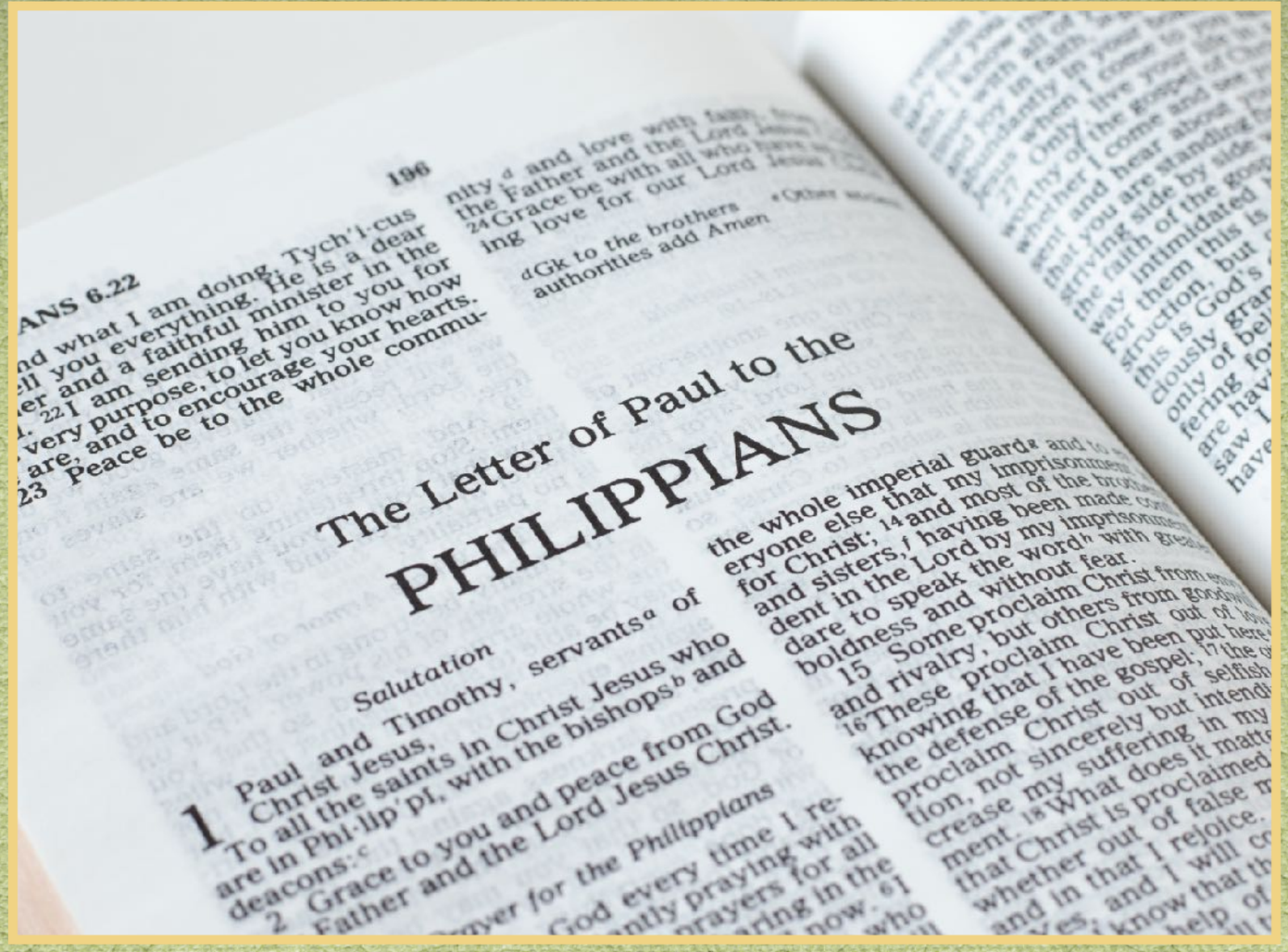

Philippians 2:12–15

Lesson 7—The Light of the World

The Equality of Christ

Philippians 2:6–7

That all *men* should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. (John 5:23)

And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. (Hebrews 1:6)

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth; And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9–11)

Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him. (1 Peter 3:22)

For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; (John 5:26)

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: (Philippians 2:6)

Robbery—something to be grasped or seized or something to be held onto

Equal—*isos*—Revelation 21:16; Acts 11:17; Mark 14:56, 59

Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God. (John 5:18)

Because Christ was one with the Father, equal with Him, He could make an atonement for transgression and save man, not in his sins, but from his sins. (19LtMs, *Lt 363, 1904*, par. 5)

The law of the Lord *is* perfect, converting the soul . . . (Psalm 19:7)

In one scale is the perfect, changeless law of God, demanding obedience; in the other, sin, disobedience, departure from righteousness. (17LtMs, *Ms 52, 1902*, par. 7)

In setting aside the law of God, men know not what they are doing. God's law is the transcript of His character. It embodies the principles of His kingdom. He who refuses to accept these principles is placing himself outside the channel where God's blessings flow. (*COL* 305.3)

The unity that exists between Christ and His disciples does not destroy the personality of either. They are one in purpose, in mind, in character, but not in person. It is thus that God and Christ are one. (*MH* 422.1)

Lucifer in heaven, before his rebellion, was a high and exalted angel, next in honor to God's dear Son. His countenance, like those of the other angels, was mild and expressive of happiness. His forehead was high and broad, showing a powerful intellect. His form was perfect; his bearing noble and majestic. A special light beamed in his countenance and shone around him brighter and more beautiful than around the other angels; yet Christ, God's dear Son, had the preeminence over all the angelic host. He was one with the Father before the angels were created. Lucifer was envious of Christ, and gradually assumed command which devolved on Christ alone. (*SR* 13.1)

The great Creator assembled the heavenly host, that He might in the presence of all the angels confer special honor upon His Son. The Son was seated on the throne with the Father, and the heavenly throng of holy angels was gathered around them. The Father then made known that it was ordained by Himself that Christ, His Son, should be equal with Himself; so that wherever was the presence of His Son, it was as His own presence. The word of the Son was to be obeyed as readily as the word of the Father. His Son He had invested with authority to command the heavenly host. Especially was His Son to work in union with Himself in the anticipated creation of the earth and every living thing that should exist upon the earth. His Son would carry out His will and His purposes but would do nothing of Himself alone. The Father's will would be fulfilled in Him. (*SR* 13.2)

Lucifer was envious and jealous of Jesus Christ. Yet when all the angels bowed to Jesus to acknowledge His supremacy and high authority and rightful rule, he bowed with them; but his heart was filled with envy and hatred. (*SR* 14.1)

Angels that were loyal and true sought to reconcile this mighty, rebellious angel to the will of his Creator. They justified the act of God in conferring honor upon Christ, and with forcible reasoning sought to convince Lucifer that no less honor was his now than before the Father had proclaimed the honor which He had conferred upon His Son. They clearly set forth that **Christ was the Son of God**, existing with Him before the angels were created; and that He had ever stood at the right hand of God, and His mild, loving authority had not heretofore been questioned; and that He had given no commands but what it was joy for the heavenly host to execute. They urged that Christ's receiving special honor from the Father, in the presence of the angels, did not detract from the honor that Lucifer had heretofore received. The angels wept. They anxiously sought to move him to renounce his wicked design and yield submission to their Creator; for all had heretofore been peace and harmony, and what could occasion this dissenting, rebellious voice? Lucifer refused to listen. (*SR* 15.2, 16.1)

Eternity

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.
(John 5:24)

The Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, existed from eternity, a distinct person, yet one with the Father. He was the surpassing glory of heaven. He was the commander of the heavenly intelligences, and the adoring homage of the angels was received by him as his right. This was no robbery of God. (*RH* April 5, 1906, p. 8)

In speaking of His pre-existence, Christ carries the mind back through dateless ages. He assures us that there never was a time when He was not in close fellowship with the eternal God. He to whose voice the Jews were then listening had been with God as one brought up with Him. (*ST*, August 29, 1900)

When Christ passed within the heavenly gates, He was enthroned amidst the adoration of the angels. As soon as this ceremony was completed, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples in rich currents, and Christ was indeed glorified, even with the glory which He had with the Father from all eternity. (*The Acts of the Apostles* 38, 39)

But while God's Word speaks of the humanity of Christ when upon this earth, it also speaks decidedly regarding his preexistence. The Word existed as a divine being, even as the eternal Son of God, in union and oneness with his Father. From everlasting he was the Mediator of the covenant, the one in whom all nations of the earth, both Jews and Gentiles, if they accepted him, were to be blessed. "The Word was with God, and the Word was God." Before men or angels were created, the Word was with God, and was God. (*RH*, April 5, 1906)

A human being lives, but his is a given life, a life that will be quenched. "What is your life? It is even vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." But Christ's life is not a vapor; it is never-ending, a life existing before the worlds were made. (*RH*, June 17, 1897, p. 5)

"The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old," Christ says. (13LtMs, *Ms 37, 1898*, par. 13)

Proverbs 8:22–30

And the Son of God declares concerning Himself: "The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting.... When He appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him." Proverbs 8:22–30. (*PP* 34.1)

The Lord Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God, existed from eternity, a distinct person, yet one with the Father. He was the surpassing glory of heaven. He was the commander of the heavenly intelligences, and the adoring homage of the angels was received by Him as His right. This was no robbery of God. "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way," He declares, "before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth" (Proverbs 8:22–27). (*1SM* 247.4)

"Sister White wrote that God sent a 'most precious message' through Elders Jones and Waggoner. What was the 1888 understanding of Christ's nature and his relationship to the Father? E. J. Waggoner wrote: (Allen Stump, *The Foundation of Our Faith*, p. 89)

“ ‘The Word was “in the beginning.” The mind of man cannot grasp the ages that are spanned in this phrase. It is not given to men to know when or how the Son was begotten; but we know that he was the Divine Word, not simply before He came to this earth to die, but even before the world was created. Just before His crucifixion He prayed, “And now, O Father, glorify thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.” John 17:5. And more than seven hundred years before His first advent, His coming was thus foretold by the word of inspiration:

"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity." Micah 5:2, margin. We know that Christ "proceeded forth and came from God" (John 8:42), but it was so far back in the ages of eternity as to be far beyond the grasp of the mind of man' (*Christ and His Righteousness*, pp. 9–10).

"Waggoner quotes Micah 5:2 and interprets this to mean that Christ was brought forth 'so far back in the ages of eternity as to be far beyond the grasp of the mind of man.' The Hebrew word translated 'eternity' or 'everlasting' is *owlam*. *Owlam* is defined as a 'vanishing point; generally, time out of mind (past or future), i.e. (practically) eternity' (Strong's #5769). This word is used in such places as 1 Samuel 1:22 where we read that Samuel was to 'appear before the LORD, and there abide for ever.' The phrase 'for ever' comes from *owlam*, and Adventists have been quick to point out that this means only as long as he lived.

"Another usage of *owlam* is found in Jonah 2:6 where Jonah describes his experience in the fish: 'I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever [*owlam*]: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God.' This was only a three-day period. *Owlam* is also translated 'everlasting' in Proverbs 8:23, a text that Sister White applies to Christ. *Owlam's* usages vary and must not violate the weight of evidence from other Scriptures.

"A few years ago after reading what Waggoner had written, there was a conflict within in my mind. I knew that Sister White had recommended his work. I had also read Sister White's statements on the Sonship of Christ, but I still did not understand how they could fully and totally agree with Sister White's statements on the eternal nature of Christ. Then one day I was reading M. L. Andreasen's book, *The Sabbath*, and it all became very clear, just as if the light switch had been turned on. Andreasen wrote:

“ ‘We can understand how God can bless human beings. We can even understand how He can bless animals and give them their work to do in carrying out God’s purpose, but how can God bless a day, a division of time, neither animate nor inanimate, not alive nor dead, a thing without substance, a conception rather than a reality; time, which defies definition, though all mankind is aware of its existence and reality? How can time be blessed so as to be a blessing to man?

“ ‘The answer is that time does not have any virtue or power in itself to be a blessing or a help to others. Time is as impersonal as space, and equally inconceivable. One difference between the two is noticeable: space extends in all directions, while time might be compared to a one-way road, permitting traffic in one direction only. Man has no power over time, to hasten or retard it. Whether he will or not, he is carried along with it, and despite all protests is one day older tomorrow than he is today. He cannot reverse the process, however much he may wish to do so. Time is superior to him, and he obeys its mandates.

“ ‘There are those who believe that God did not create time, but that in some way He found it already existing. But this cannot be. Time and space are not self-existent entities, operating apart from God and independent of Him. If that were true, they would be equal with God, or even His superior; for that which is coeval with God or exists prior to God must at least be equal with Him; and that which is not created by God is self-existent and is God. The Christian believes that “without Him was not anything made that was made,” and that time and space are created by God as verily as anything else He has made. John 1:3.

“ ‘Though the two conceptions of time and space are beyond human comprehension, each is helpful in understanding the other. Our conception of space, for example, helps us to understand time better, and how it is possible for God to bless time.’ (M. L. Andreasen, *The Sabbath*, pp. 54, 55)

"There can be no concept of eternity without the concept of time. As Andreasen noted, if all things were created by Jesus Christ, then Jesus created time as well. For lack of better words and speaking as Paul did 'after the manner of men,' there is a period of history before time or eternity existed. Because Christ is the author of time, he must also be the author of eternity, as we know it. Therefore, Christ, the Son of God, was begotten before time and eternity existed since it was Christ who brought these things into being. With this understanding, we can see how Jesus 'was with God from all eternity' and how he is also the literal Son of God begotten before Bethlehem."
(Allen Stump, *The Foundation of Our Faith*, pp. 89, 90)

Work Out Your Own Salvation

Philippians 2:12

The Saviour's promise, "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given" (Matthew 13:12), applies also to the reception of truth. To him who seeks to understand its teachings will be given increased understanding. To him who reveals that he possesses the spirit of truth will be given a larger measure of the Spirit, that he may work out his own salvation. The work of reflecting Christ to the world will not be done boastingly, but in fear and trembling, yet in the power of the Spirit. CT 399.1

Every besetting sin must be put away. Warfare must be waged against it until it is overcome. The Lord will work with your efforts. As finite, sinful man works out his own salvation with fear and trembling, it is God who works in him, to will and to do of His own good pleasure. But God will not work without the co-operation of man. He must exercise his powers to the very utmost; he must place himself as an apt, willing student in the school of Christ; and as he accepts the grace that is freely offered to him, the presence of Christ in the thought and in the heart will give him decision of purpose to lay aside every weight of sin, that the heart may be filled with all the fullness of God, and of His love. (*FE* 134.1)

The work of gaining salvation is one of copartnership, a joint operation. There is to be co-operation between God and the repentant sinner. This is necessary for the formation of right principles in the character. Man is to make earnest efforts to overcome that which hinders him from attaining to perfection. But he is wholly dependent upon God for success. Human effort of itself is not sufficient. Without the aid of divine power it avails nothing. God works and man works. Resistance of temptation must come from man, who must draw his power from God. On the one side there is infinite wisdom, compassion, and power; on the other, weakness, sinfulness, absolute helplessness. (*AA* 482.2)

Shine as Lights in the World

Philippins 2:15

And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. (Daniel 12:3)

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

For ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are ye* light in the Lord: walk as children of light:

(Ephesians 5:8)

The time is not far distant when the test will come to every soul. The observance of the false sabbath will be urged upon us. The contest will be between the commandments of God and the commandments of men. Those who have yielded step by step to worldly demands and conformed to worldly customs will then yield to the powers that be, rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened imprisonment, and death. At that time the gold will be separated from the dross. True godliness will be clearly distinguished from the appearance and tinsel of it. Many a star that we have admired for its brilliance will then go out in darkness. Those who have assumed the ornaments of the sanctuary, but are not clothed with Christ's righteousness, will then appear in the shame of their own nakedness. (*PK* 188.1)

Among earth's inhabitants, scattered in every land, there are those who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Like the stars of heaven, which appear only at night, these faithful ones will shine forth when darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people. In heathen Africa, in the Catholic lands of Europe and of South America, in China, in India, in the islands of the sea, and in all the dark corners of the earth, God has in reserve a firmament of chosen ones that will yet shine forth amidst the darkness, revealing clearly to an apostate world the transforming power of obedience to His law. (*PK* 188.2)

Even now they are appearing in every nation, among every tongue and people; and in the hour of deepest apostasy, when Satan's supreme effort is made to cause "all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond," to receive, under penalty of death, the sign of allegiance to a false rest day, these faithful ones, "blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke," will "shine as lights in the world." Revelation 13:16; Philippians 2:15. The darker the night, the more brilliantly will they shine. (*PK* 188.2)

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. (John 8:12)

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.
(John 3:16)