**Lesson 3 Sabbath, January 21, 2023**

**Fiery Serpents**

***MEMORY TEXT: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28–30).***

“The humanity of the Son of God is everything to us. It is the golden chain that binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God. This is to be our study.”—*Selected Messages,* bk. 1, p. 244.

**Suggested Reading: *The Desire of Ages,* pp. 48, 49, 114-123. (At the bottom of this page)**

***Sunday January 15***

**1. ABRAHAM’S SEED**

**a. Describe a seriously dangerous attitude that affects spiritual life. John 8:33.**

**John 8:33**They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?

**b. What makes us slaves to sin? John 8:34, 39–44.**

**John 8:34, 39–44**Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. **39**They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. **40**But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. **41**Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. **42**Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. **43**Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. **44**Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

“The Pharisees had declared themselves the children of Abraham. Jesus told them that this claim could be established only by doing the works of Abraham. The true children of Abraham would live, as he did, a life of obedience to God. They would not try to kill One who was speaking the truth that was given Him from God. In plotting against Christ, the rabbis were not doing the works of Abraham. A mere lineal descent from Abraham was of no value. Without a spiritual connection with him, which would be manifested in possessing the same spirit, and doing the same works, they were not his children.”—*The Desire of Ages,* pp. 466, 467.

**c. How is it possible to be delivered from this tyranny of a cruel master? John 8:32, 36; Galatians 3:29.**

**John 8:32, 36** And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. **36**If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

**Galatians 3:29**And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

***Monday January 16***

**2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO “KNOW”?**

**a. What all-important question did Pilate ask in the judgment hall? John 18:38 (first part). What answer would he have received if he had stopped a moment to listen to the Saviour’s response? John 14:6.**

**John 18:38**  Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.

**John 14:6** Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

“Pilate had a desire to know the truth. His mind was confused. He eagerly grasped the words of the Saviour, and his heart was stirred with a great longing to know what it really was, and how he could obtain it. ‘What is truth?’ he inquired. But he did not wait for an answer. The tumult outside recalled him to the interests of the hour; for the priests were clamorous for immediate action. Going out to the Jews, he declared emphatically, ‘I find in Him no fault at all.’ ”—*The Desire of Ages,* p. 727.

**b. Explain what can happen when a person studies the Word yet does not know God. Mark 12:24; 2 Timothy 3:7.**

**Mark 12:24**And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?

**2 Timothy 3:7**Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

“The Sadducees had flattered themselves that they of all men adhered most strictly to the Scriptures. But Jesus showed that they had not known their true meaning.”—*The Desire of Ages,* p. 605.

**c. How is it possible to be drawn to Someone that our fallen nature does not desire? John 12:32; 8:28; Matthew 11:28–30.**

**John 12:32**And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

**John 8:28**Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me,

**Matthew 11:28-30**Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. **29**Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. **30**For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

“Whenever the law is presented before the people, let the teacher of truth point out the throne arched with the rainbow of promise, the righteousness of Christ. The glory of the law is Christ; He came to magnify the law, and make it honorable. Make it distinct that mercy and truth have met together in Christ, and righteousness and peace have embraced each other. It is when you are looking to His throne, offering up your penitence and praise and thanksgiving to God, that you perfect Christian character, and represent Christ to the world. You abide in Christ, and Christ abides in you; you have that peace that passeth all understanding. We need constantly to meditate upon Christ and His attractive loveliness. We must direct minds to Jesus, fasten them upon Him. In every discourse dwell upon the divine attributes.”—*The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials,* p. 730.

“Study carefully the divine-human character, and constantly inquire, ‘What would Jesus do were He in my place?’ ”—*The Ministry of Healing,* p. 491.

***Tuesday January 17***

**3. SERPENTS IN THE WILDERNESS**

**a. What remedy did God provide for those stung by poisonous snakes in the desert? What was required for healing to take place? Numbers 21:6–9.**

**Numbers 21:6-9** And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. **7**Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. **8**And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. **9**And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

“Because they had been shielded by divine power [the children of Israel] had not realized the countless dangers by which they were continually surrounded. In their ingratitude and unbelief they had anticipated death, and now the Lord permitted death to come upon them. The poisonous serpents that infested the wilderness were called fiery serpents, on account of the terrible effects produced by their sting, it causing violent inflammation and speedy death. As the protecting hand of God was removed from Israel, great numbers of the people were attacked by these venomous creatures. . . .

“Moses was divinely commanded to make a serpent of brass resembling the living ones, and to elevate it among the people. To this, all who had been bitten were to look, and they would find relief. He did so, and the joyful news was sounded throughout the encampment that all who had been bitten might look upon the brazen serpent and live. Many had already died, and when Moses raised the serpent upon the pole, some would not believe that merely gazing upon that metallic image would heal them; these perished in their unbelief. Yet there were many who had faith in the provision which God had made. . . . If these, though faint and dying, could only once look, they were perfectly restored.

“The people well knew that there was no power in the serpent of brass to cause such a change in those who looked upon it. The healing virtue was from God alone. In His wisdom He chose this way of displaying His power. By this simple means the people were made to realize that this affliction had been brought upon them by their sins. They were also assured that while obeying God they had no reason to fear, for He would preserve them.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets,* pp. 429, 430.

**b. How does this experience parallel that of those suffering from the sting of that old serpent (Revelation 12:9) and desire healing? John 3:14, 15; 1:29.**

**Revelation 12:9** And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

**John 3:14**And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

**John 3:15**That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

**John 1:29** The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

“Let the repenting sinner fix his eyes upon ‘the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world’ (John 1:29); and by beholding, he becomes changed. His fear is turned to joy, his doubts to hope. Gratitude springs up. The stony heart is broken. A tide of love sweeps into the soul. Christ is in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.”—*The Desire of Ages,* p. 439.

***Wednesday January 18***

**4. WHO IS JESUS?**

**a. Christ lived a perfect life on earth (1 Peter 2:21, 22), yet instead of being drawn to Him and His faithful followers, what is the response of most people? 2 Timothy 3:12; John 3:19, 20.**

**1 Peter 2:21-22** For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: **22**Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

**2 Timothy 3:12**Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

**John 3:19-20**And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. **20**For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

“The early Christians were indeed a peculiar people. Their blameless deportment and unswerving faith were a continual reproof that disturbed the sinner’s peace. Though few in numbers, without wealth, position, or honorary titles, they were a terror to evildoers wherever their character and doctrines were known. Therefore they were hated by the wicked, even as Abel was hated by the ungodly Cain. For the same reason that Cain slew Abel, did those who sought to throw off the restraint of the Holy Spirit, put to death God’s people. It was for the same reason that the Jews rejected and crucified the Saviour—because the purity and holiness of His character was a constant rebuke to their selfishness and corruption. From the days of Christ until now His faithful disciples have excited the hatred and opposition of those who love and follow the ways of sin.”—*The Great Controversy,* p. 46.

**b. What supreme power is manifested in the Saviour of the world that has that capacity to draw humanity? 1 Timothy 3:16; John 1:1–3; Hebrews 1:8.**

**1 Timothy 3:16**  And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

**John 1:1-3**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2**The same was in the beginning with God. **3**All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

**Hebrews 1:8**But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.

“If Christ made all things, He existed before all things. The words spoken in regard to this are so decisive that no one need be left in doubt. Christ was God essentially, and in the highest sense. He was with God from all eternity, God over all, blessed forevermore.”—*Selected Messages,* bk. 1, p. 247.

“In the thick darkness, God veiled the last human agony of His Son. All who had seen Christ in His suffering had been convicted of His divinity. That face, once beheld by humanity, was never forgotten. As the face of Cain expressed his guilt as a murderer, so the face of Christ revealed innocence, serenity, benevolence—the image of God. But His accusers would not give heed to the signet of heaven. Through long hours of agony Christ had been gazed upon by the jeering multitude. Now He was mercifully hidden by the mantle of God.”—*The Desire of Ages,* p. 754.

“Think of Christ’s humiliation. He took upon Himself fallen, suffering human nature, degraded and defiled by sin. He took our sorrows, bearing our grief and shame. He endured all the temptations wherewith man is beset. He united humanity with divinity; a divine spirit dwelt in a temple of flesh.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary [E. G. White Comments],* vol. 4, p. 1147.

***Thursday January 19***

**5. GOD BECAME FLESH**

**a. What did this Divine Being become in order to rescue humanity from its terrible misery and hopeless condition? John 1:14; Hebrews 2:9.**

**John 1:14**  And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

**Hebrews 2:9** But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

**b. Describe what Jesus took upon His spotless divine nature. Hebrews 2:10, 11, 14, 17.**

**Hebrews 2:10, 11, 14, 17** For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. **11**For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, **14**Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; **17**Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

**c. To what extent did Jesus have to humble Himself so there is drawing power in the cross of Calvary? Hebrews 2:14; Philippians 2:6–8; 2 Timothy 2:8.**

**Hebrews 2:14**Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

**Philippians 2:6-8**Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: **7**But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: **8**And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

**2 Timothy 2:8**  Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel:

“In consideration of this, can men have one particle of exaltation? As they trace down the life and sufferings and humiliation of Christ, can they lift their proud heads as if they were to bear no trials, no shame, no humiliation? I say to the followers of Christ, Look to Calvary, and blush for shame at your self-important ideas. All this humiliation of the Majesty of heaven was for guilty, condemned man. He went lower and lower in His humiliation, until there were no lower depths that He could reach, in order to lift man up from his moral defilement.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary [E. G. White Comments],* vol. 5, pp. 1127, 1128.

“What do we give up, when we give all? A sin-polluted heart, for Jesus to purify, to cleanse by His own blood, and to save by His matchless love. And yet men think it hard to give up all! I am ashamed to hear it spoken of, ashamed to write it.

“God does not require us to give up anything that it is for our best interest to retain. In all that He does, He has the well-being of His children in view. Would that all who have not chosen Christ might realize that He has something vastly better to offer them than they are seeking for themselves.”—*Steps to Christ,* p. 46.

***Friday January 20***

**PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS**

**1. What lessons can we learn from the Jews being Abraham’s children?**

**2. How is it possible to totally miss the point of the Bible while studying it?**

**3. What lessons can I learn from the deadly serpents in the wilderness?**

**4. What makes it possible to be drawn to the Man of Calvary?**

**5. Why did Jesus take on sinful human nature?**

**Suggested Reading: *The Desire of Ages,* pp. 48, 49, 114-123.**

“Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, good will toward men.” [Luke 2:14](https://3ams.com/Bible/BCViewData1/luk%202:14%C2%A62) **(DA 48.1)**

Oh that today the human family could recognize that song! The declaration then made, the note then struck, will swell to the close of time, and resound to the ends of the earth. When the Sun of Righteousness shall arise, with healing in His wings, that song will be re-echoed by the voice of a great multitude, as the voice of many waters, saying, “Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” [Revelation 19:6](https://3ams.com/Bible/BCViewData1/rev%2019:6%C2%A62). **(DA 48.2)**

As the angels disappeared, the light faded away, and the shadows of night once more fell on the hills of Bethlehem. But the brightest picture ever beheld by human eyes remained in the memory of the shepherds. “And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.” [Luke 2:15, 16](https://3ams.com/Bible/BCViewData1/luk%202:15,%2016%C2%A62) **(DA 48.3)**

Departing with great joy, they made known the things they had seen and heard. “And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God.” [Luke 2:18-20](https://3ams.com/Bible/BCViewData1/luk%202:18-20%C2%A62) **(DA 48.4)**

Heaven and earth are no wider apart today than when shepherds listened to the angels’ song. Humanity is still as much the object of heaven’s solicitude as when common men of common occupations met angels at noonday, and talked with the heavenly messengers in the vineyards and the fields. To us in the common walks of life, heaven may be very near. Angels from the courts above will attend the steps of those who come and go at God’s command. **(DA 48.5)**

The story of Bethlehem is an exhaustless theme. In it is hidden “the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God.” [Romans 11:33](https://3ams.com/Bible/BCViewData1/rom%2011:33%C2%A62). We marvel at the Saviour’s sacrifice in exchanging the throne of heaven for the manger, and the companionship of adoring angels for the beasts of the stall. Human pride and self-sufficiency stand rebuked in His presence. Yet this was but the beginning of His wonderful condescension. It would have been an almost infinite humiliation for the Son of God to take man’s nature, even when Adam stood in his innocence in Eden. But Jesus accepted humanity when the race had been weakened by four thousand years of sin. Like every child of Adam He accepted the results of the working of the great law of heredity. What these results were is shown in the history of His earthly ancestors. He came with such a heredity to share our sorrows and temptations, and to give us the example of a sinless life. **(DA 48.6)**

Satan in heaven had hated Christ for His position in the courts of God. He hated Him the more when he himself was dethroned. He hated Him who pledged Himself to redeem a race of sinners. Yet into the world where Satan claimed dominion God permitted His Son to come, a helpless babe, subject to the weakness of humanity. He permitted Him to meet life’s peril in common with every human soul, to fight the battle as every child of humanity must fight it, at the risk of failure and eternal loss. **(DA 49.1)**

The heart of the human father yearns over his son. He looks into the face of his little child, and trembles at the thought of life’s peril. He longs to shield his dear one from Satan’s power, to hold him back from temptation and conflict. To meet a bitterer conflict and a more fearful risk, God gave His only-begotten Son, that the path of life might be made sure for our little ones. “Herein is love.” Wonder, O heavens! and be astonished, O earth! **(DA 49.2)**

“And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.” [Luke 4:1](https://3ams.com/Bible/BCViewData1/luk%204:1%C2%A62). The words of Mark are still more significant. He says, “Immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness. And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts.” “And in those days He did eat nothing.” [Mark 1:12, 13; Luke 4:2](https://3ams.com/Bible/BCViewData1/mrk%201:12,%2013;%20luk%204:2%C2%A62). **(DA 114.1)**

When Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted, He was led by the Spirit of God. He did not invite temptation. He went to the wilderness to be alone, to contemplate His mission and work. By fasting and prayer He was to brace Himself for the bloodstained path He must travel. But Satan knew that the Saviour had gone into the wilderness, and he thought this the best time to approach Him. **(DA 114.2)**

Mighty issues for the world were at stake in the conflict between the Prince of light and the leader of the kingdom of darkness. After tempting man to sin, Satan claimed the earth as his, and styled himself the prince of this world. Having conformed to his own nature the father and mother of our race, he thought to establish here his empire. He declared that men had chosen him as their sovereign. Through his control of men, he held dominion over the world. Christ had come to disprove Satan’s claim. As the Son of man, Christ would stand loyal to God. Thus it would be shown that Satan had not gained complete control of the human race, and that his claim to the world was false. All who desired deliverance from his power would be set free. The dominion that Adam had lost through sin would be recovered. **(DA 114.3)**

Since the announcement to the serpent in Eden, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed” ([Genesis 3:15](https://3ams.com/Bible/BCViewData1/gen%203:15%C2%A62)), Satan had known that he did not hold absolute sway over the world. There was seen in men the working of a power that withstood his dominion. With intense interest he watched the sacrifices offered by Adam and his sons. In these ceremonies he discerned a symbol of communion between earth and heaven. He set himself to intercept this communion. He misrepresented God, and misinterpreted the rites that pointed to the Saviour. Men were led to fear God as one who delighted in their destruction. The sacrifices that should have revealed His love were offered only to appease His wrath. Satan excited the evil passions of men, in order to fasten his rule upon them. When God’s written word was given, Satan studied the prophecies of the Saviour’s advent. From generation to generation he worked to blind the people to these prophecies, that they might reject Christ at His coming. **(DA 115.1)**

At the birth of Jesus, Satan knew that One had come with a divine commission to dispute his dominion. He trembled at the angel’s message attesting the authority of the newborn King. Satan well knew the position that Christ had held in heaven as the Beloved of the Father. That the Son of God should come to this earth as a man filled him with amazement and with apprehension. He could not fathom the mystery of this great sacrifice. His selfish soul could not understand such love for the deceived race. The glory and peace of heaven, and the joy of communion with God, were but dimly comprehended by men; but they were well known to Lucifer, the covering cherub. Since he had lost heaven, he was determined to find revenge by causing others to share his fall. This he would do by causing them to undervalue heavenly things, and to set the heart upon things of earth. **(DA 115.2)**

Not without hindrance was the Commander of heaven to win the souls of men to His kingdom. From the time when He was a babe in Bethlehem, He was continually assailed by the evil one. The image of God was manifest in Christ, and in the councils of Satan it was determined that He should be overcome. No human being had come into the world and escaped the power of the deceiver. The forces of the confederacy of evil were set upon His track to engage in warfare against Him, and if possible to prevail over Him. **(DA 116.1)**

At the Saviour’s baptism, Satan was among the witnesses. He saw the Father’s glory overshadowing His Son. He heard the voice of Jehovah testifying to the divinity of Jesus. Ever since Adam’s sin, the human race had been cut off from direct communion with God; the intercourse between heaven and earth had been through Christ; but now that Jesus had come “in the likeness of sinful flesh” ([Romans 8:3](https://3ams.com/Bible/BCViewData1/rom%208:3%C2%A62)), the Father Himself spoke. He had before communicated with humanity *through* Christ; now He communicated with humanity *in* Christ. Satan had hoped that God’s abhorrence of evil would bring an eternal separation between heaven and earth. But now it was manifest that the connection between God and man had been restored. **(DA 116.2)**

Satan saw that he must either conquer or be conquered. The issues of the conflict involved too much to be entrusted to his confederate angels. He must personally conduct the warfare. All the energies of apostasy were rallied against the Son of God. Christ was made the mark of every weapon of hell. **(DA 116.3)**

Many look on this conflict between Christ and Satan as having no special bearing on their own life; and for them it has little interest. But within the domain of every human heart this controversy is repeated. Never does one leave the ranks of evil for the service of God without encountering the assaults of Satan. The enticements which Christ resisted were those that we find it so difficult to withstand. They were urged upon Him in as much greater degree as His character is superior to ours. With the terrible weight of the sins of the world upon Him, Christ withstood the test upon appetite, upon the love of the world, and upon that love of display which leads to presumption. These were the temptations that overcame Adam and Eve, and that so readily overcome us. **(DA 116.4)**

Satan had pointed to Adam’s sin as proof that God’s law was unjust, and could not be obeyed. In our humanity, Christ was to redeem Adam’s failure. But when Adam was assailed by the tempter, none of the effects of sin were upon him. He stood in the strength of perfect manhood, possessing the full vigor of mind and body. He was surrounded with the glories of Eden, and was in daily communion with heavenly beings. It was not thus with Jesus when He entered the wilderness to cope with Satan. For four thousand years the race had been decreasing in physical strength, in mental power, and in moral worth; and Christ took upon Him the infirmities of degenerate humanity. Only thus could He rescue man from the lowest depths of his degradation. **(DA 117.1)**

Many claim that it was impossible for Christ to be overcome by temptation. Then He could not have been placed in Adam’s position; He could not have gained the victory that Adam failed to gain. If we have in any sense a more trying conflict than had Christ, then He would not be able to succor us. But our Saviour took humanity, with all its liabilities. He took the nature of man, with the possibility of yielding to temptation. We have nothing to bear which He has not endured. **(DA 117.2)**

With Christ, as with the holy pair in Eden, appetite was the ground of the first great temptation. Just where the ruin began, the work of our redemption must begin. As by the indulgence of appetite Adam fell, so by the denial of appetite Christ must overcome. “And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward an hungred. And when the tempter came to Him, he said, If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” [Matthew 4:2-4](https://3ams.com/Bible/BCViewData1/mat%204:2-4%C2%A62). **(DA 117.3)**

From the time of Adam to that of Christ, self-indulgence had increased the power of the appetites and passions, until they had almost unlimited control. Thus men had become debased and diseased, and of themselves it was impossible for them to overcome. In man’s behalf, Christ conquered by enduring the severest test. For our sake He exercised a self-control stronger than hunger or death. And in this first victory were involved other issues that enter into all our conflicts with the powers of darkness. **(DA 117.4)**

When Jesus entered the wilderness, He was shut in by the Father’s glory. Absorbed in communion with God, He was lifted above human weakness. But the glory departed, and He was left to battle with temptation. It was pressing upon Him every moment. His human nature shrank from the conflict that awaited Him. For forty days He fasted and prayed. Weak and emaciated from hunger, worn and haggard with mental agony, “His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.” [Isaiah 52:14](https://3ams.com/Bible/BCViewData1/isa%2052:14%C2%A62). Now was Satan’s opportunity. Now he supposed that he could overcome Christ. **(DA 118.1)**

There came to the Saviour, as if in answer to His prayers, one in the guise of an angel from heaven. He claimed to have a commission from God to declare that Christ’s fast was at an end. As God had sent an angel to stay the hand of Abraham from offering Isaac, so, satisfied with Christ’s willingness to enter the bloodstained path, the Father had sent an angel to deliver Him; this was the message brought to Jesus. The Saviour was faint from hunger, He was craving for food, when Satan came suddenly upon Him. Pointing to the stones which strewed the desert, and which had the appearance of loaves, the tempter said, “If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.” [Luke 4:3](https://3ams.com/Bible/BCViewData1/luk%204:3%C2%A62). **(DA 118.2)**

Though he appears as an angel of light, these first words betray his character. “If Thou be the Son of God.” [Luke 4:3](https://3ams.com/Bible/BCViewData1/luk%204:3%C2%A62). Here is the insinuation of distrust. Should Jesus do what Satan suggests, it would be an acceptance of the doubt. The tempter plans to overthrow Christ by the same means that were so successful with the human race in the beginning. How artfully had Satan approached Eve in Eden! “Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” [Genesis 3:1](https://3ams.com/Bible/BCViewData1/gen%203:1%C2%A62). Thus far the tempter’s words were truth; but in his manner of speaking them there was a disguised contempt for the words of God. There was a covert negative, a doubt of the divine truthfulness. Satan sought to instill into the mind of Eve the thought that God would not do as He had said; that the withholding of such beautiful fruit was a contradiction of His love and compassion for man. So now the tempter seeks to inspire Christ with his own sentiments. “If Thou be the Son of God.” The words rankle with bitterness in his mind. In the tones of his voice is an expression of utter incredulity. Would God treat His own Son thus? Would He leave Him in the desert with wild beasts, without food, without companions, without comfort? He insinuates that God never meant His Son to be in such a state as this. “If Thou be the Son of God,” show Thy power by relieving Thyself of this pressing hunger. Command that this stone be made bread. **(DA 118.3)**

The words from heaven, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” ([Matthew 3:17](https://3ams.com/Bible/BCViewData1/mat%203:17%C2%A62)), were still sounding in the ears of Satan. But he was determined to make Christ disbelieve this testimony. The word of God was Christ’s assurance of His divine mission. He had come to live as a man among men, and it was the word that declared His connection with heaven. It was Satan’s purpose to cause Him to doubt that word. If Christ’s confidence in God could be shaken, Satan knew that the victory in the whole controversy would be his. He could overcome Jesus. He hoped that under the force of despondency and extreme hunger, Christ would lose faith in His Father, and work a miracle in His own behalf. Had He done this, the plan of salvation would have been broken. **(DA 119.1)**

When Satan and the Son of God first met in conflict, Christ was the commander of the heavenly hosts; and Satan, the leader of revolt in heaven, was cast out. Now their condition is apparently reversed, and Satan makes the most of his supposed advantage. One of the most powerful of the angels, he says, has been banished from heaven. The appearance of Jesus indicates that He is that fallen angel, forsaken by God, and deserted by man. A divine being would be able to sustain his claim by working a miracle; “if Thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.” [Matthew 4:3](https://3ams.com/Bible/BCViewData1/mat%204:3%C2%A62). Such an act of creative power, urges the tempter, would be conclusive evidence of divinity. It would bring the controversy to an end. **(DA 119.2)**

Not without a struggle could Jesus listen in silence to the arch-deceiver. But the Son of God was not to prove His divinity to Satan, or to explain the reason of His humiliation. By conceding to the demands of the rebel, nothing for the good of man or the glory of God would be gained. Had Christ complied with the suggestion of the enemy, Satan would still have said, Show me a sign that I may believe you to be the Son of God. Evidence would have been worthless to break the power of rebellion in his heart. And Christ was not to exercise divine power for His own benefit. He had come to bear trial as we must do, leaving us an example of faith and submission. Neither here nor at any subsequent time in His earthly life did He work a miracle in His own behalf. His wonderful works were all for the good of others. Though Jesus recognized Satan from the beginning, He was not provoked to enter into controversy with him. Strengthened with the memory of the voice from heaven, He rested in His Father’s love. He would not parley with temptation. **(DA 119.3)**

Jesus met Satan with the words of Scripture. “It is written,” He said. In every temptation the weapon of His warfare was the word of God. Satan demanded of Christ a miracle as a sign of His divinity. But that which is greater than all miracles, a firm reliance upon a “Thus saith the Lord,” was a sign that could not be controverted. So long as Christ held to this position, the tempter could gain no advantage. **(DA 120.1)**

It was in the time of greatest weakness that Christ was assailed by the fiercest temptations. Thus Satan thought to prevail. By this policy he had gained the victory over men. When strength failed, and the will power weakened, and faith ceased to repose in God, then those who had stood long and valiantly for the right were overcome. Moses was wearied with the forty years’ wandering of Israel, when for the moment his faith let go its hold upon infinite power. He failed just upon the borders of the Promised Land. So with Elijah, who had stood undaunted before King Ahab, who had faced the whole nation of Israel, with the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal at their head. After that terrible day upon Carmel, when the false prophets had been slain, and the people had declared their allegiance to God, Elijah fled for his life before the threats of the idolatrous Jezebel. Thus Satan has taken advantage of the weakness of humanity. And he will still work in the same way. Whenever one is encompassed with clouds, perplexed by circumstances, or afflicted by poverty or distress, Satan is at hand to tempt and annoy. He attacks our weak points of character. He seeks to shake our confidence in God, who suffers such a condition of things to exist. We are tempted to distrust God, to question His love. Often the tempter comes to us as he came to Christ, arraying before us our weakness and infirmities. He hopes to discourage the soul, and to break our hold on God. Then he is sure of his prey. If we would meet him as Jesus did, we should escape many a defeat. By parleying with the enemy, we give him an advantage. **(DA 120.2)**

When Christ said to the tempter, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God,” [Matthew 4:4](https://3ams.com/Bible/BCViewData1/mat%204:4%C2%A62). He repeated the words that, more than fourteen hundred years before, He had spoken to Israel: “The Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness.... And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.” [Deuteronomy 8:2, 3](https://3ams.com/Bible/BCViewData1/deu%208:2,%203%C2%A62). In the wilderness, when all means of sustenance failed, God sent His people manna from heaven; and a sufficient and constant supply was given. This provision was to teach them that while they trusted in God and walked in His ways He would not forsake them. The Saviour now practiced the lesson He had taught to Israel. By the word of God succor had been given to the Hebrew host, and by the same word it would be given to Jesus. He awaited God’s time to bring relief. He was in the wilderness in obedience to God, and He would not obtain food by following the suggestions of Satan. In the presence of the witnessing universe, He testified that it is a less calamity to suffer whatever may befall than to depart in any manner from the will of God. **(DA 121.1)**

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.” [Matthew 4:4](https://3ams.com/Bible/BCViewData1/mat%204:4%C2%A62). Often the follower of Christ is brought where he cannot serve God and carry forward his worldly enterprises. Perhaps it appears that obedience to some plain requirement of God will cut off his means of support. Satan would make him believe that he must sacrifice his conscientious convictions. But the only thing in our world upon which we can rely is the word of God. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” [Matthew 6:33](https://3ams.com/Bible/BCViewData1/mat%206:33%C2%A62). Even in this life it is not for our good to depart from the will of our Father in heaven. When we learn the power of His word, we shall not follow the suggestions of Satan in order to obtain food or to save our lives. Our only questions will be, What is God’s command? and what His promise? Knowing these, we shall obey the one, and trust the other. **(DA 121.2)**

In the last great conflict of the controversy with Satan those who are loyal to God will see every earthly support cut off. Because they refuse to break His law in obedience to earthly powers, they will be forbidden to buy or sell. It will finally be decreed that they shall be put to death. See [Revelation 13:11-17](https://3ams.com/Bible/BCViewData1/rev%2013:11-17%C2%A62). But to the obedient is given the promise, “He shall dwell on high: his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.” [Isaiah 33:16](https://3ams.com/Bible/BCViewData1/isa%2033:16%C2%A62). By this promise the children of God will live. When the earth shall be wasted with famine, they shall be fed. “They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.” [Psalm 37:19](https://3ams.com/Bible/BCViewData1/psa%2037:19%C2%A62). To that time of distress the prophet Habakkuk looked forward, and his words express the faith of the church: “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.” [Habakkuk 3:17, 18](https://3ams.com/Bible/BCViewData1/hab%203:17,%2018%C2%A62). **(DA 121.3)**

Of all the lessons to be learned from our Lord’s first great temptation none is more important than that bearing upon the control of the appetites and passions. In all ages, temptations appealing to the physical nature have been most effectual in corrupting and degrading mankind. Through intemperance, Satan works to destroy the mental and moral powers that God gave to man as a priceless endowment. Thus it becomes impossible for men to appreciate things of eternal worth. Through sensual indulgence, Satan seeks to blot from the soul every trace of likeness to God. **(DA 122.1)**

The uncontrolled indulgence and consequent disease and degradation that existed at Christ’s first advent will again exist, with intensity of evil, before His second coming. Christ declares that the condition of the world will be as in the days before the Flood, and as in Sodom and Gomorrah. Every imagination of the thoughts of the heart will be evil continually. Upon the very verge of that fearful time we are now living, and to us should come home the lesson of the Saviour’s fast. Only by the inexpressible anguish which Christ endured can we estimate the evil of unrestrained indulgence. His example declares that our only hope of eternal life is through bringing the appetites and passions into subjection to the will of God. **(DA 122.2)**

In our own strength it is impossible for us to deny the clamors of our fallen nature. Through this channel Satan will bring temptation upon us. Christ knew that the enemy would come to every human being, to take advantage of hereditary weakness, and by his false insinuations to ensnare all whose trust is not in God. And by passing over the ground which man must travel, our Lord has prepared the way for us to overcome. It is not His will that we should be placed at a disadvantage in the conflict with Satan. He would not have us intimidated and discouraged by the assaults of the serpent. “Be of good cheer,” He says; “I have overcome the world.” [John 16:33](https://3ams.com/Bible/BCViewData1/jhn%2016:33%C2%A62). **(DA 122.3)**

Let him who is struggling against the power of appetite look to the Saviour in the wilderness of temptation. See Him in His agony upon the cross, as He exclaimed, “I thirst.” [John 19:28](https://3ams.com/Bible/BCViewData1/jhn%2019:28%C2%A62). He has endured all that it is possible for us to bear. His victory is ours. **(DA 123.1)**

Jesus rested upon the wisdom and strength of His heavenly Father. He declares, “The Lord God will help Me; therefore shall I not be confounded: ... and I know that I shall not be ashamed.... Behold, the Lord God will help Me.” Pointing to His own example, He says to us, “Who is among you that feareth the Lord, ... that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.” [Isaiah 50:7-10](https://3ams.com/Bible/BCViewData1/isa%2050:7-10%C2%A62). **(DA 123.2)**

“The prince of this world cometh,” said Jesus, “and hath nothing in Me.” [John 14:30](https://3ams.com/Bible/BCViewData1/jhn%2014:30%C2%A62). There was in Him nothing that responded to Satan’s sophistry. He did not consent to sin. Not even by a thought did He yield to temptation. So it may be with us. Christ’s humanity was united with divinity; He was fitted for the conflict by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And He came to make us partakers of the divine nature. So long as we are united to Him by faith, sin has no more dominion over us. God reaches for the hand of faith in us to direct it to lay fast hold upon the divinity of Christ, that we may attain to perfection of character. **(DA 123.3)**

And how this is accomplished, Christ has shown us. By what means did He overcome in the conflict with Satan? By the word of God. Only by the word could He resist temptation. “It is written,” He said. And unto us are given “exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” [2 Peter 1:4](https://3ams.com/Bible/BCViewData1/2pe%201:4%C2%A62). Every promise in God’s word is ours. “By every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” are we to live. When assailed by temptation, look not to circumstances or to the weakness of self, but to the power of the word. All its strength is yours. “Thy word,” says the psalmist, “have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee.” “By the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.” [Psalm 119:11; 17:4](https://3ams.com/Bible/BCViewData1/psa%20119:11;%2017:4%C2%A62). **(DA 123.4)**