

Jesus in the Temple

MEMORY VERSE: “*But the Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him*” (Habakkuk 2:20)

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 491–500.

“The precincts of the church should be invested with a sacred reverence.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 494.

1. THE TEMPLE DEFILED

Sunday, Jan 19

a. Describe the situation that prevailed in the temple of Jerusalem at the beginning of Christ’s public ministry. John 2:13, 14.

John 2:13, 14

And the Jews’ passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, **14** And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting:

“Every Jew was required to pay yearly a half shekel as ‘a ransom for his soul.’ . . . Besides this, large sums were brought as freewill offerings, to be deposited in the temple treasury. And it was required that all foreign coin should be changed for a coin called the temple shekel, which was accepted for the service of the sanctuary. The money changing gave opportunity for fraud and extortion, and it had grown into a disgraceful traffic, which was a source of revenue to the priests.

“The dealers demanded exorbitant prices for the animals sold, and they shared their profits with the priests and rulers, who thus enriched themselves at the expense of the people.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 155.

b. How did this affect the temple services? Ezekiel 22:26 (last part).

Ezekiel 22:26

Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.

“A great number of sacrifices were offered at the time of the Passover, and the sales at the temple were very large. The consequent confusion indicated a noisy cattle market rather than the sacred temple of God. There could be heard sharp bargaining, the lowing of cattle, the bleating of sheep, the cooing of doves, mingled with the chinking of coin and angry disputation. So great was the confusion that the worshipers were disturbed, and the words addressed to the Most High were drowned in the uproar that invaded the temple.”—*Ibid.*

2. REVERENCE IN THE HOUSE OF GOD

Monday, Jan 20

a. How does God consider the place where He manifests His presence—and what was His first directive at Mt. Sinai? Exodus 3:1–5; 19:12, 13.

Exodus 3:1–5

Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. **2** And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. **3** And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. **4** And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. **5** And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

Exodus 19:12, 13

And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: **13** There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount.

“When the Lord descended upon Mount Sinai, the place was consecrated by His presence. . . . Thus was taught the lesson that wherever God manifests His presence, the place is holy.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 155, 156.

b. How did Christ react to the desecration of the temple? John 2:15, 16.

John 2:15, 16

And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; **16** And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.

“As Jesus came into the temple, He took in the whole scene. He saw the unfair transactions. He saw the distress of the poor, who thought that without shedding of blood there would be no forgiveness for their sins. He saw the outer court of His temple converted into a place of unholy traffic. The sacred enclosure had become one vast exchange.”—*Ibid.*, p. 157.

“Slowly descending the steps, and raising the scourge of cords gathered up on entering the enclosure, He bids the bargaining company depart from the precincts of the temple. With a zeal and severity He has never before manifested, He overthrows the tables of the money-changers. The coin falls, ringing sharply upon the marble pavement. None presume to question His authority. None dare stop to gather up their ill-gotten gain. Jesus does not smite them with the whip of cords, but in His hand that simple scourge seems terrible as a flaming sword. Officers of the temple, speculating priests, brokers and cattle traders, with their sheep and oxen, rush from the place, with the one thought of escaping from the condemnation of His presence.”—*Ibid.*, p. 158.

c. What did Christ's act in purifying the temple signify? Malachi 3:1–3.

Malachi 3:1–3

Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant,

whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. **2** But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: **3** And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.

“The courts of the temple at Jerusalem, filled with the tumult of unholy traffic, represented all too truly the temple of the heart, defiled by the presence of sensual passion and unholy thoughts. In cleansing the temple from the world's buyers and sellers, Jesus announced His mission to cleanse the heart from the defilement of sin—from the earthly desires, the selfish lusts, the evil habits, that corrupt the soul.”—*Ibid.*, p. 161.

3. THE PRESENCE OF GOD

Tuesday, Jan 21

a. What was God's original purpose in establishing His sanctuary among His people? Exodus 25:8.

Exodus 25:8

And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.

“That temple, erected for the abode of the divine Presence, was designed to be an object lesson for Israel and for the world. From eternal ages it was God's purpose that every created being, from the bright and holy seraph to man, should be a temple for the indwelling of the Creator.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 161.

b. Why are believers referred to as the temple of God—and how are we wholeheartedly to maintain the sanctity of this temple? 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; Isaiah 57:15.

1 Corinthians 3:16, 17

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? **17** If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

Isaiah 57:15

For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

“Because of sin, humanity ceased to be a temple for God. Darkened and defiled by evil, the heart of man no longer revealed the glory of the Divine One. But by the incarnation of the Son of God, the purpose of Heaven is fulfilled. God dwells in humanity, and through saving grace the heart of man becomes again His temple.”—*Ibid.*

“If we believe that the end of all things is at hand, ‘what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?’

“Every soul who truly believes the truth will have corresponding works. All will be earnest and solemn, and unwearied in their efforts to win souls to Christ. If the truth is first planted deep in their own souls, then they will seek to plant it in the hearts of others. The truth is kept altogether too much in the outer court. Bring it into the inner temple of the soul, enthrone it in the heart, and let it control the life. The word of God should be studied and obeyed, then the heart will find rest and peace and joy, and the aspirations will tend heavenward; but when truth is kept apart from the life, in the outer court, the heart is not warmed with the glowing fire of God's goodness.

“The religion of Jesus is, by many, reserved for certain days, or certain occasions, and at other times is laid aside and neglected. The abiding principle of truth is not merely for a few hours on the Sabbath, or for a few acts of charity, but it is to be brought into the heart, refining and sanctifying the character.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 547.

4. THE PURIFICATION OF THE LIVING TEMPLE

Wednesday, Jan 22

a. What must we realize about our helpless condition in seeking to purify the temple? Jeremiah 2:22; Job 14:4.

Jeremiah 2:22

For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord GOD.

Job 14:4

Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.

“No man can of himself cast out the evil throned that have taken possession of the heart.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 161.

b. What is the secret to being able to stand before a holy God with a cleansed heart? Ezekiel 36:25–27; Zechariah 3:3–5.

Ezekiel 36:25–27

Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. **26** A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. **27** And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

Zechariah 3:3–5

Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. **4** And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. **5** And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD stood by.

“Jacob had been guilty of a great sin in his conduct toward Esau; but he had repented. His transgression had been forgiven, and his sin purged; therefore he could endure the revelation of God’s presence. But wherever men came before God while willfully cherishing evil, they were destroyed. At the second advent of Christ the wicked shall be consumed ‘with the Spirit of His mouth,’ and destroyed ‘with the brightness of His coming.’ 2 Thessalonians 2:8. The light of the glory of God, which imparts life to the righteous, will slay the wicked.

“In the time of John the Baptist, Christ was about to appear as the revealer of the character of God. His very presence would make manifest to men their sin. Only as they were willing to be purged from sin could they enter into fellowship with Him. Only the pure in heart could abide in His presence.”—*Ibid.*, p. 108.

“Only Christ can cleanse the soul temple. But He will not force an entrance. He comes not into the heart as to the temple of old; but He says, ‘Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him.’ Revelation 3:20. He will come, not for one day merely; for He says, ‘I will dwell in them,

and walk in them; . . . and they shall be My people.’ ‘He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.’ 2 Corinthians 6:16; Micah 7:19. His presence will cleanse and sanctify the soul, so that it may be a holy temple unto the Lord, and ‘an habitation of God through the Spirit.’ Ephesians 2:21, 22.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 161, 162.

“While Jesus ministers in the sanctuary above, He is still by His Spirit the minister of the church on earth.”—*Ibid.*, p. 166.

5. PURIFYING THE TEMPLE TODAY

Thursday, Jan 23

a. How does God hold the leaders of His people accountable to diligently uphold the sacredness of His house? Habakkuk 2:20; Ezekiel 44:23.

Habakkuk 2:20

But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.

Ezekiel 44:23

And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.

“The precincts of God’s temple should have been regarded as sacred. But in the strife for gain, all this was lost sight of.

“The priests and rulers were called to be the representatives of God to the nation; they should have corrected the abuses of the temple court. They should have given to the people an example of integrity and compassion.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 156.

“It is too true that reverence for the house of God has become almost extinct. Sacred things and places are not discerned; the holy and exalted are not appreciated. . . . God gave rules of order, perfect and exact, to His ancient people. Has His character changed? Is He not the great and mighty God who rules in the heaven of heavens? Would it not be well for us often to read the directions given by God Himself to the Hebrews, that we who have the light of the glorious truth shining upon us may imitate their reverence for the house of God?”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 495, 496.

b. Explain the essential victory to be gained in Christ’s strength. Matthew 5:8; 1 John 3:1–3.

Matthew 5:8

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

1 John 3:1–3

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. **2** Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. **3** And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

“I call upon everyone who claims to be a son of God never to forget this great truth, that we need the Spirit of God within us in order to reach heaven, and the work of Christ without us in order to give us a title to the immortal inheritance.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 442.

1. Who were the leaders of the iniquitous trade in the temple?
2. What should be the attitude of anyone who comes before God?
3. Explain the spiritual significance the temple at Jerusalem was to have.
4. What did Christ declare in cleansing the temple?
5. How only can our faulty human heart be cleansed?

Suggested Reading: Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, pp. 491–500.

To the humble, believing soul, the house of God on earth is the gate of heaven. The song of praise, the prayer, the words spoken by Christ's representatives, are God's appointed agencies to prepare a people for the church above, for that loftier worship into which there can enter nothing that defileth. **(5T 491.1)**

From the sacredness which was attached to the earthly sanctuary, Christians may learn how they should regard the place where the Lord meets with His people. There has been a great change, not for the better, but for the worse, in the habits and customs of the people in reference to religious worship. The precious, the sacred, things which connect us with God are fast losing their hold upon our minds and hearts, and are being brought down to the level of common things. The reverence which the people had anciently for the sanctuary where they met with God in sacred service has largely passed away. Nevertheless, God Himself gave the order of His service, exalting it high above everything of a temporal nature. **(5T 491.2)**

The house is the sanctuary for the family, and the closet or the grove the most retired place for individual worship; but the church is the sanctuary for the congregation. There should be rules in regard to the time, the place, and the manner of worshiping. Nothing that is sacred, nothing that pertains to the worship of God, should be treated with carelessness or indifference. In order that men may do their best work in showing forth the praises of God, their associations must be such as will keep the sacred distinct from the common, in their minds. Those who have broad ideas, noble thoughts and aspirations, are those who have associations that strengthen all thoughts of divine things. Happy are those who have a sanctuary, be it high or low, in the city or among the rugged mountain caves, in the lowly cabin or in the wilderness. If it is the best they can secure for the Master, He will hallow the place with His presence, and it will be holy unto the Lord of hosts. **(5T 491.3)**

When the worshipers enter the place of meeting, they should do so with decorum, passing quietly to their seats. If there is a stove in the room, it is not proper to crowd about it in an indolent, careless attitude. Common talking, whispering, and laughing should not be permitted in the house of worship, either before or after the service. Ardent, active piety should characterize the worshipers. **(5T 492.1)**

If some have to wait a few minutes before the meeting begins, let them maintain a true spirit of devotion by silent meditation, keeping the heart uplifted to God in prayer that the service may be of special benefit to their own hearts and lead to the conviction and conversion of other souls. They should remember that heavenly messengers are in the house. We all lose much sweet communion with God by our restlessness, by not encouraging moments of reflection and prayer. The spiritual condition needs to be often

reviewed and the mind and heart drawn toward the Sun of Righteousness. If when the people come into the house of worship, they have genuine reverence for the Lord and bear in mind that they are in His presence, there will be a sweet eloquence in silence. The whispering and laughing and talking which might be without sin in a common business place should find no sanction in the house where God is worshiped. The mind should be prepared to hear the word of God, that it may have due weight and suitably impress the heart. **(5T 492.2)**

When the minister enters, it should be with dignified, solemn mien. He should bow down in silent prayer as soon as he steps into the pulpit, and earnestly ask help of God. What an impression this will make! There will be solemnity and awe upon the people. Their minister is communing with God; he is committing himself to God before he dares to stand before the people. Solemnity rests upon all, and angels of God are brought very near. Every one of the congregation, also, who fears God should with bowed head unite in silent prayer with him that God may grace the meeting with His presence and give power to His truth proclaimed from human lips. When the meeting is opened by prayer, every knee should bow in the presence of the Holy One, and every heart should ascend to God in silent devotion. The prayers of faithful worshipers will be heard, and the ministry of the word will prove effectual. The lifeless attitude of the worshipers in the house of God is one great reason why the ministry is not more productive of good. The melody of song, poured forth from many hearts in clear, distinct utterance, is one of God's instrumentalities in the work of saving souls. All the service should be conducted with solemnity and awe, as if in the visible presence of "the Master of assemblies." Ecclesiastes 12:11. **(5T 492.3)**

When the word is spoken, you should remember, brethren, that you are listening to the voice of God through His delegated servant. Listen attentively. Sleep not for one instant, because by this slumber you may lose the very words that you need most—the very words which, if heeded, would save your feet from straying into wrong paths. Satan and his angels are busy creating a paralyzed condition of the senses so that cautions, warnings, and reproofs shall not be heard; or if heard, that they shall not take effect upon the heart and reform the life. Sometimes a little child may so attract the attention of the hearers that the precious seed does not fall into good ground and bring forth fruit. Sometimes young men and women have so little reverence for the house and worship of God that they keep up a continual communication with each other during the sermon. Could these see the angels of God looking upon them and marking their doings, they would be filled with shame, with abhorrence of themselves. God wants attentive hearers. It was while men slept that Satan sowed his tares. **(5T 493.1)**

When the benediction is pronounced, all should still be quiet, as if fearful of losing the peace of Christ. Let all pass out without jostling or loud talking, feeling that they are in the presence of God, that His eye is resting upon them, and that they must act as in His visible presence. Let there be no stopping in the aisles to visit or gossip, thus blocking them up so that others cannot pass out. The precincts of the church should be invested with a sacred reverence. It should not be made a place to meet old friends and visit and introduce common thoughts and worldly business transactions. These should be left outside the church. God and angels have been dishonored by the careless, noisy laughing and shuffling of feet heard in some places. **(5T 493.2)**

Parents, elevate the standard of Christianity in the minds of your children; help them to weave Jesus into their experience; teach them to have the highest reverence for the house of God and to understand that when they enter the Lord's house it should be with hearts that are softened and subdued by such thoughts as these: "God is here; this is His house. I must have pure thoughts and the holiest motives. I must have no pride, envy, jealousy, evil surmising, hatred, or deception in my heart, for I am coming into the presence of the holy God. This is the place where God meets with and blesses His people. The high and holy One who inhabiteth eternity looks upon me, searches my heart, and reads the most secret thoughts and acts of my life." **(5T 494.1)**

Brethren, will you not devote a little thought to this subject and notice how you conduct yourselves in the house of God and what efforts you are making by precept and example to cultivate reverence in your children? You roll vast responsibilities upon the preacher and hold him accountable for the souls of your children; but you do not sense your own responsibility as parents and as instructors and, like Abraham, command your household after you, that they may keep the statutes of the Lord. Your sons and daughters are corrupted by your own example and lax precepts; and, notwithstanding this lack of domestic training, you expect the minister to counteract your daily work and accomplish the wonderful achievement of training their hearts and lives to virtue and piety. After the minister has done all he can do for the church by faithful, affectionate admonition, patient discipline, and fervent prayer to reclaim and save the soul, yet is not successful, the fathers and mothers often blame him because their children are not converted, when it may be because of their own neglect. The burden rests with the parents; and will they take up the work that God has entrusted to them, and with fidelity perform it? Will they move onward and upward, working in a humble, patient, persevering way to reach the exalted standard themselves and to bring their children up with them? No wonder our churches are feeble and do not have that deep, earnest piety in their borders that they should have. Our present habits and customs, which dishonor God and bring the sacred and heavenly down to the level of the common, are against us. We have a sacred, testing, sanctifying truth; and if our habits and practices are not in accordance with the truth, we are sinners against great light, and are proportionately guilty. It will be far more tolerable for the heathen in the day of God's retributive justice than for us. **(5T 494.2)**

A much greater work might be done than we are now doing in reflecting the light of truth. God expects us to bear much fruit. He expects greater zeal and faithfulness, more affectionate and earnest efforts, by the individual members of the church for their neighbors and for those who are out of Christ. Parents must begin their work on a high plane of action. All who name the name of Christ must put on the whole armor and entreat, warn, and seek to win souls from sin. Lead all you can to listen to the truth in the house of God. We must do much more than we are doing to snatch souls from the burning. **(5T 495.1)**

It is too true that reverence for the house of God has become almost extinct. Sacred things and places are not discerned; the holy and exalted are not appreciated. Is there not a cause for the want of fervent piety in our families? Is it not because the high standard of religion is left to trail in the dust? God gave rules of order, perfect and exact, to His ancient people. Has His character changed? Is He not the great and mighty God who rules in the heaven of heavens? Would it not be well for us often to read the directions given by God Himself to the Hebrews, that we who have the light of the glorious truth shining

upon us may imitate their reverence for the house of God? We have abundant reason to maintain a fervent, devoted spirit in the worship of God. We have reason even to be more thoughtful and reverential in our worship than had the Jews. But an enemy has been at work to destroy our faith in the sacredness of Christian worship. **(5T 495.2)**

The place dedicated to God should not be a room where worldly business is transacted. If the children assemble to worship God in a room that is used during the week for a school or a storeroom, they will be more than human if, mingled with their devotional thoughts, they do not also have thoughts of their studies or of things that have happened during the week. The education and training of the youth should be of a character that would exalt sacred things and encourage pure devotion for God in His house. Many who profess to be children of the heavenly King have no true appreciation of the sacredness of eternal things. Nearly all need to be taught how to conduct themselves in the house of God. Parents should not only teach, but command, their children to enter the sanctuary with sobriety and reverence. **(5T 496.1)**

The moral taste of the worshipers in God's holy sanctuary must be elevated, refined, sanctified. This matter has been sadly neglected. Its importance has been overlooked, and as the result, disorder and irreverence have become prevalent, and God has been dishonored. When the leaders in the church, ministers and people, father and mothers, have not had elevated views of this matter, what could be expected of the inexperienced children? They are too often found in groups, away from the parents, who should have charge of them. Notwithstanding they are in the presence of God, and His eye is looking upon them, they are light and trifling, they whisper and laugh, are careless, irreverent, and inattentive. They are seldom instructed that the minister is God's ambassador, that the message he brings is one of God's appointed agencies in the salvation of souls, and that to all who have the privilege brought within their reach it will be a savor of life unto life or of death unto death. **(5T 496.2)**

The delicate and susceptible minds of the youth obtain their estimate of the labors of God's servants by the way their parents treat the matter. Many heads of families make the service a subject of criticism at home, approving a few things and condemning others. Thus the message of God to men is criticized and questioned, and made a subject of levity. What impressions are thus made upon the young by these careless, irreverent remarks the books of heaven alone will reveal. The children see and understand these things very much quicker than parents are apt to think. Their moral senses receive a wrong bias that time will never fully change. The parents mourn over the hardness of heart in their children and the difficulty in arousing their moral sensibility to answer to the claims of God. But the books of heavenly record trace with unerring pen the true cause. The parents were unconverted. They were not in harmony with heaven or with heaven's work. Their low, common ideas of the sacredness of the ministry and of the sanctuary of God were woven into the education of their children. It is a question whether anyone who has for years been under this blighting influence of home instruction will ever have a sensitive reverence and high regard for God's ministry and the agencies He has appointed for the salvation of souls. These things should be spoken of with reverence, with propriety of language, and with fine susceptibility, that you may reveal to all you associate with that you regard the message from God's servants as a message to you from God Himself. **(5T 497.1)**

Parents, be careful what example and what ideas you give your children. Their minds are plastic, and impressions are easily made. In regard to the service of the sanctuary, if the speaker has a blemish, be afraid to mention it. Talk only of the good work he is doing, of the good ideas he presented, which you should heed as coming through God's agent. It may be readily seen why children are so little impressed with the ministry of the word and why they have so little reverence for the house of God. Their education has been defective in this respect. Their parents need daily communion with God. Their own ideas need to be refined and ennobled; their lips need to be touched with a live coal from off the altar; then their habits, their practices at home, will make a good impression on the minds and characters of their children. The standard of religion will be greatly elevated. Such parents will do a great work for God. They will have less earthliness, less sensuality, and more refinement and fidelity at home. Life will be invested with a solemnity of which they have scarcely conceived. Nothing will be made common that pertains to the service and worship of God. **(5T 498.1)**

I am often pained as I enter the house where God is worshiped, to see the untidy dress of both men and women. If the heart and character were indicated by the outward apparel, then certainly nothing could be heavenly about them. They have no true idea of the order, the neatness, and the refined deportment that God requires of all who come into His presence to worship Him. What impressions do these things give to unbelievers and to the youth, who are keen to discern and to draw their conclusions? **(5T 498.2)**

In the minds of many there are no more sacred thoughts connected with the house of God than with the most common place. Some will enter the place of worship with their hats on, in soiled, dirty clothes. Such do not realize that they are to meet with God and holy angels. There should be a radical change in this matter all through our churches. Ministers themselves need to elevate their ideas, to have finer susceptibilities in regard to it. It is a feature of the work that has been sadly neglected. Because of the irreverence in attitude, dress, and deportment, and lack of a worshipful frame of mind, God has often turned His face away from those assembled for His worship. **(5T 498.3)**

All should be taught to be neat, clean, and orderly in their dress, but not to indulge in that external adorning which is wholly inappropriate for the sanctuary. There should be no display of the apparel; for this encourages irreverence. The attention of the people is often called to this or that fine article of dress, and thus thoughts are intruded that should have no place in the hearts of the worshipers. God is to be the subject of thought, the object of worship; and anything that attracts the mind from the solemn, sacred service is an offense to Him. The parading of bows and ribbons, ruffles and feathers, and gold and silver ornaments is a species of idolatry and is wholly inappropriate for the sacred service of God, where the eye of every worshiper should be single to His glory. All matters of dress should be strictly guarded, following closely the Bible rule. Fashion has been the goddess who has ruled the outside world, and she often insinuates herself into the church. The church should make the word of God her standard, and parents should think intelligently upon this subject. When they see their children inclined to follow worldly fashions, they should, like Abraham, resolutely command their households after them. Instead of uniting them with the world, connect them with God. Let none dishonor God's sanctuary by their showy apparel. God and angels are there. The Holy One of Israel has spoken through His apostle: "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in

that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.” 1 Peter 3:3-4. **(5T 499.1)**

When a church has been raised up and left uninstructed on these points, the minister has neglected his duty and will have to give an account to God for the impressions he allowed to prevail. Unless correct ideas of true worship and true reverence are impressed upon the people, there will be a growing tendency to place the sacred and eternal on a level with common things, and those professing the truth will be an offense to God and a disgrace to religion. They can never, with their uncultivated ideas, appreciate a pure and holy heaven, and be prepared to join with the worshipers in the heavenly courts above, where all is purity and perfection, where every being has perfect reverence for God and His holiness. **(5T 500.1)**

Paul describes the work of God’s ambassadors as that by which every man shall be presented perfect in Christ Jesus. Those who embrace the truth of heavenly origin should be refined, ennobled, sanctified through it. It will require much painstaking effort to reach God’s standard of true manhood. The irregular stones hewed from the quarry must be chiseled, their rough sides must be polished. This is an age famous for surface work, for easy methods, for boasted holiness aside from the standard of character that God has erected. All short routes, all cutoff tracks, all teaching which fails to exalt the law of God as the standard of religious character, is spurious. Perfection of character is a lifelong work, unattainable by those who are not willing to strive for it in God’s appointed way, by slow and toilsome steps. We cannot afford to make any mistake in this matter, but we want day by day to be growing up into Christ, our living Head. **(5T 500.2)**