

## Sabbath School Lesson #1 – The Beginning of the Gospel – 29 June-5 July 2024

**C**hrist died that we might find forgiveness of our sins by repentance and faith in Him, and we are called upon to show our faith by performing certain duties. But we are not called upon to do these duties without first having repented. It is every person's duty to keep the law of God. There is no individual who is free from this obligation. Had man never sinned, keeping the law of God would have been his whole duty. But all men have sinned, and now God commands all men everywhere to repent. Christ's teaching was, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:14-15). Paul preached, "Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). This is the true order. And the repentance must be complete. We must keep the whole law.

**Sunday: The Failed Missionary** – What do we know about how John Mark first became a missionary and then failed in his first missionary work? Ellen White wrote: "Cyprus was one of the places to which the believers had fled from Jerusalem because of the persecution following the death of Stephen. It was from Cyprus that certain men had journeyed to Antioch, "preaching the Lord Jesus." Barnabas himself was "of the country of Cyprus;" and now he and his fellow worker, Paul, accompanied by John Mark, a nephew of Barnabas, visited this island field" {RH May 18, 1911, par. 2}. "The mother of Mark was a convert to the Christian religion, and her home was an asylum for the disciples. There they were always sure of a welcome and a season of rest. It was during one of these visits of the apostles to his mother's home, that Mark proposed to Paul and Barnabas that he should accompany them on their missionary tour. He felt the favor of God in his heart, and longed to devote himself entirely to the work of the gospel ministry" {RH May 18, 1911, par.3}. To this point, amid encountering difficulties, Mark was still strong. "Paul and his company now continued their journey, going to Perga, in Pamphylia. Their way was toilsome; they encountered hardships and privations, and were beset with dangers on every side. As they advanced, they were compelled to face "perils of waters," and "perils of robbers." In the towns and cities through which they passed, they were still surrounded by dangers seen and unseen. But Paul and Barnabas had learned to trust in God's power to deliver. Their hearts were filled with fervent love for perishing souls. As faithful shepherds in search of the lost sheep, they had no thought of their own ease and convenience. Forgetful of self, they faltered not when weary, hungry, and cold. They had in view but one object,—the salvation of those who had wandered far from the fold of safety" {RH May 18, 1911, par.9}. "It was here that Mark was overwhelmed with fear and discouragement, and wavered for a time in his purpose to give himself whole-heartedly to the Lord's work. He had labored with success under favorable circumstances; but now, upon encountering the opposition and the perils that so often beset the pioneer worker, he failed to endure hardness as a good soldier of the cross. He had yet to learn to face danger and persecution and adversity with a brave heart. Unused to hardships, he was disheartened by the perils and privations of the way. As the apostles advanced, and still greater difficulties were apprehended, Mark was intimidated, and, losing all courage, refused to go farther, and returned to Jerusalem" {RH May 18, 1911, par. 10}.

**Monday: A Second Chance** – What more are we told, by Ellen White, how John Mark obtained a second chance, after his first deserting the missionary work? "This desertion caused Paul to judge Mark unfavorably and severely for a long time. At a future period there was a sharp contention between Paul and Barnabas concerning Mark, who had again decided to devote himself to the work of the ministry. This contention caused Paul and Barnabas to separate, the latter following out his convictions, and taking Mark with him in his work. At that time, Paul was not inclined to excuse in any degree the weakness of Mark in deserting them and the work upon which they had entered, for the comforts and safety of home; and he urged that one with so little stamina was unprepared for taking up a work requiring patience, self-denial, bravery, devotion, and faith, with a willingness to sacrifice even life if need be" {RH May 18, 1911, par. 11}. "Barnabas, on the other hand, was inclined to excuse his nephew, because of his inexperience. Barnabas felt anxious that Mark should

not abandon the ministry; for he saw in him the qualifications of a useful worker for Christ. In after-years, his solicitude in Mark's behalf was richly rewarded; for Mark gave himself unreservedly to the Lord and to the work of proclaiming the gospel message in difficult fields. Under the blessing of God, and the wise training of Barnabas, he developed into a valuable worker" {RH May 18, 1911, par. 12}. "Paul was afterward reconciled to Mark, and received him as a fellow laborer. He also recommended him to the Colossians as one who was a fellow worker "unto the kingdom of God," and "a comfort unto me." Again, not long prior to his own death, he spoke of Mark as profitable to him in the ministry" {RH May 18, 1911, par. 13}. This is a lesson for us all, as we labour in missions, that we be patient with each other.

**Tuesday: The Messenger** – Read Exodus 23:20-21, who is that Angel? "The angel who went before Israel was the Lord Jesus Christ" {3SG 268.2}. "Moses was saved by the merits of Christ, who was the angel that led the armies of Israel in all their travels through the wilderness" {ST July 18, 1878, par. 11}. "It was Christ who guided the Israelites through the wilderness. And it is Christ who is guiding His people today, showing them where and how to work" {19LtMs, Lt 335, 1904, par. 16}. That Christ is the angel that was with Moses in the Mount Sinai, was the testimony of the holy martyr, Stephen. The words in brackets express our convictions relative to the persons meant in Acts 7:38: "This [Moses] is he that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel [Christ] which spake to him [Moses] in the Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, who received the lively oracles to give unto us." The work of instructing and leading the Hebrews was given to One who is called an angel (Exodus 13:21; 14:19, 24; 23:20-23; 32:34; Numbers 20:16; Isaiah 63:9). This angel Paul calls "that spiritual Rock that followed them," and he affirms, "That Rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4). The eternal Father is never called an angel in the Scriptures, while what angels have done is frequently ascribed to the Lord, as they are His messengers and agents to accomplish His work. It is said of Him who went before the Hebrews to deliver them, "My name is in Him." In all the stupendous events of that deliverance the mind of Jehovah was represented in Jesus.

**Wednesday: Jesus' Baptism** – In Mark 1:10-11, what descended on Jesus after His baptism? Ellen White wrote: "Never before have the angels listened to such a prayer. They are eager to bear to their loved Commander a message of assurance and comfort. But no; the Father Himself will answer the petition of His Son. Direct from the throne issue the beams of His glory. The heavens are opened, and upon the Saviour's head descends a dovelike form of purest light, — fit emblem of Him, the meek and lowly One" {DA 112.1}. "Of the vast throng at the Jordan, few except John discerned the heavenly vision. Yet the solemnity of the divine Presence rested upon the assembly. The people stood silently gazing upon Christ. His form was bathed in the light that ever surrounds the throne of God. His upturned face was glorified as they had never before seen the face of man. From the open heavens a voice was heard saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" {DA 112.2}. "These words of confirmation were given to inspire faith in those who witnessed the scene, and to strengthen the Saviour for His mission. Notwithstanding that the sins of a guilty world were laid upon Christ, notwithstanding the humiliation of taking upon Himself our fallen nature, the voice from heaven declared Him to be the Son of the Eternal" {DA 112.3}.

**Thursday: The Gospel According to Jesus** – When was the last time you studied the 70-week prophecy? The angel made known the meaning of the vision to Daniel (Daniel 9:20-23). The angel said, "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people," etc (verse 24). Seventy weeks, counting a day for a year rule (Ezekiel 4:6), that is, four hundred and ninety years, were determined or cut off from the two thousand three hundred years, upon the Jewish people. They were to begin from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem. This commandment full and complete we find in Ezra 7:11-26, and it was given in the seventh year of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, which was BC 457. As this decree went forth BC 457, the sixty-nine weeks or 483 years which were to extend to the Messiah the Prince, reckoned from the commencement of the work in the Autumn of that year, bring us to the Autumn of AD 27, when our Lord was baptized by John in Jordan and went forth preaching "the time is fulfilled" (Mark 1:14). Three and a half years from this to the midst of the seventieth week, bring us to the Spring of AD 31, where crucifixion took place. Three and a half years more, last half of the week, ended 70 weeks or 490 years in Autumn of AD 34.