff-top walk, who suddenly declares his love for you by jumping off the cliff onto the jagged rocks below. Such behavior would distress and horrify you. But would it really make you believe that he loved you?

**This way of thinking is  
creeping into Christian  
churches.**

That the only reason Jesus died for us is because He loved us is contrary to Scripture, which gives the primary reason for Jesus' death (Hebrews 2:9, 10). The doctrine of Christ's death is central to our faith that God accepts us and that we have direct access to Him because of our acceptance of Christ's death. If we believe in a God who is both just and merciful, we will accept Christ's second death as a substitute for our second death. Then we who lived in rebellion against God can become at peace with Him.

So which should we believe? The “faithful witness” who uttered, “It is finished,” as He died to ensure the destruction of sin and the redemption of humans, or the doctrine of our relativistic society?

# He Defeated Death

## EXPLORATION

Luke 23

## CONCLUDE

Separation and loss are painful. God the Father was willing to bear the pain of separation and loss from His only Son Jesus Christ and allow Him to die of a broken heart for our sins. The good news is that Jesus defeated death so that those who believe in and follow Him will be resurrected to life eternal. For those who acknowledge Jesus as their Lord and Savior, the Crucifixion is a chronicle of salvation, not death.

## CONSIDER

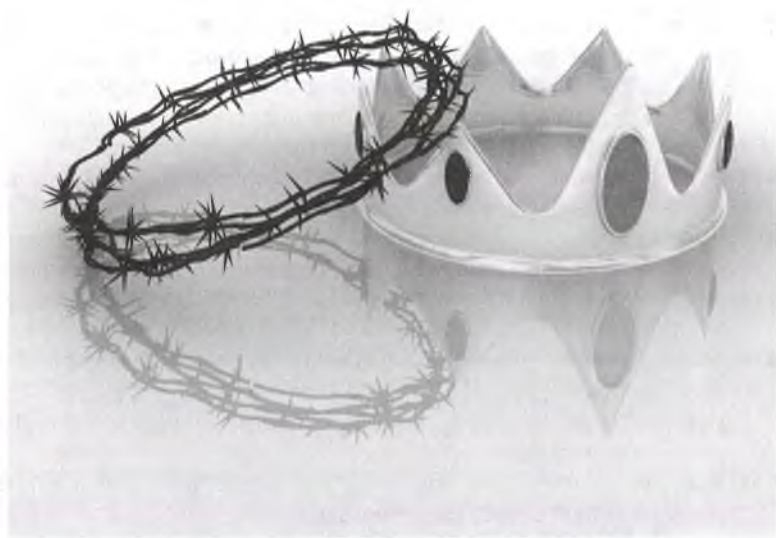
- Creating a “pain meter” out of cardboard that has the numbers 1–10 on it. Have 1 represent minor pain and 10 excruciating pain. As you read Luke 23, list the painful emotional and physical events Jesus suffered leading up to and including His crucifixion. Using the meter as a guide, for each item on your list, rate the degree of pain He suffered for you.
- Sketching a picture of the Crucifixion and Resurrection events described in the lesson. Give your sketch an eye-catching title.
- Visiting a graveyard. Look for the oldest and the newest headstones. Imagine what it will be like to see these graves open when Jesus comes. Before leaving, kneel by a specific person’s grave and thank Jesus for dying for us.
- Selecting one hymn or praise song to sing, play, hum, or listen to that represents your feelings for what Jesus did for you by coming to earth, bearing the temptations you face, and dying to forgive you from sin so that you might have eternal life.
- Making an obituary notice of Jesus’ death appropriate to run in the “Jerusalem Times” or your local newspaper.

## CONNECT

*The Desire of Ages*, chaps. 74–86.

The Life of Christ board game.

# The Power of His Resurrection



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**“ ‘I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive  
for ever and ever!’ ” (Rev. 1:18, NIV).**



# ***Titanic* Director Finds Jesus!**

## **INTRODUCTION**

1 Cor. 15:12–20

James Cameron claims that he and Simcha Jacobovici, an Emmy Award-winning journalist, have found Jesus, literally. They not only claim to have found the bones of Jesus, Son of Joseph, but the bones of Mary, Matthew, Mary Magdalene, and Judas (not Iscariot), son of Jesus as well!\*

Let us say James Cameron is right (even though we know he's not). This would mean that Jesus died, was never resurrected, and His body remained on earth and has since decomposed to bones!

What are the implications of this "discovery"? Had Jesus never been resurrected, it would mean that He had lied to us and that He was just another prophet, just another man. He would not be the Son of God, the Messiah who would deliver us from the wages of sin. We would have no salvation, no hope. All of His teachings about how we should treat each other would be nullified. All the trials and tribulations we claim God allows to make us stronger would all be arbitrary and meaningless. We would be living a useless, purposeless life. If Jesus had never been resurrected, the entire Christian faith would be nothing but lies!

But the fact is, Jesus was resurrected!

His resurrection means that we can cross the great divide from physical death into eternal life. He is the bridge between God and us. He signifies the sacrificial lamb that died for our sins so we would not have to bear the ultimate consequence of sin—the second death, which is eternal separation from God. Because He lives, we have hope for tomorrow and a purpose to live. His resurrection is the reason why you are reading this right now.

Let us take Jesus' resurrection seriously and prayerfully as we study this week about this very important, if not *the* most important event, upon which the Christian faith hinges.

**If Jesus had never been  
resurrected . . .**

\*Today with iVillage, " 'Titanic' director wanted to satisfy his curiosity about Christ's burial place," <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17349123/>. Retrieved March 22, 2007.

Sunday  
June 8

# Can a Dead Man Save You?

## LOGOS

Matt. 27:62–66; Luke 24:36–39; Acts 3:14–16; 1 Corinthians 15; Phil. 3:7–10

Many religions of the world say there is life after life. Their writings suggest that eternity comes just because we are human. The desired destiny after death is determined by our efforts of good work or meditation here on earth.

Christianity is different. Life after life does not come by believing a teaching or following something great, but by believing and following a Person, and this Person is alive. His name is Jesus.

Christianity is at least intellectually honest—dead people can't save you. Even if the dead person is Spiderman, Superman, Mohammed, or Buddha, they cannot stop us from dying. Nor is there any record of other religious leaders conquering death. So how can they bring us back to life?

Jesus died but rose again, and He conquered death for all humans. Jesus is alive; and even if we die, He can raise us back to life (Rev. 1:18).

Let us examine the New Test-ament for the evidence and emphasis regarding Jesus and His resurrection.

### Dead people can't save you.

### Not Mere Human Power (Matt. 27:62–66)

The Jewish religious leaders, who did not believe in Jesus, feared that Jesus' prophecy of rising on the third day could have some merit. They were frightened that maybe Jesus was who He said He was. For this Man had healed lepers, given sight to the blind, and awakened Lazarus from the dead! Maybe a dead Jesus could rise again too! To ensure this did not happen, the Pharisees secured the tomb where Jesus lay. But not even the tightest seal or the strongest Roman guards could prevent the power of the Lord's resurrection. This wasn't mere human power. This was Divine Power. It broke the seal, shook the earth, dazzled the guards, and woke the Son of man who had been dead for three days!

### Good News for All (Luke 24:36–39)

Jesus often warned His disciples that He was going to die. But He assured them that He would rise again. These men loved Him, believed in Him, witnessed His miracles, and heard His teachings. Yet they were surprised to see Him alive.

Jesus restored His disciples' faith by appearing to them. They witnessed His resurrected physical body. They saw the nail-scarred hands, heard Him speak, and

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touched His scars. This gave them the passion to tell the world. They were certain that Jesus' resurrection was good news for all people.

### **Power to Heal (Acts 3:14–16)**

Disciples Peter and John were convinced about their power to heal. It came from the Jesus whom the Jews had killed and whom God had raised from the dead.

### **Conquering Death (1 Corinthians 15)**

Another apostle, Paul, is certain that Jesus rose again. He gives factual evidence from eyewitnesses—Jesus was seen alive by more than five hundred people at one time (verses 3–11). Paul then says that if Jesus had not died and risen again, all humans would be dead—totally (verses 12–34). We all sin, and sin leads to death—eternal death (Rom. 6:23). Without the resurrection of the Son of God there is no power over death, no hope of salvation, no eternity, and no good news. The hard truth is that without Jesus' death and resurrection, we have no future. But God's love plan to deal with human death was Jesus' death and life.

When Jesus arose, He conquered death. It is His life that provides all who believe a reason to live. Christ's resurrection is fundamental to the faith of all Christians. His resurrection provides meaning and hope for this life and for the next. It is a guarantee that our life's purpose will have eternal results. Immortality comes when Jesus, the living Christ, returns to earth (verses 35–58).

### **An Ongoing Story (Phil. 3:7–10)**

Most people struggle to believe in Jesus' resurrection because they have never seen a resurrection. Once you're dead, you stay dead. But a religion is worthless if it cannot conquer death. Jesus did just that, so Christians have real hope of eternal life. If Jesus had stayed a lifeless, rotting corpse, no one would have ever heard of Him. The disciples would have never gone on to change the course of history. Instead, the Twelve and one hundred twenty disciples would have disappeared, their dreams crushed like the body of their Master. But the New Testament teaches that the story is ongoing. Jesus' resurrection has and will continue to bring hope to people around the world. He finally bridges the gap between God and humans, providing eternity for the human race He longed to save.

### **REACT**

1. What is the main emphasis of the New Testament regarding Jesus' resurrection?
2. How does Jesus' resurrection bring hope to you now?

## Why Are You Crying?

### TESTIMONY

Luke 24:13–35; John 20:10–18

"How many echo Mary's despairing cry, 'They have taken away the Lord, . . . and we know not where they have laid Him!' To how many might the Saviour's words be spoken, 'Why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?' He is close beside them, but their tear-blinded eyes do not discern Him. He speaks to them, but they do not understand.

"Oh that the bowed head might be lifted, that the eyes might be opened to behold Him, that the ears might listen to His voice! 'Go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen.' Bid them look not to Joseph's new tomb, that was closed with a great stone, and sealed with the Roman seal. Christ is not there. Look not to the empty sepulcher. Mourn not as those who are hopeless and helpless. Jesus lives, and because He lives, we shall live also. From grateful hearts, from lips touched with holy fire, let the glad song ring out, Christ is risen! He lives to make intercession for us. Grasp this hope, and it will hold the soul like a sure, tried anchor. Believe, and thou shalt see the glory of God."

**"Look not to the empty  
sepulcher."**

They would not sit around sulking anymore. For the two disciples at Emmaus "Christ is a living Saviour. They no longer mourn over Him as dead. Christ is risen—over and over again they repeat it. This is the message they are carrying to the sorrowing ones. They must tell them the wonderful story of the walk to Emmaus. They must tell who joined them by the way. They carry the greatest message ever given to the world, a message of glad tidings upon which the hopes of the human family for time and for eternity depend."<sup>2</sup>

### REACT

1. In your walk on this road of life, when might you have met the risen Savior unawares?
2. What pain in your lifetime has fogged your view of the risen Savior? What did you do about it?
3. How can you learn to see Jesus more plainly as He is now—alive?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 794.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 801.

# Is Our Faith Blind?

## EVIDENCE

### 1 Corinthians 15

Leading historian Gary Habermas cites many ancient texts outside of the Bible which describe Jesus, His death, and His resurrection.<sup>1</sup> There is also evidence for the Resurrection account in Mark as early as A.D. 37—too early for legend to have corrupted historical truth.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Paul confidently asserts that Jesus appeared to more than five hundred eyewitnesses after His resurrection (1 Cor. 15:6).

The swoon theory claims that Jesus' disciples gave Him a drug to feign death. However, the Gospels tell us that Jesus was flogged (John 19:1). Historians tell us that the Romans used "a whip that had jagged bones and balls of lead woven into it."<sup>3</sup> Even if Jesus really had survived a Roman flogging and crucifixion, His condition would not have inspired the disciples to embrace a new faith that would risk them torture and death at the hands of the Romans.

Most convincing is the evidence that the tomb was empty that Easter morning.<sup>4</sup> First, the Roman seal on the tomb was broken, an offense punishable by upside-down crucifixion. The heavy stone blocking the entrance, which required the strength of 20 men to move, was displaced. Even the guards had fled, risking harsh punishment. Finally, if the disciples had gone to the wrong tomb and mistakenly thought it was empty, the Jews and the Romans both would have gladly paraded Jesus' body down the streets of Jerusalem. No refuting evidence is available historically to argue against the tomb of Jesus being inexplicably empty.

**We have the hope of a  
glorious future.**

Thus, the historical evidence of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection gives us confidence in the Bible and helps us to trust God's other claims. Through Jesus' resurrection, we have the hope of a glorious future, when "the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. . . . [T]hen the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory!' " (1 Cor. 15:52, 54, NIV).

1. Gary Habermas, *The Verdict of History: Conclusive Evidence for the Life of Jesus* (Nashville: Nelson, 1988), pp. 169–172.

2. Lee Strobel, *God's Outrageous Claims* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2005), pp. 210, 211.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 207.

4. Josh McDowell, *More Than a Carpenter* (Tyndale House Publishers: Living Books Edition, 1977), pp. 91–94.



# How Can I Stay Confident in a Crisis?

## HOW-TO

Heb. 4:15

Through Jesus' resurrection, we have the assurance of an immortal future, one where death will not destroy us (1 Cor. 15:52, 54). Because He died, we can live. Because He rose again, we can be confident in our eternity with Him in heaven.

However, there are periods when the promise of heaven seems too far away. When we are discouraged and despair of any quick relief, how can we maintain hope in our eternal future?

1. *Identify who you are.* Even at the age of 12, Jesus knew who He was. When His mother scolded Him in her anxiety at not being able to find Him, He answered her, "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:49, NIV). And as an adult, Jesus announced, "I am God's Son" (John 10:36, NIV). His resurrection is proof that His claims were true. This is important, because it gives credence to the promises He made.

Do you know who you are? You know who you are when you know *whose* you are. You are a child of God. Knowing who you are will give you the security to handle stress.

*Identify your safety net.*

2. *Identify what your purpose is.* Christ said, "I know where I came from and where I am going" (John 8:14, NIV). Everyday, you either live by priorities, or you live by pressures. Think about an electric fan. An external pressure such as a strong gust of wind can move the blades. Or the blades can turn purposefully from the electricity that powers it. If you don't know your purpose, you don't know where you're going. If you don't know where you're going, how can you plan how to get there? Instead, you will unwittingly let other people decide for you.

3. *Identify your safety net.* Jesus had 12 men whom He embraced as His disciples, His friends, His family. He enlisted them partly so they could share the load. Who shares your load?

4. *Identify when to be still.* Jesus frequently went off alone to pray (Mark 1:35). Perhaps you're a morning person, and the idea of starting off the day by inviting God into your world is logical. Or maybe you prefer ending the day meditating and evaluating the past hours with Him. Or perhaps throughout the day, you frequently set aside a few minutes just for a quick "check in." Whatever your preference, make personal prayer a habit.

# Salvation That Works

## OPINION

James 2:14

Have you ever heard someone say that being a Christian is easy—that all we have to do is accept Jesus' death on the cross to receive eternal membership in heaven?

Yes, Jesus' sacrifice on the cross gives us assurance of eternal life (1 John 5:11). Salvation is a gift we cannot earn through obedience or good deeds. It can only be obtained by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8). However, James 2:20 says that faith without deeds is useless. Aren't these two concepts conflicting?

There was a couple who fell deeply in love. But throughout their courtship, the man did not buy the woman a single gift or flower, nor did he take her out for meals. He felt that his feelings for her were enough. Sadly, the relationship did not work out. Why? When you love someone, you want to do things for that person to show that you love him or her. The same applies to our relationship with Jesus.

When we accept His gift of salvation through His death on the cross and His powerful resurrection, it's like accepting His love for us. There is nothing we can do to diminish or increase His love for us. That is, we cannot earn it. Once we have experienced His wonderful love, we will want to exemplify His values and His character in our lives, because we know that by doing so, we are telling Jesus that we love Him, too. In the process, we will experience meaningful changes in our lives.

**Sadly, the relationship did not work out.**

Consider Abraham. He had great faith in God. So when God instructed him to offer Isaac, his only son, as a sacrifice, Abraham did not question God. He was ready to obey. His faith and actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did (James 2:22).

And we are not alone in this journey, for Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit to guide us. So let's not stop at just giving our minimum. Let us remember to combine faith and deeds. Then when Jesus returns, we can say that we have fought the good fight, we have finished the race, and we have kept the faith (2 Tim. 4:7).

## REACT

1. How can we encourage fellow Christians to demonstrate their faith when they are facing trials and challenges?
2. How have you shown your faith and corresponding deeds over the past two weeks?

Friday  
June 13

# Can't Keep a Good Man Down

## EXPLORATION

1 Cor. 15:12–25

## CONCLUDE

A dead person cannot save anyone. That premise makes Christianity different. Christ died but rose again and there has been overwhelming evidence—including eyewitness accounts—to support this. If Jesus wasn't resurrected, life on earth would be meaningless. But because He was resurrected, it gives us joy in this life and great hope for eternal life. Out of a heart of gratitude for what He has done for us, flows love to others manifested in kind deeds.

## CONSIDER

- Sculpting a clay model of the Resurrection scene. Bake the model, and add it to the display items in your home. Be prepared to talk about it.
- Finding out how much the stone weighed that was at the mouth of the tomb. Calculate how many average size rocks it would take to equal the weight of that stone.
- Listening to "Rise Again" on volume 9 of the Heritage Singers' *Silver Anniversary Collection* CD. From volume 5 of the same collection, also listen to "Because He Lives" or sing with a friend hymn no. 251 from *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*.
- Writing a short skit depicting the Resurrection scene. Gather a group of friends, then give each one a part and have an impromptu act for worship. Discuss what Jesus' resurrection means to each person.
- Reflecting on your personality and the genes you have inherited. Make a chart which shows the ways in which Satan could have held you captive were it not for the power given to us through Jesus' resurrection. Also show the characteristics you now have which reflect Jesus living through you.

## CONNECT

*The Desire of Ages*, chap. 81.

Woodrow Kroll, *Finding Hope in Jesus' Resurrection*.

# The Efficacy of His Priestly Ministry



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**“Now this is the main point of the things we are saying:  
We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right  
hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens”  
(Heb. 8:1, NKJV).**

# Lovely Puppies

## INTRODUCTION

Rom. 6:23

Almost everybody had a pet when I was a child—that favorite pet we always wanted to hang on to. In the early 1980s, when I was five years old, my family had a dog that had given birth to five puppies. One of those puppies stood out from the others. It was my special puppy that I wanted to keep forever. But like with all things on earth, that wasn't possible.

One day, while I was playing with some of my father's leftover building materials, a plywood panel fell on top of my lovely puppy. You can imagine how horrible I felt. I hadn't done this on purpose. But that didn't matter, because I couldn't undo what had happened.

Now I can imagine how people must have felt killing their little lambs in front of the sanctuary. Did the little children try to hold on to the little lambs? Did they beg their fathers not to kill them?

I can imagine how Aaron felt the first time he had to sacrifice a lamb. It must

have been tough, but it had to be done! Can you imagine what would have happened if the priest would refuse to complete the sacrifice? That would have been a flagrant violation of God's command. The

Lord had demanded a blood sacrifice for sin, because "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23, NKJV).

Now imagine that our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, was represented by these lovely lambs. The price of sin is death—eternal separation from God. If not for Christ's sacrifice on our behalf, we would have to pay that price. But even before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8), He agreed to be that blood Sacrifice, so that by accepting His sacrifice, we could have eternal life.

This week, as we study the sanctuary service in general and Christ's high-priestly ministry in particular, ask yourself what it means to you personally that Christ became the lovely Lamb, so you could live eternally.

**Did the little children try to hold on to the little lambs?**



# Our Priest! Our *Hiereus*! Jesus Christ!

Sunday  
June 15

## EVIDENCE

Rom. 5:11

Have you ever had to translate anything from one language to another? If you have, you know it isn't an easy task. I can only imagine how hard it is to translate the Bible. Let me show you an example. Let's use the word *priest*. Because the New Testament was written in Greek, I used a Greek version of it to do some translating. However, I ran into some problems. Two different Greek words have been translated as "priest." This doesn't happen in English, so now you understand the complexities of translating from one language to another. The first word I found was *presbyteros*. The English word *priest* is derived from this word; but literally, *presbyteros* means "elder." And in another Greek context, it refers to "seniority."

The second word translated as "priest" is *hieros*, which refers to priests who offer sacrifices, such as the priests of the Jewish temple. Hebrews 2:17 comes to mind here. "Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (NKJV).

**Jesus did it all for us.**

"Our great High Priest completed the sacrificial offering of Himself when He suffered without the gate. Then a perfect atonement was made for the sins of the people. Jesus is our Advocate, our High Priest, our Intercessor. Our present position therefore is like that of the Israelites, standing in the outer court, waiting and looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup>

Christ is our unique *hiereus*. Through His sacrificial atonement, He became the antitype of the Jewish priesthood, thereby fulfilling it and rendering it void. "When the high priest entered the holy place, representing the place where our High Priest is now pleading, and offered sacrifice on the altar, no propitiatory sacrifices were offered without. While the high priest was interceding within, every heart was to be bowed in contrition before God, pleading for the pardon of transgression. Type met antitype in the death of Christ, the Lamb slain for the sins of the world. The great High Priest has made the only sacrifice that will be of any value."<sup>2</sup>

Jesus did it all for us. He is our true High Priest, our *hiereus*!

1. *That I May Know Him*, p. 73.

2. *Ibid.*

Monday  
June 16

# The Sanctuary Unveiled

## LOGOS

Exod. 25:8; Matt. 27:50, 51; Acts 7:54–56; Heb. 6:19, 20; 7:23–28; 8:1, 2; 9

### The First Contact (Gen. 3:8, 9; Exod. 25:8; 1 John 4:19)

Since Adam and Eve first sinned, God has been trying to be close to us. One of the ways He has done so is through the sanctuary.

"God Himself gave to Moses the plan of that structure, with particular directions as to its size and form, the materials to be employed, and every article of furniture which it was to contain. The holy places made with hands were to be 'figures of the true,' 'patterns of things in the heavens' (Heb. 9:23, 24)—a miniature representation of the heavenly temple where Christ, our great High Priest, after offering His life as a sacrifice, was to minister in the sinner's behalf. God presented before Moses in the mount a view of the heavenly sanctuary, and commanded him to make all things according to the pattern shown him."

It was God's initiative to have the sanctuary built because He wanted to dwell among us! He knows we can't truly live without Him. That's why He wants to be the central part of our lives.

**It was God's initiative to have the sanctuary built.**

**To See Is to Believe (Exod. 25:9, 40; Acts 7:44, 54–56; Heb. 8:5)**

Not many people had the pleasure of seeing the heavenly sanctuary. In fact, you can count them on one hand: Moses, Enoch, Elijah, John, and Stephen. Not all Christians realize that there is a sanctuary in heaven; much less that it has to be purified from sin. Christ was made sin for all of us (2 Cor. 5:21), and He is interceding on our behalf in heaven, just as the priests did on earth. Perhaps this was why Moses and the others had an open window of heaven so that we could know for sure that the sanctuary is real.

### The Genuine High Priest (Heb. 7:23–28; 9:1–10)

The ministration of the sanctuary consisted of two different services. The daily service was performed in the court of the tabernacle and in the Holy Place, while the yearly service was performed in the Most Holy Place.

The daily service consisted of a morning and an evening burnt offering, the offering of sweet incense and the special offerings for individual sins. The high priests performed daily sacrifices not only for their own sins, but also for the sins of the people. This could have been a sign of weakness to the people, because

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their mediator was a sinner as well. In contrast, we now have a High Priest who is blameless, who doesn't need to have daily sacrifices, because He was made a sacrifice for us! We have a High Priest who can save us completely from the condemnation of sin.

### **Behind the Curtain (Matt. 27:50, 51; Heb. 6:19, 20)**

Nobody except the high priest could enter the Most Holy Place. The services that took place within this apartment symbolized Christ's atonement for sin and His high-priestly intercession on our behalf. In this apartment were the ark of the covenant and the Shekinah—the manifestation of God's presence. It must have been quite a thrill to stand in the presence of God. "No language can describe the glory of the scene presented within the sanctuary—the gold-plated walls reflecting the light from the golden candlestick, the brilliant hues of the richly embroidered curtains with their shining angels, the table, and the altar of incense, glittering with gold; beyond the second veil the sacred ark, with its mystic cherubim, and above it the holy Shekinah, the visible manifestation of Jehovah's presence; all but a dim reflection of the glories of the temple of God in heaven, the great center of the work for man's redemption."<sup>2</sup>

The moment Jesus cried, giving up His spirit, the curtain separating the two apartments of the earthly sanctuary was torn from top to bottom. Jesus Himself had now fulfilled the meaning behind all these symbols. Therefore, the rites and ministrations were no longer needed. He had offered Himself on our behalf.

### **Our Only Mediator (Heb. 9:11–28)**

After Christ's ascension, He began His work for us as our High Priest and Mediator (Heb. 9:24).

The typical ministration for the earthly sanctuary consisted of two services, so Christ's ministration consisted of two great divisions at different times. Jesus already has entered the Most Holy Place, and He is pleading our cases before the Father. Read 1 Timothy 2:5. At this very moment, we stand like the Israelites on the Day of Atonement, bowing our heads before the Lord, pleading for the forgiveness of all of our transgressions and remembering John's words, "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:1, 2, NRSV).

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1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 343.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 349.

# Christ: The Great High Priest

## TESTIMONY

Heb. 2:17

"The Lord's direction was, 'Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually.' Exodus 28:29. So Christ, the great High Priest, pleading His blood before the Father in the sinner's behalf, bears upon His heart the name of every repentant, believing soul."<sup>1</sup>

"The coming of the Lord to his temple was sudden, unexpected, to His people. They were not looking for him *there*. They expected him to come to earth, 'in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel.' 2 Thessalonians 1:8. . . .

"Light was to be given, directing their minds to the temple of God in heaven; and as they should by faith follow their High Priest in His ministration there, new duties would be revealed."<sup>2</sup>

"As Christ at His ascension appeared in the presence of God to plead His blood in behalf of penitent believers, so the priest in the daily ministration sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice in the holy place in the sinner's behalf."<sup>3</sup>

**"Light was to be given, . . .  
new duties would be  
revealed."**

"In the offering of incense the priest was brought more directly into the presence of God than in any other act of the daily ministration. . . . As in that typical service the priest looked by faith to the mercy seat which he could not see, so the people of God are now to direct their prayers to Christ, their great High Priest, who, unseen by human vision, is pleading in their behalf in the sanctuary above."<sup>4</sup>

"In the great day of final award, the dead are to be 'judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.' Revelation 20:12. Then by virtue of the atoning blood of Christ, the sins of all the truly penitent will be blotted from the books of heaven."<sup>5</sup>

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 351.

2. *The Great Controversy*, pp. 424, 425.

3. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 357.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 353.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 357.

# How to Be Perfect

## HOW-TO

Isa. 64:6; Heb. 10:14, 19; Rev. 3:20

I had a friend in high school whom I'll call Jack. Jack was an accomplished musician, and he excelled in academics. He was class president, a member of the National Honor Society, and he volunteered for nearly everything. He was the kind of child every parent wished for. Some might even say Jack was the perfect young adult.

Jack makes me wonder if we know how good we must be to enter heaven. The answer is—perfect. After all, Jesus told us in Matthew 5:48 that we are to be perfect “just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (NKJV).

“So how can I be perfect?” you ask. That’s an excellent question. But don’t worry—you don’t have to be as good as Jack. Here are some steps you can take:

1. *Realize you are not perfect.* In order to achieve perfection, you must realize that you aren’t perfect. Isaiah 64:6 tells us that even our most noble efforts are not good enough to match God’s perfection. Even Jack’s accomplishments will not get him to heaven.

2. *Believe that you have a heavenly High Priest who makes you perfect and holy.* This is good

**This is good news!**

news! Jesus, our High Priest, has entered the Most Holy Place by His own blood. When we accept His mediation for us, God looks upon us as if we have not sinned, and Christ’s righteousness becomes ours (Heb. 10:14, 19).

3. *Invite Christ into your life.* The Bible tells us that Jesus is knocking on the door of our heart and that if we invite Him in, He will enter and fellowship with us (Rev. 3:20).

4. *Live for Jesus.* Once you’ve made Jesus your personal High Priest, you must empty yourself of your earthly desires and follow Him, just as Jesus instructed the rich young man in Matthew 19:21.

## REACT

1. Why do you think so many people, churchd or unchurchd, believe that if they live a good life and their good deeds outweigh their bad deeds, they are guaranteed a ticket into heaven?

2. Do you think telling people that they must be perfect in order to enter heaven will disillusion them? Why or why not? How can you turn that around and give them hope?

3. Do you think your lifestyle alone bears witness to what God requires of His children? Why or why not?



## The Sanctuary = Plan of Salvation

### OPINION

Rom. 6:23; 1 Tim. 2:5; 1 John 3:4

To really get an understanding of Jesus Christ's high-priestly ministry, we must understand the context of the Hebrew sanctuary in which Aaron operated.

In Exodus 25, God decides to show Moses the blueprints for the earthly sanctuary. This was to be a model of the heavenly sanctuary, made specifically to show that Christ is our High Priest (Exod. 25:8, 9).

The first step in the earthly sanctuary services was the offering of a sacrificial animal. This could be any one of the following animals: a bullock, goat, lamb, or turtledove. In offering the sacrifice, sinners recognized that they faced the prospect of death, because they had broken God's law (1 John 3 and Rom. 6:23).

The earthly sanctuary service showed how sinners were to repent and atone for their sins. To help sinners understand the consequences of sin, they were to place their hands on the head of the animal and confess their sins to God. They were then required to personally slay the sacrificial animal as an offering for sin and to collect the blood of the animal. This emphasized that transgression of God's law was no small matter and that death was the inevitable result. The animal that

**"For there is one God . . ."**

was sacrificed (usually a lamb) was symbolic of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who died the second death for us, so we could live with God eternally.

That was the full extent of the participation on the part of the sinner. From that point forward, the rest of the service was conducted by a priest as mediator between the sinner and God. This was symbolic of Jesus our High Priest, our Mediator between us and God the Father. "For there is one God; there is also one Mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human" (1 Tim. 2:5, NRSV).

### REACT

1. In the sanctuary services, the lamb represented Jesus. With that in mind, pinpoint the elements of the sanctuary during His crucifixion.
2. How would you explain to a nonbeliever what the Hebrew sanctuary represented?

# The Heavenly Sanctuary

## EXPLORATION

Hebrews 9

## CONCLUDE

The earthly sanctuary was a miniature representation of the heavenly sanctuary and the work that Christ would perform on our behalf. Jesus is both our High Priest and our sacrificial Lamb. He paid the price for our sins by dying on the cross. At His death, the curtain separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place was torn, signifying that the sacrificial rituals were no longer necessary. Jesus is now our High Priest in heaven, serving as our Mediator, until He returns to take us back with Him.

## CONSIDER

- Drawing a sketch of the earthly sanctuary and visualizing the rituals that took place there.
- Creating a list of the activities performed by the high priest and their significance.
- Visiting a farm or a petting zoo where they have sheep and goats. Pet the animals (if possible), and imagine how you would feel having to kill one of them for a sacrifice.
- Composing a poem or a song of thanks to Jesus for being both our High Priest and our sacrificial Lamb.
- Reading the story of Jesus' crucifixion.
- Sharing with a friend what it means to you to have Jesus serving as your High Priest.

## CONNECT

*Early Writings*, pp. 249–253; *The Great Controversy*, chap. 23.  
*Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (1988), chap. 23.

# His Return as **King** and **Friend**



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**“So Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him”  
(Heb. 9:28, RSV).**

# Dreams

## INTRODUCTION

Rev. 21:4

He finally came back. It is too good to be true, but it's a fact. Jesus Christ finally has come back.

I watch people's reactions around me. Some are smiling and joyous because they had been waiting for what had seemed like such a long time. Others are full of despair because they refused to believe in Him.

I follow the crowd, surrounded by the pair of wings that belong to my angel. Soon, inevitably, I stand face to face with Him, and He smiles at me. He surrounds me with His arms—like He had so many times before to protect me from danger. And then, we all fly away. What an extraordinary journey.

When that journey ends, I see Him on His throne. When He sees me, He immediately stands and walks in my direction. I bow before Him, shy in my insignificance. But it doesn't matter to the King of kings. For Him, this is the coronation moment. This is part of a plan devised millions of years ago. It was just for this moment that He came to earth as a human to die for my sins and to rise again.

**Instead of verbs, there is an emotional vortex.**

Face to face with Jesus. What words can express how I really feel? All the words I had rehearsed simply disappear. Instead of verbs, there is an emotional vortex. Inevitably, tears flow with a calming effect.

He extends His hands to me—hands scarred by the nails of the cross. Now these same wounded hands dry my tears. Our eyes meet before we embrace—an embrace postponed by many years, but which now symbolizes the eternal alliance between Father and Son.

And in the rapture of that embrace, I barely lisp: "Thank You, Jesus!"

And He answers: "I make all things new. I love you, My child."

Sunday  
June 22

# He Comes to Rescue Us

## LOGOS

Dan. 9:24-27; Matthew 24; Luke 21:25-31; John 14:1-3; 1 Thess. 4:13-18;  
Heb. 9:28

### The Surety (John 14:3)

More than two thousand five hundred verses of the Bible affirm that Christ will come a second time. " 'I will come back,' " Jesus Himself promised (John 14:3, NIV). But this matter has been mixed with many philosophical and theological speculations which try to convince us that the Savior already came spiritually or that He will secretly come to rapture the church. Only a Spirit-guided study of the Scriptures will reveal the reason, manner, and time of the Second Advent. Above everything, we will find Jesus Christ returning to rescue His children.

### The Reason (Matt. 24:31; John 14:1-3; Heb. 9:28)

Jesus will return to complete His plan of salvation. As we studied earlier this quarter, Jesus paid the price for our sins on the cross and afterward worked on our behalf in the heavenly sanctuary as our High Priest. At His second advent, He takes for Himself the people He "bought with his own

**" 'I will come back.' "**

blood" (Acts 20:28, NIV). To save us, it was necessary for Christ to be born a human, live on earth as a human, face trials and death, be resurrected, and also be our High Priest. But we will only be effectively saved when Christ returns to claim us as His own.

Therefore, the main purpose of Christ's second coming is to gather His children: " 'And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other' " (Matt. 24:31, NIV).

However, while one group jumps with joy at Christ's return, another group cries out in despair. The difference between them will not be the Lord's choice, but personal decisions that brought hard consequences. Many accuse Jesus of coming to destroy, to bring an end to everything. But the only end He will bring is the end of sin, injustice, and suffering.

As children of God, we will celebrate Jesus' second coming. It will be the spiritual wedding of the Lord with His church (Rev. 19:7). He promised to return and take us to be with Him (John 14:1-3). Therefore, we need not fear. If we love Christ, if we dream of being with Him, the Second Coming will be a joy.



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"This earth is the place of preparation for heaven. The time spent here is the Christian's winter . . . But in the near future, when Christ comes, sorrow and sighing will be forever ended. Then will be the Christian's summer. All trials will be over, and there will be no more sickness or death."\*

### **The Manner (Matt. 24:27, 30; Luke 21:25–31; 1 Thess. 4:13–18)**

There is no reason to doubt the manner in which Jesus will return. The Second Coming will not be a private event. Rather it will be open to all nations and all people (Matt. 24:30; Rev. 1:7). When Christ returns, it will not be as a babe who makes His bed in a stable, but as a glorious Sovereign. And our planet will experience intense convulsions (2 Pet. 3:10). In addition, the Second Advent will be clearly audible and visible to all. Trumpets will sound, while angels will cover the horizon. Millions of God's people will arise from their graves physically changed and will meet with Christ together with the saved who will be alive at that time (1 Thess. 4:13–18).

### **The Time (Dan. 9:24–27; Matthew 24; Luke 21:25–31)**

As the first coming of Christ occurred at a time set by God (Dan. 9:24–27), so the Second Coming also will occur at a time set by God. And nobody but God knows when that time will be (Matt. 24:36). On the other hand, the Savior did give us some signs that would indicate the closeness of His coming. Natural and social calamities, religious confusion on a global scale, and phenomena in the heavens will be indicators of His soon return (Matthew 24; Luke 21:25–31). In addition, the gospel will be preached to "all nations" before He returns (Matt. 24:14).

Jesus strongly pointed out the need of being prepared for His second coming (Matt. 24:42). Nothing can be better than meeting Christ. Here and now we have a chance to receive Him as our Savior and Lord, wait for Him with hope, and share the good news about that day when all be changed for the better, forever.

### **REACT**

1. Why will some people be saved and others will not?
2. Why can we wait confidently for the return of Christ?
3. Why do people need to know about the Second Advent?

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\* *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 988.

## Be Aware!

### TESTIMONY

Rev. 16:15

"As the people of God approach the perils of the last days, Satan holds earnest consultation with his angels as to the most successful plan of overthrowing their faith. He sees that the popular churches are already lulled to sleep by his deceptive power. By pleasing sophistry and lying wonders he can continue to hold them under his control. Therefore he directs his angels to lay their snares especially for those who are looking for the second advent of Christ and endeavoring to keep all the commandments of God."<sup>1</sup>

"The world, full of rioting, full of godless pleasure, is asleep, asleep in carnal security. Men are putting afar off the coming of the Lord. They laugh at warnings. The proud boast is made, 'All things continue as they were from the beginning.' 'Tomorrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.' 2 Peter 3:4; Isa. 56:12. We will go deeper into pleasure loving. But Christ says, 'Behold, I come as a thief.' Rev. 16:15. At the very time when the world is asking in scorn, 'Where is the promise of His coming?' the signs are fulfilling. While they cry, 'Peace and safety,' sud-

den destruction is coming. When the scorner, the rejecter of truth, has become presumptuous; when the routine of work in the various

**"He is all and in all."**

money-making lines is carried on without regard to principle; when the student is eagerly seeking knowledge of everything but his Bible, Christ comes as a thief."<sup>2</sup>

"Look away from yourselves to Jesus. He is all and in all. The merits of the blood of a crucified and risen Saviour will avail to cleanse from the least and greatest sin. In trusting faith commit the keeping of your souls to God as unto a faithful Creator. Be not continually in fear and apprehension that God will leave you. He never will unless you depart from Him. Christ will come in and dwell with you if you will open the door of your hearts to Him. There may be perfect harmony between you and the Father and His Son if you will die to self and live unto God."<sup>3</sup>

1. *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 154.

2. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 635.

3. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 543.

# Is Jesus Delaying?

## EVIDENCE

Rom. 8:25; Rev. 1:7; 22:7

Society values speed. When I'm hungry, I order food from the restaurant or use the drive-thru. In less than three minutes I have my sandwich. When I buy a product from the Internet or over the phone, I want my order as soon as possible. How does this need for speed affect our faith? *UFO* magazine for September 2006, announced that Jesus would come in April 2007. This caused quite a stir among subscribers and revealed one more example of people's need for immediacy.

The Bible is clear about Jesus' imminent return. However, expecting His return is not always easy. We use a variety of reasons to rationalize why Jesus needs to come soon—injustice, war, hunger, natural disasters, lack of love. The list could go on. When Peter wrote to the believers in his time, he alerted them to this anxiety. (2 Peter 3:3, 4). But he also comforted them (and us) when he wrote, "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9, NIV).

Jesus' return will put an end to the incessant need for speed. In the meantime, let us do the following:

### Expect Jesus to return.

(1) Expect Jesus to return. (2) Live as He did while He was on this earth. (3) Engage in activities which slow us down and put us in a position where we can communicate with Him. Such activities include Bible study, prayer, living simply, helping others, etc. (4) Grow in grace.

When this world finally does end, we'll enjoy the rewards of waiting and of believing God's promises. How marvelous that day will be!

"The voice of God is heard from heaven, declaring the day and hour of Jesus' coming, and delivering the everlasting covenant to His people. Like peals of loudest thunder His words roll through the earth. The Israel of God stand listening, with their eyes fixed upward. Their countenances are lighted up with His glory, and shine as did the face of Moses when he came down from Sinai. The wicked cannot look upon them. And when the blessing is pronounced on those who have honored God by keeping His Sabbath holy, there is a mighty shout of victory.

"Soon there appears in the east a small black cloud, about half the size of a man's hand. It is the cloud which surrounds the Saviour and which seems in the distance to be shrouded in darkness. The people of God know this to be the sign of the Son of man. In solemn silence they gaze upon it as it draws nearer the earth."\*

\* *The Great Controversy*, pp. 640, 641.

## Friends Forever

### HOW-TO

Luke 21:25–28

When Christ was here on earth, He was a servant supplying the needs of many. He spoke to hearts with the power of godly love. He cured the wounds of the body and of the soul. He was a friendly King who walked with His subjects and who gave His own life to rescue them from the empire of darkness.

This King will come again. The signs of His return (Matthew 24) are clear, and they are happening even as we read this. His return will be a great encounter when all of His friends from every era of time will be in attendance. How do we get ready for this event?

1. *Look for the kingdom of God.* Let Christ sit down in the throne of your heart and reign in all the spheres of your life (Matt. 6:33). Allow the Holy Spirit to transform you daily. The kingdom of God begins in your heart.

2. *Study the King's messages.* The Bible is His letter. Read it for words of comfort, encouragement, and hope. Reserve time every day to meditate upon His messages. They are the bread of heaven for your soul.

### Stand tall with hope.

3. *Enter the King's throne room.* He is waiting for you, and here is where you will find the help you need (Heb. 4:16). Here you can talk to Him as to a friend. Tell Him everything that is going on inside your soul. He will hear your every word.

4. *Be His loyal ambassador.* He has given us a noble mission, the mission of representing Him on earth. Your actions and words will let others know what a wonderful King He really is.

When He returns with a cloud of angels, we will experience the most glorious encounter of all time in any of the universes. Christ will hug us, and He will take us home. Get ready. Stand tall with hope. Our King is coming!

### REACT

1. Why do people lose hope in Christ's return?
2. Is it wise to make long-term plans, knowing of Christ's imminent return? Explain.

# Not Yet . . .

## OPINION

2 Tim. 4:8; 2 Pet. 3:11, 12

The Second Coming has a special meaning to me. When I was a child, however, it was not this way. I was afraid of His return. I even dreamed once that when He did come back, I was lost. What a nightmare!

Some years went by. Then, at the climax of my youth, it was not the fear of missing salvation that made me afraid of His return, but the fear that there was no time to accomplish all my plans. "Please, God. I want You to come, but not yet. I haven't even gotten married!"

Have you ever felt like this? The Word of God says, "Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming" (2 Pet. 3:11, 12, NIV). Also read 2 Timothy 4:8.

Longing, great expectation, rejoicing—this is what should fill our hearts when thinking about the return of our great Friend, King, and Lord Jesus Christ!

"We should be filled with joy at the thought of Christ's soon appearing. To those that love His appearing He will come without sin unto salvation. But if our minds are filled with thoughts of earthly things, we cannot look forward with joy to His appearing."\*

## What a nightmare!

If we are not waiting for the second advent of Christ with joy and expectation, it is simply because our minds are full of secular thoughts. Of course, it is not wrong to enjoy life, to plan for the future, to make dreams come true, and to be happy while here on earth. The problem is when our minds become so full of these things that God is no longer our top priority.

On the other hand, if God is the center of our lives, if Jesus is our best Friend, if heaven is our aim, our pleasure in God's things will be so great, our love for Him so intense, that we'll promptly answer, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20, NIV). May this prayer fill your heart with joy!

## REACT

Prioritize everything that is important to you. Then rework the list in such a way that God will be at the top. If needed, add some items such as witnessing, family worship, personal devotions, etc. Finally, pray for God to help you keep your priorities straight.

\* *In Heavenly Places*, p. 355.



## "I'll Be Back"

### EXPLORATION

Heb. 9:28

### CONCLUDE

One of the most famous phrases in film history is Arnold Schwarzenegger's three words from the 1984 science fiction film *The Terminator*. In that movie "I'll be back" proved to be an ominous warning.

For Christians, however, Jesus' promise is anything but ominous. "I'll be back" as Jesus renders it in John 14:3 follows His vow to prepare a place for us. The return of Christ is good news. It means the end of suffering, sickness, and death—forever! Most of all, it's not a Hollywood script. It's real, it's vital, and it's something you can share with friends and family.

### CONSIDER

- Discussing the many paintings and other representations of Christ's return that you've seen over the years. Find one or two to share with your class and learn what they mean to each member.
- Trying to calculate the number of people who have lived on earth (Google can help you search) and figuring out what logistics the resurrection might entail.
- Writing a "memoir" of your view of the Second Coming and compare it with that of the lesson writer for this week's Introduction.
- Having a "wedding feast" like the one we will have when Jesus returns (Luke 14:15; Rev. 19:9). Have a small meal in your class with light dishes that you might want to see at the real feast.
- Interviewing people on the street and asking them what they think the return of Jesus will be like. Use a video camera, if possible, and edit the results on a computer if you can. Play the film for your class.
- Looking up the story of "We Have This Hope." Go over the verses and tell what the song means to you (no. 214 in both *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* and the *Companion to the Seventh-day Adventist® Hymnal*).

### CONNECT

*The Great Controversy*, chaps. 40, 42.

Karl Haffner, *The Cure for the Last Daze*; Marvin Moore, *Could It Really Happen?*

## Next Quarter's Lessons

# Agents of Hope: God's Great Missionaries

If you have not received a copy of *CQ* for third quarter 2008, here is a summary of the first two lessons:

### Lesson 1: For Such a Time as This: The Apostle Paul

**Logos:** Acts 9:1–9; 22:3–5, 25–29; Rom. 7:19–25; 11:1; Phil. 3:5; 2 Pet. 1:3–8.

**Memory Text:** "Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God" (Rom. 15:17, NIV).

**Key Thought:** The apostle Paul had a powerful impact on the then-known world, spreading Christianity far beyond the geographic confines of Israel and the Jewish people. His life and ministry are models for our mission today.

### Lesson 2: "All Things to All Men": Paul Preaches to the World

**Logos:** Acts 11:19–26; 13:16–42; 17:18–34.

**Memory Text:** "I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9:22, NKJV).

**Key Thought:** The apostle Paul, seeking to bring the gospel to the world, gives us an example of how we need to learn to adapt the way we present our message depending on the context and culture in which we are witnessing.

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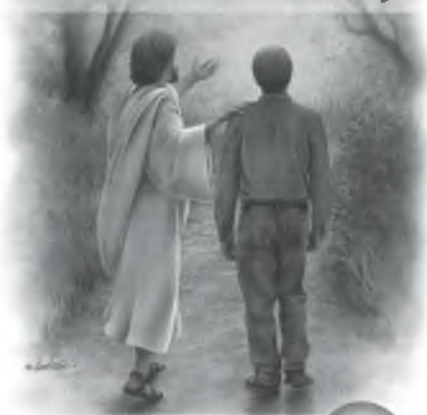
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Recently the pope ratified statements that Protestant "ecclesial communities" are "defective." He has stated that "we intensify our endeavors towards 'the holy objective' of reconciling all Christians in the unity of the one and only Church of Christ."

Surely it's time to read again the messages for these last days that have been given to us from God through Ellen White.



# Growing Pains

The Adventist Church in Central America is large—3 million—and still growing, thanks in large part to faithful lay workers. Pastors often shepherd dozens of churches, making it necessary to leave the week-to-week church work to the members. Properly trained lay workers have taken over much of the evangelism efforts throughout the region.

The program works so well that many areas, such as Mexico, are suffering growing pains. Many congregations meet in homes and rented halls because they don't have a church.

They are part of a winning team, and I want to help these believers have the training and tools they need to continue their good work. I'm glad that part of our Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help equip even more lay workers to become successful lay leaders in their churches and small groups. For me, it's personal.

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