

Sabbath School Lesson #6 – Playing God – 30 January-5 February 2021

Christ is soon coming. But before the coming of the Lord His people shall suffer persecution at the hands of earthly governments, which assume the right to prescribe the religion of citizens. The church, making itself the head, in the place of Christ, will, through the State, dictate to man what form of religion they shall openly profess. This is now done to some extent in every country, and the thing is constantly growing. Thus they will virtually substitute another in the place of Christ, for men to worship. But the true saints of God will have nothing to do with the unholy alliance with the world. They will be sorely persecuted, but their hope will be in the coming of the Lord, who is to deliver them. “And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us; this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation” (Isaiah 25:9). That event will be emphatically “the day of Christ” (Philippians 2:16; 2 Thessalonians 2:2), for it will be the demonstration before all the world of His right to reign. When He was here the first time, He was “despised and rejected of men” (Isaiah 53:3). He had not where to lay His head. Then men esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, afflicted. When He comes the second time, it will be as King of kings, and Lord of lords and men will know the Father hath given Him all. Then rude soldiers bowed in mockery before Him, ridiculing His claim to be a king. But when He comes the second time, every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil 2:10-11).

Sunday: Doom on the Nations – The doom on the nations will prove that men cannot with impunity play God. They will be doomed at the coming of Christ. Turning to the book of the prophet Isaiah, the holy man of God, whose lips were touched by a coal from God’s own altar, who was made the mouth-piece of a vivid description of power that shall attend the coming of the Lord, we read as follows, beginning with the sixth verse of chapter thirteen:

“Howl ye; for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man’s heart shall melt, and they shall be afraid; pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth; they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames. Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir. Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger” (6-13).

Once more the Lord speaks through Isaiah 24:1-6: “Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him. The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled; for the Lord hath spoken this word. The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left.”

Monday: The Late Great City of Babylon – “And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees’ excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah” (Isaiah 13:19). One hundred and thirteen years before Cyrus was born, Isaiah called him by name, and said, one hundred and seventy-six years before it came to pass, that he should let the people of Israel go from captivity. But Babylon was to fall before Israel could go free; and the prophet also said that Cyrus should take that mighty city (Isaiah 45:1-5). In the fourth year of Zedekiah, BC 597, Seraiah was sent as an ambassador to Babylon on

business to the king; and by him Jeremiah sent a copy of the prophecies contained in the fiftieth and fifty-first chapters of Jeremiah. Seraiah was to take the prophecy with him, and when he reached Babylon, he was to read it all, and when he had finished the reading of it he was to bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates, and say, "Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her" (Jeremiah 51:59-64). The prophecy says, "Neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there" (Isaiah 13:20). Babylon of old fell, and today the natives regard the whole place as actually haunted, and will not pitch their tents there, nor will the shepherds make their fold there. And so is accomplished in perfect faithfulness the word of the Lord concerning Babylon, that "it shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation" (Isaiah 13:20). And Babylon *has* "become heaps, a dwelling-place for dragons, an astonishment, and a hissing, without an inhabitant" (Jeremiah 51:37). And "this is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" (Isaiah 14:26-27).

Tuesday: Fall of the Mountain "King" – Kings of ancient kingdoms fell because of their vain imaginations, as their foolish heart were darkened. The course of their fall was the same as that of the angel who became Satan. "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:12-14). What was the cause of this self-exaltation and fall? "Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness" (Ezekiel 27:17). Yet, dependent upon God for all the wisdom that he had, he did not glorify God, but assumed that all his talents sprang from himself; and so, as he disconnected himself in his pride from the Source of light, he became the prince of darkness. Even thus it was with ancient kings.

Wednesday: Heaven's Gate – Many professed Christians are in confusion. Departing from God's way, erecting human standards, following man's way instead of God's way, adding to His Word, subtracting from it, have always brought division and hence confusion. The would-be wise men of the land of Shinar, promised themselves a better way when *they* built *themselves* a city and a tower, and sought to make *themselves* a name. They prized their work so highly that they called it, according to the story of their brick books, "Bab-il," "the gate of God," or "the gate of heaven;" but God could not serve with their sins. He will not give His glory to another, and He named it what it literally was, Babel, confusion (Genesis 11:1-9). So every attempt by professed Christians to improve upon God's work has resulted in confusion in God's work, of which confusion "God is not the author" (1 Corinthians 14:33).

Thursday: Final Triumph of Zion – There are texts in the Bible, which tell that God has appointed a final triumph of Zion – His people – which, if often considered, would give untold comfort, because God's appointments cannot fail. Here are few, without any comment. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified" (Isaiah 61:1-3). "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him" (1 Thessalonians 5:9-10). "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me" (Luke 22:29). "Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime" (2 Samuel 26:1-2). "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; we have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in" (Isaiah 26:1-2).