

Sabbath School Lesson #1 – Preamble to Deuteronomy – 25 Sep-1 October 2021

Christ would have us have the love – life – of God. God exists, and no explanation of His existence can be given. Even so it is with love, for love is simply the life of God. “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love” (1 John 4:7-8). We naturally love those who are lovable, and think that we cannot be expected to love those who are hateful, and who hate us; but God loves the hateful, and those who hate Him. “If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?” “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Mat 5:46, 48). But for the love of God, it would not be possible for any human being to love.

Sunday: Love, to Be Loved – “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we from Him. That he who loveth God love his brother also” (1 John 4:20-21). Does the text teach that whoever loves God is thereby laid under obligation to love his brother also? that if a man loves God and does not love his brother also, he will be punished for violation of law? Manifestly not, from the very statement of the text, that a man cannot love God without loving his brother. “He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen.” Since a man cannot love God if he does not also have love for his brother, it is evident that the text does not mean that there is a special law enacted for those who love God, requiring them to love their brethren. Love comes from God. “Every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.” Therefore whoever loves God must of necessity love his brother also. He must love all men, for God’s love is without respect of persons. And this shows that men cannot, as is now quite commonly thought, learn to love God by first loving their fellow-men. Love to God is first. “And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Mark 12:29-31). No man can love his neighbour unless he loves God, because love is of God; and nobody can love God without loving his brother. Love is one. It cannot be forced, for the use of force is sure death to love. It must flow spontaneously. Yet we have the statement, “This commandment have we from Him. That he who loveth God love his brother also.” The thing therefore that we are to learn from this is that the commandment of God is something far different from the commandments of men. Human laws are wholly a matter of force; but God’s commandment is that we should love one another, and that cannot be a matter of force. The law of God is love. 1 John 5:3: “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous.” “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Galatians 5:14). “Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.” “Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Romans 13:8, 10). When God spoke His law, it was because “He loved the people” (Deuteronomy 33:2-3).

Monday: The Fall and the Flood – We fast forward from the perfect Adam to his fall. When God pronounced the curse upon our first parents, and upon the earth, He also made known the way of escape from that curse. Christ, the deliverer, was immediately promised. To Satan, the Lord said: “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15). These words contain the promise of the Messiah, who, although He should be allowed to be bruised by Satan, should thereby gain the right to destroy Satan and all his works. Time passed, and Satan seemed to get a still firmer hold upon the earth, for “God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” “And God looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth” (Genesis 6:5, 12). In all the earth there was but one family who acknowledged and served God; all the rest of mankind were totally given up to the service of the devil. “And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come

before Me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth" (Genesis 6:13). So the earth, with all its inhabitants, was destroyed by the flood. Noah and his family alone were saved. God did not, as to our first parents, give Noah dominion over all the earth, for it was impossible; but so that men might not be exterminated by the beasts, that had become savage by passing under the dominion of Satan, He said: "And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, and upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered" (Genesis 9:2). Thus did God interpose to limit Satan's power, giving men a chance for life, that they might prepare for the complete possession of the earth when it should be made new. But as men began again to multiply upon the earth, they again forsook the Lord, and gave themselves fully over to the service of Satan. Soon after the flood, we find them so filled with rebellious pride that they began to build a city and a tower, thinking that thereby they could protect themselves against any judgments that God might bring upon them (Genesis 11:1-9). This impious attempt was brought to nothing, and the people were scattered abroad upon the face of all the earth, yet they did not forsake serving Satan. Again the people of the earth were once more sunken in idolatry and superstition.

Tuesday: The Call of Abram – At that time the Lord came to Abraham, one of the descendants of Shem, and said to him: "Get thee out of thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee; and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:1-3). In Abraham, the Lord saw a willingness to serve Him, although all his people were idolaters (Joshua 24:2), and He separated him from them, so that he might not become contaminated by them, but might become the father of a people who should be fitted to inherit the earth. If we closely examine this promise, we shall find that it comprehends a great deal. "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" means nothing less than the possession of the whole earth by the descendants of Abraham – this is very clearly seen in Genesis 13:14-17.

Wednesday: The Covenant at Sinai – Paul refers to "two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Hagar" (Galatians 4:24). It is not God's desire that Israel make that covenant at Sinai. Four hundred and thirty years before that time God had made a covenant with Abraham, which was sufficient for all purposes. That covenant was confirmed in Christ, and, therefore, was a covenant "from above" (John 8:23). It promised righteousness as a free gift of God through faith, and it included all nations. All the miracles that God had wrought in delivering the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage were but demonstrations of His power to deliver them and us from the bondage of sin. Yes, the deliverance from Egypt was itself a demonstration not only of God's power, but also of His desire to lead them from the bondage of sin, that bondage in which the covenant from Sinai holds men, because Hagar, who is the covenant from Sinai, was an Egyptian. So when the people came to Sinai, God simply referred them to what He had already done, and then said, "Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine" (Exodus 19:5). To what covenant did He refer? – Evidently to the covenant that was by that time already in existence, His covenant with Abraham. If they would simply keep God's covenant, that is, God's promise, they would be a peculiar treasure unto God, for God, as the possessor of all the earth, was able to do with them all that He had promised. The fact that they in their self-sufficiency rashly took the whole responsibility upon themselves, does not prove that God led them into making that covenant, but the contrary. He was leading them out of bondage, not into it, and the apostle plainly tells us that covenant from Sinai was nothing but bondage.

Thursday: Apostasy and Punishment – "And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (Exodus 19:8). They never kept this solemn covenant. The history of Israel during all these years was little but a history of backsliding. It was impossible for them to keep the law with their own unaided efforts, yet that is what they promised to do. The Lord was patient with them to show them their own weakness, and to direct their minds to the Abrahamic covenant, which provided forgiveness for transgression of the law concerning which the covenant was made, and also help to keep the law of God.