

Sabbath School Lesson #11 – Living the Advent Hope – 7-13 September 2019

Christ will have a steadfast people awaiting His Advent. Thus the apostle Paul writes, in his first letter to the Corinthians, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58). This, then, is a privilege and duty of every Christian, and every person in the world, for our God is no respecter of persons.

Sunday: “How Long, O Lord?” – The Divine ambition is to see men happy. God’s rejoicing is in the welfare of His children, and He desires that men shall acknowledge His love in the abundance of His gifts. If they will not do so, before He allows Himself to be finally rejected, and the way of death irrevocably chosen by His creatures, He gives opportunity to learn the value of His gifts by their withdrawal. Some, when the judgments of the Lord are in the earth, will learn righteousness. “With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when Thy judgments *are* in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness” (Isaiah 26:9). Although God does not willingly afflict nor grieve the children of men, this is often the only chance of saving them. It was so with Judah. To Isaiah’s question, “Lord, how long” it should be before the people should be willing to “see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed,” the reply was given, “Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate” (Isaiah 6:10-11). Yet the promise was given that a remnant should return, and that like a tree which has life in its trunk, even though all outer sign of life, in leaves and branches, has disappeared, the holy seed should be the substance of the nation. This seed was not holy by its own merits but would consist of all who should submit themselves to the righteousness of God, and not attempt, in ignorance of God and His righteousness, to establish their own righteousness.

Monday: A Certain Kind of Hope – The glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ is the “blessed hope” that is set before the church of Christ. It has been the hope of the church in all ages. The ancient prophets foretold in minutest detail “the sufferings of Christ,” and at His first advent the “sure word of prophecy” was fulfilled to the letter, but “the glory that should follow” was no less the theme of inspired penmen, and the followers of Christ were pointed forward to the time when His glory should be revealed, as the time when they also should “appear with Him in glory,” and “be glad also with exceeding joy” (1 Peter 4:13; Colossians 3:4). It was with this hope that our Saviour comforted His sorrowing disciples. “I will come *again*.” This means “another time once more.” Not thousands of times, as they would have us believe who claim that in fulfilment of His promise he comes whenever a saint dies, but only *once more* will He come again, to consummate the great plan of salvation. To this the apostle gave emphatic testimony, in these words: “Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear *the second time* without sin unto salvation” (Hebrews 9:28). It is appointed unto men once to die. In order that men might have life, Christ was once offered for sin, bearing “our sins in His own body on the tree;” and so, when His work for sinners shall have been finished, He will come once more – “the second time” – not bearing the sins of the world, as at His first advent, but for the salvation of those who, by means of His sacrifice and mediation, have “put away sin” (Hebrews 9:26). If He should not come the second time, His first coming would have been in vain. Said He, “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:3). He comes to take to Himself the purchase of His own blood. He has gone to prepare a place for those who become His friends indeed, and when He has the place prepared for them, He will come and take them to it. His coming will be the grand consummation of the plan of salvation. In vain would be all His sufferings for men; in vain would be the faith which men have placed in Him, if He should not return to complete that which He has begun.

Tuesday: Resurrection Hope – Everything in the way of our salvation depends upon the resurrection. “And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:17). He “was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification” (Romans 4:25). These Scriptures make it clear that our hope rests wholly in the

resurrection, but a consideration of some other passages may enable us to enter more fully into the meaning, of this teaching. The curse, which was death, was upon man, and in taking his place, Jesus took the curse of death upon Himself. We do not see man in the place of honour, where he was first put, as he has fallen through sin, "but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should *taste death for every man*" (Hebrews 2:9). But life for us depends not simply upon the fact that He bore the curse of death for us, but our hope centres in the fact that He was able to do this and still live. "Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I became dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of death and of Hades" (Revelation 1:17-18). "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:15), which is the curse, and so our sins caused the death of Christ, "who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree," but since He "did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth," He was able to pay the penalty for our sins and *pass through* the grave. Being without sin, there was no sting in His death, and so God raised Him up, "because it was not possible that He should be holden of it." Jesus Himself said: "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:17-18). But this "power" grew out of the fact that He was free from sin, since sin is the only thing which can take life from anyone. Now our life depends upon His life. "We shall be saved by His life." "Because I live, ye shall live also." Therefore if death had conquered Him and the grave had held Him, death would still be a conqueror, and every tomb would be an eternal prison house; but "when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away," and the young man said unto them, "He is risen; He is not here." Thus was the stone rolled away from the door of every tomb, and no grave can hold any member of the human family when is heard the voice of Him who has "the keys of death and of Hades." "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all are made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:23). So plain is it that all our hope of life is rooted in the grand truth that "He is risen; He is not here."

Wednesday: Hope of Judgment – The judgment will vindicate Jesus, and it is our hope if Christ dwells in us. The keeping of the commandments of truth is all that God requires of man. Says Solomon: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). There can be nothing more required of man than to do this; but it cannot be done except by faith in Christ. This does not mean a passive assent to the principles of the Christian religion, but such faith as brings Christ to dwell in the heart, so that He can work in us that which is good. The comprehensiveness of the law of truth is shown by the text last quoted. It is the whole duty of man, and by it every work, with every secret thing, shall be brought into Judgment. This shows that the commandments of God are that word of God which is "quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). Keeping the commandments is something more than a form. It consists in having every act, every word, and every thought just such as they would be if Jesus were dwelling within the man, acting and speaking and thinking through him. It consists in acting and speaking in every instance just as Jesus would act or speak under the same circumstances. This cannot be done unless Christ dwells in the heart.

Thursday: No More Tears or Pain – At Christ's Advent we shall be made immortal. At the last trump the dead shall be raised incorruptible, the living shall be changed; this corruptible will put on incorruption, this mortal put on immortality (1 Corinthians 15:51-54). We long for that time to come. Have we not good reason to care for our Lord's coming? Here we suffer pain; we are often obliged to confess that we are sick; on account of the weakness and feebleness of our mortal bodies, we are unable to do much that we would like to do. We lose our friends, and are often obliged to mourn. But when Jesus comes all this will cease. "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." "He that testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly, Amen, even so, come Lord Jesus."