

Sabbath School Lesson #2 – The Message of Hebrews – 1-7 Jan 2022

Christ offered Himself a sacrifice, and He ministers for our salvation. We recount the summary. “Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent” (Matthew 27:50-51). This veil was a heavy curtain suspended from the ceiling of the sanctuary, dividing it into two parts, called the holy place and the most holy place. In the inner, or most holy place was the ark of the covenant, with its covering, which was called the mercy seat, above which, from between the cherubim, the glory of God appeared. The ark in this most holy place, screened from all human eyes, except those of the high priest, who could go within the veil only once a year, was a symbol of the throne of God in heaven (see Exodus 25:10-22; 26:31-34). For this tabernacle, with all that pertained to it, was but a shadow, a very faint shadow, of realities in heaven. It was called by Stephen “the tabernacle of witness,” because both it and the tables of the law within it were witnesses against the unbelief of the Israelites. Solomon, who built the house to the Lord, said in his prayer at the dedication, “But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less this house which I have built” (2 Chronicles 5:18). In like manner Stephen said in his testimony before the Jewish council: “Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool; what house will ye build Me? saith the Lord, or what is the place of My rest?” (Acts 7:48-50). We see that those who lived in the time of the temple, who were in touch with the Lord, knew very well that it was not the real dwelling-place of God. All the people of Israel were accustomed to sing, “The Lord is in His holy temple; the Lord's throne is in heaven” (Psalm 11:4). Those who heard Stephen's discourse, being perfectly familiar with the service connected with the temple, could plainly see that if they allowed him to continue, his next words must be something like this: “Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum; We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man” (Hebrews 8:1-2). That is why they were so incensed against Stephen, for they had positively rejected Christ, and did not want to hear of Him. Yet some of these priests must have seen the veil of the temple mysteriously rent asunder when Christ died, and they knew that it was not done by human hands, and they could hardly have failed to recall the words of Jesus, “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.” Never the absolute dwelling-place of God, it was not then even a symbol of it. If the professed people of God in olden time had been faithful to their high calling, there would never have been any earthly tabernacle, with its exclusive priesthood; for God's promise was, “Ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests” (Exodus 19:6). Even so all God's people to-day are “a royal priesthood,” “an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5, 9). No other sacrifices have ever been acceptable to God. Every believer is a priest, and therefore every one has a right to come into the presence of God. The rending of the temple veil at the death of Christ, was to emphasise the fact that by the blood of Jesus we have boldness or liberty to enter into the holiest place by the new and living way through the veil, which He hath consecrated for us, that is, His flesh (Hebrews 10:19-20). We are not kept standing in the outer court, but having been “made nigh by the blood of Christ,” are urged to “draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.” Seeing therefore that Christ, our Brother, is High Priest, and we are partakers of Him, let us come with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in our priestly work of showing forth the excellencies of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light.

Sunday: Jesus Is Our King – “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Romans 14:17). Over that kingdom Christ has been set as King, for God has said, “Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion” (Psalm 2:6). Now read further the words of the Father to the Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things: “Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated

iniquity; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows” (Hebrews 1:8-9). A sceptre is the symbol of power. Christ’s sceptre is a sceptre of righteousness; therefore the power of His kingdom is righteousness. He rules by righteousness. His life on earth was a perfect manifestation of righteousness, so that He rules His kingdom by the power of His life. All those who own His life are subjects of His kingdom. No other thing but the life of Christ is the badge of citizenship in the kingdom of Christ. But with what was Christ anointed King? The text last read says that it was with “the oil of gladness.” Then gladness, or joy, is a necessary part of the kingdom of Christ. It is a kingdom of joy, as well as of righteousness. Therefore it is that every subject of that kingdom must be filled with joy. ‘A gloomy Christian’ is as much a contradiction of terms as ‘a cold sun.’ The sun is for the purpose of shedding the warmth of which it is composed; so the Christian is for the purpose of diffusing the peace and joy which is a part of his nature. The Christian is not joyful simply because he thinks that he ought to be, but because he has been translated into the kingdom of joy. “He that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another” (Romans 14:18-19). He who in what things serves Christ? That is in righteousness, and peace, and joy. Or, as some translations have it, “He that thus serves Christ.” God accepts such service, and men approve. Not only do Christians approve such service, but unbelievers are constrained to approve. The enemies of Daniel were forced to bear witness to the uprightness of his life, when they said that they could find nothing against him except in the law of his God. But that very statement was an approval of the law of his God, obedience to which made him the faithful man that he was.

Monday: Jesus Is Our Mediator – In a world of sin and wickedness the one who is believing in Christ as mediator is being kept from the iniquity that surrounds him, that is even in his very flesh ready to spring upon him. When the three Hebrew captives were thrown into the furnace of fire, the fire had no power upon their bodies, “nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them” (Daniel 3:27). There was with them in the furnace One who had said, “I will be with thee,” and “when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned” (Isaiah 43:2). He it is that is pledged to keep the believing one in the midst of the consuming fire of sin. We cannot endure it alone; we always fall, and the fiery darts strike into the soul. The prayer of David must be ours continually, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a constant spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10). Thank God, when our faith has not held Him fast, and we find the enemy has found us and touched us, there is still the promise following the injunction, “sin not.” “And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1). He looses and sets us free again. But He sets us free that we may hold steadfastly by a firmer faith to Him. In the bitterness of sin we are taught our own weakness and also our worthlessness, and in the sweetness of His forgiveness we are taught His power to save.

Tuesday: Jesus Is Our Champion – “The humanity of Christ received the fallen foe and engaged in battle with him. He was sustained in the conflict by divine power just as man will be sustained by his being a partaker of the divine nature. He gained victory after victory as our Champion, the Captain of our salvation, and the divine approval of God and all the universe of heaven flowed into His soul. His nature was shocked almost unto death, but the heavenly angels ministered unto the suffering One” {6LtMs, Ms 57, 1890, par. 14}. “The Son of the infinite God is brought into the tenderest sympathies with the tempted church. He knows how to succor those who shall be tempted, because He was Himself tempted” {p.15}.

Wednesday: Jesus Is Our High Priest – The faith which looks unto Jesus, beholds Him engaged in His priestly work before His Father. That work is a work typified by the work of the high priest in the sanctuary built by Moses which was a pattern of this true sanctuary above (Hebrews 9:23-24). When the work is finished He will change His priestly garments for the robes of a King, “appear the second time, without sin and salvation” (verses 9:24-28).

Thursday: Jesus Mediates a Better Covenant – Christ “is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises” (Hebrews 8:6). The old was ratified by the blood of beasts, which could never take away sin (Hebrews 10:4, 11). But the new was ratified by the blood of Christ which “taketh away the sins of the world” (John 1:29)