

## 9. A Devoted Soul and an Impending Cross

**Texts:** John 11:1-12:50

### Quotes:

- The heart that is generous and kind most resembles God. Robert Burns
- I expect a good deal of the problem is that you are busy disbelieving a different God than the one I am busy believing in. Larry Wall
- Were there no God, we would be in this glorious world with grateful hearts and no one to thank. Christina Rossetti
- God's fingers can touch nothing but to mold it into loveliness. George MacDonald

### Introductory questions

Why was the raising of Lazarus so significant? What does this reveal about the nature and character of God? Why did Jesus weep when he already knew what he was going to do? What does this tell us about God? What is so important about Jesus' statement about being "lifted up"? What issues are answered by the cross? What is the "drawing" power?

### Discussion ideas

The dramatic raising of Lazarus provides the high point in Jesus' healing ministry. In this wonderful description by John there are so many elements that beautifully portray the character of God. This passage is far more than a treatise on the state of the dead or proof of Jesus' power over death—it is a prime revelation of Jesus' character of healing love. It is no accident that this story of resurrection is closely linked with the cross—as a living parable of God revealed in Jesus.

Look again at how Jesus reacts to the whole situation—the report of Lazarus' illness, his intent to heal, his compassion for Lazarus, Mary and Martha, his desire to help his disciples understand... In his loving care Jesus once again reveals his nature, and we see God working to heal the damage of sin and death.

The tragedy in the story is that the response of the religious leaders is not one of joy at the bringing of life but the intent to cause death. That the resurrection of Lazarus becomes a primary motive for killing Jesus reveals the issues of the great controversy—the life-giving, God-revealing mission of Jesus is in stark contrast to death-bringing, God-defaming work of Satan the Accuser.

Even in the midst of the sadness, with Jesus himself weeping, some are still arguing over Jesus and his abilities, wondering (perhaps critically) if Jesus could not have saved Lazarus. Both Mary and Martha also offer some kind of rebuke, and Jesus deals with them graciously, always working to help everyone understand and believe in the goodness of a trustworthy God.

Jesus follows this miracle, and the incident of Mary's anointing of him "for his burial," with one of the clearest explanations of the cross. Jesus is to be "lifted up" and so draw all to himself. John makes the comment plain by saying "He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die." (John 12:33 NIV). *The kind of death Jesus dies is a revelatory death that tells us who God is, what he is like, and his intentions to us.* Not for us alone, either, for through the cross God draws the on-looking universe, so that all may see the truth about God and his saving acts, his answers to the charges of the Devil, and his restoration of universe-wide harmony.

## **Ellen White Comments**

Christ's last and crowning miracle was the raising of Lazarus of Bethany, after he had been dead four days. The Jews were given this wonderful evidence of the Saviour's divinity, but they rejected it. Lazarus rose from the dead and bore his testimony before them, but they hardened their hearts against all evidence, and even sought to take his life. {COL 265.1}

"Now is the judgment of this world," Christ continued; "now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me. This He said, signifying what death He should die." This is the crisis of the world. If I become the propitiation for the sins of men, the world will be lighted up. Satan's hold upon the souls of men will be broken. The defaced image of God will be restored in humanity, and a family of believing saints will finally inherit the heavenly home. This is the result of Christ's death. . . . But the work of human redemption is not all that is accomplished by the cross. The love of God is manifested to the universe. The prince of this world is cast out. The accusations which Satan has brought against God are refuted. The reproach which he has cast upon heaven is forever removed. Angels as well as men are drawn to the Redeemer. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth," He said, "will draw all unto Me." {DA 625-6}

But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe. To this result of His great sacrifice--its influence upon the intelligences of other worlds, as well as upon man--the Saviour looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said: "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me." John 12:31, 32. The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin. {PP 68-9}

Christ came to manifest the love of God to the world, to draw the hearts of all men to Himself. He said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me." The first step toward salvation is to respond to the drawing of the love of Christ. . . . It is that men may understand the joy of forgiveness, the peace of God, that Christ draws them by the manifestation of his love. If they respond to his drawing, yielding their hearts to his grace, He will lead them on step by step to full knowledge of Himself, and this is life eternal. {BEcho, March 15, 1893}

## **Extra material**

I sit with many others in the grounds of the 'Garden Tomb,' Jerusalem, to be part of a moving Communion service. To my left, the hill some identify as Golgotha, the Place of the Skull, Crucifixion site. To my right, the first century tomb some believe to be that of Joseph of Arimathea, the one donated as the temporary resting place for Jesus—for Jesus needed that tomb for only a brief stay. . . .

The time between. Crucifixion to the left, resurrection to the right. Between Friday and Sunday, and today is indeed Sabbath. As I eat the bread and drink the wine, the words echo around the garden, "you celebrate the Lord's death till he comes."

Today, and in all our todays, we live in the time between. Christ has come. He has revealed God to us, he has made salvation possible, he has been lifted up from the earth to draw all to him.

And soon he will come again to complete the reality of that salvation, to take us to be with him where he is, to lift us up to heaven and draw us to himself.

But for the moment we live in that in-between-time, between the "now already" and the "not yet." In the same way as that intervening Sabbath was one of both rest and anticipation, looking forward and back, so too we live between. Between the achievement of God's plan to save, and the consummation of that plan. Between promise and fulfillment. Between "I have come" and "I will come again."

## 10. Real Greatness

**Texts:** John 13:1-30; 17.

### Quotes:

- In Christ we see God *for us*. Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki
- Jesus Christ, the condescension of divinity, and the exaltation of humanity. Phillips Brooks
- All growth that is not towards God / Is growing to decay. George MacDonald
- God, from a beautiful necessity, is Love. M.F. Tupper

### Introductory questions

What has John 13:3 got to do with the following verse? Was Jesus' example of washing his disciples' feet a ritual to be observed or an attitude to be followed? What did they "later understand"? What did Jesus mean when he spoke of "acceptance"? In Jesus prayer in John 17, what does "I in them and you in me" mean? What is this "in-ness"? When he spoke about unity, was Jesus talking about atonement? How did he make God known?

### Discussion ideas

In the two passages (John 13 and 17) we have both Jesus' actions and his words on the meaning of true power and greatness, on true humility and oneness with God and each other. Most of all, Jesus continues his mission of revealing the Father and answering the issues of the great controversy. John begins chapter 13 with the comment, "Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love." John 13:1 NIV. Is this referring to the foot-washing, the crucifixion, the resurrection—what?

Often Adventists refer to John 13 to bolster the argument for the foot-washing service. Was Jesus primarily concerned to institute some kind of observance, or to help his disciples—and us—to a better attitude? Jesus knew that there were competing thoughts in the minds of his disciples, and ambitions for greatness. His demonstration of true greatness through lowering himself to the actions of the lowliest servant says much, and the more when he washes his betrayer's feet too. Ask yourself—what does it say about God and the issues in the great controversy when Jesus washed Judas' feet? How do we see God in Jesus at this point? How is Jesus answering the charges that God is hostile, unforgiving, severe etc.?

In John 17, how is Jesus glorified? What is eternal life? How is unity restored? So many subjects are addressed in this personal and yet public prayer of Jesus to his Father. For example, some theologians have asserted that Jesus did not talk about the atonement, he simply provided it. Yet if we remember that atonement in its original meaning did mean at-one-ment, then in his prayer Jesus is talking about atonement very extensively—identifying the objective of being at-one, just as Jesus and the Father are at one.

As Jesus declares, "this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." John 17:3 NIV. The saving knowledge of God and his answers to the Devil's rebellion—this is what leads to eternal life. Jesus' affirmation of his disciples is that they knew and believed he came from God. That trusting faith in Jesus is what leads to salvation, and Jesus prays for this same faith in those who hear the message later. Jesus summarizes his mission: to make God known, to have people believe in the one who sent him, to take them home to be with him forever.

## Ellen White Comments

Though Jesus knew Judas from the beginning, He washed his feet. And the betrayer was privileged to unite with Christ in partaking of the sacrament. A long-suffering Saviour held out every inducement for the sinner to receive Him, to repent, and to be cleansed from the defilement of sin. This example is for us. . . . It was because the disciples were erring and faulty that He washed their feet, and all but one of the twelve were thus brought to repentance. {DA 655}

[John 13:34, 35 quoted.] The golden chain of love, binding the hearts of the believers in unity, in bonds of fellowship and love, and in oneness with Christ and the Father, makes the connection perfect, and bears to the world a testimony of the power of Christianity that cannot be controverted. . . . Satan understands the power of such a testimony as a witness to the world of what grace can do in transforming character. . . . He will work every conceivable device to break this golden chain which links heart to heart of those who believe the truth and binds them up in close connection with the Father and the Son. {AG 237}

Heavenly intelligences know that the cross is the great center of attraction. They know that it is through the cross that fallen man is to receive the atonement, and to be brought into unity with God. {TDG 51}

Christ is ready to do large things for us, to restore our natures by making us partakers of His divine nature. He waits to link our hearts with His heart of infinite love, in order that we may be fully reconciled to God; but it is our privilege to understand that God loves us as He loves His Son. When we believe in Christ as our personal Saviour, the peace of Christ is ours. The reconciliation provided for us in the atonement of Christ is the foundation of our peace. . . {LHU 332}

In His prayer to the Father, Christ gave to the world a lesson which should be graven on mind and soul. “This is life eternal,” He said, “that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.” John 17:3. This is true education. It imparts power. The experimental knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent, transforms man into the image of God. {COL 114}

The unity that exists between Christ and His disciples does not destroy the personality of either. They are one in purpose, in mind, in character, but not in person. It is thus that God and Christ are one. {MH 422}

## Extra Material

The mission of Jesus was to reveal God—not in a theoretical way of imparting information, but with all the implications of the Biblical concept of “to know.” This intimate experience based on practical demonstration lies at the heart of our salvation and the response of God before the universe to the Devil’s charges. Nor does this mean that Jesus came to inaugurate a moral philosophy or be a wise teacher. His very presence brought salvation, for he is God incarnate, salvation made manifest. As C.S. Lewis writes in *God in the Dock*, “The idea of a great moral teacher saying what Christ said is out of the question. . . . We may note in passing that He was never regarded as a great moral teacher. He did not produce that effect on any of the people who actually met Him. He produced mainly three effects – Hatred – Terror – Adoration. There was no trace of people expressing mild approval.”

While it is true that Jesus in these passages does explain the meaning of true greatness and points to the virtue of humility, his main objective is to reveal this in the context of who God truly is. This concept was very much in contrast to the methods and beliefs of the religious leaders of his time. God is not the one who uses power to enforce his point. His ways are quite the different, and in his prayer and in his serving of his disciples we see the true God revealed.

## 11. The Spirit “Replaces” Jesus

**Texts: John 13:31-16:33.**

### Quotes:

- We are not human beings on a spiritual journey. We are spiritual beings on a human journey. Stephen R. Covey
- The best way to know God is to love many things. Vincent Van Gogh
- God Himself is the One to be seen and the vision of God assigns incorruption to humanity, and incorruption maintains perpetual union with God. Iranaeus

### Introductory questions

What is so important about these chapters? What is the context? Jesus speaks plainly now—why didn’t he do so before? Why does he seem to be speaking so intensely? What do we learn about God’s intention to us from these verses? Are we servants, or do we want to be friends? Why does Jesus command love? Why does Jesus say he won’t plead the Father for us?

### Discussion ideas

It’s disappointing that no specific attention is given to texts that some of us believe are supremely important: John 14:9; John 15:15; John 16:26. While the idea that the Spirit takes on a greater role once Jesus leaves is surely important, there is so much more here. In fact these chapters deserve far much more attention than just one lesson!

So we will also have to focus on some aspects and leave out others. In these vital chapters we see the heart of the mission of Jesus—to reveal God as he truly is, answering the issues the Devil has raised over God’s character and actions, fulfilling his promise to save and heal.

Jesus is explaining the vital truths to the disciples. Judas has left, and there is not much time. Yet his best friends on earth are still slow to comprehend, so Jesus gives them a crash course, a survival guide, and executive summary—call it what you will. This is Jesus’ last will and testament, his most important words to us. So we do well to pay very close attention.

He answers Philip’s desire to see the Father with his clearest statement—“if you’ve seen me, you’ve seen the Father.” He tells them to trust in him, for he will return. He commands love! Then he tells them they are his friends if they do what he says. For friends do not need to be compelled—they act out from higher principles. The reason they are his friends is because they know their Master’s business—they are not unthinking, uncaring servants.

For much of his ministry Jesus spoke figuratively—in parables and picture language and using illustrations. Now he speaks plainly: “Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father.” John 16:25 NIV. In fact he tells them immediately. He tells them he won’t plead the Father for them, for the Father loves them himself. Why does the Father love them?—because they have loved Jesus and believed he came from God. That is the heart of the gospel, and Jesus says it most plainly here. For those who say Jesus never claimed divinity or was revealing God, listen to his words: “I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father.” John 16:28 NIV. Even his sometimes dull-witted disciples exclaim at this point, “Now you’re speaking plainly.” Jesus responds, “You believe at last!”

His reason for telling his disciples all this? “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace.” John 16:33 NIV.

## **Ellen White Comments**

Who is Christ?--He is the only begotten Son of the living God. He is to the Father as a word that expresses the thought,--as a thought made audible. Christ is the word of God. Christ said to Philip, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." His words were the echo of God's words. Christ was the likeness of God, the brightness of His glory, the express image of His person.

As a personal being, God has revealed Himself in His Son. Jesus, the outshining of the Father's glory, "and the express image of his person" (Hebrews 1:3), was on earth found in fashion as a man...

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. . . . 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. But not from the stars or the ocean or the cataract can we learn of the personality of God as it is revealed in Christ. {SD 21}

Jesus says, "I call you not servants... but I have called you friends." When you appreciate His wondrous love, love and gratitude will be in your heart as a wellspring of joy. {FE 303-4}

The earnest toil, the unselfish work, the patient, persevering effort, will be abundantly rewarded. Jesus will say, Henceforth I call you not servants, but friends. [SEE JOHN 15:15.] The approval of the Master is not given because of the greatness of the work performed, but because of fidelity in all that has been done. It is not the results we attain, but the motives from which we act, that weigh with God. He prizes goodness and faithfulness above all else. {GW 267}

The love of the Father, no less than of the Son, is the fountain of salvation for the lost race. Said Jesus to His disciples before He went away: "I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father Himself loveth you." John 16:26, 27. God was "in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." 2 Corinthians 5:19. And in the ministration in the sanctuary above, "the counsel of peace shall be between Them both." "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. {GC 416-7}

## **Extra material**

So that all may see God as he truly is, God came to this world in human form. Jesus suffered and died and rose again to reveal God's love, and to show us the way back to him. "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." (John 17:3; 14:9 NIV).

So 'Why, God?' Why is there so much pain and suffering?

God replies something like this: "Not because I cannot prevent it, or do not wish to prevent it. Not because I do not care, or that I am unmoved by so much pain. I weep with you, and every second this evil world continues is agony to me. But I wait before I end it for a supremely important reason.

"I wait so that all may see what sin really means and where selfishness leads. I wait so that all can see the Devil in his true character. I wait so that all who will may come to me for salvation, salvation in the arms of a Father God who loves them with an undying love.

"If you want to know my answer to your question, 'Why God?' go to the Cross. There you will see me as I really am, two arms outstretched to save, bleeding and dying for all the suffering, misery and pain in the world."

## 12. Jesus Lays Down His Life for His Friends

**Texts:** John 18:1-19:42

### **Quotes:**

- What if we chose the wrong religion? We're just making God madder and madder every Sunday. Homer Simpson
- Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important. Clive Staples Lewis
- Christianity is a religion for losers. I don't want anybody to die for me. I've had a few drinks and a few girlfriends and if that's gonna put me in hell, then so be it. Ted Turner.

### **Introductory questions**

Why was it so wrong for Peter to fight? What does Jesus' reaction show? Why does the high priest question Jesus in private? What was the pressure here? How does it relate to the fulfillment of Jesus' mission? Why is Jesus' response so important? What of Pilate's comments and involvement? What is significant in Jesus cry "It is finished"?

### **Discussion ideas**

Jesus has to die because he claimed to be the Son of God, say the Jewish leaders. How ironic—that God is killed because he claims to be God. Nor is it primarily a question of claims, for anyone can make assertions. The truth is that Jesus *is* God, and reveals him in the clearest way. The fact that the religious leaders refuse such clear revelation demonstrates that they have a very different picture of God. So Jesus, God-revealer, is rejected and executed, since the God he reveals is not the God that they want.

Jesus is questioned by the high priest. But Jesus refuses to dispute—for he has already answered all those questions publicly. Perhaps the religious leaders were thinking they could do some kind of "deal" with Jesus, after having demonstrated their power by having Jesus arrested. But Jesus is not distracted and finding they cannot win him to their picture of God, they send Jesus to Pilate with a death sentence on his head. Pilate exploits his power, and Jesus dies.

Even on the cross Jesus is still revealing the truth about God. It would be quite understandable for him to be preoccupied with what was happening and to claim the critical importance of what he was accomplishing. But even here, Jesus demonstrates God's character in his care for his mother, making arrangements for her from the cross.

"It is finished," Jesus cries. What has finished? His life? His ministry? His provision of salvation? Yes, but most importantly, his core mission—to reveal God to us. As he died there on the cross, Jesus was answering all the questions raised in the great controversy, winning us back to love and trust, saving us from ourselves and our self-centered sinfulness. While the implications of his saving sacrifice continue, as we look into the face of our dying savior, the assurance is that the mission is accomplished. In the words of Ellen White, "In his prayer just before his crucifixion, he [Jesus] 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}

## Ellen White Comments

Christ came to represent the Father. We behold in him the image of the invisible God. He clothed his divinity with humanity, and came to the world that the erroneous ideas Satan had been the means of creating in the minds of men, in regard to the character of God, might be removed. We could not behold the glory of God unveiled in Christ and live; but as he came in the garb of humanity, we may draw nigh to our Redeemer. We are called upon to behold the Lord our Father in the person of his Son. Christ came in the robe of the flesh, with his glory subdued in humanity, that lost man might communicate with him and live. Through Christ we may comprehend something of him who is glorious in holiness. Jesus is the mystic ladder by which we may mount to behold the glory of the infinite God. By faith we behold Christ standing between humanity and divinity, connecting God and man, and earth and heaven...

The only plan that could be devised to save the human race was that which called for the incarnation, humiliation, and crucifixion of the Son of God, the Majesty of heaven. After the plan of salvation was devised, Satan could have no ground upon which to found his suggestion that God, because so great, could care nothing for so insignificant a creature as man. The redemption of man is a wonderful theme, and the love manifested to the fallen race through the plan of salvation, can be estimated only by the cross of Calvary. The depth of this love even angels cannot sound. That God could consent to become flesh, and dwell among fallen beings, to lift them up from their helplessness and despair, is an unfathomed mystery. He whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, whose dominion endureth throughout all generations, made himself to be sin for us that he might lift up all that are bowed down, and give life to those who are ready to perish.

Oh, that men might open their minds to know God as he is revealed in his Son! {ST, January 20, 1890}

## Extra material

The highly-objectivized view of salvation ignores the personality of God and of us, and reduces God's salvation to a mechanistic kind of contractual process whereby when all the right actions are performed then salvation is automatic.

Jesus came to *be* God's salvation: primarily as he revealed what this salvation *is*. Not a mechanical process or some objective legal transaction, but the relationship of persons. Salvation is subjective in the sense that it applies to and inside of us, rather than somewhere "out there." Those who view the salvation effected through the cross of Jesus as being concerned with taking care of our legal standing before God see the ceremonialism of the act. As someone who subscribed to this legal view once remarked, Christ's sacrifice on the cross could have taken place on the other side of the Universe and it would have had the same effect. But the truth is that Jesus died *here* on the cross. It was not some kind of rite or ritual that had to be undergone to provide for the legal readjustment of sinners before God. Only the contrary, the cross says and means something far different.

Above all, God's revelation of salvation through Jesus is expressed in terms of divine healing of the sin-damaged individual. It surely is no coincidence that having been announced as the one who makes God known (John 1:18), Jesus spent the vast majority of his ministry in acts of physical healing. Jesus told those around him: "When he [a man] looks at me, he sees the one who sent me" (John 12:45 NIV) and "If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him...Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." (John 14:7, 9 NIV).

### 13. The Power of the Resurrection

**Texts:** John 20:1-21:25

**Quotes:**

- To the excessively fearful the chief characteristic of power is its arbitrariness. Man had to gain enormously in confidence before he could conceive an all-powerful God who obeys his own laws. Eric Hoffer
- God's power is more clearly seen in the message of the cross than in any political or social plan that we might devise. Erwin Lutzer
- A lawyer's dream of Heaven: Every man reclaimed his own property at the resurrection, and each tried to recover it from all his forefathers. Samuel Butler.

**Introductory questions**

Why did Jesus appear to Mary? Why not a dramatic appearance in front of those who condemned him to death? What does this tell you about God? Why does John say that Jesus "had" to rise from the dead? When Jesus appears to his disciples, his first words are peace. Why? What about doubting Thomas? Wasn't Thomas only trying to rely on evidence?

**Discussion ideas**

John's introduction to the resurrection just tells the facts. There is no great build up, no amazement at such an incredible event. Told in this matter-of-fact way it becomes even more believable—for example, his record of the response of Mary. That John should even mention that Mary thought the risen savior was the gardener is typical of this. For John, that Jesus should rise from the dead is entirely "natural" and consistent with who Jesus is and why he came.

Thomas refused to believe until he had literally *tangible proof*. When Jesus appeared again, he invited Thomas to confirm the physical evidence, and stop doubting. Some have concluded that belief should not be based on evidence, but Jesus does not say this. Belief is more than the evidence of our senses—our mental processes are also involved. That is why we are able to trust in Jesus even at this distance in time from his physical presence in our world.

For those who stress the legal aspects of the crucifixion as payment of penalty and a transaction to propitiate God, the resurrection can often seem of lesser importance. In such a view the contractual aspects are met by the sacrifice, and our legal standing is consequently adjusted. For this the appeasement/payment/satisfaction aspects are the essential elements.

However, this misses the importance of resurrection as preached by the early apostles. If legal payment was all, then why does Acts and the letters of the New Testament place such stress on resurrection? Without the resurrection, as Paul makes clear, our faith would be in vain. It is the resurrection that is the guarantee, the proof, the demonstration of the intent of our trustworthy God to ensure we are forever with him. The cross without resurrection is indeed a dim prospect.

John points to the miraculous signs, of which the resurrection is supreme, as the reason for confidence—not a valuing of the spectacular, but of evidence through which we can have complete trust in our trustworthy God: "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. John 20:31 NIV.

The gospel of John stands as the pinnacle of God's good news. Written by "the disciple whom Jesus loved," it gives us a unique insight into the true character of God: "The disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down...his testimony is true." John 21:24 NIV.

## **Ellen White Comments**

During these days that Christ spent with His disciples, they gained a new experience. As they heard their beloved Master explaining the Scriptures in the light of all that had happened, their faith in Him was fully established. They reached the place where they could say, "I know whom I have believed." 2 Timothy 1:12. They began to realize the nature and extent of their work, to see that they were to proclaim to the world the truths entrusted to them. The events of Christ's life, His death and resurrection, the prophecies pointing to these events, the mysteries of the plan of salvation, the power of Jesus for the remission of sins--to all these things they had been witnesses, and they were to make them known to the world. They were to proclaim the gospel of peace and salvation through repentance and the power of the Saviour. {AA 27}

How grateful we should be for the record that the early disciples have given concerning the resurrection of a crucified Saviour! He was among them, and confirmed the words he had spoken to them before his great humiliation, suffering, and death. With what intense interest would they listen to his teachings, as he appeared among them--a Saviour risen from the dead! They knew of a certainty that he was the Messiah, their living Redeemer. The words he had spoken before his suffering, in regard to the scenes of his humiliation, his trial and death, were words whose meaning they had not comprehended... Christ remained with his disciples to reason with them, to explain to them prophecies concerning himself, to leave no chance for temptation to skepticism. When he had first revealed himself to them after his resurrection, they had been amazed, and could not believe that he was their risen Saviour. It seemed to them too good to be true. Their hopes and their faith they had buried in Joseph's new tomb with their dead Saviour; and what was their surprise, their astonishment, when he arose to meet with them as the Scripture had said... He brought life and immortality to light, and made a bright, clear pathway from earth to heaven, that those who receive him should follow where he leads the way. {YI, November 18, 1897 par. 5}

## **Extra material**

"I can see no intellectual objection to the statement that God's power is not limited by anything outside His own creative purpose: in that sense He is omnipotent, but it is even impossible for Him to exercise that power in certain ways without thereby ceasing to be our Father. In that sense God is not omnipotent: He is limited by His own nature, by His perfect goodness and mercy; for the omnipotence of God means nothing apart from His Fatherly love. In particular, this limitation of the power of God is to be found in the measure of freedom which, as His children, we enjoy. God shares His power with us so that, for a time at least, if we so determine, we can break His laws and frustrate His plans, but also so that we can give to Him, if we choose, the free allegiance of our hearts and minds, and become children at His Family Table, drawn together by the compulsion of His love, and not the exercise of His might." Donald O. Soper.

"When I was a child, bishops expressed doubts about the Resurrection, and were called courageous. When I was a girl, G. K. Chesterton professed belief in the Resurrection, and was called whimsical. When I was at college, thoughtful people expressed belief in the Resurrection "in a spiritual sense", and were called advanced; (any other kind of belief was called obsolete, and its professors were held to be simpleminded)." Dorothy L. Sayers.

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