

Sabbath School Lesson #2 – Blueprint for a Better World – 6-12 July 2019

Christ would have us accept His leading as the blueprint for a better world. In this, let us consider the ministry of “the man Christ Jesus.” Wicked men plotted to take His life; His own disciple betrayed Him by an act of basest perfidy; His other disciples forsook Him in His hour of trial, and one denied Him with an oath; the soldiers crowned Him with thorns, and spat upon Him, the multitude derided Him; yet never did one impatient word escape His lips, but instead there came from His heart of infinite love that wonderful prayer: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” The same Spirit will animate the true Christian today. He will do more than tolerate passively to submit to wrong treatment. There will be absence of hate, and abundance of warm, hearty love. The renewed heart, though sorely grieved by sin, has an unutterable longing for the salvation of the sinner, recognising him as the purchase of Christ’s blood. ‘I can forgive an injury,’ one may say, ‘but I can never forget it.’ This feeling is really a very common one, though not always frankly avowed. Is it right? Of course not. For the Lord says: “Thou shalt not avenge, nor *bear any grudge* against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Leviticus 19:18).

Sunday: The God Who Hears – Israelites spent many years in Egypt and Babylon – did God hear their cry? Yes; but unbelief prevented them from receiving His help. This is clear from their conduct. Although “failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass” (Joshua 21:45), the people “in their hearts turned back again into Egypt” (Acts 7:39), “yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not, His word; but murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord” (Psalm 106:24-25). “So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief” (Hebrews 3:19).

Peter says, “the Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). God delivered the Israelites from Egypt, but their hearts remained there. When the children of Israel again refused to accept the freedom to which the Lord had called them, the refusal that was marked by their being carried away to Babylon, God set another time for the deliverance of His people. When they went to Babylon, God told them that in seventy years He would deliver them; and so He did; yet they did not get free from Babylon any more than they had from Egypt, and in view of this God again extended the time, marking off a very long period, which is also now in the past. But at any time up to the Babylonian captivity the people might, by repentance and faith, have entered into the promised inheritance. They lived in similar conditions as we do. As it was to them, so it is to us today: the thing that hinders the coming of the Lord is lack of preparation due to unbelief.

Monday: The Ten Commandments – “The law of the Lord is perfect” (Psalm 19:7), and the “commandment is exceeding broad” (Psalm 119:96). The law is so broad that it takes cognizance of the very thoughts of the heart, and not alone the outward acts. Christ says: “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment; but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire ... Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery; but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28). The sixth commandment may be broken by a single angry thought that may never be expressed; and the seventh may be as effectually broken by a single wrong desire as by the overt act. And since in all its prohibitions and requirements the law is perfect, we can readily and naturally accept the words of the wise man, in Ecclesiastes 12:13: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.” No sin conceivable that is not forbidden by the ten commandments, and no righteous act or thought that is not commended by them. It is not possible to list all thoughts or acts to show this, but it will be found true in every case. Things may be mentioned which at first sight may seem to many persons to be outside of the ten commandments; but a little careful thought will show that nothing can be done that is beyond or outside of the perfect law of God.

Tuesday: Slaves, Widows, Fatherless, Foreigners – The world is increasingly wicked, at the foundation of this wickedness is false worship. All of false worship is modelled more or less after the primitive sun-worship of early apostasy. The Psalmist declared that “all the foundations of the earth are out of course” (Psalm 82:5). This he seems to assert as the reason why the fatherless, the poor and needy, are in the hand of the wicked, – and he calls for their defence and deliverance. The poor or fatherless of the world cry out today that they are in the hands of those who take from them everything and return nothing. If there has been oppression, it is reaping its reward in the commercial losses which must come through famine and pestilence for which no defence is provided. The day hastens when the Lord will rise and judge the world, and then the foundations of the earth will be set in their proper courses, and famine, and sorrow, and sickness will be no more. Multiplication of disasters in the world brings trouble to millions, but as we look at the future we know from the Word that these are only the beginnings of sorrows. “A time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation” is in waiting just ahead – how far no man knows. Shall fatherless or poor who is Christian be downcast? No; when these things begin to come to pass he is to look up and lift up his head knowing that redemption draweth nigh. And he is to point others to the hope which God sets before every soul to be a support and comfort in times that try men’s souls.

Wednesday: Second Tithing – The method of second tithing is giving beyond tithe for the cause of God. This should not be difficult for a true Christian – the secret is recognising that all you have belong to God. The Apostle Paul bears witness to the great liberality of the churches of Macedonia, in spite of their “great trial of affliction,” and “their deep poverty” (2 Corinthians 8:1-2). He did not need to plead with them to make an offering to the cause of God, but he says, “For to their power I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift;” and the reason for this is that they “first gave their own selves to the Lord” (2 Corinthians 8:3-5). This is the secret of giving; for whoever has given himself to the Lord will never fail to give for the cause of God beyond returning tithe. Not simply our property, but we ourselves belong to the Lord, and we are to render to Him His own. When we recognise that we are not our own, but that our whole being belongs to Him, we shall also recognise that we can have nothing, money or property, in our own right; all is the Lord’s. Strength is more than money; and the commandment “Thou shalt not steal” forbids our robbing God of the strength that is His due.

Thursday: The Year of Jubilee – Satan is mustering all his forces for the last, desperate struggle; he is determined to deceive the whole world. But the message of the third angel, warning man against the worship of the beast and his image (Revelation 14:9-15), and preparing them for the coming of the Saviour, must go with a loud cry. Means are needed more to finish the great work; and as the conflict increases, approaching its consummation, the loyal soldiers of Jesus, realising that earthly wealth will soon lose all its value, will know when it is time to sell their invested properties, and they will throw out not only themselves, but all that they have, into the cause of truth. The faithful hold wealth subject to the disposal of the Lord, until the Master calls for it. How soon this time will come, we know not, but it is fast approaching. In ancient times the value of acquired property varied according to the nearness of the year of jubilee. At the year of jubilee all land that had been sold returned to its original possessor (Leviticus 25:8-16). If that year were very far off, so that a man might reasonably expect to spend a life-time on land that he should buy, he would have to pay nearly or quite its full value; but if the year of jubilee were near at hand, the land would bring but a small sum, since the buyer would have possession for only a short time. Well, the year of jubilee is just at hand, for “the end of all things is at hand.” Our redemption draws nigh, and the Lord will soon “proclaim liberty throughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof.” The earth will then be given to Him whose right it is (Ezekiel 21:27). The professed Christians who are now hoarding their money into city properties, are being deceived. They are paying full price for that which is depreciating in value every day, and which will be worth nothing to them when the jubilee is proclaimed. In that day those who have still clung to their possessions, will cast their idols of silver and gold to the moles and to the bats (Isaiah 2:20), as worthless trash. May we, ere that day dawn, shall have laid off all our treasure in heaven, so that we may hail our expected Lord with joy, and receive an incorruptible inheritance.