1. In this Sabbath School Lesson, we will continue our series on loving the appearing of Jesus Christ. We will focus on the life of Demas and John Mark.

2. What does 2 Timothy 4:10 record about Demas?

3. Who was Demas in relation to Paul prior to this point? Philemon 24; Colossians 4:14

4. Note: While the Bible doesn’t speak much about Demas, the Spirit of Prophecy gives us more insight into his life for our own self-examination.

5. What was one reason why Demas forsook Paul? Matthew 16:26

“Demas was a convert to Christianity. He was received into full communion with the church. He is mentioned in connection with Luke the beloved physician. “Luke the beloved physician, and Demas greet you,” writes Paul. In another letter he sends greeting to Demas. But again we find him writing, “Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me; for Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.” He chose the world before Christ, and this was the cause of his failure. It is the cause of the failure of many who claim to be Christians. We all need to see our weakness, and strive to remedy our faults of character, else we shall surely become as Demas,—drawn away from safe paths into worldly projects and ambitious plans. Thus we shall make shipwreck of our faith."

6. Which type of ground in the parable of the sower chooses the things of this world over Christ? Mark 4:18, 19

7. Note: To put the thorny ground hearers into clearer perspective for this study, we have to look at the other laborers who worked alongside Demas and Paul.

“A among Paul’s assistants at Rome were many of his former companions and fellow workers. Luke,” the beloved physician,” who had attended him on the journey to Jerusalem, through the two years’ imprisonment at Caesarea, and upon his perilous voyage to Rome, was with him still. Timothy also ministered to his comfort. Tychicus, “a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord,” stood nobly by the apostle. Demas and Mark were also with him. Aristarchus and Epaphras were his “fellow prisoners.” Colossians 4:7-14. (AA 454.2)

8. Note: Both Mark and Luke were fellow laborers of Paul and Demas. They also wrote books of the Bible and wrote about the thorny ground hearers.

“Christ specified the things that are dangerous to the soul. As recorded by Mark He mentions the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things. Luke specifies the cares, riches, and pleasures of this life. These are what choke the word, the growing spiritual seed. The soul ceases to draw nourishment from Christ, and spirituality dies out of the heart.” (COL 51.1)

9. From one perspective, who were Mark and Luke talking about when they wrote about the thorny ground hearers? Mark 4:18, 19; Luke 8:14

10. Into what two pits can thorny ground hearers fall?

“Many who might be fruitful in God’s service become bent on acquiring wealth. Their whole energy is absorbed in business enterprises, and they feel obliged to neglect things of a spiritual nature. Thus they separate themselves from..."
God. We are enjoined in the Scriptures to be “not slothful in business.” Romans 12:11. We are to labor that we may impart to him who needs. Christians must work, they must engage in business, and they can do this without committing sin. But many become so absorbed in business that they have no time for prayer, no time for the study of the Bible, no time to seek and serve God. At times the longings of the soul go out for holiness and heaven; but there is no time to turn aside from the din of the world to listen to the majestic and authoritative utterances of the Spirit of God. The things of eternity are made subordinate, the things of the world supreme. It is impossible for the seed of the word to bring forth fruit; for the life of the soul is given to nourish the thorns of worldliness.” {COL 51.3}

“And many who are working with a very different purpose, fall into a like error. They are working for others’ good; their duties are pressing, their responsibilities are many, and they allow their labor to crowd out devotion. Communion with God through prayer and a study of His word is neglected. They forget that Christ has said, “Without Me ye can do nothing.” John 15:5. They walk apart from Christ, their life is not pervaded by His grace, and the characteristics of self are revealed. Their service is marred by desire for supremacy, and the harsh, unlovely traits of the unsubdued heart. Here is one of the chief secrets of failure in Christian work. This is why its results are often so meager.” {COL 52.1}

11. In contrast with Demas’ account, what was Paul’s experience? Philippians 3:7, 8

12. What was another reason Demas forsook Paul?

“One by one, Paul saw his friends leaving him. The first to depart were Phygellus and Hermogenes. Then Demas, dismayed at the thickening clouds of difficulty and danger, forsook the persecuted apostle to seek for ease and security in a worldly life. Crescens was sent on a mission to the churches of Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia, Tychicus to Ephesus. Luke, the beloved physician and faithful friend, was still with him. This was a great comfort to Paul, who had never needed the companionship and ministration of his brethren more than now, enfeebled as he was by age, toil, and infirmities, and confined in the damp, dark vaults of a Roman prison. And, as he was dependent upon the aid of an amanuensis, the services of Luke were of great value, enabling him still to communicate with his brethren and the world without.” {LP 308.1}

13. What warning has God given to all those who will follow Him? Matthew 10:16; 2 Timothy 3:12; Luke 9:23

14. How does Peter describe the class, like Demas, who know the truth but fall away from it? 2 Peter 2:20-22

“A Herod, a Demas, an Alexander stand out in marked prominence on the pages of Inspiration. Like these, this class do their work under the training of the enemy. As long as their path runs smoothly and in accordance with their own particular ideas, they are well satisfied to float along; but when obstacles or trials are met, when their personal habits or selfishness are rebuked, they turn away like the displeased disciples. Describing this class, the great apostle to the Gentiles says, “Better had it been for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they had known it, to turn from the holy commandment given them.” [2 Peter 2:21.] Better, far better, had they never known the truth, than to have had a knowledge of it, and then turn traitor to its principles.” {Ms74-1897.35}

15. What should be the church’s response to these false brethren? Matthew 13:27-30

“Many choose the world before Christ. Paul wrote to Timothy, “Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: for Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.” This we shall meet. Those whom we have loved and trusted will leave the faith, and by their falsehoods do us harm. But we are to work on, lifting up Christ, the sin-pardoner, higher and still higher. We must not be overwhelmed because good and bad are gathered into the church. Judas was numbered among the disciples. He had every advantage a man could have; but although he heard the truth, and listened to the principles so plainly laid down, Christ knew that he did not receive the truth. He did not eat the truth. It did not become part of himself. His old habits constantly asserted themselves. But Christ did not take forcible means to cut Judas away from the disciples.” {RH February 7, 1899, par. 9}

“There is a time coming when those who have joined the church, but have not joined Christ, will be manifest. Their corrupt principles can not blend with Christ. The heart must be made new before it can receive the truth that sanctifies the receiver. But to sit in judgment on those who, we think, are wrong—to condemn them and cast them out—is not for mortals to do. God has not given this work to any human being. “Let both grow together until the harvest,” Christ says. He has bought men with a price, even his precious blood; and he would not lose one soul. His experience with Judas is recorded to show his long patience with perverse human nature. He came not to “destroy men’s lives, but to save them.” He will decide who has bought men with a price, even his precious blood; and he would not lose one soul. His experience with Judas is recorded to show his long patience with perverse human nature. He came not to “destroy men’s lives, but to save them.” {RH February 7, 1899, par. 10}

16. Note: Let us now compare and contrast Demas’ life and ministry with that of John Mark. In the same chapter where Paul mentions that Demas forsook him, he calls for John Mark to be brought to him during his time of imprisonment and trial (2 Timothy 4:11).

“Mark’s mother was a convert to the Christian religion, and her home at Jerusalem 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.” {AA 166.3}


“‘It was here that Mark, overwhelmed with fear and discouragement, wavered for a time in his purpose to give himself wholeheartedly to the Lord’s work. Unused to hardships, he was disheartened by the perils and privations of the way. He had labored with success under favorable circumstances; but now, amidst the opposition and 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. 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.’ {AA 169.3}

19. Like some of the men in Gideon’s army who were fearful, (Judges 7:2,3) Mark deserted his post in God’s army. What did Paul counsel Timothy? 2 Timothy 2:3, 4; 1:7, 8

20. What are we told is required to get through the events of these last days?

“The season of distress and anguish before us will require a faith that can endure weariness, delay, and hunger—a faith that will not fail though severely tried. The period of probation is granted to all to prepare for that time. Jacob prevailed because he was persevering and determined. His victory is an evidence of the power of importunate prayer. All who will lay hold of God’s promises, as he did, and be as earnest and persevering as he was, will succeed as he succeeded. Those who are unwilling to deny self, to agonize before God, to pray long and earnestly for His blessing, will not obtain it. {Wrestling with God—how few know what it is! How few have ever had their souls drawn out after God with intensity of desire until every power is on the stretch. When waves of despair which no language can express sweep over the suppliant, how few clinging with unyielding faith to the promises of God.’ {GC 621.2}

21. Although Mark forsook Paul, he was afterward re-converted and was a faithful laborer for God. Many today have backslidden from Jesus and from His ministry. What was it that caused Mark to once again labor for Jesus and love His appearing?

1 Peter 2:21; 1:7

“Mark had since learned the lesson which all must learn, that God’s claims are above every other. He saw that there is no release in the Christian warfare. He had obtained a closer and more perfect view of his Pattern, and had seen upon his hands the scars of his conflict to save the lost and perishing. He was willing to follow his Master’s example of earnestness and self-sacrifice, that he might win souls to Jesus and the blessedness of Heaven. And now, while sharing the lot of Paul the prisoner, Mark understood better than ever before, that it is infinite gain to win Christ at whatever cost, and infinite loss to win the world and lose the soul for whose redemption the blood of Christ was shed. Mark was now a useful and beloved helper of the apostle, and he continued faithful even unto the end. In writing from Rome just prior to his martyrdom, Paul bade Timothy, “Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is profitable to me for the ministry.” {LP 282.3}

22. What reformer had a similar experience to Mark after seeing his companion killed for Jesus’ sake?

“The death of Huss had not resulted as the papists had hoped. The violation of his safe-conduct had roused a storm of indignation, and as the safer course, the council determined, instead of burning Jerome, to force him, if possible, to retract. He was brought before the assembly, and offered the alternative to recant, or to die at the stake. Death at the beginning of his imprisonment would have been a mercy in comparison with the terrible sufferings which he had undergone; but now, weakened by illness, by the rigors of his prison house, and the torture of anxiety and suspense, separated from his friends, and disheartened by the death of Huss, Jerome’s fortitude gave way, and he consented to submit to the council. He pledged himself to adhere to the Catholic faith, and accepted the action of the council in condemning the doctrines of Wycliffe and Huss, excepting, however, the “holy truths” which they had taught.—Ibid, vol. 2, p. 141. {GC 111.1}

23. What caused Jerome to return back to the truth and joyfully suffer for Jesus’s sake?

“By this expedient Jerome endeavored to silence the voice of conscience and escape his doom. But in the solitude of his dungeon he saw more clearly what he had done. He thought of the courage and fidelity of Huss, and in contrast pondered upon his own denial of the truth. He thought of the divine Master whom he had pledged himself to serve, and who for his sake endured the death of the cross. Before his retraction he had found comfort, amid all his sufferings, in the assurance of God’s favor; but now remorse and doubts tortured his soul. He knew that still other retractions must be made before he could be at peace with Rome. The path upon which he was entering could end only in complete apostasy. His
resolution was taken: To escape a brief period of suffering he would not deny his Lord.” {GC 111.2}

24. How can we practically get this experience so that we will not love this present world but love Christ’s appearing? John 1:29; Revelation 3:20

“...It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross.” {DA 83.4}

25. In Closing: Another thing which helped Mark to turn back to Jesus was the prayers, pleading, and counsel of Barnabus. This shows us that there are many souls who have backslidden from God who need the encouragement of faithful “Barnabuses” today in order to return back to Jesus. Meditate on Luke 15:4-7 and the following quotation.

“This desertion caused Paul to judge Mark unfavorably, and even severely, for a time. Barnabas, on the other hand, was inclined to excuse him because of his inexperience. He felt anxious that Mark should not abandon the ministry, for he saw in him qualifications that would fit him to be a useful worker for Christ. In after years his solicitude in Mark’s behalf was richly rewarded, for the young man 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.” {AA 170.1}