

**Sabbath School Lesson #13 – Heaven, Education, and Eternal Learning – 19-25
December 2020**

Christ who abides in us by His own Spirit will bodily return to take us to heaven where God awaits to give us the blessings of things we cannot now fully comprehend. “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Sunday: The Fate of the Dead – The second coming of Christ provides us a lesson into the fate of the dead. The time which Jesus spent on this earth, from His birth in Bethlehem until His ascension from the Mount of Olives, is known as the first advent, or coming of Christ. There is no question but that He had been upon the earth many times before, but that was His first appearance in connection with the great plan of salvation. And so, although He has since been on earth continuously, by His own Spirit, His second coming must be limited to that one mentioned in the promise He gave in comforting His disciples, “I will come *again*” (John 14:1-3). This promise cannot be fulfilled by anything except by His personal presence in glory. It will be His second coming in connection with the great plan of salvation – this time to complete the work by taking His people to Himself. That we are not mistaken in saying that Christ in comforting his disciples, gave promise of a second coming, is proved by the words of Paul, in Hebrews 9:27-28: “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the Judgment; so 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.” This text also settles another much mooted question, that of a future probation. “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the Judgment.” How long after death the Judgment takes place must be determined by other texts. The general truth is stated that men die but once, and that after that their future fate is determined by the Judgment. “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.” That is, since men have but one life, – one probation, – which ends with their death, so Christ was only once offered. His offering had reference only to men in this present life. If man was to have two or more probations, then it would be necessary for two or more offerings to be made in his behalf; but there was only one offering. At His advent, Christ was offered “to bear the sins of many.” The Lord “laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6). “In His own body” He bore our sins on the tree (1 Peter 2:24). In order to save us from sin, He was made to be sin (2 Corinthians 5:21); Christ the innocent One was counted as guilty in order that the guilty might be accounted innocent. The benefits of this sacrifice are now free to all who will accept it, while Jesus is pleading its merits before the Father. But when He comes “the second time,” He will be “without sin;” He will then no longer act as substitute for sinners; no longer will he assume any responsibility in their behalf. The sins of the righteous will have been blotted out, and those of the impenitent rolled back upon their own heads. There can then be no more probation for them unless Christ should again take upon Himself their sins and make another sacrifice; for there is no salvation in any other (Acts 4:12). Since Christ makes but one offering, it follows that their sins remain upon them, to sink them into perdition – that will be the fate of the wicked dead.

Monday: A New Existence – Our hope of new existence lies in the new kingdom, thus we are taught to pray, “Thy kingdom come.” Paul in Titus 2:13, calls it “the blessed hope.” It was that to which the church in all ages looked forward, as the brightest prospect which their faith revealed, and the realisation of their fondest hopes. In the heart of every true Christian this thought, this hope, will be uppermost. We are taught to give it this prominence by the Lord Himself. The very first petition of the “Lord’s prayer” is, “Thy kingdom come.” And this prayer is one for all Christ’s followers. In the sermon on the mount, also, the first utterance is one concerning the coming kingdom: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Other sentences which follow allude to the same thing. “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” This inheritance cannot be until the coming of the kingdom, by which the wicked shall be destroyed (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9), and the earth made ready for its future inheritors (Psalm 37:10-11). “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.” The time of comfort of the saints is when “the tabernacle of God is with men,” and “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither

sorrow nor crying" (Revelation 31:3-4). "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." They shall see Him at the coming of His kingdom. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The blessings which come to the poor in spirit, the meek, the pure in heart, and other possessors of heavenly graces, are many in this life; but they are not to be compared with those that will be realised at the coming of the kingdom of God. The very first prophecy that was ever uttered by inspiration, so far as we have any record, is a prophecy of the coming of Christ in His kingdom. We find the record in Jude. "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold the Lord cometh, with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him" (Jude 14,-15). Note the very last prophecy of the Bible is also a prophecy of the same event. "He which testifieth these words saith, Surely I come quickly" (Revelation 22:20). The sacred writer adds, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." This is the prayer of every Christian heart, the goal toward which he strives, the event for which he labours. Let others make their pilgrimages to Mecca, or to the shrine of "our lady," or to Rome; the Christian's pilgrimage is to Mount Zion. And the one inspiring thought that leads him on over the rough and narrow passage is "that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). Would you be of the mind of Enoch, and of John, and of Paul, and of Christ? If so you will say with them, "Thy kingdom come." For that you will hope, that you will pray, for that you will work. And in the hour of trial you will find comfort in the thought, "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off" (Isaiah 33:17), and hope for a new existence.

Tuesday: Then Shall We Know – "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Corinthians 13:12). It is evident that the illustration of childhood and manhood refers to more than growth in this world; for the "now" and "then" of this verse plainly means the present time and the perfect state in the world to come. Now we see only reflections in a mirror, but in the next world we shall see realities; "for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18). Spiritual things are the only realities. The Greek word rendered "darkly" is our familiar word "enigma." God hides Himself now; but the time is coming when we shall see His face and all that is enigmatical now will be solved.

Wednesday: The School in the Hereafter – Life seems a long-drawn-out torture to the afflicted soul who does not see and know the Lord; but he should remember that life is more than a few years long. If we receive evil things, as well as good things, with thanksgiving, as from the hand of our Father, and know that we suffer only with Christ, eternity is ours, and "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18). But think how insignificant the longest life of poverty and affliction will seem, when looked back upon after a hundred thousand million years of fulness of joy in the kingdom of God, which will be but the beginning of eternity! The apostle Paul reminds us, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, which is but for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:17-18). Whatever your condition in life, whether you have wealth and ease, or poverty and affliction, never forget to take the long view, and you will be kept from becoming either high-minded or downcast.

Thursday: The Great Teacher – "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). "And one shall say unto Him, What are these wounds in Thine hands? Then He shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends" (Zechariah 13:6). "Behold, God exalteth by His power: who teacheth like Him?" Christ is the great Teacher, for He reveals God to us. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John 1:18). "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him" (Matthew 11:27).