

Sabbath School Lesson #12 – Desire of Nations – 13-19 March 2021

Christ would fill us with His glory if we allow Him into our hearts. “And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising” (Isaiah 60:3). When Moses erected the tabernacle, “then the cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle” (Exodus 40:34-35). Even so it was at the dedication of Solomon’s temple: when Solomon had made an end of praying, “the glory of the Lord filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord’s house” (2 Chronicles 7:1-2). When the Spirit fills men they have power to be tabernacles of witness. There was no man in the tabernacle when the glory of God filled it; even so when Christ, “the quickening Spirit” (1 Corinthians 15:45), dwells in the heart by faith, and we are, according to the riches of His glory, “filled with all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:19), self will disappear, and He that abideth between the cherubim (Exodus 25:22) will shine forth.

Sunday: The Effects of Sin – Clouds can sometimes look very threatening, but there is only one kind that can really harm us. It is the kind spoken of in Isaiah 59:1-2: “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your *sins* have hid His face from you, that He will not hear.” No other clouds, however threatening, can shut us away from the Sun of Righteousness. But sin cherished in the heart covers us with a pall of blackness. As long as we hold on to it we cannot see a ray of light. At any moment it is liable to burst upon us in all its fury and carry us down to destruction. But there is hope for us even then. When we let go of sin and really want it removed, and allow Jesus to speak light into our souls, that instant the cloud disappears and the blessed light shines in. Then He can say to us, as did to ancient Israel, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee” (Isaiah 44:22). Trials, sicknesses, and troubles of various kinds are often called clouds. But these clouds need not frighten us at all. For they cannot harm us if we but have faith and ever cling to the Master. Christ is near us though we cannot see Him, for He says so, and “the eyes of the Lord are over the *righteous*, and His ears are *open* unto their prayers” (Psalms 34:15; 1 Peter 3:12).

Monday: Who Is Forgiven? – Whoever believes in the Lord is forgiven. But whoever is thus forgiven is a prey for the wicked. “He that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey” or “exposeth himself to be plundered.” (Isaiah 59:15). Space will not permit anything more than a very direct comment upon this. Competition is very keen in this world, especially in these days. It is the case, which everyone will recognise, that the man who is conscientious is cut off from many ways of ‘making money,’ that are successfully adopted by the unscrupulous. But this is not all: the strictly honest man in business stands a great chance of having his business taken from him by his unscrupulous neighbours in the same line. There are, in some places, at least, certain lines of business, legitimate enough in themselves, in which corrupt dealing is so prevalent, that the man who does not put his conscience in his pocket, and ‘do as the rest do,’ cannot ‘succeed.’ Neither is this all. The prophecy applies to the last days, and inasmuch as the coming of the Lord is near, the injunction is to cry aloud, and not spare to show God’s people their sins (Isaiah 58:1), to declare His whole truth. Accordingly the Sabbath truth, which has been so long forgotten, is presented in chapters fifty-six and fifty-eight. To what does the business man expose himself if he begins to keep God’s holy day instead of Satan’s counterfeit? – We hear the answer continually: ‘If I should keep the Sabbath, I should lose my place,’ or, ‘I should have to give up my business’ Even with regard to the Sunday, we have it constantly reiterated that a law is necessary, to compel all to keep the day, in order that those who wish to keep it may not lose their situations or their business. How much more, then, must it be the case that he who keeps the Sabbath of the Lord, contrary to human law and custom, exposes himself to be plundered? We have no picture of ease and prosperity in this world, as this world counts prosperity, to hold before the one to whom we declare the whole counsel of God. The time will yet come when a decree will go forth, that whoever will keep the Sabbath of the Lord instead of the Sunday of

the apostate church, shall be killed (Revelation 13:16-17); and that will be the test: whether men can trust God's promise of life, in the face of man's threat of persecution and death.

Tuesday: Universal Appeal – This present age is called night. Says Paul, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light" (Romans 13:12). This he says in view of the fact previously stated, that it is high time to wake out of sleep, because our salvation is near. The dawning of the day, and the arising of the day-star, refer to the coming of Christ, who is "the bright and morning star" (Revelation 22:16). So Isaiah, like Paul, tells of the night of darkness, and the coming of the dawn. Looking with prophetic sight down the ages, he says: "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising" (Isaiah 60:1-3). This is commonly applied simply to the spread of the gospel; but what follows, and taken in connection with parallel passages in the New Testament, shows that the prophet saw the triumph of the gospel in the final destruction of the wicked, and the salvation of the righteous in the New Jerusalem (compare Isaiah 60:11-14, 18-21 with the twenty-first of Revelation). The dawning of the day, and the rising of the day-star, will be when the glory of the Lord shall fill the earth, and the people shall be righteous. This present time is night because the darkness of sin covers the people. In the midst of this night, our only light is that which shines from God's word. David said: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalms 119:105). The lamp of prophecy, lighted from the glory that surrounds the throne of God, sheds its beams amidst the darkness that overspreads the earth, and is the wayfaring man's only guide till the glory of the Lord shall arise in full splendour upon him. Whosoever takes heed to it, his path shall be "as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Proverbs 4:18).

Wednesday: "The Year of the Lord's Favour" – The Lord Jesus Christ began His earthly ministry by reading in the synagogue at Nazareth the following words from Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19). And then He said to the congregation, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." The whole import of the text therefore is that Christ came to give freedom in every sense of the word. It is charged with the idea of liberty, and that to an extent that few realise. The word "liberty," in the statement, in Isaiah 61:1, that Christ was anointed "to proclaim liberty to the captives," is from a Hebrew word, the primary signification of which is 'a swallow.' This noun is derived from a verb which signifies 'to fly in a circle, to wheel in flight,' like a bird in the air. From this it is easy to see how the word came to signify 'freedom' and 'liberty.' We learn, therefore, that the Bible idea of liberty is best represented by the graceful flight of a swallow through the air. We often use the figure, 'as free as a bird,' and that exactly expresses the liberty wherewith Christ makes us free. Is it not a glorious thing? What a sense of freedom thrills the soul at the very thought of it!

Thursday: "The Day of Vengeance of Our God" – In Luke 4 when the Lord read from Isaiah 61:1-2, He did not read out the last part of verse 2. Now why did Jesus close the book as soon as He had read the words, "to preach the acceptable year of the Lord"? Simply because if He had read the next line He could not have said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21). Those who heard Him "wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth," for He was "full of grace and truth." He came announcing a "great salvation," which was afterwards "confirmed unto us by them that heard Him;" and the call has been reiterated since that time by whosoever has heard. Since ten days before the day of Pentecost, Christ has been at the right hand of God, ready to "save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him" (Hebrews 7:25); there will come a time, however, when He will "put on the garments of vengeance for clothing," and "according to their deeds, accordingly He will repay, fury to His adversaries, recompense to His enemies" (Isaiah 59:17-18); but that time will be when there is "no intercessor." Before that day, let us "seek righteousness; it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger" (Zephaniah 2:3).