

Second Quarter 2008 Adult Sabbath School Lessons

Special Insights No. 13

(Produced by the Editorial Board of the 1888 Message Study Committee)

His Return as King and Friend

As we review the past thirteen lessons about Jesus, one magnificent truth about Him emerges as all-important:

He GAVE Himself for us, GAVE Himself completely—emptied Himself as we read here: “Christ Jesus. . . being in the form of God, counted not equality with God a thing to be grasped at, but made Himself of no reputation (a man or woman will fight to the death to preserve reputation!), and

1. “Made Himself of no reputation,
2. Took upon Himself the form of a slave,
3. And was made in the likeness of men:
4. And being found in fashion as a man,
5. He humbled Himself,
6. And became obedient unto death,
7. Even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:5-8).

This author who is writing this INSIGHT was born into a Lutheran home and early learned to love the story of Martin Luther; he became my hero.

Then we moved to a town where there was no Lutheran church, so we became Methodists; and then we moved again, and again no Lutheran church, so we became Presbyterians.

The Presbyterian church was the most handsome one in town, complete with a pipe organ, which I loved as a child. I will never forget the walls trembling with the grand bass notes as we sang, “Love Divine, All Love Excelling,” etc.

I discovered the Sabbath truth in that Presbyterian Sunday School; the dear Lord gave me the grace to receive it and to believe it because it was so obviously Bible truth. It wasn't any goodness of my own; the Lord gave me the grace to believe.

When we left and went to the little Seventh-day Adventist Church, they had no pews, just benches to sit on, and not even a piano—they had an old wheeze organ—the kind you pump with your feet.

But I knew that the Sabbath truth is biblical, and the Lord in His great mercy gave me of His much more abounding grace to open my heart to receive the truth. It meant saying goodbye to the nice little girl I liked who accompanied me on the piano when I played Massenet's “Thais,” etc., on the violin.

The Presbyterian pastor, Dr. Campbell, offered to finance my way through college if I would give up this crazy “seventh-day-sabbath-business.”

Walking through downtown on Saturday mornings dressed in my Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes on my way to the Seventh-day Adventist church across town, seemed a bit painful; class mates thought I was crazy, including the nice girl who played the piano for me; but conviction of truth held me.

Today I thank the Lord from the bottom of my heart that from His much more abounding grace, I was permitted to have this test of faith.

If I had stayed in that dear Presbyterian church (that's where the bank president was), I would never have learned this most astounding truth that we have learned in our thirteen weeks of studies about "Jesus":

The death that Jesus died for us was "the second death" which is mentioned twice in the book of Revelation (2:11; 20:12-14). That is the measure of "the breadth, and length, and depth, and height" of the love (*agape*) of Christ. Only when those grand dimensions of His love (*agape*) are clearly understood, do you and I sense the "constraint" of that love (*agape*) motivating us to total consecration to the service of Jesus: "The love [*agape*] of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor. 5:14, 15). In fact, what Paul said was that "henceforth" you will find it impossible to live for self, no matter how the world tempts you, if you let that love (*agape*) constrain you.

But come to think of it, this "second death" truth wasn't mentioned with emphasis in our 13-week "Quarterly," either!

But someday, and we trust it will be soon, this glorious truth of "*agape*" will take center stage in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and then will lighten the earth with the glory of the fourth angel's message of Revelation 18:1-4.

The Lord did His very best to send that message to us in 1888; but "in a great degree" it was kept away from our people, and kept away from the world (cf. *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 234, 235).

Thank the Lord for the glorious good news yet before us!

—Robert J. Wieland

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