

## Sabbath School Lesson #13 – Redemption – 19-25 March 2016

**C**hrist is coming back soon to redeem His saints to whom this is promised: “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Revelation 21:4). What will the coming of Christ mean for Him and for us?

The coming of Christ will mean the end of the reign of sin; it will mean the universal and eternal reign of Christ; it will mean the end of sorrow and brokenness of heart and end of disappointment to so many thousands and millions of people. Yes, it will mean the end of the sufferings of our Lord, who has given Himself for the redemption of this groaning creation.

We do not need to be in any doubt at all as to what is the message for these last days, for we are plainly told in the third verse of the first chapter of the first epistle of John. It is “that which was from the beginning;” there is nothing new. God Himself is always the same, and Jesus Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last. He is not first the Alpha and then the end. But He is always the Alpha and the Omega, the same yesterday, today, and for ever. He is the first and at the same time the last, at once the beginning and the end. Therefore in Christ Jesus the end is the same as the beginning.

There is no new truth in these last days. This last message is only to bring us back to the beginning. If we are going in the way of truth, we are coming back. Not content with the Lord’s way, we have been enterprising, and started on a way of our own, and called that advancement. This is the spirit of Satan; at his fall, he was enterprising, and reached out for something beyond what God had given him. When the last day shall come, where shall we have come to? “Behold I make all things new” (Revelation 21:5). We shall have come back to the beginning, with the new man and the new earth; we shall have completed the revolution, and the world will have come again to its original state, in which it will for ever remain. So the quickest and surest way for us to come to the last day is not to rush onward as the world is going, but to come back to the beginning. Christ cannot come until the world is made ready for Him, either by men returning to the beginning, being made new creatures, or by so far departing from Him that the race would cease to exist if He should tarry.

God is inviting us to inherit the kingdom. An invitation from the king is a command that nullifies all previous engagements. We issue invitations to our friends, and sometimes they excuse themselves on the ground of inconvenience or previous engagements; but not one ever heard of anybody making such an excuse to royalty. If a statesman should refuse the king’s invitation/command to dine with him, that would end his political career. This is an object lesson to us. God’s invitations, the privileges that He accords to us, are commands, and we cannot lightly ignore them. If we are content with anything less than the way of life, – the perfection of life which He makes known to us, – if we excuse ourselves because of previous engagements or inconvenience, that puts us outside of His Government. But God is longsuffering and kind; we have made many excuses, but our career in His kingdom is not yet ended. He still makes the message known, and gives freely to us. More than all this, He gives us the privilege of letting the world know what His kingdom’s glorious privileges are.

What does inheritance of the kingdom mean for God? God’s Inheritance – for we think and speak so much about “the saints’ inheritance,” that we are liable to forget about God’s inheritance. We are heirs of God; He Himself “is the portion of mine inheritance” (Psalm 16:5), even as He said to Abraham: “I am thy shield and thine *exceeding great reward*” (Genesis 15:1). But what does God get? Paul speaks of “the riches of the glory of His *inheritance in the saints*” (Ephesians 1:18). “The Lord’s portion is His people” (Deuteronomy 32:9). “Ye are God’s husbandry” (1 Corinthians 3:9) or “tilled land,” and the seed sown in us is “the Word of God.” We need to realise our responsibility to cultivate this garden of the Lord, that when He comes He may find in us “the riches of the glory of His inheritance.”

What about redemption? It is creation. It is the distinguishing mark of Divinity. The Spirit of the LORD through the prophet Jeremiah describes the vanity of idols, and then continues: “But the LORD is the true God, He is the living God, and an everlasting King: at His wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide His indignation. Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall

perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. He hath made the earth by His power, He hath established the world by His wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by His discretion" (Jeremiah 10:10-12). The earth was made by His power, and established by His wisdom. But Christ is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:24). So here clearly we find Christ inseparably connected with creation as the Creator. Only as we acknowledge and worship Christ as the Creator, do we acknowledge His divinity.

Christ is Redeemer by virtue of His power as Creator. We read that "we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins," because that "by Him were all things created" (Colossians 1:14-16). If He were not Creator, He could not be Redeemer. This is shown in the statement of the apostle, but the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, which statement is immediately followed by another to the effect that the power of God is seen by means of the things that have been made. When we consider the works of creation, and think of the power manifested in them, we are contemplating the power of redemption.

There has been a great deal of idle speculation as to which is greater, redemption or creation. Many have thought that redemption is a greater work than creation. Such speculation is idle, because only infinite power could perform either work, and infinite power cannot be measured by human minds. But while we cannot measure the power, we can easily settle the question about which is a greater, because the Scriptures give us the information: Neither is greater than the other, for both are the same – Redemption *is* creation. Redemption is the same power that was put forth in the beginning to create the world and all that is in it, now put forth to save men and the earth from the curse of sin.

The Scriptures are very clear on this point. The Psalmist prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10). The apostle says that "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17), or a new creation. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Compared to God, man is "less than nothing, and vanity" (Isaiah 40:17); in man "dwelleth no good thing" (Romans 7:18); but the power that in the beginning made the earth from nothing can make of him that which is "to the praise and glory of His grace" (Ephesians 1:6).

The same word that created the earth also upholds it. To Christ: "For in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones, or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through Him, and unto Him; and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist" (Colossians 1:16-17). To consist is to hold together. All on earth, and earth itself, owe their continued existence to Christ; "In Him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

This upholding is by His word. Thus: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:1-3). Christ is the divine Word; He is in the spoken word, so, since all things hold together in Him, they are upheld by His powerful word.

"By the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water; whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished; but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" (2 Peter 3:5-7). The Word that made the earth still upholds it. That word, therefore, must indeed be substantial. It is more real and solid than the earth itself, even as the foundation of a thing must be more substantial than the thing. That word "liveth and abideth forever" (1 Peter 1:23). Therefore the one who trusts the Word will never be at a loss. Having the Word, Christ, is redemption.

Time is coming when "the earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage" (Isaiah 24:20); when every island shall flee away, "the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea," but in that awful time the true Christian will say, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear" (Psalm 46:2, 1).