

Lesson 1
Sabbath Afternoon, September 26
The Creator Speaks

In God's Word we behold the power that laid the foundation of the earth and that stretched out the heavens. Here only can we find a history of our race unsullied by human prejudice or human pride. Here are recorded the struggles, the defeats, and the victories of the greatest men this world has ever known. Here the great problems of duty and destiny are unfolded. The curtain that separates the visible from the invisible world is lifted, and we behold the conflict of the opposing forces of good and evil, from the first entrance of sin to the final triumph of righteousness and truth; and all is but a revelation of the character of God. In the reverent contemplation of the truths presented in His Word the mind . . . is brought into communion with the infinite mind. Such a study will not only refine and ennoble the character, but it cannot fail to expand and invigorate the mental powers.

The teaching of the Bible has a vital bearing upon man's prosperity in all the relations of this life. It unfolds the principles that are the cornerstone of a nation's prosperity—principles with which is bound up the well being of society, and which are the safeguard of the family—principles without which no man can attain usefulness, happiness, and honor in this life, or can hope to secure the future, immortal life. There is no position in life, no phase of human experience, for which the teaching of the Bible is not an essential preparation. Studied and obeyed, the Word of God would give to the world men of stronger and more active intellect than will the closest application to all the subjects that human philosophy embraces. It would give men of strength and solidity of character, of keen perception and sound judgment—men who would be an honor to God and a blessing to the world.

In the study of the sciences also we are to obtain a knowledge of the Creator. All true science is but an interpretation of the handwriting of God in the material world. Science brings from her research only fresh evidences of the wisdom and power of God. Rightly understood, both the book of nature and the Written Word make us acquainted with God by teaching us something of the wise and beneficent laws through which He works. . . .

The impress of Deity, manifest in the pages of revelation, is seen upon the lofty mountains, the fruitful valleys, the broad, deep ocean. The things of nature speak to man of his Creator's love. — *Reflecting Christ*, p. 115.

Sunday, September 27
Communication in Eden

In their original perfection all created things were an expression of the thought of God. To Adam and Eve in their Eden home nature was full of the knowledge of God, teeming with divine instruction. Wisdom spoke to the eye and was received into the heart; for they communed with God in His created works. . . . The earth is now marred and defiled by sin. Yet even in its blighted state much that is beautiful remains. . . .

The beauties of nature have a tongue that speaks to us without ceasing. The open heart can be impressed with the love and glory of God, as seen in the works of His hand. The listening ear can hear and understand the communications of God through the things of nature. There is a lesson in the sunbeam, and in the various objects of nature that God has presented to our view. The green fields, the lofty trees, the buds and flowers, the passing cloud, the falling rain, the babbling brook, the sun, moon, and stars in the heavens—all invite our attention and meditation. —*The Faith I Live By*, p. 25.

God's created works testify to His love and power. He has called the world into being, with all that it contains. God is a lover of the beautiful; and in the world which He has fitted up for us He has not only given us everything necessary for our comfort, but He has filled the heavens and the earth with beauty. . . .

The same creative energy that brought the world into existence is still exerted in upholding the universe and continuing the operations of nature. The hand of God guides the planets in their orderly march through the heavens. It is not because of inherent power that year by year the earth continues her motion round the sun and produces her bounties. The word of God controls the elements. He covers the heavens with clouds and prepares rain for the earth. He makes the valleys fruitful and "grass to grow upon the mountains;" Psalm 147:8. It is through His power that vegetation flourishes, that the leaves appear and the flowers bloom.

The whole natural world is designed to be an interpreter of the things of God. To Adam and Eve in their Eden home, nature was full of the knowledge of God, teeming with divine instruction. To their attentive ears it was vocal with the voice of wisdom. Wisdom spoke to the eye and was received into the heart, for they communed with God in His created works. As soon as the holy pair transgressed the law of the Most High, the brightness from the face of God departed from the face of nature. Nature is now marred and defiled by sin. But God's object lessons are not obliterated; even now, rightly studied and interpreted, she speaks of her Creator. —*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, pp. 185, 186.

Monday, September 28
Hiding From God

Man was originally endowed with noble powers and a well-balanced mind. He was perfect in his being, and in harmony with God. His thoughts were pure, his aims holy. But through disobedience, his powers were perverted, and selfishness took the place of love. His nature became so weakened through transgression that it was impossible for him, in his own strength, to resist the power of evil. He was made captive by Satan, and would have remained so forever had not God specially interposed. It was the tempter's purpose to thwart the divine plan in man's creation, and fill the earth with woe and desolation. And he would point to all this evil as the result of God's work in creating man.

In his sinless state, man held joyful communion with Him "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." But after his sin, he could no longer find joy in holiness, and he sought to hide from the presence of God. Such is still the condition of the unrenewed heart. It is not in harmony with God, and finds no joy in communion with Him. The sinner could not be happy in God's presence; he would shrink from the companionship of holy beings. Could he be permitted to enter heaven, it would have no joy for him. The spirit of unselfish love that reigns there—every heart responding to the heart of Infinite Love—would touch no answering chord in his soul. His thoughts, his interests, his motives, would be alien to those that actuate the sinless dwellers there. He would be a discordant note in the melody of heaven. —*Steps to Christ*, p. 17.

God invites us to come to Him with our burden of guilt and our heart sorrows. Sin fills us with fear of God. When we have sinned we try to hide ourselves from Him. But whatever our sin, God bids us come unto Him through Jesus Christ. It is only by taking our sins to God that we can be freed from them. Cain, under the rebuke of God, acknowledged his guilt in killing Abel, but he fled away from God, as if he could thus escape from his sin. Had he fled to God with his burden of guilt he would have been forgiven. The prodigal son, realizing his guilt and wretchedness, said, "I will arise and go to my father" (Luke 15:18). He confessed his sin and was taken back to his father's heart.

If we would offer acceptable prayer, there is a work to be done in confessing our sins to one another. If I have sinned against my neighbor in word or action I should make confession to him. If he has wronged me he should confess to me. So far as is possible the one who has wronged another is to make restitution. Then in contrition he is to confess the sin to God, whose law has been transgressed. In sinning against our brother, we sin against God, and we must seek pardon from Him. Whatever our sin, if we but repent and believe in the atoning blood of Christ we shall be pardoned. . . . We have only one channel of approach to God. Our prayers can come to Him through one name only—that of the Lord Jesus, our advocate. —*That I May Know Him*, p. 260.

Tuesday, September 29
God Seeks Humanity

Jesus looked upon the distressed and heart-burdened, those whose hopes were blighted, and who with earthly joys were seeking to quiet the longing of the soul, and He invited all to find rest in Him.

Tenderly He bade the toiling people, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matthew 11:29).

In these words, Christ was speaking to every human being. Whether they know it or not, all are weary and heavy-laden. All are weighed down with burdens that only Christ can remove. The heaviest burden that we bear is the burden of sin. If we were left to bear this burden, it would crush us. But the Sinless One has taken our place. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6).

He has born the burden of our guilt. He will take the load from our weary shoulders. He will give us rest. The burden of care and sorrow also He will bear. He invites us to cast all our care upon Him; for He carries us upon His heart.

The Elder Brother of our race is by the eternal throne. He looks upon every soul who is turning his face toward Him as the Saviour. He knows by experience what are the weaknesses of humanity, what are our wants, and where lies the strength of our temptations; for He was "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). He is watching over you, trembling child of God. Are you tempted? He will deliver. Are you weak? He will strengthen. Are you ignorant? He will enlighten. Are you wounded? He will heal. The Lord "tellethe the number of the stars"; and yet "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds" (Psalm 147:4, 3).

Whatever your anxieties and trials, spread out your case before the Lord. Your spirit will be braced for endurance. The way will be open for you to disentangle yourself from embarrassment and difficulty. The weaker and more helpless you know yourself to be, the stronger will you become in His strength. The heavier your burdens, the more blessed the rest in casting them upon your Burden Bearer.

Circumstances may separate friends; the restless waters of the wide sea may roll between us and them. But no circumstances, no distance, can separate us from the Saviour. Wherever we may be, He is at our right hand, to support, maintain, uphold, and cheer. Greater than the love of a mother for her child is Christ's love for His redeemed. It is our privilege to rest in His love, to say, "I will trust Him; for He gave His life for me." Human love may change, but Christ's love knows no change. When we cry to Him for help, His hand is stretched out to save. —*Lift Him Up*, p. 97.

As divine truth is revealed in Holy Writ, so it is reflected, as from a mirror, in the face of nature; and through His creation we become acquainted with the Creator. And so the book of nature becomes a great lesson book, which instructors who are wise can use, in connection with the Scriptures, to guide lost sheep back to the fold of God. As the works of God are studied, the Holy Spirit flashes conviction into the mind. It is not the conviction which logical reasoning produces; but unless the mind has become too dark to know God, the eye too dim to see Him, the ear too dull to hear His voice, a deeper meaning is grasped, and the sublime, spiritual truths of the written Word are impressed on the heart.

The most effective way to teach the heathen who know not God is through His works. In this way, far more readily than by any other method, they can be made to realize the difference between their idols, the works of their own hands, and the true God, the Maker of heaven and earth. —*To Be Like Jesus*, p. 249.

Wednesday, September 30
Expelled From the Garden

Adam, in his innocence, had enjoyed open communion with his Maker; but sin brought separation between God and man, and the atonement of Christ alone could span the abyss and make possible the communication of blessing or salvation from heaven to earth. Man was still cut off from direct approach to his Creator, but God would communicate with him through Christ and angels.

Thus were revealed to Adam important events in the history of mankind, from the time when the divine sentence was pronounced in Eden, to the Flood, and onward to the first advent of the Son of God. He was shown that while the sacrifice of Christ would be of sufficient value to save the whole world, many would choose a life of sin rather than of repentance and obedience. Crime would increase through successive generations, and the curse of sin would rest more and more heavily upon the human race, upon the beasts, and upon the earth. The days of man would be shortened by his own course of sin; he would deteriorate in physical stature and endurance and in moral and intellectual power, until the world would be filled with misery of every type. Through the indulgence of appetite and passion men would become incapable of appreciating the great truths of the plan of redemption. Yet Christ, true to the purpose for which He left heaven, would continue His interest in men, and still invite them to hide their weakness and deficiencies in Him. He would supply the needs of all who would come unto Him in faith. And there would ever be a few who would preserve the knowledge of God and would remain unsullied amid the prevailing iniquity.

The sacrificial offerings were ordained by God to be to man a perpetual reminder and a penitential acknowledgment of his sin and a confession of his faith in the promised Redeemer. They were intended to impress upon the fallen race the solemn truth that it was sin that caused death. To Adam, the offering of the first sacrifice was a most painful ceremony. His hand must be raised to take life, which only God could give. It was the first time he had ever witnessed death, and he knew that had he been obedient to God, there would have been no death of man or beast. As he slew the innocent victim, he trembled at the thought that his sin must shed the blood of the spotless Lamb of God. . . . And he marveled at the infinite goodness that would give such a ransom to save the guilty. A star of hope illumined the dark and terrible future and relieved it of its utter desolation. . . .

The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan —*Lift Him Up*, p. 324.

Thursday, October 01
God's Spokespeople

Only by knowing God here can we prepare to meet Him at His coming. . . . In His lessons and His mighty works Christ is a perfect revelation of God. This Christ declares through the inspired evangelist. "No man hath seen God at any time," He says; "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:18). "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." These words show the importance of studying Christ's character. Only by knowing Christ can we know God.

As our representative, Christ stands on the highest possible ground. When He came to the world as God's messenger, He held the salvation of God in His hand. All mankind was delivered to Him, for in Him was the fullness of the Godhead. . . . So fully did Christ reveal the Father that the messengers sent by the Pharisees to take Him were charmed by His presence. . . . As they beheld the soft light of the glory of God that enshrouded His person, as they heard the gracious words that fell from His lips, they loved Him. And when. . . they were asked by the Pharisees, "Why have ye not brought him?" they answered, "Never man spake like this man" (John 7:45, 46).

As we behold Christ we shall be changed into His image and made fit to meet Him at His coming. Now is the time to prepare for the coming of our Lord. Readiness to meet Him cannot be attained in a moment's time. Preparatory to that solemn scene there must be vigilant waiting combined with earnest work. The union of these two makes us complete in Christ. The active and devotional must be combined as were the human and divine in Christ. So God's children glorify Him. Amid the busy scenes of life their voices will be heard speaking words of encouragement, hope, and faith. The will and the affections will be consecrated to Christ. Thus they prepare to meet their Lord; and when He comes, they will say, with joy: "This is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us." —*In Heavenly Places*, p. 250.

In every age God's chosen messengers have been reviled and persecuted; yet through their affliction, the knowledge of God has been spread abroad. Every disciple of Christ is to step into the ranks, and carry forward the same work, knowing that its foes can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. God means that truth shall be brought to the front, and become the subject of examination and discussion, even through the contempt placed upon it. The minds of the people must be agitated; every controversy, every reproach, every effort to restrict liberty of conscience, is God's means of awakening minds that otherwise might slumber.

How often this result has been seen in the history of God's messengers! When the noble and eloquent Stephen was stoned to death at the instigation of the Sanhedrin council, there was no loss to the cause of the gospel. The light of heaven that glorified his face, the divine compassion breathed in his dying prayer, were as a sharp arrow of conviction to the bigoted Sanhedrist who stood by, and Saul, the persecuting Pharisee, became a chosen vessel, to bear the name of Christ before Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. And long afterward Paul the aged wrote from his prison-house at Rome: "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife, . . . not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds. . . . Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached." Through Paul's imprisonment the gospel was spread abroad, and souls were won for Christ in the very palace of the Caesars. By the efforts of Satan to destroy it, "the incorruptible seed" of the Word of God, "which liveth and abideth forever," is sown in the hearts of men; through the reproach and persecution of His children, the name of Christ is magnified, and souls are saved. —*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 261.

Friday, October 02
For Further Reading

Reflecting Christ, "The Pure in Heart to Reflect Christ," December 30, p. 378.
To Be Like Jesus, "Time to Study Revelation," March 1, p. 69.