

Sabbath School Lesson #11 – Backslidden people – 7-13 December 2019

Christ would have men in responsible positions of our Seventh-day Adventist Church learn lessons from the work of Nehemiah in recovering the backslidden people, and especially in sanctifying the Sabbath day. Of the work by Nehemiah, we read: “And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and *that* they should come *and* keep the gates, to sanctify the sabbath day. Remember me, O My God, *concerning* this also, and spare me according to the greatness of Thy mercy” (Nehemiah 13:22). As in the days of Nehemiah, we Seventh-day Adventists have backslidden from keeping the Sabbath.

There is a correlation between worshipping false gods and not keeping the Sabbath. The last message of the Gospel is to fear God, and give glory to Him, and to worship Him as the Creator of the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters (Revelation 14:6-7) – here is unmistakable reference to the Sabbath, which is the memorial of God’s work (Exodus 20:8-11). The Sabbath is made very prominent because the Sabbath of the Lord means perfect rest and trust in the Lord, and that must be the condition of those who are prepared for His coming. Keeping the Sabbath is not salvation by works, but salvation by resting in the Lord. It is a delight. He who finds the Sabbath a hardship has never kept it, and does not know what it is. It is the holy of the Lord, and honourable. Whilst the Sabbath furnishes opportunity for repair of physical waste, so that man is better able to perform the duties of the week following, this is incidental; the keeping of the Sabbath is primarily an act of worship. The Sabbath was given as a memorial of God’s creative power. It was given that man might ever keep in mind the one true God, who created the heavens and the earth. It was given to guard men against idolatry; for those who keep the Sabbath according to God’s appointment, and for the reason for which He appointed it, can never worship false gods.

As in the days of Nehemiah so it is for us today, the keeping of the Sabbath is made the test – to all to whom that truth is revealed. We know the Sabbath is the seal of creation finished and perfect. As such it reveals God as Creator and Sanctifier (Ezekiel 20:12, 20), as Sanctifier by His creative power. The Sabbath is not a work, by which we may vainly try to win the favour of God, but it is rest, – rest in the everlasting arms. It is the sign and memorial of God’s eternal power; and the keeping of it is the seal of that perfection which God alone can work out, and which He freely bestows upon all who trust Him. It means full and perfect trust in the Lord, that He can and will save us by the same power by which He made all things in the beginning. Therefore we see that since the same promise is left us, that was given to ancient Israel, it must necessarily be that the Sabbath should be made specially prominent in this our day, as we approach Sunday Law, and as Christ’s coming approaches.

Professed Adventists are repeating the history of Israel. First, after our leading Adventist pioneers had passed away, our church gradually turned from worshipping the only true God, to worship modern Baal (read from online Library the booklet “*Greater Abominations*” for details). Like Israel, our church continues to break the first commandment. Second, having the worship of false gods, the Sabbath of the true God is “lightly regarded” {1SM 204.2}, and when Sunday Law comes, it is no wonder “a large class” of Seventh-day Adventists will “join the ranks of the opposition” {GC 608.2}. Our pioneers worshipped the true God, our Father (John 17:3), who is “revealed in His word, in Christ, in nature.” After our pioneers died, our Fundamental ‘Principles’ were changed to ‘Beliefs’ to accept modern Baal gods, our religion was changed, the Sabbath is lightly regarded, and soon many will fail the Sunday Law test.

“Let the reader understand” (Mark 13:14): “The enemy of souls has sought to bring in the supposition that a great reformation was to take place among Seventh-day Adventists, and that this reformation would consist in giving up the doctrines which stand as the pillars of our faith, and engaging in a process of reorganization. Were this reformation to take place, what would result? The principles of truth that God in His wisdom has given the remnant church, would be discarded. Our religion would be changed. The fundamental principles that have sustained the work for the last fifty years would be accounted as error. A new organization would be established. Books of a new order would be written. A system of intellectual philosophy would be introduced. The founders of this system would go into the cities, and do a wonderful work. The Sabbath of course, would be lightly regarded, as also the God who

created it. Nothing would be allowed to stand in the way of the new movement. The leaders would teach that virtue is better than vice, but God being removed, they would place their dependence on human power, which, without God, is worthless. Their foundation would be built on the sand, and storm and tempest would sweep away the structure" {1SM 204.2}.

Satan has long been planting tares among us. Jesus tells us: "But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away" (Matthew 13:25). The Spirit of Prophecy tells us: "While the Lord brings into the church those who are truly converted, Satan at the same time brings persons who are not converted into its fellowship. While Christ is sowing the good seed, Satan is sowing the tares" (*Faith I Live By*, p. 305).

As Satan brings tares in our church, they get baptised but remain tares for they were not brought in by God, these tares go to our seminaries to study theology, they study from books by Sunday-keeping authors, they return as tare-ministers. Given the apostasy these tare-ministers would cause in our church, you wonder why God allows Satan to plant them in our church while we sleep. We are told: "God has permitted apostasies to take place in order to show how little dependence can be placed in man" (*Notebook Leaflets*, Number 19, p. 2).

As the storms of Sunday law approaches, "men of talent and pleasing address, who once rejoiced in the truth, employ their powers to deceive and mislead souls" (*Great Controversy*, p. 608). We see men preach health reform, yet sit to feast on meats and set an evil example to the souls ensnared by appetite. They 'have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth;' no wonder they will 'employ their powers' to urge the remnants to worship on Sunday.

Remember, whilst God has faithful ministers in our church, there are also unfaithful ministers. "Unsanctified ministers are arraying themselves against God. They are praising Christ and the god of this world in the same breath. While professedly they receive Christ, they embrace Barabbas, and by their actions say, 'Not this Man, but Barabbas.' Let all who read these lines, take heed. Satan has made his boast of what he can do. He thinks to dissolve the unity which Christ prayed might exist in His church. He says, 'I will go forth and be a lying spirit to deceive those that I can, to criticize, and condemn, and falsify.' Let the son of deceit and false witness be entertained by a church that has had great light, great evidence, and that church will discard the message the Lord has sent, and receive the most unreasonable assertions and false suppositions and false theories. Satan laughs at their folly, for he knows what truth is" (*Testimonies to Ministers*, page 409). Read the passage again, noting that the 'unsanctified ministers' are in Christ's remnant church, 'His church.'

We are told: "The Lord has a controversy with His professed people in these last days. In this controversy men in responsible position will take a course directly opposite to that pursued by Nehemiah. They will not only ignore and despise the Sabbath themselves but they will try to keep it from others by burying it beneath the rubbish of custom and tradition. In churches and in large gatherings in the open air, ministers will urge upon the people the necessity of keeping the first day of the week. There are calamities on sea and on land: and these calamities will increase, one disaster following close upon another; and the little band of conscientious Sabbath-keepers will be pointed out as the ones who are bringing the wrath of God upon the world by their disregard of Sunday." (*Review and Herald*, March 18, 1884).

Contrary to the work of Nehemiah is the corrupting work of most men leading our church. "How readest thou" (Luke 10:26) the above? Are these Seventh-day Adventists or other outside ministers? Let us recount what we know: Satan brings persons who are not converted into our church, these become an influence that is continually working for the corrupting of God's people, we have unsanctified ministers in our church, and as a result we have far more to fear from within than from without. As the statement begins with God having a controversy with 'His professed people,' then these ministers are also ministers who minister directly to God's 'professed people.' We know that, "the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put Him to death" (Matthew 26:59). It is very likely that Satan will use the same device against the remnants of Jesus. We also know that, "the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus" (Matthew 27:20). Each of us has to choose either Christ (Sabbath worship) or Barabbas (Sunday worship). It is very likely that Satan will again use men in our ranks to persuade us to accept Sunday worship and destroy the Sabbath.