

## Sabbath School Lesson #8 – “Comfort My People” – 13-19 February 2021

**C**hrist is coming soon, His faithful servants are to prepare the people for His coming. “O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!” (Isaiah 40:9). Those who give this message are to lift up their voices with strength. It is to be a loud cry. It is a Gospel message, for Gospel means good tidings. What is it to “Behold your God”? – The words are very simple and can hear no other meaning than that people are to see their God. Where shall people look to behold Him? We cannot expect to see Him where He is not present, but wherever He is, there we are to see Him, and there is no place where He is not present. “Whither shall I flee from Thy presence?” “If I ascend up into heaven Thou art there.” “Thou hast beset me behind and before” (Psalms 139). Since it is impossible to get from the presence of God, it is equally impossible to avoid beholding Him. No matter where we may be, in city or field, in darkness or light, upon whatever we look we see God. Some will say, That cannot be, for surely when we look upon poverty and wretchedness we do not behold God. Yes, even there, we see God suffering the poverty and wretchedness, and if we help the suffering one, He says, “Ye have done it unto Me.” It is literally true that he that giveth to the poor lendeth unto the Lord. Even the sinner is living by the life of God. God gives to all life and breath and all things, so that His own life is revealed in every living thing. When a man uses the life to commit sin with, he is woefully perverting it, but God does not withdraw it on that account. He “is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish [lose the life], but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). “For we are members of His body” (Eph. 5:30).

**Sunday: Comfort for the Future** – Now let us read Isaiah 40:1-2: “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith the Lord.” Here is a message of comfort. This whole Lesson study is derived from this chapter, which has a special application to us now, because it contains the message that is to prepare the way of the Lord when He shall come with His reward. So to us apply the words, “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak comfortably to Jerusalem,” literally, “speak to the heart of Jerusalem,” that is, that they will understand, “and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.” What has she received double? – Mercy; because when the Lord pardons sins, gives grace to pardon, He does not measure it to fit the exact size and need. No, “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Romans 5:20). There is more than enough. “Return unto your God, and He will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:7). “Cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished.” Here is something that is to be told to the people – Your warfare is accomplished. Does that mean that men may now sit down and have an easy time? – Oh, no; far from it; it means action. It means the taking of the victory that has been gained. Christ has accomplished the warfare; hence, what are you to do? – Rejoice in it. How can you rejoice in it? – By faith. Well, what is meant by that – by having victory in Him? We get victory because His victory is our victory. He gained it for us, and we get the benefit of it by allowing Him to dwell in us in His fullness. Satan is as powerless against Christ in us as he was powerless against Christ in Nazareth.

**Monday: Presence, Word, and Roadwork** – “Surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the Word of our God shall stand for ever” (Isaiah 40:7-8). Jesus who spoke not His own words, but the Word of God, said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Word shall not pass away.” It cannot pass away, for God is the Word. The Word was before all things, and by it and from it all things were created; so when all visible things wither and vanish away, the Word will still remain; and he who has built upon it will be able to stand for ever. We are to be so firmly rooted and grounded in the Word that it will grow up into us, and permeate our being, creating us anew; and thus, the foundation and the superstructure being all one, we can no more be swept away than can the Rock of Ages.

This message, “all flesh is grass ... but the Word of our God shall stand for ever,” is only another statement of the message of Revelation 14:7: “Fear God, and give glory to Him ... and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” We give glory to God only when we acknowledge that He alone has the power, and that we

are helpless; that in Him alone is life and righteousness; that in Him is everything, while in us is nothing. He is light, while we are in ourselves but darkness. When we hold fast this confession, and allow Him to work in us and to clothe us even as He does the grass of the field, men see our good works, and glorify Him, because, He does the works. Then we may be “filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God” (Philippians 1:11). To have the perfect righteousness of God, by the faith of Jesus, is all that is needed to meet the Lord. So, the message that leads men to confess themselves as weak and worthless as the grass of the field, and God and His Word to be everlasting strength and righteousness, is the preparatory message for Christ’s coming.

**Tuesday: The Birth of Evangelism** – Notice how beautifully this thought of a Shepherd-King is expressed in Isaiah 40:10-11: “Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.” This is the only kind of ruling that the Lord sanctions in His church. In Hebrews 13:17 is the exhortation, “Obey them that have the rule over you,” but even here we may learn that these “rulers” are guides – those who direct the people in the right way, as a shepherd. Christ is “the Prince of princes,” the Ruler over all; He leads His people, however, and does not drive them. He leads them where they will find food and safety. This thought is emphasised by the fact that Christ as Ruler comes out of Bethlehem. Bethlehem, literally, is the ‘House of Bread.’ Out of the house of bread comes the Ruler, whose work is to feed the people. How significant! More than this, He Himself is the bread of life. In the house of God there is always an abundance of “the hidden manna,” enough and to spare. Here is a lesson for all who are in positions of authority in the church. Their work is to take the bread of life from the house of bread, to feed upon it themselves, and then feed the people with it. When ministers in our Church do this, their authority will be recognised by the people, even if questioned by the scribes and Pharisees.

**Wednesday: Merciful Creator** – Our merciful Creator, the true God, the knowledge of whom is eternal life (John 17:3), is “the living God and an everlasting King” (Jeremiah 10:10). But “the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary” (Isaiah 40:28). That is because He is the living God. The characteristic of eternity is freshness. Eternal life is everlasting youth, so that “they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint” (verse 31). Eternal life is rest, ever rest, – rest that remains no matter what disturbances arise. It was to this rest that God called ancient Israel, but into which they could not enter because of unbelief. God swore that they should not enter into His rest, not because He would not permit it, but because it was impossible. They rejected faith, the only thing that brings rest. “So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief” (Hebrews 3:19). If they had believed, they would have entered in. We may also enter into the same rest that was offered them, and enter in *today*, if we “take heed” to the voice that calls, “Today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not our hearts” (Hebrews 3:15). The voice of mercy is calling. Hear, and your soul shall live, “and rest in the Lord” (Psalms 37:7).

**Thursday: The Problem With Idolatry** – Are we like ancient Israel making images to worship? Isaiah 40:19-20 says: “The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains. He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation chooseth a tree that will not rot; he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, that shall not be moved.” There is just as much danger for us in this respect as there ever was for any people. Whoever trusts in himself, having any confidence whatever in the flesh, is worshiping the works of his own hands instead of God, just as truly as does any one who makes and bows down to a graven image. It is so easy for a man to trust to his own supposed shrewdness, to his ability to ‘take care of himself,’ and to forget that the thoughts even of the wise are vain, and that there is no power but of God. “Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord” (Jeremiah 9:23-24).