

Sabbath Lesson #11 – The Seal of God and Mark of the Beast: Part 1 – 3-9 June 2023

Christ would have us receive the seal of God to avoid the mark of the beast. John says, “And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads” (Revelation 7:2-3). “In a little while every one who is a child of God will have His seal placed upon him. O that it may be placed upon our foreheads!” {RH May 28, 1889}. “Just as soon as the people of God are sealed in their foreheads, – it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved, – just as soon as God’s people are sealed and prepared for the shaking, it will come. Indeed, it has begun already” {17LtMs, Ms173, 1902, Par. 25}. To be sealed is to be settled in the testimony and the law of God; when we both know and love it, then the Lord will declare: “Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples” (Isaiah 8:16), and “never suffer the righteous to be moved” (Psalms 55:22). Test every doctrine “to the law and to the testimony” (Isaiah 8:20). It is in the law and testimony we must be “grounded and settled, and be not moved away from” (Colossians 1:23). The sealing message centres on worshiping one true God and keeping His Sabbath. “Not all who profess to keep the Sabbath will be sealed. There are many even among those who teach the truth to others who will not receive the seal of God in their foreheads. They had the light of truth, they knew their Master’s will, they understood every point of our faith, but they had not corresponding works” {5T 213.2}. “Not one of us will ever receive the seal of God while our characters have one spot or stain upon them. It is left with us to remedy the defects in our characters, to cleanse the soul temple of every defilement” {5T 214.2}.

Sunday: Steadfast Endurance – In Revelation 14:12, what two characteristics do we discover in this passage about God’s last-day people, why are both important? The two characteristics are patience and faith. It is by faith and patience that we are to inherit the promises of God; so Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, exhorts to patient endurance, without slothfulness, that the promises may be obtained (Hebrews 6:12). We read a brief description of those who are prepared for the Lord when He comes: “Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12). On the effects of patience, we read: “Let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing” (James 1:4). The patience of the saints calls for allowing that patience to do its perfect work in us, resulting in perfection, which perfection is the keeping of the commandments of God. This perfection is only in Christ. He alone, of all those who have trod this earth, fully kept the law. But He gave Himself for us, so that we may also have the perfect keeping of the law in us if we can only say in truth, that “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). We must “live by the faith of the Son of God” to endure.

Monday: The Cosmic Struggle – In this cosmic struggle, looking back at the faith that Jesus had when dying on the cross, if we too are to overcome, we need to live by that faith of Jesus, but what does exactly mean to live by the faith of Jesus? The faith of Jesus cannot exist outside of Himself, thus He must live in us if we may live by His faith. Christ Himself living in us; “Christ in you the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27); God with us; God manifest in the flesh now, to-day in our flesh, by the faith of Jesus Christ — this and this only is living faith. For “every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God; and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:2-4). Therefore, “Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves” (2 Corinthians 13:5).

Tuesday: Babylon: The Ungodly Chain – In Revelation 13:15–17, what will God’s end-time people face in the final crisis, what must we do to overcome in the crisis? The Lesson writer says, “The prophecy says the persecution will start with economic sanctions: “No one

can buy or sell” unless they have “the mark.” When this happens, the immense majority will capitulate. Anyone who refuses will eventually be placed under a death decree.” Before that death decree comes, let us reckon ourselves dead to the world, but alive unto God, so that it can be said of us, “For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3). A Christian is dead to the world, and his life is “hid with Christ in God.” He lives in the world, but he is not of the world. There is no life in the world but the life of sin; and to that he counts himself dead. Many will capitulate because they are alive unto the world, they live by and for themselves apart from Christ. They are not dead to self. We die to self that we may have life unto God. “Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it” (Mark 8:35). Before that time, let us now reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto the world, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ.

Wednesday: Those Who Follow the Lamb – How do we understand the mark of the beast crisis in the context of following the Lamb? The Lesson writer says, “In contrast to “all the world,” who follows the beast, God will have a people who will “follow the Lamb” instead. As always, it will be one side or the other, for Jesus or against Jesus. There will be then, as now, no middle ground, no neutral position. To not firmly commit to Jesus is, consciously or not, to commit to the other side.” The beloved apostle says of the 144,000, “These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb” (Revelation 14:4). Those who will follow the Lamb wherever He goes for eternity, must first follow the Lamb here on earth. In light of Revelation 17:5, in what sense have the 144,000 not been defiled with women? John saw that they “were not defiled with women; for they are virgins” (Revelation 14:4). In the Bible, a woman is a symbol of a church. “Say unto Zion, Thou art my people” (Isaiah 51:16) and “I have likened the daughter of Zion to a comely and delicate woman” (Jeremiah 6:2). The 144,000 are not defiled by the false doctrines in the churches, for they have a living faith of Jesus in them.

Thursday: Jesus: Our Only Mediator – With Christ as our only mediator (1 Timothy 2:5), how do we read His words to Philip in John 14:9? “When Philip came to Jesus with the request, “Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us,” the Saviour answered, “Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?” Christ declares Himself to be sent into the world as a representative of the Father. In His nobility of character, in His mercy and tender pity, in His love and goodness, He stands before us as the embodiment of divine perfection, the image of the invisible God” Ellen White – {ST April 12, 1910, par. 5}. Do we have two mediators or intercessors, Christ in heaven and “Holy Spirit” on earth? “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). Instead of accepting the Holy Spirit as a manifestation of Christ, false doctrines make it a separate Being, forming two intercessors, Jesus in heaven, and the “Holy Spirit” in us. But the Bible teaches that Christ is Omnipresent, that is, Christ is the Holy Spirit in us. “And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening Spirit” (1 Corinthians 15:45). In other words, “the last Adam [Jesus Christ] was made [after His resurrection] a quickening Spirit.” “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Galatians 4:6). The Spirit of the Son of God is His own omnipresence. “Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Corinthians 3:17). Christ ministers physically in heaven, and ministers spiritually in us. “It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Romans 8:34). Christ alone, not another, is the intercessor. “While Jesus ministers in the sanctuary above, He is still by His Spirit the minister of the church on earth. He is withdrawn from the eye of sense, but His parting promise is fulfilled, ‘Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.’ Matthew 28:20. While He delegates His power to inferior ministers, His energizing presence is still with His church” {DA 166.2}. “The Lord is soon to come. We want that complete and perfect understanding which the Lord alone can give. It is not safe to catch the spirit from another. We want the Holy Spirit, which is Jesus Christ. If we commune with God, we shall have strength and grace and efficiency” (EG White, Letter 66-1894 (April 10, 1894) par 18).