

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Fourth Quarter 2019: *Ezra and Nehemiah*
Lesson 7 “Our Forgiving God”

Read for this week’s study

Nehemiah 9:1–3; Daniel 9:4–19; Nehemiah 9:4–8; Colossians 1:16, 17; Nehemiah 9:9–38; Romans 5:6–8.

Memory Text

“He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy” (Proverbs 28:13, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Fasting and Worship
- III. Beginning of the Prayer
- IV. Lessons From the Past
- V. The Law and the Prophets
- VI. Praise and Petition
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. Read Proverbs 28:13. How would you define the word “confession”? Which should come first, confession or celebration of God’s goodness? (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Read Nehemiah 9:1-3. Why were the people separating themselves from all the foreigners in their midst? What relation did the Israelites of Nehemiah’s day have with the sins of their “fathers” that the foreigners living in Jerusalem did not have? Read Daniel 9:4-19. What is the role of corporate confession in the Christian life? How would we apply this to ourselves today? Why did they associate the reading of the Torah with their confession? (Sunday’s lesson)
3. Read Nehemiah 9:4-8. What are the main topics focused on in these verses? What is worship in the biblical sense? What is the foundation of true worship? Why is the doctrine of God as Creator so central to biblical faith that we are invited to remember it every seven days? (Monday’s lesson)
4. Read Nehemiah 9:9-21. How does this part of the prayer differ from the first part? What are the two main themes of this passage? Graham Maxwell often spoke and

wrote about three types of obedience. Are there three corresponding types of disobedience? Think back to times when you were certain God was working in your life. How can you draw comfort from that the next time you face struggles in your life? (Tuesday's lesson)

5. Read Nehemiah 9:22-31. Describe the contrast between the behavior of the Israelites and "God's great goodness." How were the people invited to respond to the recital of this history? (Wednesday's lesson)
6. Read Nehemiah 9:32-38. How does this prayer of confession conclude? Notice how Nehemiah 9 is a summary of the whole Old Testament. That makes it a parallel passage to Galatians 3, where Paul discusses the purpose of the Old Testament (as a "schoolmaster" or "pedagogue"). How has the Old Testament functioned in your life? How are we better off because a lengthy account of the history and experience of ancient Israel precedes the clear picture of God in the New Testament? Read Romans 5:6-8. How does this passage clarify the larger picture of Nehemiah 9? (Thursday's lesson)
7. Read Matthew 13:22. What does Jesus mean by "the deceitfulness of riches"? How does this relate to the prayer of confession in Nehemiah 9? (Friday's lesson)
8. How does one strike a balance between painful awareness of our faults and defects and the need for encouragement to live a better life? How do we know the difference between the awareness of sin brought by the Holy Spirit and that brought by Satan? (Friday's lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

And in the text from Ezra, the Jews are confessing (when they came back from Babylonian captivity) that they have done several things that they should not have done. But they describe their misbehaviors in these words: "We have broken faith with our God." (RSV) "We have been unfaithful to our God." (NIV)

See, that again suggests that the essence of sin is a breach of faith; it's a breakdown of trust and trustworthiness. One of the most impressive illustrations of sin as a violation of trust involves so great a saint as Moses. I don't know of a greater illustration in the whole Bible. You remember when the people were complaining about the lack of water, and they came to Moses and they grumbled. They even said they wished they had died in the wilderness. "Why did you bring us here from Egypt? We have no water!"

And they behaved so badly that Moses ran to God and prayed, "God, what shall I do?"

And God said, "Give them water. Take your rod and go to the rock and speak this time; don't hit it, don't make a scene, don't be angry with the people. Don't even condemn them. Just speak to the rock, and they'll have all the water they want."

And Moses went back to the rock and stood there, and striking it smartly he said, “You ungrateful rebels! Must we bring forth water from this rock?”

And God said what you see in Numbers 20:12:

But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them.” (NIV)

Now, isn't that being a bit arbitrary and severe? All the old man had done was to get irritated and impatient. And he disobeyed God, and he hit the rock with his rod. Is that enough to keep him out of the Promised Land? For forty years he had led the people. And think what he had put up with all those years. But God says, “Because of what you did at the rock you may not take this people in.” Does that seem severe to you, for God to treat his old friend like this? How could what Moses did be serious enough to call for such (in his eyes) a terrible consequence and penalty?

He begged God, “Please. Please may I take the people in?”

And finally God says, “Speak to me no more on this matter.” Now how could it be that serious? Or is the answer in the text that we read? It doesn't say in Numbers 20:12, “because you disobeyed me, you cannot take the people in.” The Lord said, “Because you did not trust in me, and you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you may not bring the people in.” {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #2, “What Went Wrong In God's Universe?” recorded January, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/2MMCAG>

Lou: Back to the prodigal son model and the question that comes out of that: “Is it necessary to repent and to confess before one is forgiven?”

Graham: Ah. The boy hardly started to speak when the father said, “I forgave you long ago.” But the most stunning illustration of that is Jesus forgiving on the cross. There was no indication that the soldiers who were nailing him to the cross were saying, “Please forgive us; please forgive us.”

Lou: They didn't even ask.

Graham: They didn't even ask, and he says, “I forgive you anyway.” (Luke 23:34) And that's the idea that God is forgiveness personified. But that does us no good unless we hear, unless we accept, unless we are moved by his forgiveness to repent. We always have it the other way around, “If I repent, maybe he will forgive me.” No, when I learn of his forgiveness, that moves me to repentance—some of us, anyway. That's the kindness of God leading us to repentance.

Now this doesn't leave out repentance. If I don't respond to his gracious forgiveness—which would be in terms of changing my mind and confessing and saying, "I am sick, help me, what must I do to be well?" Then it doesn't do me any good.

Lou: So the difference here is whether we set out by our repentance and confession to win God over to where . . .

Graham: If I make a good speech . . .

Lou: . . . maybe he would be willing to forgive us. And him saying, "Well, all right, since you feel that badly about it," and the father saying to the prodigal son, "Well if you have made all these promises, then maybe I'll welcome you home."

Graham: You see, on the serious level, again I want to be very reverent in saying it, if it requires that I bring the blood of his Son to God before God can say, "Well, now I can forgive you," that denies the prodigal son story.

Lou: That's true.

Graham: Yes, that's sad. You don't have to bring him anything. But God sent his Son to die to answer all those questions and to draw us to him, to handle all the emergencies in the great controversy, because he had forgiven us, but we didn't know it. He sent the Son to make it clear. And the Son hanging on the cross said, "I forgive you. You don't understand what you're doing." That's incredible! That wins some to repentance. That won the thief. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #13 with Lou Venden, "How God Treats His Erring Children" recorded April, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/13MMCAG>

When do you think the prodigal son really came to know his father, and the kindness of his father led him to real repentance? Don't you think it's after he discovered he'd been forgiven? Which comes first, forgiveness or repentance? In a sense, the forgiveness is offered, and some of us are won by that to repentance. If we're legalists, you have to do it all in the right order, you know, or God can't do it. He's not that kind of a God. He wants us to come home all the time, not willing that any of his children should be lost, but that all should come to repentance. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Luke, recorded April, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/55MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/56MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

So Micah appropriately raises the question. “Sinners that we all are, how shall we come into the presence of the Lord,” so we’ll be safe? “How shall I bow myself low before the Most High God,” so that he could accept me, be kind to me? Well, he raises these suggestions. “Shall I approach him with burnt-offerings? with calves a full year old?” Texts from Leviticus? “Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams?” I mean, if one is effective, how about thousands of them? Wouldn’t that help?

Remember when David brought the ark back, all those sacrifices he offered? Maybe it was nothing more than fire insurance for him. You remember the story before. He was a bit afraid of God. “Will the Lord be pleased with ten thousand rivers of oil?” Not just a little—ten thousand rivers of oil. Would that help? “Should I even give my first-born to pay for my own misdeeds? The fruit of my flesh for the sin of my soul?” What do we have to bring to God? How shall we approach him?

And Micah says, “You know well enough, Man, what is good! For what does the Lord require from you,” but to bring the right blood? What should we think about that? Is that what he wants? “What does the Lord require from you, but to be just, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” And if the blood of Christ does not bring that about in us, it won’t help us to offer the blood of Jesus to the Father. It isn’t that he has been turning us down because we’ve been bringing the wrong blood. If we should now bring him the right blood would he say, “Good, that’s what I’ve been waiting for; you can come in.” No, it’s new hearts, right spirits, humility, integrity. All these qualities that all of these Old Testament prophets mention, let alone the Sermon on the Mount, and I find it in Romans, Galatians and everywhere else.

If the death of Christ does not lead us to repentance and to trust so we are willing to listen and let God heal the damage done, his death is of no avail to us at all. There is such a thing as hematology. We have talked of bibliolatry, where people have made an idol of the book. Jesus commented on that. He said, “You search the book, because you think that in the book you have eternal life.” He said, “The book can’t give you life.” That’s bibliolatry, making an idol of the book. He said, “The book is indispensable. It testifies of me, and I can give you life.”

See, God saves; books don’t save. Blood doesn’t save. Not even the blood of Jesus saves. Jesus saves, and it cost his death to clarify everything, to meet Satan’s charges, to win us back to humility and trust. And if it has won us back to repentance and faith, God will save all who trust him. But this is how we approach God, in Micah. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – Leviticus*, recorded October, 1981, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1983:

<http://pkp.cc/5MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/6MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

So now, imagine that the Father appears visibly among us here at Loma Linda this evening. How would we speak to him? Or to make it more personal, let us say that he is willing to meet us in the fellowship room. As many of us as could, would go over there and gather around him, just as the crowds did around Jesus; and Mary loved to sit there at his feet. Supposing we should have the inestimable privilege of talking there freely with God the Father for a whole hour; would it be appropriate at the end for someone among us to arise and say, "This has been such a special occasion, don't you think we ought to close this meeting with a word of prayer?" Or would it be correct to understand that talking, conversing, having conversation with our God as with a friend for that whole hour, actually is real prayer, and we have been praying the whole hour long? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #15, "Talking to God As a Friend" recorded May, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/15MMCAG>*

If you are ushered right now into the presence of God, would you be afraid he might hurt you? He might hit you? Do you trust him with his almighty power? You see, truly the way we approach God someday, and every one of us will, will reveal the kind of person we have been persuaded our God really is.

And so, knowing all that we do and the things we have talked about in our conversation series, let us go back with renewed courage to the fellowship room. And God is there waiting for us to come. Whether it be Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, it should make no difference to us. For all three are on our side. Paul said in Romans 8 that all three are our friends. Now, as we walk into the room, we know that God is the all powerful Creator of the whole vast universe. We know that the mighty angels, sinless as they are, they stand overwhelmed with awe and wonder at the majesty and glory of our God. Yet, though that all be true, if we are afraid to go in, then God has failed to convince us of the truth about himself. And Jesus has failed to convince us, not just with his words, but with what he has demonstrated to be true when he was here, that God is infinitely powerful, but equally gracious, and there is no need to be afraid. How could we turn down what he has paid such a price to reveal? And so, overwhelmed with awe, we venture to go inside. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #15, "Talking to God As a Friend" recorded May, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/15MMCAG>*

But then as you read on through the sixty-six books, the meaning of the Sabbath is repeated and enlarged. For example on Sinai, in the Ten Commandments the Sabbath is connected with creation. Then when you read on, John and Paul make it plain that the one who created us, was none other than Jesus Christ. Look at the verse John 1:3, and you know the whole setting for

this: “Through him [that is, Jesus], all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.” (NIV)

Or put with that Paul’s comment in Colossians 1:16: “For by him all things were created; things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities, all things were created by him and for him.” (NIV)

Think of the significance of that. The one who came to save us is the one who made us in the beginning. And who would know better how to heal the damage done? The gentle Jesus who walked so softly among men and then died the way he did on Calvary, is not some weak person. He is the supreme all-powerful Creator of the whole vast universe. That’s the one who died on Calvary. Nor did God send some subordinate person; not even the first of his angels. The Creator came himself, the one who is equal with God, for he actually is God.

Then for some of us, every time we observe the seventh-day Sabbath, we are publicly acknowledging to God, to our friends, and to ourselves, that we have faith in Jesus as our Saviour, as our Creator, and our God, no less. So then when you raise the question about what kind of person is our God, could the Father possibly be as gracious as the Son—the reply comes every Sabbath. God is just as gracious as the Son is. For Christ, the one we call the Son, is God. Or does anyone think that he is less than that? If Christ is Creator God, if we want to know what our God is like, just look at Christ. Every Sabbath is to remind us of theology that consequential. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #10, “The Reminder of the Evidence” recorded March, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/10MMCAG>*

Further Study with Ellen White

In the creation of man was manifest the agency of a personal God. When God had made man in His image, the human form was perfect in all its arrangements, but it was without life. Then a personal, self-existing God breathed into that form the breath of life, and man became a living, intelligent being. All parts of the human organism were set in action. The heart, the arteries, the veins, the tongue, the hands, the feet, the senses, the faculties of the mind, all began their work, and all were placed under law. Man became a living soul. Through Christ the Word, a personal God created man and endowed him with intelligence and power. {MH 415.1}

The God of heaven is constantly at work. It is by His power that vegetation is caused to flourish, that every leaf appears and every flower blooms. Every drop of rain or flake of snow, every spire of grass, every leaf and flower and shrub, testifies of God. These little things so common around us teach the lesson that nothing is beneath the notice of the infinite God, nothing is too small for His attention. {FLB 28.4}

It was by deception that Satan seduced angels; thus he has in all ages carried forward his work among men, and he will continue this policy to the last. Should he openly profess to be warring against God and His law, men would beware; but he disguises himself, and mixes truth with error. The most dangerous falsehoods are those that are mingled with truth. It is thus that errors are received that captivate and ruin the soul. By this means Satan carries the world with him. But a day is coming when his triumph will be forever ended. {PP 338.3}

God's dealings with rebellion will result in fully unmasking the work that has so long been carried on under cover. The results of Satan's rule, the fruits of setting aside the divine statutes, will be laid open to the view of all created intelligences. The law of God will stand fully vindicated. It will be seen that all the dealings of God have been conducted with reference to the eternal good of His people, and the good of all the worlds that He has created. Satan himself, in the presence of the witnessing universe, will confess the justice of God's government and the righteousness of His law. {PP 338.4}

When it is in the heart to obey God, when efforts are put forth to this end, Jesus accepts this disposition and effort as man's best service, and He makes up for the deficiency with His own divine merit. {FW 50.1}

If man had kept the law of God, as given to Adam after his fall, preserved by Noah, and observed by Abraham, there would have been no necessity for the ordinance of circumcision. And if the descendants of Abraham had kept the covenant, of which circumcision was a sign, they would never have been seduced into idolatry, nor would it have been necessary for them to suffer a life of bondage in Egypt; they would have kept God's law in mind, and there would have been no necessity for it to be proclaimed from Sinai or engraved upon the tables of stone. And had the people practiced the principles of the Ten Commandments, there would have been no need of the additional directions given to Moses. {PP 364.2}

By beholding Jesus we receive a living, expanding principle in the heart, and the Holy Spirit carries on the work, and the believer advances from grace to grace, from strength to strength, from character to character. He conforms to the image of Christ, until in spiritual growth he attains unto the measure of the full stature in Christ Jesus. Thus Christ makes an end of the curse of sin, and sets the believing soul free from its action and effect. {1SM 395.1}

The heart of God yearns over His earthly children with a love stronger than death. In giving up His Son, He has poured out to us all heaven in one gift. The Saviour's life and death and intercession, the ministry of angels, the pleading of the Spirit, the Father working above and through all, the unceasing interest of heavenly beings,—all are enlisted in behalf of man's redemption. {SC 21.2}

Many are the ways in which God is seeking to make Himself known to us and bring us into communion with Him. Nature speaks to our senses without ceasing. The open heart will be

impressed with the love and glory of God as revealed through the works of His hands. The listening ear can hear and understand the communications of God through the things of nature. The green fields, the lofty trees, the buds and flowers, the passing cloud, the falling rain, the babbling brook, the glories of the heavens, speak to our hearts, and invite us to become acquainted with Him who made them all. {SC 85.1}

In word and in deed the Messiah, during His earthly ministry, was to reveal to mankind the glory of God the Father. Every act of His life, every word spoken, every miracle wrought, was to make known to fallen humanity the infinite love of God. {PK 696.3}

All men are of one family by creation, and all are one through redemption. Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, ... that every soul may have free access to God. His love is so broad, so deep, so full, that it penetrates everywhere. {TMK 99.5}

All heaven took a deep and joyful interest in the creation of the world and of man. Human beings were a new and distinct order. They were made "in the image of God," and it was the Creator's design that they should populate the earth (RH Feb. 11, 1902). {1BC 1081.3}

Christ, the Light of the world, veiled the dazzling splendor of His divinity and came to live as a man among men, that they might, without being consumed, become acquainted with their Creator. Since sin brought separation between man and his Maker, no man has seen God at any time, except as He is manifested through Christ. {MH 419.1}

Christ came to teach human beings what God desires them to know. In the heavens above, in the earth, in the broad waters of the ocean, we see the handiwork of God. All created things testify to His power, His wisdom, His love. Yet not from the stars or the ocean or the cataract can we learn of the personality of God as it was revealed in Christ. {MH 419.3}

God saw that a clearer revelation than nature was needed to portray both His personality and His character. He sent His Son into the world to manifest, so far as could be endured by human sight, the nature and the attributes of the invisible God. {MH 419.4}

God regards us as His children. He has redeemed us out of the careless world and has chosen us to become members of the royal family, sons and daughters of the heavenly King. He invites us to trust in Him with a trust deeper and stronger than that of a child in his earthly father. Parents love their children, but the love of God is larger, broader, deeper, than human love can possibly be. It is immeasurable. Then if earthly parents know how to give good gifts to their children, how much more shall our Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? {COL 142.1}

God would not have us remain pressed down by dumb sorrow, with sore and breaking hearts. He would have us look up and behold His dear face of love. The blessed Saviour stands by many whose eyes are so blinded by tears that they do not discern Him. He longs to clasp our hands,

to have us look to Him in simple faith, permitting Him to guide us. His heart is open to our griefs, our sorrows, and our trials. He has loved us with an everlasting love and with loving-kindness compassed us about. We may keep the heart stayed upon Him and meditate upon His loving-kindness all the day. He will lift the soul above the daily sorrow and perplexity, into a realm of peace. {MB 12.2}

Having undertaken the work of man's redemption, the Father would spare nothing, however dear, which was essential for the completion of His work. He would make opportunities for men; He would pour upon them His blessings; He would heap favor upon favor, gift upon gift, until the whole treasury of heaven was open to those whom He came to save. Having collected all the riches of the universe, and laid open all the resources of His divine nature, God gave them all for the use of man. They were His free gift. What an ocean of love is circulating, like a divine atmosphere, around the world! What manner of love is this, that the eternal God should adopt human nature in the person of His Son, and carry the same into the highest heaven! {TMK 19.2}

All the heavenly intelligences were watching with intense interest the warfare that was going on upon the earth—the earth that Satan claimed as his dominion. Every moment was big with eternal realities. How would the conflict end? The angels looked for the justice of God to be revealed, His anger to be aroused against the prince of darkness and his sympathizers. But lo, mercy prevailed. When the Son of God might have come to the world to condemn, He came as righteousness and peace, to save not merely the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but all the world—every son and daughter of Adam who would believe on Him, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. What an exhibition of the love of Jehovah! This is love without a parallel. {TMK 19.3}

It is no part of Christ's mission to compel men to receive Him. It is Satan, and men actuated by his spirit, who seek to compel the conscience. Under a pretense of zeal for righteousness, men who are confederated with evil angels sometimes bring suffering upon their fellow men in order to convert them to their ideas of religion; but Christ is ever showing mercy, ever seeking to win by the revealing of His love. He can admit no rival in the soul, nor accept of partial service; but He desires only voluntary service, the willing surrender of the heart under the constraint of love. {AA 541.1}

We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The sinner brings punishment upon himself. His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. By choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death. {FLB 84.7}

In the person of Christ we behold the eternal God engaged in an enterprise of boundless mercy toward fallen man. {FLB 98.3}

He passed by no human being as worthless, but sought to apply the healing remedy to every soul. . . . He sought to inspire with hope the roughest and most unpromising, setting before them the assurance that they might become blameless and harmless, attaining such a character as would make them manifest as the children of God. {FLB 98.6}

If in our ignorance we make missteps, the Saviour does not forsake us. We need never feel that we are alone. Angels are our companions. The Comforter that Christ promised to send in His name abides with us. In the way that leads to the City of God there are no difficulties which those who trust in Him may not overcome. There are no dangers which they may not escape. There is not a sorrow, not a grievance, not a human weakness, for which He has not provided a remedy. {MH 249.1}

None need abandon themselves to discouragement and despair. Satan may come to you with the cruel suggestion, "Yours is a hopeless case. You are irredeemable." But there is hope for you in Christ. God does not bid us overcome in our own strength. He asks us to come close to His side. Whatever difficulties we labor under, which weigh down soul and body, He waits to make us free. {MH 249.2}

Every human being is the object of loving interest to Him who gave His life that He might bring men back to God. Souls guilty and helpless, liable to be destroyed by the arts and snares of Satan, are cared for as a shepherd cares for the sheep of his flock. {MH 162.1}

The fall of man, with all its consequences, was not hidden from the Omnipotent. Redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam, but an eternal purpose, suffered to be wrought out for the blessing not only of this atom of a world, but for the good of all the worlds that God had created. . . . {TMK 18.2}

Had Christ come in His divine form, humanity could not have endured the sight. The contrast would have been too painful, the glory too overwhelming. Humanity could not have endured the presence of one of the pure, bright angels from glory; therefore Christ took not on Him the nature of angels; He came in the likeness of men. {5BC 1131.1}

And while Christ opens heaven to man, the life which He imparts opens the heart of man to heaven. Sin not only shuts us away from God, but destroys in the human soul both the desire and the capacity for knowing Him. All this work of evil it is Christ's mission to undo. The faculties of the soul, paralyzed by sin, the darkened mind, the perverted will, He has power to invigorate and to restore. He opens to us the riches of the universe, and by Him the power to discern and to appropriate these treasures is imparted. {Ed 28.3}

Christ exalted the character of God, attributing to him the praise, and giving to him the credit, of the whole purpose of his own mission on earth,—to set men right through the revelation of God. In Christ was arrayed before men the paternal grace and the matchless perfections 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.” When the object of his mission was attained,—the revelation of God to the world,—the Son of God announced that his work was accomplished, and that the character of the Father was made manifest to men. {ST, January 20, 1890 par. 9}

The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan’s deceptive power was to be broken. This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God’s government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. Upon the world’s dark night the Sun of Righteousness must rise, “with healing in His wings.” Malachi 4:2. {DA 22.1}

This truth has been to many a cause of doubt and unbelief. When Christ came into the world, — the Son of God and the Son of man,—He was not understood by the people of His time. Christ stooped to take upon Himself human nature, that He might reach the fallen race and lift them up. But the minds of men had become darkened by sin, their faculties were benumbed and their perceptions dulled, so that they could not discern His divine character beneath the garb of humanity. {5T 746.3}

Christ, the Light of the world, veiled the dazzling splendor of His divinity and came to live as a man among men, that they might, without being consumed, become acquainted with their Creator. No man has seen God at any time except as He is revealed through Christ. . . . {8T 265.2}

God saw that a clearer revelation than nature was needed to portray both His personality and His character. He sent His Son into the world to reveal, so far as could be endured by human sight, the nature and the attributes of the invisible God. . . . {8T 265.5}

Christ revealed all of God that sinful human beings could bear without being destroyed. He is the divine Teacher, the Enlightener. Had God thought us in need of revelations other than those made through Christ and in His written word, He would have given them. {8T 266.1}