

Sabbath School Lesson #3 – The Lord Reigns – 13-19 January 2024

Christ would have us know that, “The LORD reigneth, He is clothed with majesty; the Lord is clothed with strength, wherewith He hath girded Himself: the world also is established, that it cannot be moved” (Psalm 93:1). The keynote in this Lesson is that the psalmist declares God – the Father, a single person – as the true God above all gods.

Sunday: The Lord Has Made Us – The psalmist asks a question we all need to ask and ponder upon. “When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him” (Psalm 8:3-4). Thus spoke the Psalmist, and thus must every one feel who has any just sense of the works of God. It is common for men to have a high opinion of themselves and of their merits; so much so that they forget their dependence upon God (see for example, Romans 1:21-28). Considering the origin of man (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7), we realise that, like the beasts, man was taken from the ground; the earth is the source whence all animate creatures spring: “All are of the dust, to dust again” (Ecclesiastes 3:20). After death and decomposition, the dust of the prince cannot be distinguished from the dust of his dog. If at last he does not share the fate of beasts, it is only because he has had humility enough to accept the wisdom that comes from God; for “man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish” (Psalm 49:20). There is no life but from God. “For with Thee is the fountain of life” (Psalm 26:9). But life is righteousness: “for to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Romans 8:6). Sin is death, and is from Satan, and the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Sin is at last to be utterly blotted from the universe, and of necessity those whose lives are still sin must be blotted out with it. If they cling to their sinful lives they must be destroyed with sin. Christ is the righteousness of God; for God alone is good, and in Christ is all the fulness of God. Therefore, only those who have Christ can have any hope of life hereafter. In fact, they have no real life now. “This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5:11-12). Nay, more than this: “He that believeth not the Son shall not see life” (John 1:36). Those who by their doctrines believe that the Sonship of Christ is metaphorical, cannot have the real life that God has put in His literal Son. “What Is Man?” – This is a question which we must not forget to answer, and the answer must be kept in mind. “The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground” (Genesis 2:7). Literally, He “formed man dust of the ground.” So that God could say to him, “Dust thou art.” God took dust, and set it over the works of His hands. In all his glory and honour, man was but dust. The power was God’s and so was the glory. How wonderful is God’s power! With a handful of dust He can rule a world! No wonder that He will not despise “a broken and a contrite heart” (Psalm 51:17), that is, a heart that is but dust, – contrite: ground together, pulverised, – and which continually acknowledges that it is nothing. God will not despise it, because nothing is small or insignificant with Him, and He can do wonders with it. His glory is in doing the greatest things with the weakest instrument. The fact that God created man dust of the earth, and crowned him with glory and honour, and set him over the work of His hands, is the joy and strength of the converted soul. In the facts of the creation of man, we learn what God can do with the contrite soul that is “a new creature” in Christ. Man is nothing, but God is everything. Whoever has learned this truth, has the key to the wisdom of the universe.

Monday: The Lord Reigns – For us who are living at the very end of this earth’s history, having a message that must go out to the world in these end times, what is the significance of the psalmist’s keynote message that “the Lord reigneth”? It is to acknowledge and teach others to acknowledge God – the literal Father of our Lord Jesus, a single person – as the only true God above all gods. Thus, the psalmist, in Psalms 96, opens with a call to sing: “O sing unto the Lord a new song...” This is exactly parallel with a passage in Isaiah 42:10-13, where the call to sing unto the Lord a new song is immediately followed by a description of the going forth of the Lord as a warrior. It is the triumph of the Lord over all false gods, that is, over every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God. It is the same thing that is described in Isaiah 2, when “the day of the Lord shall be upon every one that is

proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low.” “And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. And the idols He shall utterly abolish.” It is the day when the Lord in “the glory of His majesty” ariseth “to shake terribly the earth.” In this time the new song is to be sung by the people of God. God’s people are to sing best when the cloud hangs darkest. This is made still more emphatic in the third chapter of Habakkuk. A terrible time is described by the prophet, so terrible that he trembled at the mere vision of it, and prayed that he might be spared from living through the reality. Yet he says: “I will joy in the God of my salvation.” No trouble can come on the earth that is so great that God’s people cannot sing. It is very common for people to sing when they see no trouble; but it is indeed a new song that is sung when trouble is thickest. This new song is the song of deliverance. The thirteenth chapter of Revelation sets before us the exaltation of the Papacy against God, and the influence that it has and will have in all the earth, inducing even the people not nominally under the Papal yoke to do homage to it, and to make an image to it, enacting that all who will not worship either the Papacy or its counterpart shall be killed. But amid that seeming victory of the forces of evil, the prophet saw victory for the people of God. He says: “I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion, and with Him an hundred, forty and four thousand, having His Father’s name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps; and they sang as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders; and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand which were redeemed from the earth” (Revelation 14:1-3). May we sing even now, in anticipation: “Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?” (Exodus 15:11-13).

Tuesday: God Is the Judge – The Psalms call us to rejoice in anticipation of God’s judgments (Ps. 67:4, Ps. 96:10–13, Ps. 98:4–9). How is God’s judgment good news for those covered by the blood of Christ? The judgment brings us to the Second Coming of our lovely Lord and Saviour. “Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6); “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day” (2 Timothy 1:12). “Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be” (Revelation 22:12). In the Psalms the coming of the Lord is often mentioned, and always as a cause for rejoicing (Psalm 96:11-13; Psalm 98:1-9). Before the coming of the Lord His people shall suffer persecution, and they will be sorely persecuted, but their hope will be in the coming of the Lord: “And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us; this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation” (Isaiah 25:9).

Wednesday: Ever Mindful of His Covenant – What do we have in Jesus, which shows why these promises made to ancient Israel can now apply to us? (See Gal. 3:26–29). We are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and if we be Christ’s, then are we Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise. We come to God in Christ solely by virtue of the covenant made with Abraham. Hid in Christ, we fear not the judgment of God, for in that judgement, God “hath remembered His covenant for ever, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations” (Psalm 105:8). Notice “commanded to a thousand generations” – an expression that comprehends all the generations of men that would ever exist upon the earth. “Be ye mindful always of his covenant; the word which he commanded to a thousand generations” (1 Chronicles 16:15). Whoever is the same kind of Christian that Abraham was, is as sure of everything in the promises as though already raised to heavenly places.

Thursday: Your Testimonies Are Very Sure – How are the Lord’s testimonies? “The testimony of the Lord is sure... the commandment of the Lord is pure” (Psalm 19:7-8). “Thou through Thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies” (Psalm 119:98). “The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding” (Job 28:28). The Lord gives wisdom, but not apart from Himself in Christ. He cannot separate His attributes from Himself. All things are in Christ, and He gives us all things in giving us Christ. Christ is “the wisdom of God and the power of God” (1 Cor 1:24), and He is that to us who believe.