

Sabbath School Lesson #2 – Among the Lampstands – 5-11 January 2019

Christ gave to John the messages to the seven churches, and John wrote of hearing the Spirit: “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God” (Revelation 2:7). Let us be clear here, the Spirit is Christ, for Paul says, “The Lord is that Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:17); and so let us hear what Christ says to us today.

Sunday: On Patmos – Treating him as a criminal, when he is not, the Roman authorities burnished John on the isle of Patmos. What would you do today under bad governments? “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by Him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing, you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king” (1 Peter 2:13-17). Peter says if we find ourselves subject to a master, and there is no difference whether he rules over one or over millions, we must all be subject to him. But supposing that the master be a bad man, and he commands those who are under him to do something that is wrong, then what? “For this is thankworthy if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God” (1 Peter 2:19-20). If a man finds himself the subject of a bad master, and he does everything that that bad master tells him, how can he suffer for it? He is a willing tool in the hands of his master; but the suffering is brought by the fact that he will not do the wicked things commanded; and this is what is acceptable in the sight of God. He has disobeyed the power, and because he has disobeyed it, he suffers; but he suffers for well doing. If he obeys that wicked master, he must disobey God. This we know would be wrong. But it is perfectly right to disobey the wicked decree of a master or government, provided always that when the punishment comes, we take it patiently. This is acceptable with God. The very fact that a man suffers for well doing, shows that he is the servant of God, and accepted of Him. Then how is it that we can be subject to the powers that be, and yet go directly contrary to what they say? – By submitting to the punishment, but not doing the evil thing they commanded us to do. As Christians, we owe allegiance to God, the highest power, and to Him alone. This was the case with John at the isle of Patmos.

Monday: On the Lord’s Day – John begins an account of visions he received by saying, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice” (Revelation 1:10). It is noted from this that there was a certain day known at that time as the Lord’s day, and that John, as a faithful follower of Christ, observed it. We also know that if the Lord had a special day for His own then, He must have it still. Let find out what day it is. In Isaiah we find the Lord’s day mentioned: “If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride on the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it” (Isaiah 58:13-14). Here the day which the Lord Himself calls, “My holy day,” is “the Sabbath!” What day is the Sabbath? The Lord tells us: “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work” (Exodus 20:8-10).

It is plain that the Sabbath – the seventh day – is the same day that in Isaiah is called by the Lord, “My holy day.” With these two texts alone we have found that the Lord’s day is the Sabbath – the seventh day of the week – known as Saturday. Therefore the day on which John was in the Spirit, and received visions from God, was the seventh day, the Sabbath. Thus, to put the matter into compact form: The seventh day is the Sabbath; it is the Sabbath of the Lord; it is a holy day, and is to be kept holy; the Lord Himself calls it “My holy day.” John was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day; hence John was in the Spirit on the Sabbath day.

Tuesday: John's Vision of Christ at Patmos – In Revelation 1:12-18 John saw the Son of Man – Jesus Christ – in vision. Commenting on these verses, Uriah Smith wrote as follows:

“The central and all-attractive figure of the scene now opened before John's vision, is the majestic form of one like the Son of man, representing Christ. The description here given of him with his flowing robe, his hair white, not with age, but with the brightness of heavenly glory, his flaming eyes, his feet glowing like molten brass, and his voice as the sound of many waters, cannot be excelled for grandeur and sublimity. Overcome by the presence of this august Being, and perhaps under a vivid sense of his own unworthiness, John fell at his feet as dead; but a comforting hand is laid upon him, and a voice of sweet assurance tells him to fear not. It is equally the privilege of Christians to-day to feel the same hand laid upon them to strengthen and comfort in hours of trial and affliction, and to hear the same voice saying unto them, Fear not. But the most cheering assurance in all these words of consolation, is the declaration of this Exalted One who is alive forevermore, that he is the arbiter of death and the grave. ‘I have,’ he says, ‘the keys of hell [*dffyf*, the grave] and death.’ Death is a conquered tyrant. He may ply his gloomy labors age after age, of gathering to the grave the precious of the earth, and gloat for a season over his apparent triumph. But he is performing a fruitless task; for the key to his dark prison-house has been wrenched from his grasp, and now rests in the hands of a mightier than he. He is compelled to deposit his trophies in a region over which another has absolute control; and this one is the unchanging friend and the pledged redeemer of his people. Then grieve not for the righteous dead; they are in safe keeping. An enemy for a while takes them away; but a friend holds the key to the place of their temporary confinement” (*Daniel and the Revelation*, 1882 edition, pp 448-449).

Satan has the power of death (Hebrews 2:14); the grave is his prison-house, and all the dead he counts as his lawful prey, since death came because of sin. So he, as “a strong man armed keepeth his palace” (Luke 11:21), and “opened not the house of his prisoners” (Isaiah 14:17). But Christ is the stronger than Satan, who has come upon Satan, and overcome him, and passing through his prison-house, has carried away the keys, and will divide the spoils (Luke 11:22; Isaiah 53:12). The grave cannot prevail against us, for Christ says: “He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live” (John 11:25). Who would fear the gloomiest prison, when his dearest friend, who is Almighty, holds the keys? In Christ Jesus “we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us” (Romans 8:35-37).

Wednesday: Christ's Message for Then and Now – In Revelation 1:20 is the meaning of the seven stars that John saw in vision in Christ's hand. Commenting on this verse, Uriah Smith wrote as follows: “To represent the Son of man as holding in his hand only the ministers of seven literal churches in Asia Minor, and walking in the midst of only those seven churches, would be to reduce the sublime representations and declarations of this and following chapters into comparative insignificance. The providential care and presence of the Lord are with, not a specified number of churches only, but with all his people; not in the days of John merely, but through all time. ‘Lo! I am with you always,’ said he to his disciples, ‘even unto the end of the world.’” (*Daniel and the Revelation*, 1882 edition, p 450).

Thursday: Message to the Church in Ephesus – The Ephesians had laboured, and kept themselves from evil workers bent on sowing disaffection, and had not fainted; the pitiful Lord had seen it all. But there was one thing that had robbed them of the joy and peace in labour. “I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.” Have you lost your first love for Christ? How can we regain our first love and how can we grow again and daily in His grace? Ellen White wrote: “The only way to grow in grace is to be interestedly doing the very work Christ has enjoined upon us to do, – interestedly engaged to the very extent of our ability to be helping and blessing those who need the help we can give them. This is the only way we can grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Christians who are constantly growing in earnestness, in zeal, in fervor, in love, – such Christians never backslide. They are becoming more closely identified with the Saviour in all his plans. They are partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. Their wisdom is increasing, their ability how to work. They seem to comprehend the largest plans. They are ready to engage in the most stirring enterprises, and they have no room for slothfulness; they cannot find a place for stagnation” (RH June 7, 1887, par. 9).