

Sabbath School Lesson #13 – Must the Whole World Hear? – 19-25 Sep 2015

Christ died for the sins of the whole world and the whole world must hear it. “Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever” (Romans 16:25-27).

No other name under heaven – Recall the Levitical sacrifices for sin represented the real sacrifice made by Christ; the service by priests was a type of real service now conducted by Christ in heaven in “the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man” (Hebrews 8:2); the Levitical service was typical, the forgiveness was real. Sin was actually pardoned, David said: “I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin” (Psalm 32:5).

There was no virtue in the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin, nor in our baptism; yet they as we are commanded to fulfill. It is the death and resurrection of Christ (Romans 4:25), it is not by the mere act of baptism, but by the faith which is thereby indicated, that we secure pardon for transgressions. In the case of the man in the Levitical age – his sin was forgiven, not through any virtue in the blood of a goat or bullock that he offered, but by virtue of his faith in Christ’s sacrifice, which he manifested by offering an animal that typified Christ.

We must not lose sight of the fact that the plan of salvation has not varied in the least since the days of Adam; it is always Christ. “The instant man accepted the temptations of Satan, and did the very things God had said he should not do, Christ, the Son of God, stood between the living and the dead, saying, ‘Let the punishment fall on Me. I will stand in man’s place. He shall have another chance’” {FLB 75.3}. “As soon as Adam sinned, the Son of God presented Himself as surety for the human race, with just as much power to avert the doom pronounced upon the guilty as when He died upon the cross of Calvary” {RH March 12, 1901 Par 4}. Thus, Christ was “slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8). It made no difference that Christ’s death at Calvary was years after the fall; from the time the promise was made, forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ was just as certain to the man who repented then as it is today. The parallel between the time before and after His crucifixion is: they looked forward by faith to the time when Christ, according to the promise, should be offered; we look backward to the cross and we see the promise actually fulfilled.

But while their sins were forgiven in fact, they were blotted out only in figure. Even in this the parallel holds good; for the sins of men now living, although forgiven, have not yet been blotted out. The exhortation to us is, “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19). And because the way of salvation is uniform throughout and God deals with men in the same way in all ages of the world, we do not like the terms ‘old dispensation’ and ‘new dispensation;’ or ‘Jewish dispensation’ and ‘gospel dispensation.’ The patriarchs lived in the ‘gospel age’ as well as we (Galatians 3:8). The gospel is the good news of salvation in Christ, and the patriarchs understood this just as we do. Forgiveness of sins has always been granted immediately upon repentance; and Christ’s blood was of just as much efficacy four thousand years ago as it is today. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

How much must one know? – We read in Psalms: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world” (Psalm 19:1-4). Now read Romans 10:13-18: “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the Gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then

faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.”

In this text all the objections which men raise against the punishment of the heathen are answered. As stated in Romans 1:20, “they are without excuse.” The gospel has been made known to every creature under heaven. It is admitted that men cannot call on one in whom they have not believed, and that they cannot believe in one of whom they have not heard, and that they cannot hear without a preacher. And that which they ought to hear, and which they have not obeyed, is the gospel. Having stated this, the apostle asks, “Have they not heard?” and at once answers his own question by repeating the words of the nineteenth Psalm, “Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.” Thus we learn that the speech which the heavens utter from day unto day is the Gospel; and the knowledge which they show from night unto night is the knowledge of God.

In the house of Cornelius the apostle Peter made a statement: “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34-35). There are men heathen lands who may never have heard the name of God, or seen a line of His written Word, who will be saved. God is revealed in the works of creation, and they who accept what they see of Him there are accepted with Him as surely as they who have learned much more of Him.

When Peter and John were arrested and threatened for preaching Christ, they said, “We can not but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20). All those who appreciate the gift, which God commits to them, must tell it to others. Some think that it is useless to carry the gospel to the heathen when they hear that God justifies the heathen who walk according to the little light that shines to them just the same as He does the person who walks according to the light that shines from the written Word. They think that the wicked heathen are in no worse case than the unfaithful professed Christians. None who appreciate the blessings of the Lord could think so. Light is a blessing. The more the people know of the Lord, the more they can rejoice in Him, and all who truly know the Lord must be desirous to spread “good tidings of great joy” (Luke 2:10) to all souls for whom it is designed.

Universalism and pluralism – As our Lesson points out, ‘both universalism and pluralism are contrary to Scripture.’ “By the righteousness of One the free gift came upon *all men* unto justification of life” (Romans 5:18). There is no exception here. As the condemnation came upon all, so the justification comes upon all. Christ has tasted death for every man. He has given Himself for all. Nay, He has given Himself to every man. The free gift has come upon all. The fact that it is a free gift is evidence that there is no exception. If it came upon only those who have some special qualification, then it would not be a free gift. It is a fact, stated in the Bible, that the gift of righteousness and life in Christ has come to every man on earth. There is not the slightest reason why every man that has ever lived should not be saved unto eternal life, except that they would not have it. So many spurn the gift offered so freely.

God’s love is that whosoever believes in Christ should not perish (John 3:16). This love is for everyone. “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation has appeared to *all men*” (Titus 2:11). God has wrought out salvation for every man, and has given it to him; but the majority spurn it and throw it away. The judgment will reveal the fact that full salvation was given to every man and that the lost have deliberately thrown away their birthright possession.

It says in Romans 5:19, “by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous.” Some may ask, ‘Why are not all made righteous by the obedience of One?’ The reason is that they do not wish to be. If men were counted righteous simply because One was righteous years ago, then all would have to be righteous by the same obedience. There would be no justice in counting righteousness to one and not to all, if it were in that way. But we have seen that it is not so. People are not simply counted righteous, but actually made righteous, by the obedience of Christ, who is as righteous as He ever was, and who lives today in those who yield to Him. His ability to live in any human being is shown in the fact that He took human flesh about two thousand years ago. What God did in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, He is willing and anxious to do for every man that believes. The free gift comes upon all, but all will not accept it, and therefore all are not made righteous by it. Nevertheless, “many” will be made righteous by his obedience – who will be one of the many that are made righteous?