

Sabbath School Lesson #4 – The Hard Way – 16-22 January 2021

Christ would have us wait upon Him. Thus says the prophet, “And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth His face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for Him” (Isaiah 8:17). The Church is to wait upon the Lord, for His second coming draws near. The class to whom He hides His face are the unfaithful servants who find Him a stabling block. To the faithful, He will “appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Hebrews 9:28).

Sunday: Prophecy Fulfilled – The prophecy of Isaiah to king Ahaz said: “For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings” (Isaiah 7:16). In regard to the kingdom of northern Israel, this prophecy was fulfilled in consequence to persistence in sin by the Israelites. From the time of king Jeroboam, subsequent kings did more evil continually. They were all idolaters, and some of them were men of the vilest character, without a single redeeming trait. The children of Israel sinned against the Lord “and walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel;” “and they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree; and there they burnt incense in all the high places, as did the heathen whom the Lord carried away before them; and wrought wicked things to provoke the Lord to anger.” “And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger” (see 2 Kings 16:7-23). So in about the year 721 BC after the kingdom of Israel had continued 254 years, and had made a record of wickedness, which has probably never been exceeded by any nation, the Lord removed them “out of his sight.” In about that year the king of Assyria took Samaria the capital of the kingdom, “and carried Israel away into Assyria,” and filled their places with “men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim” (2 Kings 17:24). From this date the kingdom of northern Israel had no more a place in history.

But that was ancient Israel, what about us as Seventh-day Adventists, do we have a prophecy fulfilled? Here is a prophecy that has almost been fully fulfilled: “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 to 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” {Ellen G White, 1SM 204.2}. Only to sweep away the structure remains to be fulfilled of this prophecy! Principles of truth have been discarded; our religion changed; books of new order written; a system of intellectual philosophy was introduced; and fundamental principles our pioneers believed have been accounted as error!

Monday: Foreseen Consequences – “For Ahaz took away a portion *out* of the house of the LORD, and *out* of the house of the king, and of the princes, and gave *it* unto the king of Assyria: but he helped him not. And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the LORD: this *is that* king Ahaz” (2 Chronicles 28:21-22). King Ahaz should have foreseen the consequences of seeking help from the heathen king of Assyria. King Ahaz dishonoured God by seeking help from Assyria. He failed to take counsel from Psalms: “It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in princes” (Psalm 118:8). “Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.” “Happy *is he* that *hath* the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope *is* in the Lord his God, Which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein *is*: which keepeth truth for ever” (Psalm 146:3, 5-6). How

strange that men who profess to be Christians, who pity the heathen who worship gods that can do nothing, will, when danger threatens, act as though the God they profess to serve were like the gods of the heathen! When we are in trouble, that is when God's power is seen at its best. "God is our refuge and strength; a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1).

Tuesday: What's in a Name? – In the name of the son of Isaiah, was a prophecy of the fate of Damascus and Samaria. "Moreover the Lord said unto me, Take thee a great roll, and write in it with a man's pen concerning Mahershalalhashbaz. And I took unto me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah. And I went unto the prophetess; and she conceived, and bare a son. Then said the Lord to me, Call his name Mahershalalhashbaz. For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria" (Isaiah 8:1-4). The Hebrew meaning of Maher-shalal-hash-baz is "swift (is) booty, speedy (is) prey" – signifying the spoil of the kingdoms of Syria and northern Israel.

Wednesday: Nothing to Fear When We Fear God Himself – We are reminded of the words of our Adventist brother: "The fear of God turns other fears out of doors; there is no room for them where this great fear is; and, being greater than they all, yet it disturbs not as they do; yea, it brings as great quiet as they brought trouble" {Leighton, ST, July 11, 1906}.

Thursday: Gloom of the Ungrateful Living Dead – "Twenty years old was Ahaz when he began to reign, and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem, and did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord his God, like David his father. But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yea, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel. And he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree" (2 Kings 16:2-4). This kind of heathen worship is and always has been, devil-worship. "But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God; and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils" (1 Corinthians 10:20). Consequently all heathen worship springs from the idea that a sacrifice must be made to appease the wrath of their god. Most professed Christians have borrowed their ideas of God from the heathen.

The prophets of Baal cut themselves with knives, "till the blood gushed out upon them" (1 Kings 18:28), hoping thereby to induce their god to listen to them. With the same idea of God, thousands of so-called Christians have made pilgrimages on their knees, slept on the hard floor, or the ground, and scourged themselves with thorns, starved themselves nearly to death, and set themselves the most impossible tasks. But nobody ever found peace in any of those ways, because no man could get out of himself that which was not in him, and righteousness and peace are not in man. Sometimes this idea of propitiating the wrath of God has taken an easier form, – that is, easier for the worshippers. Instead of sacrificing themselves, they have sacrificed others. Human sacrifices have always been to a greater or lesser extent connected with heathenism. Men shudder as they read of the human sacrifices offered by the ancient inhabitants; but professed (not real) Christianity has its awful list. In the dark ages, hundreds were burnt for the purpose of turning away the wrath of God.

Wherever there is religious persecution to any degree, it springs from the mistaken idea that God demands a victim. This is shown by the words of Christ to His disciples: "The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (John 16:2). All such worship has been devil worship, and not worship of the true God. Just here somebody has remembered that it is said in Hebrews 9:22, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission;" and this makes him think that after all God did demand a sacrifice before He would pardon man. It is difficult for the mind to rid itself of the idea received as a legacy from paganism through the antichrist that God was angry at man for having sinned, that He could not be mollified without seeing blood flow, but that it made no difference to Him whose blood it was, if only somebody was killed; and that since Christ's life was worth more than the lives of all men, He accepted Him as a substitute for them. This is almost a brutal way of stating the case, but it is the only way that the case can be truly presented. The heathen conception of God is a brutal one, as dishonouring to God as it is discouraging to man; and this heathen idea has been allowed to colour too many texts of Scripture. It is sad to think how greatly men who profess to love the Lord, have given occasion to His enemies to blaspheme!