

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Second Quarter 2014: *Christ and His Law*

Lesson 3 “Christ *and* Religious Tradition”

Read for this week’s study

Matt. 23:1–7; Matt. 15:1–6; Isa. 29:13; Matt. 5:17–20; Rom. 10:3.

Memory Text

“ ‘ “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines” ’ ” (Matthew 15:8, 9, RSV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Seat of Moses
- III. Human Commandments
- IV. Traditions of the Elders
- V. The Precepts of Men
- VI. Excessive Righteousness
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Moderator: Jon Paulien

1. What is the difference between fundamental beliefs, creeds and traditions? What are the strengths and weaknesses of tradition as a guide to human behavior and obedience? Which traditions have universal significance and which are based on local and cultural factors? (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Read Matthew 23:1-7. What are the strengths and weaknesses of “church discipline?” How can we avoid the kinds of attitudes that the Pharisees fell into in their attempts to keep the community “pure?” (Sunday’s lesson)
3. Read Matthew 15:1-6. What is the controversial issue here? What error is Jesus seeking to correct? (Monday’s lesson)
4. What rules, traditions and customs have Seventh-day Adventists introduced to help them live more faithfully and obediently to God’s laws? What are the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches? (Monday’s lesson)
5. What laws govern your life that are not grounded in Scripture yet seem as binding as anything in Scripture? How does one find an appropriate perspective on such “life commandments?” (Tuesday’s lesson)

6. Read Isaiah 29:13. What crucial biblical principles are revealed here? (Tuesday's lesson)
7. Read Matthew 15:3-6 in light of Exodus 20:12, Deuteronomy 5:16, Matthew 19:19 and Ephesians 6:2. What two serious charges does Jesus make against the Pharisees? (Wednesday's lesson)
8. Read Matthew 5:17-20. In the context of this week's lesson, what are some ways verse 20 can be understood? Is Matthew's use of righteousness here similar to or different from that used by Paul? (Thursday's lesson)
9. Read Romans 10:3-4. What implications does this passage have for the true meaning of "righteousness?" (Thursday's lesson)
10. Read Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 9, page 125. According to the passage, how does one "unconsciously wander far from the way of righteousness?" (Friday's lesson)
11. Why does your church have the particular order of worship that it has? How much of that is based on Scripture and how much on tradition? Why is such an order so difficult to change? (Friday's lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

And the one unifying thing in Ephesians is the *unity inherent in our trust and our knowledge of the Son of God*. Eventually, when we come to see God, we have this. Along the way, we may have obeyed many rules which God never gave. Isn't that true of the Jews? So we formulate this, and formulate this.

We might (even tonight) be rejoicing in the freedom that comes from knowing the truth about God, yet still have some customs and traditions which we don't need to follow. It's possible, isn't it? I mean, some people have very odd ones. Well, I'll confess an odd one. You know, Ellen White makes a comment about not wearing "artificial", and that's interpreted in various ways. In England, it was interpreted by Adventist saints that you don't wear artificial flowers. And I can remember sitting in church, in England, watching the lady in front who had a beautiful new spring hat. And there were daisies all around. And if they didn't wilt by the benediction, she was in trouble! She was wearing artificials, see. And, can you not think of rules and regulations of that sort through the years. And the Lord would love to set us free. However, Paul would be very respectful toward a person being so conscientious, and yet carrying a heavy burden there. (And so on.) {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in all 66 – Galatians*, recorded May, 1982 Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/65MMPOGIA66>*

"We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you keep away from any brother who is living in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from

us.” By the way, there’s nothing wrong with tradition. You just want to have a good tradition. Anything that’s “handed down” is a tradition. You know, we condemn tradition. The whole Bible is tradition. It was all handed down. We just want good tradition. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Philippians-1&2 Thessalonians, recorded May, 1982 Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/69MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/70MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

For hundreds of years, justification, and propitiation, and sanctification, and atonement, and imputed and imparted righteousness, and all these complex terms, (many of them heavy with Latin etymology) have only served to make the plan of healing and salvation more and more complicated. In fact, the plan of salvation can be spelled out in such complex detail that only a few initiates who understand this terminology really seem to have a grasp of what’s going on. I think that’s a gross perversion of the truth. Now—I should take that back a little. Grammarians do that with language; you know how they can spin it out. I have a grammar of the New Testament that must be five inches thick and it’s only one of scores of grammars, very complex. And the Greeks have been talking Greek without reading that volume all these years. It’s the same way with salvation. Children have been won back to faith and trust in God. And He’s forgiven them. And they’ve had peace with God. And they’ve grown up to be trusting boys and girls, and men and women. And they’ll be saved in His Kingdom, and they’ve never heard the words justification, sanctification, propitiation, expiation, dispensation, glorification, and they don’t know the difference between imputed and imparted righteousness, none of those terms. You see, some of them only listened to Jesus and they’ve never heard Paul.

Did you ever stop to think that Jesus never used those words? Do you mean that Jesus didn’t understand the *plan of salvation*? No one was saved under the ministry of Christ?

Jesus would say, “Come unto me, and let me save you and heal you. Trust my Father.” He said a lot about repentance, a lot about trust, a lot about forgiveness and being healed. He never talked about justification, sanctification, propitiation, expiation. He never used those words.

Don’t tell me Jesus had to read Paul later on to learn about the plan of salvation!—And this isn’t minimizing Paul. I think it’s just to warn us that Paul’s description of the plan of salvation is not the only description of the plan of salvation. Paul under inspiration described the plan of salvation magnificently, to a special audience who would understand these terms. Jesus talked to another audience. He talked about vines, He talked about agricultural things. He didn’t talk about law courts and law terminology.

So now we are in Romans, and we’re going to use these terms, but let’s remind ourselves constantly that one can be won back to faith in God without ever hearing one of these words.

And I love to teach a class in righteousness by faith without using one of them, for weeks on end. And then when we've agreed that the everlasting good news about God shows that He's worthy of our trust and faith—He stands ready to forgive, accept, and heal us; He wants us to have peace and be comfortable in His presence, and it only makes sense to listen to such a God and obey His advice and commands on every subject! Only when that's all over do we say, "Now, let's see if we can sprinkle these terms along through here." You could have the experience without ever using them. Let us not be tyrannized by theological terminology, especially terminology that Jesus never used. But then let's be grateful (to be sure) that inspiration brought us Romans. To me, it's the greatest book to explain all of this. But I don't want to be tyrannized by the terms. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 3, recorded October, 1977, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/5MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/6MMROMANS66> (Part 2)

So Paul makes it plain, as all the Bible writers have, that God is the one who has the power to heal. He's the one who forgives, He's the one who restores, He's the one who's made every move whether to win us or to warn us. It all comes from Him.

So we make no contribution in this way to our own salvation. Our being set right depends upon our trust in God. Salvation comes by trusting God, and not by our own works. We have no basis for boasting in this, but rather to glorify God for the kind of person He is and for His willingness to wait so long to win some of us back.

Now this is why Ellen White puts it in this order in a quotation I read near the end. To me, it's so impressive; I'd like to read it one more time. It's in the *Signs of the Times* reprints that are just coming out now. It appeared in 1890, just a year and a half after the Minneapolis General Conference. What a summation of what Paul has been saying:

The law of Jehovah was burdened with needless exactions and traditions. [which in turn make God seem arbitrary and unreasonable.] He was pictured even as one who could take pleasure in the sufferings of His creatures. [Severe] The very attributes that belong to the character of Satan, the evil one represented as belonging to the character of God. Jesus came to teach men of the Father, to correctly represent Him before the fallen children of earth. Now angels could not fully portray the character of God, but Christ, who was a living impersonation of God, could not fail to accomplish the work. The only way in which He could set and keep men right, [I wonder if she had the word "justify" in the back of her mind. I just wish I could know that for sure because, to me, that's the essential meaning of that experience.] The only way in which He could set and keep men right was to make Himself visible and familiar to their eyes. So, Christ came and exulted

the character of God, giving to Him the credit of the whole purpose of His own mission on earth. [The mission is now restated, “to set men right through the revelation of God.”]

And what is described in Romans as the ultimate demonstration of the righteousness of God—when God showed his son publicly dying:

So, in Christ was arrayed before men the paternal grace and the matchless perfection of the Father. In His prayer just before his crucifixion He declared, ‘I have manifested thy name, I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.’

By the way, is our work similar? Here is the statement of his work:

“When the object of His mission was obtained, that is the revelation of God to the world; the son of God announced that His work was accomplished.”

Do you suppose our work is different? If we follow in His footsteps taking the gospel to all of the world, we will not be able to say the work is finished until we can say we have served to reveal the character of God to the world; that’s our business. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 5, recorded October, 1977, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/9MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/10MMROMANS66> (Part 2)

As you continue studying the Biblical record, do you find yourself despising the God revealed—or admiring Him ever more deeply?

Of course, everything depends upon our continuing to study. Life today is so busy that we are all faced with the temptation to abandon earlier habits of regular Bible reading.

“Someday when I have more time I’ll take it up again,” we promise ourselves.

Famous last words!

In self-justification, and as an excuse for not studying further, some even come to the place where they regard it as a Christian virtue to hold fast stubbornly to a fixed and final system of belief about God.

Far from being a virtue, this is idolatry. For the essence of idolatry is the worship of a limited image of the unlimited God. When a man loses his eagerness to know his infinite Creator ever more fully, he becomes all too prone to accept tradition, and worship he knows not what.

But as Jesus said to the woman of Samaria, “We worship what we know.” {Maxwell, A. Graham. *You Can Trust the Bible; why, after many translations, it is still the word of God*, p. 67. Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1967}

“If only you knew the truth about God and His laws,” Jesus urged, “you would find that His yoke is easy and His burden is light. For He wants you to be free.” But the people accused Him of blasphemously misrepresenting God. They condemned Him as lawless and crucified Him as a heretic.

Then the apostle Paul took up the cause. At first he too obeyed for the wrong reason, for he worshiped a tyrannical god who would be pleased to see people persecuted and imprisoned to force them to obey. See Acts 9:1, 2.

Then he saw the light, and the truth set him free. And who has written more eloquently about freedom, love, and grace, and that faith is the only requirement for heaven, and that we are not under law but under grace, and that Christ is the end of legalism as a way of being saved?

“Of course, don’t misunderstand me,” Paul seems to be saying in Romans 3:31. “Does faith abolish law? Perish the thought! Faith establishes law, by putting it in its proper perspective.” For, adopting Paul’s understanding of faith, the man who really knows, loves, and trusts God, and admires God for His wise and orderly ways, is most willing to listen and give heed to God’s instructions on any subject.

“Let me tell you,” continued Paul, “why our gracious Lord, who wants us to feel the joy and dignity of freedom, made so much use of law.”

“Why then the law?” he wrote to the Galatians. “It was added because of transgressions.” Galatians 3:19. It was designed to be our guardian, our custodian, to bring us back to a right relationship with God. And how we sinners, in our rebelliousness, our immaturity, and disorderliness, have needed the guidance and protection of God’s law!

The *King James* version describes the law as our “schoolmaster,” which might imply that the law itself is our teacher. The Greek word Paul used is *paidagōgos*, which it is true is the source of our English word “pedagogue.” But in the first century it was a term for a trusted slave whose duty it was to take the children to school. He was to protect them on their way and make sure that they arrived.

Now read this meaning back into Paul’s letter to the Galatians: “But before this faith came, we were kept locked up under the law, in preparation for the faith which was to be unveiled. So the law has been our attendant to lead us to Christ, so that we might through faith obtain right standing with God. *But* now that this faith has come, we are no longer in charge of the

attendant. For all of you are sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.” Galatians 3:23-26, C. B. Williams.

This is not an easy passage to translate, and it is enlightening to compare the various versions of these important verses. One thing, however, stands out clearly through them all—the beneficent purpose and function of God’s law, *but only if rightly understood*.

When Paul spoke of the law like this, he ran into the same opposition Jesus did, the same stubborn preference for tradition, the same unwillingness to give truth a fair hearing or to move in any new direction where the evidence might lead.

The great apostle was even a puzzle to some of his fellow Christian leaders. No one could fault his obedience. But how could he be such a law-abiding believer and feel so individual and free?

Paul had learned the truth that sets saints free. {Maxwell, A. Graham. *I Want to Be Free*, pp. 29-31. Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1970}

Further Study with Ellen White

The people were gathering to Christ. The sympathetic hearts of the multitude accepted lessons of love and benevolence in preference to the rigid ceremonies required by the priests. If the priests and rabbis had not interposed, His teaching would have wrought such a reformation as this world has never witnessed. But in order to maintain their own power, these leaders determined to break down the influence of Jesus. His arraignment before the Sanhedrin, and an open condemnation of His teachings, would aid in effecting this; for the people still had great reverence for their religious leaders. Whoever dared to condemn the rabbinical requirements, or attempt to lighten the burdens they had brought upon the people, was regarded as guilty, not only of blasphemy, but of treason. On this ground the rabbis hoped to excite suspicion of Christ. They represented Him as trying to overthrow the established customs, thus causing division among the people, and preparing the way for complete subjugation by the Romans. {DA 205.1}

But the plans which these rabbis were working so zealously to fulfill originated in another council than that of the Sanhedrin. After Satan had failed to overcome Christ in the wilderness, he combined his forces to oppose Him in His ministry, and if possible to thwart His work. What he could not accomplish by direct, personal effort, he determined to effect by strategy. No sooner had he withdrawn from the conflict in the wilderness than in council with his confederate angels he matured his plans for still further blinding the minds of the Jewish people, that they might not recognize their Redeemer. He planned to work through his human agencies in the religious world, by imbuing them with his own enmity against the champion of truth. He would lead them to reject Christ and to make His life as bitter as possible, hoping to

discourage Him in His mission. And the leaders in Israel became instruments of Satan in warring against the Saviour. {DA 205.2}

Jesus had come to “magnify the law, and make it honorable.” He was not to lessen its dignity, but to exalt it. The scripture says, “He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth.” Isaiah 42:21, 4. He had come to free the Sabbath from those burdensome requirements that had made it a curse instead of a blessing. {DA 206.1}

As Jesus spoke in the temple court, the people were held spellbound. The very men who were the most violent against Him felt themselves powerless to do Him harm. For the time, all other interests were forgotten. {DA 453.2}

Day after day He taught the people, until the last, “that great day of the feast.” The morning of this day found the people wearied from the long season of festivity. Suddenly Jesus lifted up His voice, in tones that rang through the courts of the temple: {DA 453.3}

“If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” The condition of the people made this appeal very forcible. They had been engaged in a continued scene of pomp and festivity, their eyes had been dazzled with light and color, and their ears regaled with the richest music; but there had been nothing in all this round of ceremonies to meet the wants of the spirit, nothing to satisfy the thirst of the soul for that which perishes not. Jesus invited them to come and drink of the fountain of life, of that which would be in them a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life. {DA 453.4}

The priest had that morning performed the ceremony which commemorated the smiting of the rock in the wilderness. That rock was a symbol of Him who by His death would cause living streams of salvation to flow to all who are athirst. Christ’s words were the water of life. There in the presence of the assembled multitude He set Himself apart to be smitten, that the water of life might flow to the world. In smiting Christ, Satan thought to destroy the Prince of life; but from the smitten rock there flowed living water. As Jesus thus spoke to the people, their hearts thrilled with a strange awe, and many were ready to exclaim, with the woman of Samaria, “Give me this water, that I thirst not.” John 4:15. {DA 454.1}

Jesus knew the wants of the soul. Pomp, riches, and honor cannot satisfy the heart. “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me.” The rich, the poor, the high, the low, are alike welcome. He promises to relieve the burdened mind, to comfort the sorrowing, and to give hope to the despondent. Many of those who heard Jesus were mourners over disappointed hopes, many were nourishing a secret grief, many were seeking to satisfy their restless longing with the things of the world and the praise of men; but when all was gained, they found that they had toiled only to reach a broken cistern, from which they could not quench their thirst. Amid the glitter of the joyous scene they stood, dissatisfied and sad. That sudden cry, “If any man thirst,”

startled them from their sorrowful meditation, and as they listened to the words that followed, their minds kindled with a new hope. The Holy Spirit presented the symbol before them until they saw in it the offer of the priceless gift of salvation. {DA 454.2}

Whenever the message of truth comes home to souls with special power, Satan stirs up his agents to start a dispute over some minor question. Thus he seeks to attract attention from the real issue. Whenever a good work is begun, there are cavilers ready to enter into dispute over forms or technicalities, to draw minds away from the living realities. When it appears that God is about to work in a special manner for His people, let them not be enticed into a controversy that will work only ruin of souls. The questions that most concern us are, Do I believe with saving faith on the Son of God? Is my life in harmony with the divine law? "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life." "And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." John 3:36; 1 John 2:3. {DA 396.3}

Never, by word or deed, did Jesus lessen man's obligation to present gifts and offerings to God. It was Christ who gave all the directions of the law in regard to tithes and offerings. When on earth He commended the poor woman who gave her all to the temple treasury. But the apparent zeal for God on the part of the priests and rabbis was a pretense to cover their desire for self-aggrandizement. The people were deceived by them. They were bearing heavy burdens which God had not imposed. Even the disciples of Christ were not wholly free from the yoke that had been bound upon them by inherited prejudice and rabbinical authority. Now, by revealing the true spirit of the rabbis, Jesus sought to free from the bondage of tradition all who were really desirous of serving God. {DA 397.1}

"Ye hypocrites," He said, addressing the wily spies, "well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoreth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me. But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." The words of Christ were an arraignment of the whole system of Pharisaism. He declared that by placing their requirements above the divine precepts the rabbis were setting themselves above God. {DA 397.2}

The deputies from Jerusalem were filled with rage. They could not accuse Christ as a violator of the law given from Sinai, for He spoke as its defender against their traditions. The great precepts of the law, which He had presented, appeared in striking contrast to the petty rules that men had devised. {DA 397.3}

To the multitude, and afterward more fully to His disciples, Jesus explained that defilement comes not from without, but from within. Purity and impurity pertain to the soul. It is the evil deed, the evil word, the evil thought, the transgression of the law of God, not the neglect of external, man-made ceremonies, that defiles a man. {DA 397.4}

Christ presented to men that which was entirely contrary to the representations of the enemy in regard to the character of God, and sought to impress upon men the love of the Father, who “so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16. He urged upon men the necessity of prayer, repentance, confession, and the abandonment of sin. He taught them honesty, forbearance, mercy, and compassion, enjoining upon them to love not only those who loved them, but those who hated them and treated them despitefully. In all this He was revealing to them the character of the Father, who is long-suffering, merciful, and gracious, slow to anger, and full of goodness and truth. {CT 29.3}

Satan claimed to be able to present laws which were better than God’s statutes and judgments, and he was expelled from heaven. He has made a similar attempt upon earth. Ever since his fall he has put forth efforts to deceive the world, to lead men to ruin, that he might be revenged upon God because he was overcome and thrust down from heaven. His efforts to put himself and his devices where God should be, are most persevering and persistent. He has taken the world captive in his snare, and many even of the people of God are ignorant of his devices, and they give him all the opportunity he asks to work the ruin of souls. . . . {1SM 316.2}

God does not conceal His truth from men. By their own course of action they make it obscure to themselves. Christ gave the Jewish people abundant evidence that He was the Messiah; but His teaching called for a decided change in their lives. They saw that if they received Christ, they must give up their cherished maxims and traditions, their selfish, ungodly practices. It required a sacrifice to receive changeless, eternal truth. Therefore they would not admit the most conclusive evidence that God could give to establish faith in Christ. They professed to believe the Old Testament Scriptures, yet they refused to accept the testimony contained therein concerning Christ’s life and character. They were afraid of being convinced lest they should be converted and be compelled to give up their preconceived opinions. The treasure of the gospel, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, was among them, but they rejected the greatest gift that Heaven could bestow. {COL 105.1}

“Among the chief rulers also many believed on Him,” we read; “but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.” John 12:42. They were convinced; they believed Jesus to be the Son of God; but it was not in harmony with their ambitious desires to confess Him. They had not the faith that would have secured for them the heavenly treasure. They were seeking worldly treasure. {COL 105.2}

He attended the great yearly festivals of the nation, and to the multitude absorbed in outward ceremony He spoke of heavenly things, bringing eternity within their view. To all He brought treasures from the storehouse of wisdom. He spoke to them in language so simple that they could not fail of understanding. By methods peculiarly His own, He helped all who were in

sorrow and affliction. With tender, courteous grace He ministered to the sin-sick soul, bringing healing and strength. {MH 22.2}

In Christ's day the religious leaders had so long presented human ideas before the people, that the teaching of Christ was in every way opposed to their theories and practice. His sermon on the mount virtually contradicted the doctrines of the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees. They had so misrepresented God that He was looked upon as a stern judge, incapable of compassion, mercy, and love. They presented to the people endless maxims and traditions as proceeding from God, when they had no "Thus saith the Lord" for their authority. Though they professed to know and to worship the true and living God, they wholly misrepresented Him; and the character of God, as represented by His Son, was as an original subject, a new gift to the world. Christ made every effort so to sweep away the misrepresentations of Satan, that the confidence of man in the love of God might be restored. He taught man to address the Supreme Ruler of the universe by the new name – "Our Father." This name signifies His true relation to us, and when spoken in sincerity by human lips, it is music in the ears of God. Christ leads us to the throne of God by a new and living way, to present Him to us in His paternal love.— *Review and Herald*, Sept. 11, 1894. {FE 309.1}

In the parables which Christ had spoken, it was His purpose both to warn the rulers and to instruct the people who were willing to be taught. But there was need to speak yet more plainly. Through their reverence for tradition and their blind faith in a corrupt priesthood, the people were enslaved. These chains Christ must break. The character of the priests, rulers, and Pharisees must be more fully exposed. {DA 611.2}

The Pharisees enjoined a multitude of regulations, having their foundation in tradition, and unreasonably restricting personal liberty. And certain portions of the law they so explained as to impose upon the people observances which they themselves secretly ignored, and from which, when it served their purpose, they actually claimed exemption. {DA 612.2}

To make a show of their piety was their constant aim. Nothing was held too sacred to serve this end. To Moses God had said concerning His commandments, "Thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes." Deuteronomy 6:8. These words have a deep meaning. As the word of God is meditated upon and practiced, the whole man will be ennobled. In righteous and merciful dealing, the hands will reveal, as a signet, the principles of God's law. They will be kept clean from bribes, and from all that is corrupt and deceptive. They will be active in works of love and compassion. The eyes, directed toward a noble purpose, will be clear and true. The expressive countenance, the speaking eye, will testify to the blameless character of him who loves and honors the word of God. {DA 612.3}

Christ was not exclusive, and He had given special offense to the Pharisees by departing in this respect from their rigid rules. He found the domain of religion fenced in by high walls of

seclusion, as too sacred a matter for everyday life. These walls of partition He overthrew. In His contact with men He did not ask, What is your creed? To what church do you belong? He exercised His helping power in behalf of all who needed help. Instead of secluding Himself in a hermit's cell in order to show His heavenly character, He labored earnestly for humanity. He inculcated the principle that Bible religion does not consist in the mortification of the body. He taught that pure and undefiled religion is not meant only for set times and special occasions. At all times and in all places He manifested a loving interest in men, and shed about Him the light of a cheerful piety. All this was a rebuke to the Pharisees. It showed that religion does not consist in selfishness, and that their morbid devotion to personal interest was far from being true godliness. This had roused their enmity against Jesus, so that they tried to enforce His conformity to their regulations. {DA 86.3}

Jesus worked to relieve every case of suffering that He saw. He had little money to give, but He often denied Himself of food in order to relieve those who appeared more needy than He. His brothers felt that His influence went far to counteract theirs. He possessed a tact which none of them had, or desired to have. When they spoke harshly to poor, degraded beings, Jesus sought out these very ones, and spoke to them words of encouragement. To those who were in need He would give a cup of cold water, and would quietly place His own meal in their hands. As He relieved their sufferings, the truths He taught were associated with His acts of mercy, and were thus riveted in the memory. {DA 87.1}

All who heard the Saviour "were astonished at His doctrine: for His word was with power." "He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." Luke 4:32; Matthew 7:29. The teaching of the scribes and elders was cold and formal, like a lesson learned by rote. To them the word of God possessed no vital power. Their own ideas and traditions were substituted for its teaching. In the accustomed round of service they professed to explain the law, but no inspiration from God stirred their own hearts or the hearts of their hearers. {DA 253.3}

Jesus had nothing to do with the various subjects of dissension among the Jews. It was His work to present the truth. His words shed a flood of light upon the teachings of patriarchs and prophets, and the Scriptures came to men as a new revelation. Never before had His hearers perceived such a depth of meaning in the word of God. {DA 253.4}

Jesus met the people on their own ground, as one who was acquainted with their perplexities. He made truth beautiful by presenting it in the most direct and simple way. His language was pure, refined, and clear as a running stream. His voice was as music to those who had listened to the monotonous tones of the rabbis. But while His teaching was simple, He spoke as one having authority. This characteristic set His teaching in contrast with that of all others. The rabbis spoke with doubt and hesitancy, as if the Scriptures might be interpreted to mean one thing or exactly the opposite. The hearers were daily involved in greater uncertainty. But Jesus

taught the Scriptures as of unquestionable authority. Whatever His subject, it was presented with power, as if His words could not be controverted. {DA 253.5}

Yet He was earnest, rather than vehement. He spoke as one who had a definite purpose to fulfill. He was bringing to view the realities of the eternal world. In every theme God was revealed. Jesus sought to break the spell of infatuation which keeps men absorbed in earthly things. He placed the things of this life in their true relation, as subordinate to those of eternal interest; but He did not ignore their importance. He taught that heaven and earth are linked together, and that a knowledge of divine truth prepares men better to perform the duties of everyday life. He spoke as one familiar with heaven, conscious of His relationship to God, yet recognizing His unity with every member of the human family. {DA 254.1}

God desired to make His people Israel a praise and a glory. In obedience to His law they would find their wisdom and understanding. He told them that the keeping of His commandments would bring to them an elevation of life and character that even the heathen world would recognize and commend. But Israel did not fulfill God's purpose. They forgot God, and lost sight of their high privilege as His representatives. Through disobedience, they developed a character exactly the opposite of the character He designed they should develop by obedience to His law. While the people were firm in their allegiance to God, His commandments were not grievous; but when they separated from Him and gave their powers to the service of the prince of evil, they became aware of their inability to execute the holy enactments of heaven. The law that had once been their delight, became an unendurable weight. {ST, May 7, 1902 par. 4}

The Israelites placed their own mould and superscription upon the truths entrusted to them. Their minds were quickened into activity by selfish ambition. Inspiring them with a power from beneath, Satan infused their minds with subtle sentiments derogatory to God's character. He invented theories by which he ensnared the minds of all classes. Gradually the law of God was lost sight of, the minutiae of formalism taking its place. The Jewish religion became a religion of rites and ceremonies. The religious leaders, laying great stress on their own opinions, and teaching for doctrine the commandments of men, filled the minds of the people with theories and doctrines that were contrary to the law of God. {ST, May 7, 1902 par. 5}

As a Teacher sent from God, Christ's work was to explain the true significance of the laws of God's government. His work was important; for He sought to present truth in contrast to the many false theories so destructive to the salvation of all who entertained them. He came, not to abrogate the law, but to be in His life a correct expositor of the character of God, which the law revealed. To remove the confusion of opinion existing everywhere concerning the meaning of the law, He Himself lived the law in its purity. {ST, May 7, 1902 par. 7}

Christ came as One able to expound the law of God, so long misunderstood and misinterpreted by priests and leaders. He tore away the gloomy framework of error and doubt, tradition and

superstition, with which men had surrounded truth and obscured its brightness. Resetting the jewels of truth in the framework of God's law, He caused them to shine in their original, heavenly luster. He taught a religion entirely different from the religion taught by the Pharisees. He showed that true happiness springs from purity of heart. True religion is not a mere theory; it affects the heart, and is expressed in the life by good works. {ST, May 7, 1902 par. 8}

The divine beauty of the character of Christ, of whom the noblest and most gentle among men are but a faint reflection; of whom Solomon by the Spirit of inspiration wrote, He is "the chiefest among ten thousand, . . . yea, He is altogether lovely" (Song of Solomon 5:10-16); of whom David, seeing Him in prophetic vision, said, "Thou art fairer than the children of men" (Psalm 45:2); Jesus, the express image of the Father's person, the effulgence of His glory; the self-denying Redeemer, throughout His pilgrimage of love on earth, was a living representation of the character of the law of God. In His life it is made manifest that heaven-born love, Christlike principles, underlie the laws of eternal rectitude. {MB 49.2}

He rescued truth, eternal truth, from the base companionship of error, and commanded it to shine forth in all its brightness and heavenly luster. He set the truth on high, in order that like a light it might illuminate the moral darkness of the world. . . . Jesus restored truth that had been cast out, to its royal order, and invested it with its true importance and dignity. Christ Himself was the truth and the life (*Review and Herald*, Aug. 6, 1895). {LHU 181.5}

But Israel had not perceived the spiritual nature of the law, and too often their professed obedience was but an observance of forms and ceremonies, rather than a surrender of the heart to the sovereignty of love. As Jesus in His character and work represented to men the holy, benevolent, and paternal attributes of God, and presented the worthlessness of mere ceremonial obedience, the Jewish leaders did not receive or understand His words. They thought that He dwelt too lightly upon the requirements of the law; and when He set before them the very truths that were the soul of their divinely appointed service, they, looking only at the external, accused Him of seeking to overthrow it. {RC 67.5}

The words of Christ, though calmly spoken, were uttered with an earnestness and power that stirred the hearts of the people. . . . They "were astonished at his teaching: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes" (Matthew 7:28, 29, R.V.). The Pharisees noted the vast difference between their manner of instruction and that of Christ. They saw that the majesty and purity and beauty of the truth, with its deep and gentle influence, was taking firm hold upon many minds. The Saviour's divine love and tenderness drew the hearts of men to Him. . . . {RC 67.6}