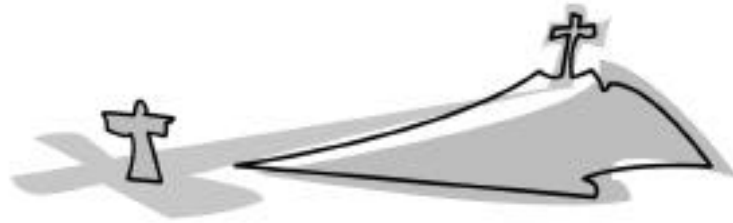


In the Shadow of the Cross



SABBATH—JANUARY 22

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matthew 17:1-9; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:28-36; Luke 24:7; Acts 10:38, 39; 1 Corinthians 15:13-18.

MEMORY VERSE: “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him. John said, ‘Look! The Lamb of God! He takes away the sin of the world!’ ” (John 1:29, Nlrv).

IN THE BOOK, *THE BRIDGE OVER SAN LUIS REY*, there was a monk¹ named Brother Juniper. He wanted to know why five people were killed when the bridge over the San Luis Rey had fallen. He believed in an all-powerful, all-loving God. So he believed there had to be a good reason for why those five people were killed. Brother Juniper spent many years asking questions about the lives of the people who were killed. But when he was finished, he threw all his notes into the sea, because he could not find any good reason for their deaths.

Someone should have warned Brother Juniper that he would not be able to find good reasons for why the people died when the bridge fell. In this world, we often find no reasons for terrible happenings. But we do have the Cross. The Cross was God Himself suffering for our sins. We cannot find good reasons for why bad things happen. But when we think about the Cross, we find hope that someday God will tell us why bad things happened to good people.

A LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON: What was John the Baptist's work? Why should the Cross be the center of all our teaching and preaching? Why did the disciples do what they did when they heard Jesus' warning about the Cross? How do we show the same attitude as the disciples?

Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 29.

¹monk—a man who gives up everything for religion and goes to live in a monastery.

SUNDAY—JANUARY 23

JOHN THE BAPTIST (John 1:29-34).

The Bible says very little about John the Baptist. But we have enough information about his faith and hard work. We can learn much from this strong preacher who announced Jesus' first coming.



What basic truth did God show John about Jesus and what Jesus had come to do? John 1:29.

John did not fully understand the meaning of his own words about Jesus as the Lamb of God. But John spoke these words with the Holy Spirit's leading. John's mission (work) was to open the minds and hearts of people to the important message of Jesus' sacrifice. Jesus

came to heal people and to teach them about God. He preached to them and raised people from the dead. Everything He did pointed people to who He was and to what He was going to do for them through His death. Without His death, all His other work would have been for nothing in the end.

What do the following verses tell us about how important Jesus' death was in the plan of salvation? Mark 8:31; Luke 24:7; 1 Corinthians 15:13-18.

"The sacrifice of Jesus as payment for sin is the great truth. All other truths point to it. If we are to understand and appreciate every truth in the Bible, we must study every one of them in the light that flows from the Cross. We need to remember that all truth is connected with the wonderful, central truth of the Savior's sacrifice. Those of us who study the Savior's wonderful sacrifice will grow in grace and knowledge."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 221.

Why must Jesus' sacrifice at the Cross be the most important part of our message as Seventh-day Adventists? What can we do as a church to keep Jesus' sacrifice at the center of our message? What will happen to us if we stop focusing on Jesus' sacrifice?

MONDAY—JANUARY 24

**JESUS' LIFE OF SERVICE,
SUFFERING, AND SACRIFICE
(Acts 10:38, 39).**

For about three and a half years, Jesus worked hard among sinners. The Gospels² are filled with stories of the good things Jesus did with the power of God working through Him as a human. Never did the world see such a Healer, such a Teacher, such a Lover of people! All His life, Jesus worked hard at serving His fellow humans.

Describe Jesus' work and its result. Matthew 4:23-25; Matthew 8:14-17; Acts 10:38, 39.



Jesus goes around “doing good.” But what does He get for His hard work? He is killed! Why would someone who is kind, good, pure, and loving be killed? Perhaps it was His

purity, love, and goodness that caused Him to be killed.

How do John 3:19-21, John 15:17-25, and Romans 8:7 help us understand why Jesus was killed?

We should not be so quick to judge and criticize the people who killed Jesus. Instead, we should look at our own wicked hearts (Jeremiah 17:9). We have all met people who are very good, kind, and faithful while we are weak and faulty! Have we not felt guilty, bitter, or hateful toward them? And if we would feel this way when contrasted³ with another sinner, imagine how we might feel if we were with Jesus.

Why do we sometimes feel anger, hate, or guilt when we are with kind, loving people? What should those thoughts tell us about ourselves? What should we do about such thoughts?

TUESDAY—JANUARY 25

**WARNINGS OF THE CROSS
(Matthew 16:13-21).**

At what point in His ministry (work) did Jesus begin to speak about His death? Why do you

²the Gospels—the New Testament books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

³contrasted—to have shown how things are different.

**think He waited until this time?
Matthew 16:13-21; Luke 9:18-22.**

Many Bible scholars⁴ believe that Peter said Jesus was the Messiah in August or September of A.D. 30. This was the summer before Jesus' death (*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 231). From that point on, Jesus wished to discourage the disciples' false ideas about His work. He wanted to prepare them for His death and the times of trouble they would go through because of Him.

Why was it so difficult for the disciples to accept and understand Jesus' statements about His sacrifice? Mark 9:31, 32; Luke 9:44, 45.

Mark and Luke say that the disciples were afraid to ask Jesus what He meant. They did not want to know. No one wants to hear bad news! People do not want to hear something that goes against their ideas and hopes!

In Mark 9:33, 34, the disciples quarreled among themselves about who would be the greatest of them. They were too busy thinking about worldly honors to be ready for the shame of the Cross. No wonder Mark speaks two times about how

dull the disciples were in understanding Jesus' words and actions! Their "hearts were hardened" (Mark 6:52, NRSV; Mark 8:17). This hardening came from false pride. False pride always goes against the humility of the Cross. The disciples saw Jesus avoid opportunities to become king. Then they were insulted by Jesus' failure to show ambition.

**How do we see pride in the church and in our own hearts?
How must we get rid of pride?**

WEDNESDAY—JANUARY 26

FAILING SHADOWS AND RADIANT⁵ GLORY (Matthew 17:1-9).

What happened that should have made the people's faith stronger? Matthew 17:1-9; Luke 9:28-36.



⁴scholars—experts who study a particular subject.

⁵radiant—shining; sending out beams of light.

Jesus knew that His disciples were not ready for the upcoming crisis. The religious leaders were working against Jesus and His disciples. John the Baptist had just been beheaded. Jesus had warned the disciples of His own sufferings that would come soon. The disciples felt negative about the future. Then they saw this wonderful example of God's power, along with a voice from heaven supporting Jesus. All of this should have increased their faith and given them strength for the coming trouble.

What did Moses and Elijah talk about with Jesus? Luke 9:30, 31. Why do you think they discussed this subject?

It is interesting that heaven did not send powerful angels to the Savior at this time. Instead, two human beings who had suffered came to talk with the Savior about His upcoming sacrifice on the cross. This wonderful event⁶ was not just for the three disciples who slept through part of the whole thing. This event was to give Jesus strength as He faced the Cross. "God sent Moses and Elijah to talk with Jesus about His suffering. They also came to comfort Him with the sympathy of heaven."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 425.

Why did the disciples' faith not stay strong after this experience

with Jesus? What can we do to keep our faith strong?

THURSDAY—JANUARY 27

**LAW OF THE NEW KINGDOM
(Matthew 20:25-28).**

Jesus' work was moving toward its close. He was leading His disciples on their last trip together. On the way, He told them, " 'Everything that the prophets wrote about the Son of Man [Jesus] will come true.' " Why? " 'The Son of Man will be handed over to the priests and the teachers of the law. They will sentence him to death. Then they will turn him over to people who are not Jews. The people will make fun of him and whip him. They will nail him to the cross. On the third day he will rise again' " (Luke 18:31, NIV; Matthew 20:18, 19, NIV). This warning about the coming events should have helped the disciples to be more interested in the teachings of the prophets. But "the disciples did not understand any of this. . . . They didn't [did not] know what Jesus was talking about" (Luke 18:34, NIV). This is not because Jesus' words were unclear. This is because Jesus' purposes were so different from the disciples' purposes. The disciples did not want to hear what He had to say. Jesus had commanded them to preach everywhere that " 'the kingdom of heaven is near' " (Matthew 3:2, NIV). He had promised them that they would have

⁶event—something that happens.

positions of high honor in His kingdom (Matthew 19:27-30).

James, John, and their mother asked Jesus for what special favor? What did His answer show about the path to His kingdom and the nature of His government? Matthew 20:20-28; Mark 10:35-45.

James, John, and their mother showed that they had selfish ambition. But Jesus did not rebuke (scold) them or their mother. Jesus tried to deepen and purify their love for Him and His work. He wished them to see that the Cross comes before the crown.

Fyodor Dostoevsky once wrote a story about Jesus coming to earth a second time. A short time later, Jesus was arrested and thrown into jail. In jail, He was questioned by the Great Questioner, who wanted to know why Jesus had come back again. Suppose Jesus were to step directly into your life. How would He be bothering you? What does your answer tell you about yourself?

FRIDAY—JANUARY 28

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*,⁷ pp. 359, 541–543; *The Desire of*

Ages, pp. 547–551, 644; *Fundamentals [Basics] of Christian Education*, p. 142; *The Sanctified Life*, pp. 56, 57; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 226.

“Jesus’ cross is to be lifted high above the people so they can spend much time thinking about it. Then they will receive power from God. Then they will be more eager and ready to work for Him. They will bring Jesus to the world so the world will better understand Jesus’ love and work.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 44.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Jesus is the world’s best Teacher and Model (Example) of truth. He

⁷apostles—Jesus’ twelve disciples were called apostles after Jesus returned to heaven.

showed in everything He did that He came “not to be served. Instead, He came to serve” (Mark 10:45, NIV). Why did His disciples have a hard time understanding Jesus’ work of service? What does this say about sinful people? How only can we understand Jesus’ work?

2. Suppose Jesus complained about people’s failure to understand and appreciate His work. Suppose He had complained about His disciples’ failure to understand His goals and character. How would His complaints have influenced His mission on earth? Do we have any more right to complain than Jesus had? What is the cure to our desire to complain? John 15:11; John 16:33; Hebrews 12:1-5.
3. The disciples were not ready for the Cross, even though Jesus tried to help them get ready. Are we ready for Jesus’ second coming? What can we do to be ready?
4. Discuss the question at the end of Thursday’s lesson. Would we welcome Jesus? Or would His presence interrupt our plans as a church or our personal plans?