

Sabbath School Lesson #12 – Sabbath: Experiencing and Living *the Character of God* – 12-18 December 2020

Christ is the Lord of the Sabbath, it is His holy day – even the Lord’s day. “And He said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath” (Mark 2:27-28). The Sabbath is not against man, a hard requirement, – something to hold, him down, – but a thing calculated to help him in every way. But it is *for* man; that is, it is a blessing to a man only when he keeps it. When a man rejects that which is good, he has only the evil; so a blessing spurned leaves only a man helpless. But that does not mean man has any license to break the Sabbath. “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8), is still a valid commandment.

Sunday: Time to Be Astonished – The choice of the Lesson writer’s expression here, ‘astonished’, to describe the reaction of Adam at the beautiful creation before the fall of man, is not the most fitting representation. True at some point Adam was ‘astonished’, but that was when Eve ate of the forbidden fruit. Notice what Ellen White says, “As soon as Eve had disobeyed she became a powerful medium through which to occasion the fall of her husband. I saw a sadness come over the countenance of Adam. He appeared afraid and astonished. A struggle appeared to be going on in his mind. He told Eve he was quite certain that this was the foe that they had been warned against, and if so, that she must die. She assured him she felt no ill effects but rather a very pleasant influence, and entreated him to eat” {SR 35.1-2}. Adam was not astonished at the beautiful creation, rather, we are given different reaction by Ellen White: “The creation was now complete. “The heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.” “And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good.” Eden bloomed on earth. Adam and Eve had free access to the tree of life. No taint of sin or shadow of death marred the fair creation. “The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” Job 38:7” {PP 47.1}.

Adam, the son of God, was put by his Father into this earth, which was to be not only his home, but also the school in which he educated for the service of God. But he had no books from which to study like those we use in our schools today. Yet he had a wonderful library written for him and for his family by God Himself. All that men need to learn to know God, and all that can be known of God, is clearly seen in the things that He has made (Romans 1:19-20). So God did not give them a lot of books to teach them *about* His works, but He wanted them to study *the works themselves*, that *they* might teach them to know *God*. On everything that men could see, in every living thing that He had put into the earth, some message from God was written. The patriarch Job, who lived very early in the history of this world, said, “Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee; or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee, and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these, that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?” (Job 12:7-10). As through sin men departed from God, they lost the Spirit of God out of their hearts, and soon forgot how to read what God was saying to them in all creation.

Monday: Time for Rediscovery – “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth” (Psalm 33:6). He spoke and said, “Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth; *and it was so*” (Genesis 1:11). The life that was in His word caused the corn to grow in the beginning, and that same life has caused it to grow ever since. Therefore all the food that men have to eat is that which comes from the word of God. We cannot see the life in a grain of wheat, but when we eat the bread that is made from it, we experience it. But the physical strength which we receive from the food is but the working of the word of the Lord. If we do not recognise God in this, we get no spiritual life but only the physical strength. The Israelites who ate manna in the desert, did not believe the Lord, and did not recognise His life, and so they derived no spiritual life from it. “They believed not in God, and trusted not in His salvation; though He had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven, and had rained down upon them manna to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven” (Psalm 78:22-24). So although they were indeed feeding upon the life of Christ, they received no spiritual life, because of their blind unbelief. In the

giving of the manna God was giving them the lesson that “man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). The manna was the test of their loyalty to the law of God, and especially to the Sabbath as a seal of that law. But in the manna they were taking in Christ, if they had only realised it. Therefore we are to learn that if we but allow Christ to dwell in our hearts by faith in His word, – not a part only, but the whole, – He will bring into our lives the keeping of the whole law, even the Sabbath.

Tuesday: Time for Learning Priorities – Whatever God blesses He makes a means of blessing. “God blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it” (Genesis 2:3). The Lord sent it forth on its mission of carrying blessing to mankind. It is a truth that God has poured out His blessings freely on all men; the very possession of life is the blessing of the Creator; but it is the Sabbath that makes known to mankind the fulness of God's blessing. It brings with it to all who accept it for just what it is, the knowledge of such a blessing as they never before dreamed of, no matter how long they have had experience as Christians. It was given in Eden, and pertains to Eden, and brings the joy of Eden with it. It is, in fact, a remnant of Eden left in this sin-cursed world, to win us to Eden restored. In it we find the power of the world to come. “If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath,” says the Lord, “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 upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father [and that heritage is Christ]; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it” (Isaiah 58:13-14). Oh then, “taste, and see that the Lord is good” (Psalm 34:8). May we have our priorities right. Accept His perfect rest, – His Sabbath, – and keep it, and know now the joy of the Lord.

Wednesday: Time for Finding Balance – Jesus had been among this people, so marked with bigotry and prejudice, and He knew that in healing on the Sabbath day He would be regarded as a transgressor of the law. He Was aware that the Pharisees would seize upon such acts with great indignation, and thereby seek to influence the people against Him. He knew that they would use these works of mercy as strong arguments to affect the minds of the masses, who had all their lives been bound by the Jewish restrictions and exactions. Nevertheless, He was not prevented by this knowledge from breaking down the senseless wall of superstition that barricaded the Sabbath, and teaching men that charity and benevolence are lawful on all day. Is there a lesson beyond mere ‘finding balance’,? Yes! “And it came to pass also on another Sabbath, that He entered into the synagogue and taught; and there was a man whose right hand was withered. And the scribes and Pharisees watched Him, whether He would heal on the Sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against Him” (Luke 6:6-7). It is not so very strange a thing to see an afflicted person in any assembly; why then should these Pharisees be so specially on the watch when they saw this one present? What was it that made them think that Jesus would heal them? – Ah, it was because it was just like Jesus to heal any afflicted person whom He saw. What wonderful tribute those jealous Pharisees paid to Christ! And what a wonderful comfort this contains for us! We are infirm; but He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities; and whenever He sees infirmity, His impulse is to heal. He is on the lookout to do good. “He delighteth in mercy” (Micah 7:18). Therefore, Be of good cheer; “Jesus Christ maketh thee whole” (Acts 9:34).

Thursday: A Time for Community – “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together” (Hebrews 10:25). God has made man a social being. Intercourse with his fellows is a law of his nature, and man cannot reach his full development as a man without this. This is especially true as regards Christian character. God has set in his church different gifts, which are likened to different members, or parts of the human body (1 Corinthians 12). As each part of the body is mutually dependent to a greater or less extent on every other part in order to full and perfect development, so the various members and gifts in the church need the aid and instruction to be received from all. They are to “edify [or build up] one another” (1 Thessalonians 5:11); to “comfort one another” (4:18); and, if connected with Christ, the head, they will this way, as a community of believers, be “fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Ephesians 4:16).