

Sabbath School Lesson #5 – Christ in the Heavenly Sanctuary – 28 April-4 May 2018

Christ would have us know of His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. We are told of Christ, “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth” (Philippians 2:9-10). We are living in the Day of Atonement.

Sunday: Supreme Sacrifice – “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:3-4). He certainly does not deliver us in order that we may go on transgressing the law. “The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.” There is no fault to be found with it but with us, because we have transgressed it. Christ’s work is not to change the law in any particular, but to change us in every particular. It is to put the law into our hearts in perfection, in place of the marred and broken copy. The law is strong enough to condemn, but it is weak, even powerless, with respect to what man needs namely, salvation. It was and is “weak through the flesh.” The law is good, and holy, and just, but man has no strength to perform it. The good and just law did set forth man’s duty; it remained for him to do it. But he could not, and therefore Christ came to do it in him. What the law could not do, God did by His Son.

There is a common idea that this means that Christ *simulated* sinful flesh; that He did not take upon Himself actual sinful flesh, but only what appeared to be such. But the Scriptures do not teach such a thing. “In all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:17). He was “born of a woman, born under the law,” that He might redeem them that were under the law (Galatians 4:4-5). He took the same flesh that all have who are born of woman. A parallel text to Romans 8:3-4 is found in 2 Corinthians 5:21. The former says that Christ was sent in the likeness of sinful flesh, “that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us.” The latter says that God “made Him to be sin for us,” although He knew no sin, “that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” All the comfort that we can get from Christ lies in the knowledge that He was made in all things as we are. Otherwise we should hesitate to tell Him of our weaknesses and failures. The priest who makes sacrifices for sins must be one “who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that He Himself also is compassed with infirmity” (Hebrews 5:2). This applies perfectly to Christ; “for we have not an High Priest which can not be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). This is why we may come boldly to the throne of grace for mercy. So perfectly has Christ identified Himself with us, that He even now feels our sufferings. “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.” Note that this depends on the preceding statement, “that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” The things of the Spirit are the commandments of God, because the law is spiritual. The flesh serves the law of sin (see Galatians 5:19-21 for works of flesh). But Christ came in the same flesh, to show the power of the Spirit over the flesh. “They that are in the flesh can not please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of Christ dwell in you.” Now no one will claim that the flesh of a man is any different after his conversion from what it was before. Least of all will the converted man himself say so; for he has continual evidence of its perversity. But if he is really converted, and the Spirit of Christ dwells in him, he is no more in the power of the flesh. Christ came in the same sinful flesh, yet He was without sin, He was always led by the Spirit.

Monday: The Lamb of God – “The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Jesus is the sacrifice that God has provided. God has given His own Son to take our place, and taste death for every one, so that we may all go free. Jesus “was brought as a lamb to the slaughter.” Why did He thus suffer death? The innocent little lambs that were offered upon the Jewish altars had done no wrong. They were not slain for their own misdeeds. Their lives were taken because of the sins of the people. But could the blood of these animals take away their sins? – Oh, no; but they were to teach them about the true Lamb of God, who suffered death that they might live. Besides the morning and evening sacrifice, when any one of the people had sinned, he brought a sacrifice to be offered on the altar. Before the lamb was, killed, he put his hands upon its head and confessed his sin. This was to teach him that “the Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all.” When we confess our sins to Jesus, He takes them right away from us, and bears them Himself. They are washed away in the blood that He shed for us, and they will never be found any more. When the

lamb had been killed and offered, the blood was taken inside the tabernacle, and sprinkled in the holy place and before the Ark. "The blood is the life." When Jesus shed His blood, He gave His life for us. But this will not save us unless we receive the life that He has given. The life of Jesus must come right into the inner apartment – into the heart – to make us clean, and to keep us from sin.

Tuesday: Our High Priest – "But this man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this He did once, when He offered up Himself" (Hebrews 7:24-27). What we read here is emphasised elsewhere in the scripture which tells us the power by which Christ is priest; it is "the power of an endless life" (Hebrews 7:16). It is the power of eternity in all its breadth, as well as in its length. By Himself Christ has purged sins. He is a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man, in that He ministers His sinless, eternal life to sinners condemned to death. Now from His first "goings forth," "from the days of eternity" (Micah 5:2), Christ has been ministering life. It was "through the eternal Spirit that He offered Himself without spot to God" (Hebrews 9:14). Thus He has a priesthood extending from His origin in eternity to eternity – "an unchangeable priesthood" because "He ever liveth." Because He was priest by virtue of the endless life that He had, He would offer Himself to God for our sins. But in doing this, no new power was brought into existence, no new office was devised. When sin entered, the priestly office and power to cope with it were already there by virtue of Christ's endless life. The new conditions did not surprise the Lord, nor find Him unprepared for them. No tax was made upon His resources. Here was a dam by which Satan thought to stop the flow of the river of life; but that mighty stream rolls on in its majestic course, sweeping away every obstacle, and swallowing it up. No new fountain had to be opened, to increase its volume; for the fountain of living waters is He who fills heaven and earth and is "from the days of eternity", inhabiting eternity. Of that fountain, we may sing: "There is a fountain filled with blood; Drawn from Immanuel's veins. And sinners plunged beneath that flood; Lose all their guilty stains." May we be plunged therein!

Wednesday: Our Intercessor – "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Hebrews 9:24). Man cannot plead his own case before God. However confident others may be of their power to stand and plead their own case before God, we are glad for the promise that "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1). "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). "Who is he that condemneth? 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). These texts plainly teach that man has an advocate; that advocate is Christ; and He is now making intercession for us. "The intercession of Christ in our behalf is that of presenting His divine merits in the offering of Himself to the Father as our substitute and surety; for He ascended up on high to make an atonement for our transgressions. 'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world' (1 John 2:1, 2). 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins' (1 John 4:10). 'He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them' (Hebrews 7:25)" {FW 105.3}. Through the intercession of Christ we are reconciled to our God.

Thursday: The Day of Atonement – "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these" (Hebrews 9:23). In the earthly service, besides the daily sacrifices there was the yearly service on what was called the Day of Atonement. This was the time when the tabernacle was cleansed; the time for the remission – the sending away – of sins. So the people spent that day in seeking the Lord, and confessing their sins, so that He might blot them out. The last work of Jesus before His death was to cleanse the temple, driving out all those things that were defiling it. His last work before His coming, which is now very near, is the cleansing away of sin from us who are His living temples. Before He comes, His people must be perfect, "without spot, or wrinkle; or any such thing." All their sins must be blotted out. So we are living in the great Day of Atonement – the time for the remission and blotting out of sins. This is a very solemn time, when we should seek the Lord, and confess our sins. God said that if anyone should be careless, and take no notice of the Day of Atonement, "that soul shall be cut off from among his people" (Leviticus 23:29). Is it not very important that we come to Jesus now, so that all our sins are blotted out before He comes?