

Sabbath School Lesson #5 – Jesus, *the Giver of Rest* – 22-28 January 2022

Christ would have us enter God's rest. The apostle says: "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9). After "God ended His work which He had made," "He rested on the seventh day" (Genesis 2:2), that is, He had Sabbath. God rested, not because He was weary, but because His work was finished. When work is finished, and is well done, nothing but rest remains. In six days God finished His work, and as He surveyed it, He pronounced it "very good." It was without fault before Him. Since God's work was done and well done at the close of the sixth day, "He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made" (Genesis 2:2). He had no regrets. Every portion of the work, even man, was as perfect as it was possible for it to be. God took pure delight in contemplating the work from which He was resting because it was complete and perfect.

This is the rest which He offers to us. It is not something that He imposes on us, but which He in everlasting love and kindness gives to us. Rest is not a task that is laid on one. It is not a burden. They who look upon the Sabbath as a burden, have no idea of what the Sabbath of the Lord is. It is rest, perfect, unalloyed rest. Jesus Christ is the One by whom the worlds were made, "for in Him were all things created, in the heavens, and upon the earth" (Colossians 1:16), therefore He is the one who offers us this rest. To every soul He clearly cries, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). The rest is found in Him, because in Him the works of God are completed. In Him is the new creation, and "therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17). On the cross Jesus cried, "It is finished" (John 19:30), thus showing that in His cross we find that perfect rest that comes alone from the finished work of the Lord.

This rest is gained by faith. "We which believe do enter into rest" (Hebrews 4:3). How so? – Because by faith we have the finished, perfect work of the Lord as our own. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent" (John 6:29). Believing Him means receiving Him; and since in Him the works of God are complete, it follows that by believing on Him we find the rest. The rest that Jesus gives is rest from sin. The heavy laden whom He calls to Him are those who are burdened with the weight of their sins. All men are thus burdened, "for all have sinned" (Romans 3:23). Our best works are utterly worthless. Christ will have a people who are "zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14-15), but the good works must be those which God Himself has wrought for us in Christ. Only His work is enduring. "His work is honourable and glorious; and His righteousness endureth for ever" (Psalms 111:3). Therefore, "by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast; for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before prepared, that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:8-10). It is "not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He poured out upon us richly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus 3:5-6). O that we may pray for wisdom to grasp this truth!

It is by the works of God, therefore, that we are saved, and not by our own. Good works there are in abundance, and they are for us too, but through no work of our own; solely through the perfect work of God in Jesus Christ. If the works were our own, then the rest would be our own; but God gives us His rest, not ours, because only His works can yield perfect rest. "He hath made His wonderful works to be remembered" (Psalms 111:4), or, literally, "He hath made a memorial for His wondrous works." That memorial is the seventh day, the day on which He rested from all His works. That day He has blessed and sanctified, made holy. Its holiness has never departed from it, for "whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever" (Ecclesiastes 3:14). No matter what man does, nor regards the day, it remains holy.

"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9); and the seventh day, which God for ever declares to be His rest, is that by which He makes known to us the perfection of His rest, because it calls us to contemplate a finished and perfect new creation. It reveals to us the everlasting God, the unwearied, almighty Creator, who has wrought and laid up great goodness for them that trust in Him before the sons of men (Psalms 31:19). It reminds us that we are "complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power"

(Colossians 2:10). Although we have sinned, and brought the curse upon God's perfect creation, the cross of Christ that bears the curse, restores and perpetuates the perfect work of God, so that through it we may stand without fault before the throne of God, just as when man was first made. "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift" (2 Corinthians 9:15).

Sunday: The Land as a Place of Rest – In Exodus 4:23 and Psalm 105:43-45 we learn that the Israelites could not serve the Lord in Egypt. In Exodus 5:5 we learn that Moses and Aaron made the people "rest from their burdens." When Moses and Aaron came with the message of God (Exodus 1:29-31) they attempted a reform, which only increased their oppression. God took them to the land of Canaan from where they could keep the Sabbath.

Monday: Because of Unbelief – Like ancient Israelites, many Adventists will not enter because of unbelief. "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). We are told: "When the third angel's message is received in its fullness, health reform will be given its place in the councils of the Conference, in the work of the church, in the home, at the table, and in all the household arrangements" {CH 434.2}. "A diet of flesh meat tends to develop animalism. A development of animalism lessens spirituality, rendering the mind incapable of understanding truth" {CH 575.4}. "As the storm approaches, a large class who professed faith in the third angel's message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, abandon their position and join the ranks of the opposition" {GC 608.2}. Many professed Adventists will fall because they are not sealed as in "settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved" {LDE 219.4}, because they would not be sanctified by health reform, as they have rendered their "mind incapable of understanding truth" by which truth they should have been sealed. Like ancient Israelites, many Adventists who have disbelieved health reform "will not enter in because of unbelief" (Hebrews 3:19).

Tuesday: Today, If You Hear His Voice – God had promised rest to the Israelites, but they rebelled against Him, and "so we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief" (Hebrews 3:19). Does He set another day? "Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief; again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To-day, after so long a time; as it is said, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (4:6-7). That other day is *to-day*. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Wednesday: Entering Into His Rest – The Israelites failed to enter into the Sabbath, to rest in the works of God. Many today do not enter the rest of the Sabbath, for they attempt to keep the Sabbath through their own works. The fact that "they could not enter in because of unbelief," shows that they would have entered in if they had believed; and the fact that perfect rest was all ready for them, is still further shown by the statement, "the works were finished from the foundation of the world" (Hebrews 4:3). When works are finished, rest must ensue; accordingly we read that "God did rest the seventh day from all His works" (verse 4). That is what God said in one place of the seventh day; but in another place He said, "They shall not enter into My rest" (verse 5). We see, therefore, that the rest which was ready, and which the children of Israel did not enter into because of unbelief, was the rest connected with the seventh day. For it was God's rest that was offered them, and it was His rest that they failed to secure, and the seventh day is the Sabbath – rest of the Lord. The Sabbath is the only rest of which we read in connection with God – God rested on the seventh day from all His work – and that rest was ready as soon as the work of creation was completed.

Thursday: A Foretaste of New Creation – We must keep the Sabbath now to keep it in future. But Sabbath rest is only by the Spirit of Christ in us (Galatians 4:6). Only those who are spiritual can truly keep the Sabbath of the Lord. So long as Adam was led by the Spirit, he enjoyed perfect rest, both of body and soul; but as soon as he sinned, he lost the rest. But although the curse upon the earth causes weariness of body, the Sabbath still remains from Eden, the pledge and seal of spiritual rest. The abstaining from all secular work and our own pleasure on the seventh day – from everything by which we could personally profit – is simply in recognition of the Lord as our Creator and upholder of all things – the one by whose power we live. Sabbath keeping involves rest from our own work on the seventh day, but he who does no more than this does not keep the Sabbath of the Lord. As the Sabbath was the seal of a perfect creation, so it is the seal of a perfect new creation in Christ Jesus.