

The Hour of Glory: The Cross and Resurrection

Sabbath afternoon, December 14

[Satan] was on the ground at the time when Christ presented Himself to John for baptism. . . . [He] heard the fearful words from Jehovah, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He saw the brightness of the Father's glory overshadowing the form of Jesus, thus pointing out in that crowd the One whom He acknowledged as His Son with unmistakable assurance. The circumstances connected with this baptismal scene had aroused the most intense hatred in the breast of Satan. He knew then for a certainty that unless he could overcome Christ, from thenceforth there would be a limitation of his power. . . .

He feared that God was now to unite man more fully to Himself, and give power to overcome his devices. And for this purpose Christ had come from the royal courts to the earth. Satan was well acquainted with the position of honor Christ had held in heaven as the Son of God, the beloved of the Father. And that He should leave heaven, and come to this world as a man, filled him with apprehension for his safety. . . . As he had lost through his rebellion all the riches and pure glories of heaven, he was determined to be revenged by causing as many as he could to undervalue heaven and to place their affections upon earthly treasures. —*Confrontation*, p. 29.

The only-begotten Son of God took upon Him the nature of man, and established His cross between earth and heaven. Through the cross, man was drawn to God, and God to man. Justice moved from its high and awful position, and the heavenly hosts, the armies of holiness, drew near to the cross, bowing with reverence; for at the cross justice was satisfied. Through the cross the sinner was drawn from the stronghold of sin, from the confederacy of evil, and at every approach to the cross his heart relents and in penitence he cries, "It was my sins that crucified the Son of God." At the cross he leaves his sins, and through the grace of Christ His character is transformed. The Redeemer raises the sinner from the dust, and places him under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. —Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 470.

Jesus placed the cross in line with the light coming from heaven, for it is there that it shall catch the eye of man. The cross is in direct line with the shining of the divine countenances, so that by beholding the cross men may see and know God and Jesus Christ, whom He hath sent. In beholding God we behold the One who poured out His soul unto death. In beholding the cross the view is extended to God, and His hatred of sin is discerned. But while we behold in the cross God's hatred of sin, we also behold His love for sinners, which is stronger than death. To the world the cross is the incontrovertible argument that God is truth and light and love. —Ellen G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1133.

Sunday, December 15

What Is Truth?

When the Saviour was brought into the judgment hall, Pilate looked upon Him with no friendly eyes. The Roman governor had been called from his bedchamber in haste, and he determined to do his work as quickly as possible. He was prepared to deal with the prisoner with magisterial severity. Assuming his severest expression, he turned to see what kind of man he had to examine, that he had been called from his repose at so early an hour. He knew that it must be someone whom the Jewish authorities were anxious to have tried and punished with haste.

Pilate looked at the men who had Jesus in charge, and then his gaze rested searchingly on Jesus. He had had to deal with all kinds of criminals; but never before had a man bearing marks of such goodness and nobility been brought before him. On His face he saw no sign of guilt, no expression of fear, no boldness or defiance. He saw a man of calm and dignified bearing, whose countenance bore not the marks of a criminal, but the signature of heaven. —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 723, 724.

Pilate's golden opportunity had passed. Yet Jesus did not leave him without further light. While He did not directly answer Pilate's question, He plainly stated His own mission. He gave Pilate to understand that He was not seeking an earthly throne. . . .

Pilate therefore said unto Him, Art Thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth My voice."

Christ affirmed that His word was in itself a key which would unlock the mystery to those who were prepared to receive it. It had a self-commending power, and this was the secret of the spread of His kingdom of truth. He desired Pilate to understand that only by receiving and appropriating truth could his ruined nature be reconstructed.

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.—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 727.

Christ's enemies had demanded a miracle as evidence of His divinity. They had evidence far greater than any they had sought. As their cruelty degraded His torturers below humanity into the likeness of Satan, so did His meekness and patience exalt Jesus above humanity, and prove His kinship to God. His abasement was the pledge of His exaltation. The blood drops of agony that from His wounded temples flowed down His face and beard were the pledge of His anointing with "the oil of gladness" (Hebrews 1:9.) as our great high priest. —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 734.

Monday, December 16

Behold the Man!

Pilate showed his weakness. He had declared that Jesus was innocent, yet he was willing for Him to be scourged to pacify His accusers. He would sacrifice justice and principle in order to compromise with the mob. This placed him at a disadvantage. The crowd presumed upon his indecision, and clamored the more for the life of the prisoner. If at the first Pilate had stood firm, refusing to condemn a man whom he found guiltless, he would have broken the fatal chain that was to bind him in remorse and guilt as long as he lived. Had he carried out his convictions of right, the Jews would not have presumed to dictate to him. Christ would have been put to death, but the guilt would not have rested upon Pilate. But Pilate had taken step after step in the violation of his conscience. He had excused himself from judging with justice and equity, and he now found himself almost helpless in the hands of the priests and rulers. His wavering and indecision proved his ruin. —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 731.

Satan and his angels were tempting Pilate and trying to lead him on to his own ruin. They suggested to him that if he did not take part in condemning Jesus others would; the multitude were thirsting for His blood; and if he did not deliver Him to be crucified, he would lose his power and worldly honor, and would be denounced as a believer on the impostor. Through fear of losing his power and authority, Pilate consented to the death of Jesus. And notwithstanding he placed the blood of Jesus upon His accusers, and the multitude received it, crying, "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matthew 27:25), yet Pilate was not clear; he was guilty of the blood of Christ. For his own selfish interest, his love of honor from the great men of earth, he delivered an innocent man to die. —*The Story of Redemption*, p. 218.

The difference between the character of Christ and the character of other men of His day was everywhere apparent, and because of this difference the world hated Him. It hated Him for His goodness and His strict integrity. And Christ declared that those who manifest the same attributes would be likewise hated. As we near the end of time this hatred for the followers of Christ will be more and more manifest. . . .

Satan contested every claim put forth by the Son of God and employed men as his agents to fill the Saviour's life with suffering and sorrow. The sophistry and falsehood by which he had sought to hinder the work of Jesus, the hatred manifested through the children of disobedience, his cruel accusations against Him whose life was one of unexampled goodness, all sprang from deep-seated revenge. The pent-up fires of envy and malice, hatred and revenge, burst forth on Calvary against the Son of God, while all heaven gazed upon the scene in silent horror. —*Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, pp. 527, 528.

Tuesday, December 17

“ ‘It Is Finished’ ”

[Mary’s] heart was pierced with anguish such as none but a fond mother can feel; yet, with the disciples, she still hoped that Christ would work some mighty miracle and deliver Himself from His murderers. She could not endure the thought that He would suffer Himself to be crucified. But the preparations were made, and Jesus was laid upon the cross. The hammer and the nails were brought. The hearts of the disciples fainted within them. The mother of Jesus was bowed with agony almost beyond endurance. Before the Saviour was nailed to the cross, the disciples bore her from the scene, that she might not hear the crashing of the spikes as they were driven through the bone and muscle of His tender hands and feet. Jesus murmured not, but groaned in agony. His face was pale, and large drops of sweat stood upon His brow. Satan exulted in the suffering through which the Son of God was passing, yet feared that his efforts to thwart the plan of salvation had been in vain, that his kingdom was lost, and that he must finally be destroyed. —*Early Writings*, p. 176.

The eyes of Jesus wandered over the multitude that had collected together to witness His death, and He saw at the foot of the cross John supporting Mary, the mother of Christ. She had returned to the terrible scene, not being able to longer remain away from her Son. The last lesson of Jesus was one of filial love. He looked upon the grief-stricken face of His mother, and then upon John; said He, addressing the former: “Woman, behold thy son!” Then, to the disciple: “Behold thy mother!” John 19:27. John well understood the words of Jesus, and the sacred trust which was committed to him. He immediately removed the mother of Christ from the fearful scene of Calvary. From that hour he cared for her as would a dutiful son, taking her to his own home. The perfect example of Christ’s filial love shines forth with undimmed luster from the mist of ages. While enduring the keenest torture, He was not forgetful of His mother. —*The Story of Redemption*, p. 224.

In silence the people watch for the end of this fearful scene. . . . Suddenly the gloom is lifted from the cross, and in clear trumpet tones, that seem to resound throughout creation, Jesus cries, “It is finished.” “Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.” Luke 23:46. A light encircled the cross, and the face of the Saviour shone with a glory like unto the sun. He then bowed His head upon His breast and died. . . .

Jesus did not yield up His life till He had accomplished the work which He came to do. . . . There was joy in heaven that the sons of Adam could now, through a life of obedience, be exalted finally to the presence of God. Satan was defeated, and knew that his kingdom was lost. —*The Story of Redemption*, p. 226.

Wednesday, December 18

The Empty Tomb

At last Jesus was at rest. The long day of shame and torture was ended. As the last rays of the setting sun ushered in the Sabbath, the Son of God lay in quietude in Joseph's tomb. His work completed, His hands folded in peace, He rested through the sacred hours of the Sabbath day.

In the beginning the Father and the Son had rested upon the Sabbath after Their work of creation. When "the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them" (Genesis 2:1), the Creator and all heavenly beings rejoiced in contemplation of the glorious scene. "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Job 38:7. Now Jesus rested from the work of redemption; and though there was grief among those who loved Him on earth, yet there was joy in heaven. —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 769.

A young man clothed in shining garments was sitting by the tomb. It was the angel who had rolled away the stone. . . . [The] women were afraid. They turned to flee, but the angel's words stayed their steps. "Fear not ye," he said; "for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead." . . .

He is risen, He is risen! the women repeat the words again and again. No need now for the anointing spices. The Saviour is living, and not dead. They remember now that when speaking of His death He said that He would rise again. What a day is this to the world! Quickly the women departed from the sepulcher "with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word." —*Lift Him Up*, p. 99.

The disciples hurried to the tomb, and found it as Mary had said. They saw the shroud and the napkin, but they did not find their Lord. Yet even here was testimony that He had risen. The graveclothes were not thrown heedlessly aside, but carefully folded, each in a place by itself. John "saw, and believed." He did not yet understand the scripture that Christ must rise from the dead; but he now remembered the Saviour's words foretelling His resurrection.

It was Christ Himself who had placed those graveclothes with such care. When the mighty angel came down to the tomb, he was joined by another, who with his company had been keeping guard over the Lord's body. As the angel from heaven rolled away the stone, the other entered the tomb, and unbound the wrappings from the body of Jesus. But it was the Saviour's hand that folded each, and laid it in its place. In His sight who guides alike the star and the atom, there is nothing unimportant. Order and perfection are seen in all His work. —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 789.

Thursday, December 19

Jesus and Mary

In the garden, Mary had stood weeping, when Jesus was close beside her. Her eyes were so blinded by tears that she did not discern Him. And the hearts of the disciples were so full of grief that they did not believe the angels' message or the words of Christ Himself.

How many are still doing what these disciples did! How many echo Mary's despairing cry, "They have taken away the Lord, . . . and we know not where they have laid Him"! To how many might the Saviour's words be spoken, "Why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?" He is close beside them, but their tear-blinded eyes do not discern Him. He speaks to them, but they do not understand. —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 794.

Mary had been looked upon as a great sinner, but Christ knew the circumstances that had shaped her life. He might have extinguished every spark of hope in her soul, but He did not. It was He who had lifted her from despair and ruin. Seven times she had heard His rebuke of the demons that controlled her heart and mind. She had heard His strong cries to the Father in her behalf. She knew how offensive is sin to His unsullied purity, and in His strength she had overcome. . . .

Through His grace she became a partaker of the divine nature. The one who had fallen, and whose mind had been a habitation of demons, was brought very near to the Saviour in fellowship and ministry. It was Mary who sat at His feet and learned of Him. It was Mary who poured upon His head the precious anointing oil, and bathed His feet with her tears. Mary stood beside the cross, and followed Him to the sepulcher. Mary was first at the tomb after His resurrection. It was Mary who first proclaimed a risen Saviour. —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 568.

In the lowering of the moral standard among the Corinthian believers, there were those who had given up some of the fundamental features of their faith. Some had gone so far as to deny the doctrine of the resurrection. . . .

With convincing power the apostle set forth the great truth of the resurrection. "If there be no resurrection of the dead," he argued, "then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ: whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 319, 320.

Friday, December 20

For Further Reading

The Desire of Ages, "Why Weepest Thou?" pp. 788–794;

Selected Messages, "A Vivid View of Coming Events," book 3, pp. 427–431.