

Sabbath School Lesson #2 – Crisis of Leadership – 2-8 January 2021

Christ would have His people avoid crisis of leadership by continually beholding His glory. The prophet says: “In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple” (Isaiah 6:1). We should not know to whom this refers, if our Saviour Himself had not, in John 12:40-41 (“He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw His glory, and spake of Him”), quoted Isaiah 6:10 (“Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed”), and applied them to Himself. The angels cried one to another in praise of the divine Lord “lifted up” for fallen man to see. The theme of their song was not that the heavenly temple was filled with glory ineffable. “One cried unto another, and said, holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: *the whole earth is full of His glory.*” This is not something afar off. The whole earth – this earth where we live, over which the curse has spread, with sorrow and sin in its train – is full of the glory of the Lord, and the angels glorify Him because of it. Do you lead others to see what angels saw? So thrilling was their cry that the thresholds of the temple moved at the voice of praise. At the time when Isaiah heard the angels’ cry the Lord gave him the commission, “Go, and tell this people, See ye indeed, but perceive not” (verse 9). And the blindness is blindness of heart. “Lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed.” Seeing the Lord’s glory in the earth means that the heart must confess its sins, as Isaiah confessed his undone condition.

Sunday: The King Is Dead. Long Live the King! – The prophet, Isaiah began to see visions concerning Judah and Jerusalem in days of king Uzziah, and his work continued for some sixty years. It was in the last year of Uzziah’s life that Isaiah saw the vision which is referred to in the memory text of this lesson. Uzziah was the grandson of Joash. The latter, like his father; died a violent death, as did also his own son Amaziah. Both Amaziah and his son and successor, Uzziah, began to reign in the fear of God, but as the Lord prospered them, their hearts were lifted up. Amaziah worshipped false gods, and Uzziah became so full of pride and self-importance that he even forced his way into the sanctuary with the intention of burning incense. For this he was smitten with leprosy, and obliged to surrender the kingdom to his son Jotham. The blasphemous pride of King Uzziah in presumptuously approaching that altar had merited and found swift and awful punishment; but for Isaiah’s humble confession of guilt it had no terrors. The sinful and helpless, who can only plead their sad necessity, may come with boldness to the throne of grace, and find there plenteous redemption. The broken and contrite heart may be despised among men, but it is honoured in heaven. God hath respect unto the lowly. His answer to every confession of wrongdoing is, as it was to Isaiah, “Thine iniquity is taken away” (Isaiah 6:7). At the death of king Uzziah, the prophet did not only have his sin taken away by the Lord, but by faith understood the resurrection of the King of Kings. By faith, even Isaiah received this gospel: “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). The resurrection of Christ means a victory over the world through our faith in His resurrection life (1 John 5: 4), and a final and complete victory over that last enemy which is death. “The dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? But thanks be unto God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:52-57). Let us not look at earthly kings, but to Christ, “He is risen!”

Monday: “Holy, Holy, Holy” – When Isaiah saw the Lord on the throne, high and lifted up, surrounded by the seraphim, he heard those beings cry one to another, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory” (Isaiah 6:3). These words were spoken hundreds of years ago. Are they true now, and is the earth now full of the glory of the Lord? – Most certainly; all the while the word has been, “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee” (Isaiah 60:1). The whole earth is full of the glory

of God. He has revealed it in every blade of grass, in every flower, in everything that he has made. "His glory covers the heavens, and the earth is full of his praise" (Habakkuk 3:3). The plant springing up and yielding its fruits, is showing forth the glory of God; for when at Cana in Galilee Christ accelerated the process, and, instead of waiting six months for the rain to come down and be taken up into the vine and converted into the juice of the grape, changed the water into wine by the power of the same word which sends the rain and is the life of the plant, it was written that this beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, "and manifested forth His glory" (John 2:11). If we would see in the daily bread we eat, His glory manifested, like the holy angels, we would also continually sing the holiness of the Lord.

Tuesday: New Personality – In Isaiah's vision there was revealed to him the Lord upon His throne, exalted high, surrounded by angels and worshipped by the seraphim. As these declared the holiness of the Lord, a sense of his own sinfulness overwhelmed the prophet and he cried, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." The Lord never makes known His holiness with the object of inducing despair in men. High and lifted up as He is, His holiness and power are equalled by His love for men; He bids them "Sing unto the Lord, all ye saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness" (Psalm 30:4). In His love He bestows His holiness freely upon sinful men, hence the infinite measure of His holiness only makes known the fulness of His unspeakable gift. In quick response to the prophet's sense of need, an angel flies to him with a live coal from off the altar, and as it was laid upon Isaiah's mouth, the comforting assurance was given, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."

Wednesday: Royal Commission – When Peter, in his boat on the Sea of Galilee, saw the power of Jesus of Nazareth over the sea and its inhabitants, he fell down before the Lord, saying, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8). It was the same feeling that prompted Isaiah, when he saw the same Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, to exclaim, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Isaiah 6:5). It is worthy of note, also, that both those men who thus confess their sinfulness, were at once accepted as workers. To Peter, the Lord said, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men," literally, 'thou shalt be catching men alive.' But Peter had to be converted before he could strengthen the brethren; and likewise the coal from off the altar had to touch the lips of Isaiah, and purge his sin, before he could say, "Here am I; send me," to the call "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" and could be told, "Go." And herein is hope and a wondrous calling for every sinner. Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. He receives and saves sinners, and then, having received them into his confidence, he sends them forth as his representatives, to carry his message of mercy to other sinners. He takes us as associates with him. He was made flesh, and took the nature of fallen humanity, in order to save men; and so he commits the work not to angels, but to those who have felt the power of the sins that oppress those to whom they are sent. To thus work with Christ is the highest honour that the universe can bestow.

Thursday: Appalling Appeal – "What has not the Lord God of Israel done for his people? He has given them his word; he has followed them with his testimonies, which have warned, reprov'd, rebuked, encouraged; he has given signs; he has given precious promises; and how few give him praise or glory! Many think if they tolerate the movings and workings of God in their behalf they ought to be commended. Oh, how few really know God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent! He has spoken by prophets and apostles of what will be in the future. He has given living testimonies of himself in these last days when he spake unto us by his Son, and yet it is a truth that pains my soul, that the Lord is grieved with hard hearts and unteachable minds. How few believe and repent! to how few is the arm of the Lord revealed! 'And go, get thee ... unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord God; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.' All will come to a decision to declare wholly for God or for Baal. God has sent to his people testimonies of truth and righteousness, and they are called to lift up Jesus, and to exalt his righteousness" {RH May 27, 1890, par. 4}. May we accept this appeal and repent our sins!