

Chapter 14

MEDITATION EXAMPLES

“And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.”

Luke 6:12

BEGINNING something new is always difficult. If you haven’t meditated before, then these examples will be of help. All we need to do is read a passage of scripture or someone’s written description, and then think about each sentence; about each statement or thought, and then let it seep into our presence; let it influence our being.

The Judgment

Let’s set the tone for this scene, where Mrs. White was given a vision of the Judgment that is worthy of reading and meditation. I include it in full from the book *Early Writings*.

“On the morning of October 23, 1879, about two o’clock, the Spirit of the Lord rested upon me, and I beheld scenes in

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the coming judgment. Language fails me in which to give an adequate description of the things which passed before me and of the effect they had upon my mind.

The great day of the execution of God's judgment seemed to have come. Ten thousand times ten thousand were assembled before a large throne, upon which was seated a person of majestic appearance. Several books were before Him, and upon the covers of each was written in letters of gold, which seemed like a burning flame of fire: 'Ledger of Heaven.' One of these books, containing the names of those who claim to believe the truth, was then opened. Immediately I lost sight of the countless millions about the throne, and only those who were professedly children of the light and of the truth engaged my attention. As these persons were named, one by one, and their good deeds mentioned, their countenances would light up with a holy joy that was reflected in every direction. But this did not seem to rest upon my mind with the greatest force.

Another book was opened, wherein were recorded the *sins* of those who profess the truth. Under the general heading of selfishness came every other sin. There were also headings over every column, and underneath these, opposite each name, were recorded, in their respective columns, the lesser sins.

Under covetousness came falsehood, theft, robbery, fraud, and avarice; under ambition came pride and extravagance; jealousy stood at the head of malice, envy, and hatred; and intemperance headed a long list of fearful crimes, such as lasciviousness, adultery, indulgence of animal passions, etc. As I beheld I was filled with inexpressible anguish and exclaimed: 'Who can be saved? who will stand justified before God? whose robes are spotless? who are faultless in the sight of a pure and holy God?'

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As the Holy One upon the throne slowly turned the leaves of the ledger, and His eyes rested for a moment upon individuals, His glance seemed to burn into their very souls, and at the same moment every word and action of their lives passed before their minds as clearly as though traced before their vision in letters of fire. Trembling seized them, and their faces turned pale. Their first appearance when around the throne was that of careless indifference. But how changed their appearance now! The feeling of security is gone, and in its place is a nameless terror. A dread is upon every soul lest he shall be found among those who are wanting. Every eye is riveted upon the face of the One upon the throne; and as His solemn, searching eye sweeps over that company, there is a quaking of heart, for they are self-condemned without one word being uttered. In anguish of soul each declares his own guilt and with terrible vividness sees that by sinning he has thrown away the precious boon of eternal life.

One class were registered as cumberers of the ground. As the piercing eye of the Judge rested upon these, their sins of neglect were distinctly revealed. With pale, quivering lips they acknowledged that they had been traitors to their holy trust. They had had warnings and privileges, but they had not heeded nor improved them. They could now see that they had presumed too much upon the mercy of God. True, they had not such confessions to make as had the vile and basely corrupt; but, like the fig tree, they were cursed because they bore no fruit, because they had not put to use the talents entrusted to them.

This class had made *self* supreme, laboring only for selfish interests. They were not rich toward God, not having responded to His claims upon them. Although professing to be servants

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of Christ, they brought no souls to Him. Had the cause of God been dependent on their efforts, it would have languished; for they not only withheld the means lent them of God, but they withheld themselves. But these could now see and feel that in occupying an irresponsible position in reference to the work and cause of God they had placed themselves on the left hand. They had had opportunity, but would not do the work that they could and should have done.

The names of all who profess the truth were mentioned. Some were reproved for their unbelief, others for having been slothful servants. They had allowed others to do the work in the Master's vineyard, and to bear the heaviest responsibilities, while they were selfishly serving their own temporal interests. Had they cultivated the abilities God had given them, they could have been reliable burden bearers, working for the interest of the Master. Said the Judge: 'All will be justified by their faith and judged by their works.' How vividly then appeared their neglect, and how wise the arrangement of God in giving to every man a work to do to promote the cause and save his fellow men. Each was to demonstrate a living faith in his family and in his neighborhood, by showing kindness to the poor, sympathizing with the afflicted, engaging in missionary labor, and by aiding the cause of God with his means. But, like Mer-oz, the curse of God rested upon them for what they had not done. They had loved that work which would bring the greatest profit in this life; and opposite their names in the ledger devoted to good works there was a mournful blank.

The words spoken to these were most solemn: 'You are weighed in the balances, and found wanting. You have neglected spiritual responsibilities because of busy activity in temporal

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matters, while your very position of trust made it necessary that you should have more than human wisdom and greater than finite judgment. This you needed in order to perform even the mechanical part of your labor; and when you disconnected God and His glory from your business, you turned from His blessing.'

The question was then asked: 'Why have you not washed your robes of character and made them white in the blood of the Lamb? God sent His Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that through Him it might be saved. My love for you has been more self-denying than a mother's love. It was that I might blot out your dark record of iniquity, and put the cup of salvation to your lips, that I suffered the death of the cross, bearing the weight and curse of your guilt. The pangs of death, and the horrors of the darkness of the tomb, I endured, that I might conquer him who had the power of death, unbar the prison house, and open for you the gates of life. I submitted to shame and agony because I loved you with an infinite love, and would bring back my wayward, wandering sheep to the paradise of God, to the tree of life. That life of bliss which I purchased for you at such a cost, you have disregarded. Shame, reproach, and ignominy, such as your Master bore for you, you have shunned. The privileges He died to bring within your reach have not been appreciated. You would not be partaker of His sufferings, and you cannot now be partaker with Him of His glory.' Then were uttered these solemn words: 'He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.' The book then closed, and the mantle fell from the Person on the throne, revealing the terrible glory of the Son of God.

The scene then passed away, and I found myself still upon

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the earth, inexpressibly grateful that the day of God had not yet come, and that precious probationary time is still granted us in which to prepare for eternity.”

What an inspiring description that encourages me to increase my time in Spiritual Exercise to better understand His sacrifice for me.

The Baptism of Jesus

The time had arrived for Jesus to end His manual labor and to begin His ministry. He was thirty years old—about the time when the worker has achieved a skill level to be a master at his trade. We don’t know if Jesus was a carpenter or a stone worker, but we do know that He worked with His hands. He learned from a mentor, and I’m sure He began as an apprentice, and improved with experience. He probably had bruises on His hands and had callouses from working with rough materials and heavy tools.

Knowing Jesus, He probably gave away His tools to someone who was starting in the trade, because He knew He would not need them again.

This was an exciting time; a time He had known was coming, and a time that would begin an entirely new phase in His life. He would be on His own for the first time. He was leaving His beloved mother into the care of His brothers and sisters who were not unhappy to see Him go, because He was an embarrassment to His family, as He refused to comply with the man-made traditions of the church. He knew she would be well provided for,

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and He wasn't concerned for her safety.

Good-byes were exchanged as He left the small village and headed for the river where He would look for his cousin, John the Baptist.

I'm sure His mother made sure He had some food that He carried, and perhaps it lasted until he was able to find John. It might have taken Him several days to make the journey on foot, and He might have gone east to the river and then turned south and asked along the way if anyone knew where John was. Eventually He met people who knew of his whereabouts and Jesus found him at the Jordan river.

I imagine that Jesus stood on the bank of the river and listened to John preach and exhort the people to repent and live a spiritual life.

John probably spoke clearly and forcefully as people gathered around to hear what he had to say.

At some point while Jesus was listening, John noticed Him but didn't realize who He was at first. But when Jesus took off His tunic, and stepped into the water to be baptized, John was impressed by the Holy Spirit that this was the Christ, and he exclaimed, "Behold, the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. This is the one of whom I said, 'After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.' "

I can hear him saying to Jesus, "I cannot baptize you—You should be baptizing me!"

"No, we must proceed—you must baptize me; together we

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must fulfill all righteousness.” Jesus replied.

“But I’m not worthy,” John thought to himself.

John had been preaching repentance and the need for spiritual revival for months, and now before him stood a person who had no need of repentance.

He could feel that this was a momentous event; he felt that he needed more time to get comfortable with this situation, but here was the Christ standing in front of him—waiting for him to act—saying nothing.

John knew what he had to do, but he hesitated. He felt like dropping to his knees and praying; he felt inadequate for the task.

Jesus looked at him and perhaps raised his eyebrows in expectation, and John responded.

He took hold of Jesus, made an appropriate remark, and lowered Him into the water until his entire body was submerged.

He then lifted the Saviour up to a standing position, and noticed that Jesus let him to all of the work.

Over the many months that John had baptized he noticed that some who quickly reverted back to their sinful ways also had made every attempt to lift themselves out of the water.

Jesus didn’t fit into this category. He was submissive. He was gentle.

As Jesus wiped the water out of His eyes, a miraculous sign appeared over His head.

A form of a dove mysteriously emerged. At first it was trans-

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parent, but then it quickly became solid. It was a brilliant polished gold color and it hovered over Jesus.

While the people were looking, and while John was looking a voice spoke. This was not an ordinary voice, no it was a deep and powerful voice and it said, “This is my son who I love and in whom I am well pleased.”

John smiled with joy at the sight of the Holy Spirit hovering over Christ. He was now doubly sure that this was the Christ that had been prophesied by so many godly men over the centuries.

This would begin a new epoch in the history of Israel.

When Jesus heard the voice of the Father, He was reassured that all was well. This was a major checkpoint of His life. So far everything was working well, according to the heavenly plan.

He had incorporated prayer into His life to such an extent that He was able to receive help from the Father ever since he was a young boy. He took advantage of the same power that I have—the same power that the Father still desires to bestow upon each and every believer.

Oh, that I might take advantage of the power of prayer just like Jesus did. Oh, that I might emulate His life of prayer and service.

We are reminded that “We must be much in communion with God. Prayer in secret, prayer while the hands are engaged in labor, prayer while walking by the way, prayer in the night season, the heart’s desires ever ascending to God,—this is our only safety. In this manner Enoch walked with God. In this manner our Exemplar obtained strength to tread the thorny path from

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Nazareth to Calvary.”⁽¹⁾

The Crucifixion of Christ

Mrs. White described the crucifixion in a book called *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. 1 beginning on page 57. I include this because of its beauty, and I know it will help as you meditate upon the similar accounts in the Gospels.

“The Son of God was delivered to the people to be crucified. They led the dear Saviour away. He was weak and feeble through pain and suffering, caused by the scourging and blows which he had received, yet they laid on him the heavy cross upon which they were soon to nail him. But Jesus fainted beneath the burden. Three times they laid on him the heavy cross, and three times he fainted. They then seized one of his followers, a man who had not openly professed faith in Christ, yet believed on him. They laid on him the cross, and he bore it to the fatal spot. Companies of angels were marshaled in the air above the place. A number of his disciples followed him to Calvary in sorrow, and with bitter weeping. They called to mind Jesus’ riding triumphantly into Jerusalem, and they following him, crying, Hosanna in the highest! and strewing their garments in the way, and the beautiful palm branches. They thought that he was then to take the kingdom and reign a temporal prince over Israel. How changed the scene! How blighted their prospects! They followed Jesus; not

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with rejoicing; not with bounding hearts and cheerful hopes; but with hearts stricken with fear and despair they slowly, sadly followed him who had been disgraced and humbled, and who was about to die.

The mother of Jesus was there. Her heart was pierced with anguish, such as none but a fond mother can feel. Her stricken heart still hoped, with the disciples, that her Son 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 they laid Jesus upon the cross. The hammer and the nails were brought. The heart of his disciples fainted within them. The mother of Jesus was agonized, almost beyond endurance, and as they stretched Jesus upon the cross, and were about to fasten his hands with the cruel nails to the wooden arms, the disciples bore the mother of Jesus from the scene, that she might not hear the crashing of the nails, 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 sufferings which the Son of God was passing through, yet feared that his kingdom was lost, and that he must die.

They raised the cross after they had nailed Jesus to it, and with great force thrust it into the place prepared for it in the ground, tearing the flesh, and causing the most intense suffering. They made his death as shameful as possible. With him they crucified two

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thieves, one on either side of Jesus. The thieves were taken by force, and after much resistance on their part, their arms were thrust back and nailed to their crosses. But Jesus meekly submitted. He needed no one to force his arms back upon the cross. While the thieves were cursing their executioners, Jesus in agony prayed for his enemies, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. It was not merely agony of body which Jesus endured, but the sins of the whole world were upon him.

As Jesus hung upon the cross, some who passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, as though bowing to a king, and said to him, Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. The Devil used the same words to Christ in the wilderness, If thou be the Son of God. The chief priests and elders and scribes mockingly said, He saved others, himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. The angels who hovered over the scene of Christ's crucifixion were moved to indignation as the rulers derided him, and said, If he be the Son of God let him deliver himself. They wished there to come to the rescue of Jesus, and deliver him; but they were not suffered to do so. The object of his mission was almost accomplished. As Jesus hung upon the cross those dreadful hours of agony, he did not forget his mother. She could not remain away from the suffering scene. Jesus' last lesson was one of compassion and humanity. He

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looked upon his mother, whose heart was well nigh bursting with grief, and then upon his beloved disciple John. He said to his mother, 'Woman, behold thy Son.' Then said he to John, 'Behold thy mother.' And from that hour John took her to his own house.

Jesus thirsted in his agony; but they heaped upon him additional insult, by giving him vinegar and gall to drink. The angels had viewed the horrid scene of the crucifixion of their loved commander, until they could behold no longer; and veiled their faces from the sight. The sun refused to look upon the dreadful scene. Jesus cried with a loud voice, which struck terror to the hearts of his murderers, *It is finished*. Then the veil of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom, the earth shook, and the rocks rent. Great darkness was upon the face of the earth. The last hope of the disciples seemed swept away as Jesus died. Many of his followers witnessed the scene of his sufferings and death, and their cup of sorrow was full.

Satan did not then exult as he had done. He had hoped that he could break up the plan of salvation; but it was laid too deep. And now by Jesus' death, he knew that he must finally die, and his kingdom be taken away and given to Jesus. He held a council with his angels. He had prevailed nothing against the Son of God, and now they must increase their efforts, and with their cunning and power turn to Jesus' followers. They must prevent all they could from receiving salvation purchased for them by Jesus. By

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so doing Satan could still work against the government of God. Also it would be for his own interest to keep from Jesus all he could. For the sins of those who are redeemed by the blood of Christ, and overcome, at last will be rolled back upon the originator of sin, the Devil, and he will have to bear their sins, while those who do not accept salvation through Jesus will bear their own sins.

Jesus' life was without worldly grandeur, or extravagant show. His humble, self-denying life was a great contrast to the lives of the priests and elders, who loved ease and worldly honor, and the strict and holy life of Jesus was a continual reproof to them, on account of their sins. They despised him for his humbleness, holiness and purity. But those who despised him here, will one day see him in the grandeur of heaven, and the unsurpassed glory of his Father. He was surrounded with enemies in the judgment hall, who were thirsting for his blood; but those hardened ones who cried out, His blood be on us and on our children, will behold him an honored King. All the heavenly host will escort him on his way with songs of victory, majesty and might, to him that was slain, yet lives again a mighty conqueror. Poor, weak, miserable man spit in the face of the King of glory, while a shout of brutal triumph arose from the mob at the degrading insult. They marred that face with blows and cruelty which filled all heaven with admiration. They will behold that face again, bright as the noon-day sun, and will seek to flee from before it. Instead of that shout of brutal triumph, in terror they will wail

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because of him. Jesus will present his hands with the marks of his crucifixion. The marks of this cruelty he will ever bear. Every print of the nails will tell the story of man's wonderful redemption, and the dear price that purchased it. The very men who thrust the spear into the side of the Lord of life, will behold the print of the spear, and will lament with deep anguish the part they acted in marring his body. His murderers were greatly annoyed by the superscription, The King of the Jews, placed upon the cross above his head. But then they will be obliged to see him in all his glory and kingly power. They will behold on his vesture and on his thigh, written in living characters, King of kings, and Lord of lords. They cried to him mockingly, as he hung upon the cross, Let Christ the King of Israel descend from the cross, that we may see and believe. They will behold him then with kingly power and authority. They will demand no evidence then of his being the King of Israel; but overwhelmed with a sense of his majesty and exceeding glory, they will be compelled to acknowledge, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

The shaking of the earth, the rending of the rocks, the darkness spread over the earth, and the loud, strong cry of Jesus, *It is finished*, as he yielded up his life, troubled his enemies, and made his murderers tremble. The disciples wondered at these singular manifestations; but their hopes were all crushed. They were afraid the Jews would seek to destroy them also. Such hate manifested against the Son of God they thought would not end there. Lonely hours

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the disciples spent in sorrow, weeping over their disappointment. They expected that he would reign a temporal prince; but their hopes died with Jesus. They doubted in their sorrow and disappointment whether Jesus had not deceived them. His mother was humbled, and even her faith wavered in his being the Messiah.

But notwithstanding the disciples had been disappointed in their hopes concerning Jesus, yet they loved him, and respected and honored his body, but knew not how to obtain it. Joseph of Arimathea, an honorable counsellor, had influence, and was one of Jesus' true disciples. He went privately, yet boldly, to Pilate and begged his body. He dared not go openly; for the hatred of the Jews was so great that the disciples feared that an effort would be made by them to prevent the body of Jesus having an honored resting place. But Pilate granted his request, and as they took the body of Jesus down from the cross, their sorrows were renewed, and they mourned over their blighted hopes in deep anguish. They wrapped Jesus in fine linen, and Joseph laid him in his own new sepulchre. The women who had been his humble followers while he lived still kept near him after his death, and would not leave him until they saw his sacred body laid in the sepulchre, and a stone of great weight rolled at the door, lest his enemies should seek to obtain his body. But they need not have feared; for I beheld the angelic host watching with untold interest the resting place of Jesus. They guarded the sepulchre, earnestly waiting the command to act their part

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in liberating the King of glory from his prison house.

Christ's murderers were afraid that he might yet come to life and escape them. They begged of Pilate a watch to guard the sepulchre until the third day. Pilate granted them armed soldiers to guard the sepulchre, sealing the stone at the door, lest his disciples should steal him away, and say that he had risen from the dead."

I find this description to be very helpful as I meditate upon the sacrifice of my Lord.

Praise Ye the Lord

This is from the *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 5, pages 316-318. "What a theme for meditation is the sacrifice that Jesus made for lost sinners! 'He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.' How shall we estimate the blessings thus brought within our reach? Could Jesus have suffered more? Could He have purchased for us richer blessings? Should it not melt the hardest heart when we remember that for our sakes He left the happiness and glory of heaven and suffered poverty and shame, cruel affliction and a terrible death? Had He not by His death and resurrection opened for us the door of hope, we should have known nothing but the horrors of darkness and the miseries of despair. In our present state, favored and blessed as we are, we cannot realize from what depths we have been rescued. We cannot measure how much deeper our afflictions would have been, how much

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greater our woes, had not Jesus encircled us with His human arm of sympathy and love, and lifted us up.

We may rejoice in hope. Our Advocate is in the heavenly sanctuary, pleading in our behalf. Through His merits we have pardon and peace. He died that He might wash away our sins, clothe us with His righteousness, and fit us for the society of heaven, where we may dwell in light forever. Dear brother, dear sister, when Satan would fill your mind with despondency, gloom, and doubt, resist his suggestions. Tell him of the blood of Jesus, that cleanses from all sin. You cannot save yourself from the tempter's power, but he trembles and flees when the merits of that precious blood are urged. Then will you not gratefully accept the blessings Jesus bestows? Will you not take the cup of salvation that He presents, and call on the name of the Lord? Do not show distrust of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Do not for a moment pain the heart of the pitying Saviour by your unbelief. He watches with the most intense interest your progress in the heavenly way; He sees your earnest efforts; He notes your declensions and your recoveries, your hopes and your fears, your conflicts and your victories.

Shall all our devotional exercises consist in asking and receiving? Shall we be always thinking of our wants and never of the benefits we receive? Shall we be recipients of His mercies and never express our gratitude to God, never praise Him for what He has done for us? We do not pray any too much, but we are too sparing of giving thanks. If the loving-kindness of God called forth more thanksgiving and praise, we would have far more power in prayer. We would abound more and more in the love of God and have more bestowed to praise Him for.

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You who complain that God does not hear your prayers, change your present order and mingle praise with your petitions. When you consider His goodness and mercies you will find that He will consider your wants.

Pray, pray earnestly and without ceasing, but do not forget to praise. It becomes every child of God to vindicate His character. You can magnify the Lord; you can show the power of sustaining grace. There are multitudes who do not appreciate the great love of God nor the divine compassion of Jesus. Thousands even regard with disdain the matchless grace shown in the plan of redemption. All who are partakers of this great salvation are not clear in this matter. They do not cultivate grateful hearts. But the theme of redemption is one that the angels desire to look into; it will be the science and the song of the ransomed throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity. Is it not worthy of careful thought and study now? Should we not praise God with heart and soul and voice ‘for His wonderful works to the children of men?’

Praise the Lord in the congregation of His people. When the word of the Lord was spoken to the Hebrews anciently, the command was: ‘And let all the people say, Amen.’ When the ark of the covenant was brought into the city of David, and a psalm of joy and triumph was chanted, ‘all the people said, Amen, and praised the Lord.’ This fervent response was an evidence that they understood the word spoken and joined in the worship of God.”

This is why we are also instructed to “glorify God with our mouth, speaking in honor of the truth and of his unbounded mercy...” (2)

Shepherds of Bethlehem

Each year faithful Jews from all over the Roman Empire returned to Jerusalem to attend the sacred ceremonies held in the temple. These people were either wealthy and could afford the trip, or they were commoners and saved their money over time in order to make the trip—maybe the only one during their lifetime.

It was a blessing to enter the city with so much history and so much importance. This was the city of David; the city that had been inhabited by so many generations of God's chosen people. This was believed to be the hill where Abraham had sacrificed. This place was special in the eyes and hearts of every believer.

The trip was generally by boat because it was the most efficient. The traveler would cross the Mediterranean Sea and arrive on the shores at Antioch, and then make the journey through Galilee and up the hills to the great city by foot, or some other conveyance, such as a mule or rented chariot.

It was required that each person bring an offering, and because it was so difficult to transport one, the various items were grown locally and made available to the pilgrims for a price.

The sheep used for the offerings were raised by a select group of Levites who lived and worked near Bethlehem, which was just a few miles outside of Jerusalem. These sheep were

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special; they were bred and cared for with the express purpose of preparing them for sacrificial offerings. Any that were born with defects, or any that were injured, were immediately sold at the market where they might be purchased for slaughter or for some other shepherd to care for.

The men who became shepherds were men who didn't need much society. These were men who were alone much of the time. The country was fully inhabited, and there were no predators to threaten the flocks at night, so the shepherds were able to rest. The days were monotonous as each one was no different than the others, except when the weather changed.

But this group of shepherds was different than most because they considered their work to be a ministry--not just a job.

They were spiritual Levites who were aware of the prophetic timetable, and who were interested in the coming of the Messiah.

In my mind's eye I watch them that evening.

They had finished eating a simple meal of flat bread and vegetable stew. This was the second and main meal of the day and it was late afternoon. The day was warm, and they knew the night would be cool because there were no clouds in the sky. It was not yet beginning to cool, but they were prepared to stay warm with extra garments.

The sunset is much different tonight as there are no clouds to reflect the different colors. All we see is the orange disk of the sun moving down toward the horizon, slowly moving as time progresses.

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There's nothing else to look at, so we all face the west and watch the miraculous movement of the sun as it changes from orange to red and begins to disappear.

The shepherds start a fire that they will keep going throughout the night; a fire that will be modest in size and one that will provide sufficient heat for their comfort. The sheep are accustomed to the routine, and have gathered close to the men, and begin lying down for the evening. Their close proximity serves well, as if any disturbance occurs during the night hours, the shepherd will easily hear it and be prepared to investigate at a moment's notice.

All is quiet as the shepherds sit down for the evening next to the fire before they also lie down for a good night's sleep. It had been several years since the sheep had been threatened at night. It was a wild dog that had sneaked up to the flock, and when it attacked, the bleating awakened the shepherds who grabbed their staffs, and ran to the source of the commotion. Before the dog could get away it was struck with great force by one of the staffs, and while it was stunned, another staff put it out of its misery.

Of course the injured sheep had to be sold at the market because it no longer qualified for sacrificial purposes.

The shepherds were talking among themselves about politics that night. There were reports of some men up in Galilee who were hoping to obtain sufficient support in order to resist the Romans. This was nothing new, but this type of thing always gained sufficient attention that generated much discussion.

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The shepherds couldn't understand how the Lord could allow Israel to be under the control of the Romans when the entire nation no longer worshipped idols and hardly ever married nonbelievers. They were doing everything right; they were doing everything by-the-book. Literally.

Where is the Lord? Why has it been centuries since any prophets have spoken?

And yet, it is time—time for the Messiah. The night is fully dark and the stars are fully visible. When sleeping outside it's considered a luxury to lie on one's back and gaze at the sky. Examine the various stars and think heavenly thoughts; think of a God that is so powerful that He can create such vast distances and such large planets such as this one.

Each of the shepherds is lost in his own thoughts at the end of the day and all is quiet. There isn't a sound in the air—not even the wind can be heard. The sheep are quiet.

Suddenly a bright light appears above the fire. Not close to the fire, but far above it.

The shepherds awake immediately as the light becomes brighter and brighter and spreads wider and wider. It's as if the whole sky is about to break out in sunlight, and as the shepherds look up they notice the light coming closer until they discern various bodies within it.

And then they hear music. These thousands of beings up in the sky are singing, and they are singing in Hebrew so the shep-

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herds understand the words. They're praising God! They're singing, "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace, good will toward men." The music is loud and beautiful. It's being sung with many harmonious parts and it thrills the hearts of the shepherds as they watch with their mouths open and their eyes glued to the bright beings in the sky.

As they watch, one of the angels descends closer to them and speaks with a clear voice saying, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

And then the angel floats upward to join the others and after a few minutes the bright light drifts higher and higher into the sky and the sound fades along with the light.

The shepherds are astonished at what they have just seen.

They repeat the words of the angel and discuss the meaning. This topic is familiar to them and they understand what the angel meant, so they decide right then and there to walk over to the village and make inquiries.

The night isn't dark, and they are able to follow the familiar paths leading across the fields to the village, where they stop at the small inn and ask the proprietor if anyone with a baby is there.

They learn that the only new baby in town is a poor one, and the parents are staying in a stable, so they head to the place

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where they were directed and enter the room that is generally reserved for animals.

When they announce themselves a man meets them at the doorway. They inform him of their interest, and he invites them inside where the mother and child are resting on a bed of straw that is covered with some borrowed blankets.

The men say hello to the mother, and ask to see the child, and as the mother displays the baby, they drop to their knees and worship.

Not only do they pray, but they begin singing the same song they heard the angels sing, quietly at first, and as they repeat the now familiar tune, they increase the volume of their voices until they sing fortissimo that the people in nearby houses can hear.

After a sufficient time has passed, the shepherds decide they should leave and allow the mother and child to rest, so they head back to their sheep where they spend the entire night discussing the event and its significance.

Josiah

In the book of 2 Chronicles, we find in chapter 34 a story of a king who was only eight years old. It's clear to me that his mother was a righteous woman, and one who was able to raise her child to know and respect the Lord.

When he was twenty six years old, a scholar (described as a scribe) asked to see him, and I can picture this momentous

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event.

Perhaps it was not the time of day for visitors. Most kings had routines where they would deal with the affairs of state at certain calling hours, and I imagine that this particular event couldn't wait for the king's schedule.

The priests had, under the king's direction, been renovating and updating the temple. The pavement had been worn over time by thousands of people coming and going, and many stones needed replacing. In previous years some parts of the temple had actually been dismantled in order to use the materials for other structures, and the king wanted everything to be put back in its original condition. This was a major construction project.

On this particular afternoon, I imagine the High Priest himself had been organizing a storeroom and found a fairly large leather satchel. It was very dusty, and he wiped it off with his hands. Maybe it made him sneeze. There wasn't much light in the room, because he had a small candle with him, and he wondered what was in this satchel.

He picked it up and carried it to a place near the door, and set it on a table. He then looked inside the leather pouch and saw a large scroll. He had already guessed that there was a scroll inside because of its shape. It was a long and narrow bundle, and the contents were soft.

The scroll was extracted with great care, as it was obviously very old. At first he didn't realize how old it was; he had no idea that it was over 800 years old. But as he opened it he noticed it

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was a religious document. He began reading at the beginning and followed the words of Moses.

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth....”

This was the original writing of the great prophet Moses!

After two verses, he stopped reading.

He recognized what this was.

His heart stopped beating.

He was silent.

This was the original book; the original writings of Moses.

His heart resumed beating.

He resumed breathing.

Everyone thought this book had been lost, and here it was—before his very eyes!

The nation had forgotten about God, and it seemed the Lord had forgotten about Israel. It had been years since any prophetic messages had been given for the nation, and it seemed that this was a new era without God.

But now the book had been found, and all the knowledge that had been lost could be recovered.

The emotions of the priest were overwhelming and he began to cry. Tears flowed freely down his cheeks as he considered the implications. The temple services could now be resumed following the original rules; they could, for the first time in many years, become fully compliant with the law of God.

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He couldn't wait to tell the other Levites, so he hurriedly called a meeting, and together they all hovered over the scroll for several hours.

They praised God and prayed that they might respond correctly. Then they set at work that very afternoon copying the words of that scroll, to make sure it would never be lost again.

While the priests were talking one of them suggested that the king might wish to see the scroll, and everyone agreed it was a good idea. So they placed it back into the leather cover and hurried to the palace.

The king was notified that the scribe or scholar ["Shaphan"] wished to see him, and the scribe was ushered into the king's presence in a small room that was the king's private office. Josiah was sitting on a chair behind a table that was covered with documents. Another man was standing next to the table, and they had been talking.

The scribe then approached the king and asked if he might lay his package onto the king's table. The king nodded his head to give permission.

The scroll was opened before Josiah, and the scribe explained its significance.

Josiah quickly understood the import of this document, and wanted to kiss the writings of Moses. He was stunned that this was the law of God.

"Shaphan," he said as he addressed the scholar, "just imagine, this is the writing of Moses!"

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“Yes.” Replied Shaphan.

Together they read the first three chapters of Genesis.

They were thrilled!

They read various sections of the document and they stumbled upon Deuteronomy 28:15 that says, “But it shall come to pass if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee:”

The scribe then read the following curses to the king, and Josiah became so emotional that he tore his outer garment; he ripped it apart right down the middle as an act of extreme regard and despair, while exclaiming how upset the Lord must be.

The tearing of a robe when receiving bad news was no small thing, especially if it was done by the king. It was a newsworthy event, and by the end of the day the news had spread far and wide.

Shaphan then explained how they had already started to make a copy of the scroll, and the king quickly expressed his approval.

They agreed that as soon as two copies were made of each chapter, one would be forwarded to the king, and the other would be studied by the priests.

Later that week, when the scroll was fully copied, the various pieces were stitched together. But in the meantime the writings were read and studied as they became available, and over the

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next week the entire palace and temple compound was doing nothing but studying the writings of Moses.

At the end of the week, the king called a meeting with the priests, and they decided to reinstitute all of the requirements laid out in the book.

The king also brought up the issue of the wrath of God because of all of the sins of the previous kings. He asked the priests to go and find a prophet of God, if any existed, and determine the status of things, and to find out what they should do to pacify the Lord.

Perhaps one of the priests remembered a woman who had once had a message from God, and she lived in the college in Jerusalem. So the High Priest led a committee that was appointed by the king to the apartment of Huldah, and they presented this new discovery before her and asked her if the Lord had any message for them.

You can read the rest for yourself, as you meditate upon this exciting scene and discover anew this thrilling story.

The remaining chapters contain quotes from the pen of Ellen White that are relevant to this topic. Some of them have already been included thus far, and the page numbers where they were used are shown for reference purposes. The quotes are not taken out of context because their original context was the same as this entire manuscript.

REFERENCES

- 1 *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, November 8, 1887.
- 2 *Early Writings*, page 116.