

Lesson 9

**February 24-March 1*

NEXT WEEK — LESSONS OF THE PAST

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Blessed Is He Who Comes
in the Name of the Lord

SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Psalm 23; John 10:11-15; Psalm 22; Ps. 89:27-32; Col. 1:16; Psalm 2; Heb. 7:20-28.*

Memory Text: "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes" (*Psalm 118:22, 23, NKJV*).

The Psalms testify about Christ's person and ministry.

Almost all aspects of His work in the plan of salvation are seen in the Psalms. In various ways, Christ's life and work are prefigured and predicted in them, often with remarkable accuracy.

The topics revealed in the Psalms include Christ's deity, His sonship, His obedience, His zeal for God's temple, His identity as the Good Shepherd, His betrayal, His suffering, His bones not being broken, His death, resurrection, ascension, priesthood, and kingship. It's all there, as predicted many centuries before Jesus came in the flesh.

No wonder, for example, when talking about His ministry, Jesus had pointed back to the Psalms when speaking to the disciples on the road to Emmaus (*Luke 24:44*). He wanted them to find in the Psalms evidence for who He was.

Some of the Psalms that have a typological fulfillment in Christ include Psalms 24, 45, 72, and 101 (the ideal King and Judge), 88, and 102 (prayers of the suffering servant of God).

In all the Psalms, through the psalmists' laments, thanksgivings, praises, and cries for justice and deliverance, we can hear the echoes of Christ's prayer for the salvation of the world.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 2.*

SUNDAY

February 25

Divine Self-Sacrificing Shepherd

Read Psalm 23; Psalm 28:9; Psalm 80:1; Psalm 78:52, 53; Psalm 79:13; and Psalm 100:3. How is the relationship between the Lord and His people portrayed in these texts?

PS 88:15:

“I have been afflicted and ready to die from my youth; I suffer Your terrors; I am distraught.”

Psalms 88:15 NKJV

As Christ begins His public ministry, how do the religious leaders respond?

“They also that seek after my life lay snares for me: and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long” (Psalm 38:12).

With some exceptions when necessary, how does Jesus generally respond to hypocrisy, betrayal, and those who misjudge Him?

“I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good; and my sorrow was stirred” (Psalm 39:2).

“‘When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled.’ He read the hearts of all assembled. He saw that with many, what passed as a demonstration of grief was only pretense. He knew that some in the company, now manifesting hypocritical sorrow, would ere long be planning the death, not only of the mighty miracle worker, but of the one to be raised from the dead. Christ could have stripped from them their robe of pretended sorrow. But He restrained His righteous indignation. The words He could in all truth have spoken, He did not speak, because of the loved one kneeling at His feet in sorrow, who truly believed in Him” (The Desire of Ages, p. 533).

“Mary’s act was in marked contrast with that which Judas was about to do. What a sharp lesson Christ might have given him who had dropped the seed of criticism and evil thinking into the minds of the disciples! How justly the accuser might have been accused! He who reads the motives of every heart, and understands every action, might have opened

before those at the feast dark chapters in the experience of Judas. (The Desire of Ages, p. 563).

“Simon was touched by the kindness of Jesus in not openly rebuking him before the guests.” (The Desire of Ages, pp. 567, 568).

As His influence grows, what tactics are used to misrepresent Jesus before the people?

“All day they twist my words; all their thoughts are against me for evil” (Psalm 56:5, NKJV).

“In the past the Pharisees had circulated false statements regarding the most wonderful manifestations of the power of God. When Christ raised to life the daughter of Jairus, He had said, ‘The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.’ Mark 5:39. As she had been sick only a short time, and was raised immediately after death, the Pharisees declared that the child had not been dead; that Christ Himself had said she was only asleep. They had tried to make it appear that Christ could not cure disease, that there was foul play about His miracles” (The Desire of Ages, pp. 534, 535).

By misconstruing His words, they hoped to prejudice the people against Him” (The Desire of Ages, p. 389).

As nothing seems to stop Christ, what is the final determination of the leaders in Israel?

“For I have heard the slander of many: fear was on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life” (Psalm 31:13, NKJV).

“So, as the priests, the rulers, and the elders gathered for consultation, it was their fixed determination to silence Him who did such marvelous works that all men wondered. ” (The Desire of Ages, pp. 538, 539).

Despite the deadly opposition arrayed against Jesus, what does He do?

“I have proclaimed the good news of righteousness in the great assembly; indeed, I do not restrain my lips, O lord, You Yourself know. I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth from the great assembly” (Psalm 40:9, 10, NKJV).

“In the midst of the feast, when the excitement concerning Him was at its height, He [Jesus] entered the court of the temple in the presence of the multitude....“Standing thus, the center of attraction to that vast throng, Jesus addressed them as no man had ever done. His words showed a knowledge of the laws and institutions of Israel, of the sacrificial service and the teachings of the prophets, far exceeding that of the priests and rabbis.” (The Desire of Ages, pp. 452, 453).

**As Christ approaches the close of His ministry and begins to taste the cup of God’s wrath in our behalf, what strange experience comes over Him?
“You hold my eyelids open; I am so troubled that I cannot speak” (Psalm 77:4, NKJV).**

“As they approached the garden, the disciples had marked the change that came over their Master. Never before had they seen Him so utterly sad and silent” (The Desire of Ages, pp. 685, 686).

What physical experience does Jesus begin to suffer in Gethsemane?

“O Lord, God of my salvation, I have cried out day and night before You. Let my prayer come before You; Incline Your ear to my cry. For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near to the grave. I

am counted with those who go down to the pit; I am like a man who has no strength” (Psalm 88:1-4, NKJV).

“As He proceeded, this strange sadness deepened; yet they dared not question Him as to the cause. His form swayed as if He were about to fall. Upon reaching the garden, the disciples looked anxiously for His usual place of retirement, that their Master might rest. Every step that He now took was with labored effort. He groaned aloud, as if suffering under the pressure of a terrible burden. Twice His companions supported Him, or He would have fallen to the earth” (The Desire of Ages, p. 686).

Does Jesus find human comfort in this hour of His great suffering?

“Reproach has broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness; I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none” (Psalm 69:20).

What terrible thought does Satan now press upon Christ?

“Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my cry; do not be silent at my tears; for I am a stranger with

You, a sojourner, as all my fathers were. Remove Your gaze from me, that I may regain strength, before I go away and am no more” (Psalm 39:12, 13, NKJV).

“With the issues of the conflict before Him, Christ’s soul was filled with dread of separation from God. Satan told Him that if He became the surety for a sinful world, the separation would be eternal. He would be identified with Satan’s kingdom, and would nevermore be one with God” (The Desire of Ages, p. 687).

What does God do to assure Christ of His love and acceptance?

“I will cry unto God Most High; unto God that performeth all things for me. He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah. God shall send forth His mercy and His truth” (Psalm 57:2, 3).

“In this awful crisis, when everything was at stake, when the mysterious cup trembled in the hand of the sufferer, the heavens opened, a light shone forth amid the stormy darkness of the crisis hour, and the mighty angel who stands in God’s presence, occupying the position from which Satan fell, came to the side of Christ. The angel came not

to take the cup from Christ's hand, but to strengthen Him to drink it, with the assurance of the Father's love. He came to give power to the divine-human suppliant." (The Desire of Ages, pp. 693, 694).

What does Jesus finally decide to do after the angel's encouragement?

"I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God. They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored that which I took not away" (Psalm 69:3, 4).

"The awful moment had come—that moment which was to decide the destiny of the world. The fate of humanity trembled in the balance. Christ might even now refuse to drink the cup apportioned to guilty man. It was not yet too late, He might wipe the bloody sweat from His brow, and leave man to perish in his iniquity. He might say, Let the transgressor receive the penalty of his sin, and I will go back to My Father. Will the Son of God drink the bitter cup of humiliation and agony? Will the innocent suffer the consequences of the curse of sin, to save the guilty? The words fall tremblingly from the pale lips of Jesus, 'O My Father, if this cup

may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done.'

“Three times has He uttered that prayer. Three times has humanity shrunk from the last, crowning sacrifice. But now the history of the human race comes up before the world’s Redeemer. He sees that the transgressors of the law, if left to themselves, must perish. He sees the helplessness of man. He sees the power of sin. The woes and lamentations of a doomed world rise before Him. He beholds its impending fate, and His decision is made. He will save man at any cost to Himself” (The Desire of Ages, pp. 690, 700).

The image of the Lord as Shepherd and God’s people as the sheep of His pasture highlights God’s guidance and sustaining care of His people and the people’s dependence on God to meet all their needs. The image conveys the notion of closeness between God and His people because shepherds lived with their flocks and cared for each sheep individually. The pastoral imagery also underlines God’s ownership of His flock, guaranteed by two strong bonds: creation (*Ps. 95:6, 7; Ps. 100:3*) and covenant (*Ps. 28:9, Heb. 13:20*).

The image of the divine Shepherd who leads Joseph like a flock (*Ps. 80:1*) perhaps alludes to Jacob’s benediction of

Joseph, which pictures God as the Shepherd of Israel, and so appeals to this great promise and blessing (*Gen. 49:24*).

Kings were considered shepherds of their people (*2 Sam. 5:2*). Yet, only God truly deserves this title because most human kings did not live up to such a calling. Only Jesus did, which is why He is called the Good Shepherd.

Read John 10:11–15. What does Jesus say about Himself as the Good Shepherd?

The intimate bond between the divine Shepherd and His flock is seen in the flock's unmistakably knowing the Shepherd's voice (*John 10:4, 27*). To the current day, Middle Eastern shepherds can divide their flocks that have mingled simply by calling their sheep, who recognize and follow their shepherd's voice.

At times, God's flock suffers various afflictions that the people understand as the sign of God's discontent and abandonment. Yet, the Good Shepherd never forsakes His strayed sheep but searches to save them. This is a powerful image of God's relationship with His people. He is willing to die for His sheep (*John 10:11, 15*) and paradoxically become a sacrificial lamb on their behalf (*John 1:29*). Also, Jesus confirmed that He

would call His sheep in other folds and unite them into one flock (*John 10:16*).

What are ways that you can on a daily and practical level take advantage of what is promised to us in having Jesus as our Good Shepherd?