

Sabbath School Lesson #9 – Jesus, *the Perfect Sacrifice* – 19-26 February 2022

Christ “is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises” (Hebrews 8:6). The old covenant, made by the people, 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).

Sunday: Why Were Sacrifices Needed? – When the Jews at Sinai volunteered to work God’s works for Him, they undertook their own salvation. They ignored the history of Abraham, and God’s covenant with him, to which their attention had been specially called. But God is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance; and so, in harmony with His covenant with Abraham, He did not cast off the people, but endeavoured to teach them of Himself and His salvation, even out of their unbelief. He gave them a system of sacrifices and offerings, and a daily and yearly round of ceremonies that were exactly in keeping with the law which they had elected to keep, namely, the law of works. The faithful among the people understood this well. David said, after he had committed a great sin, “Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it: Thou delightest not in burnt offering” (Psalm 51:16). And God, through the prophets, taught the people: “To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me?” “I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats” (Isaiah 1:11). “Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto Me” (Jeremiah 6:20). There was no virtue in them, for the law had only “a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things,” and could “never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect” (Hebrews 10:1). It would of course have been better, nay, the very best thing, if the people of Israel had preserved the simple and strong faith of Abraham and Moses, in which case they would have had no tabernacle but the one “which the Lord pitched, and not man;” no High Priest except Christ Himself, “made an High Priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek;” no limit to the priesthood, but every one of them a priest “to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ;” no law but “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ;” in short, only the reality, and not the mere shadow. But since the people did not believe, it was a wonderful exhibition of God’s kindness and love and forbearance, that He gave them what must have served as a continual object lesson. The very “weakness and unprofitableness” (Hebrews 7:18) of the law of works was always apparent to every thoughtful person; and when the soul became awakened, that law whose only profit was conviction, and whose only power was death, directed them to Christ, to whom it shut them up for freedom and life. It made evident to them that in Christ, and in Him alone, they could find salvation. The truth as it is in Jesus, is the truth that sanctifies.

Monday: Diverse Kinds of Sacrifices – They had diverse kinds, yet “All things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee” (1 Chronicles 29:14). In addition to their tithes, the Israelites spent much in offerings. There were special offerings, such as sin-offerings, peace-offerings, and thank-offerings. The name of each of these is sufficiently descriptive. For the law in regard to them, see Leviticus 4, 5, and 7. The point to be remembered is that these sacrifices cost something, the cost of varying with the wealth or position of the one making the offering. Those ancient Jews had no idea that a man could profess to be a religious man for a score of years, and yet contribute nothing to the cause. And they really seemed to think that there was something disreputable in dead-head worship, even when they could worship for nothing as well as not. When there was a plague upon Israel on account of David’s sin in numbering the people, the prophet directed the king to “rear an altar unto the Lord in the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite.” Accordingly David went up, and was met by Araunah, to whom he told his errand. “And Araunah said unto David, Let my Lord the king take and offer up what seemeth good unto him: behold, here be oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing instruments and other instruments of the oxen for wood. All these things did Araunah, as a king, give unto the king. And Araunah said unto the king, The Lord thy God accept thee” (2 Samuel 24:22-23). Imagine now that you hear David say, How providential! Here is everything ready; I could worship God, and it will cost me a farthing. But no; David had a better idea of what true worship is. “And the king

said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price." That, you say, was very natural; the king did not want to be under obligation to anybody. But it was not because he was averse to receiving a gift that he refused Araunah's offer; there was a principle involved. Here is his reason: "Neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing." And the result was that "David bought the threshing-floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver." We hear much about the superior privileges of the Christian dispensation; of the increased light that we enjoy. Very true; but do we realize the responsibility that these rich blessings bring? If the ancients had such exalted ideas of the sacredness and importance of the worship of God, what ought we to do? Do we appreciate the blessings that God is showering upon us without measure? Gratitude will show itself in a tangible form as well now as it would three thousand years ago. It is true that "salvation is free," but is it any freer now than it was then? Did the patriarchs and prophets buy their salvation with their tithes and offerings? Did not they obtain pardon for sin through Christ alone, as well as we? Most certainly. All that they could do or give would not purchase the pardon of a single sin, and this they knew; but they had a deep sense of the amazing love of God in holding out to them a free pardon through Christ, and their hearts overflowed with gratitude. Salvation is indeed free, but it has cost a price beyond the comprehension even of angels, and when men begin to realize its value, they will not be anxious to avoid making sacrifices, but, with David, their cry will be, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people" (Psalms 116:12-17).

Tuesday: Jesus' Perfect Sacrifice – "In the beginning, the head of each family was considered ruler and priest of his own household. Afterward, as the race multiplied upon the earth, men of divine appointment performed this solemn worship of sacrifice for the people. The blood of beasts was to be associated in the minds of sinners with the blood of the Son of God. The death of the victim was to evidence to all that the penalty of sin was death. By the act of sacrifice, the sinner acknowledged his guilt, and manifested his faith, looking forward to the great and perfect sacrifice of the Son of God, which the offering of beasts prefigured. Without the atonement of the Son of God there could be no communication of blessing, or salvation from God to man. God was jealous for the honor of His law. The transgression of that law caused a fearful separation between God and man. To Adam in his innocency was granted communion, direct, free and happy, with his Maker. After his transgression, God would communicate to man through Christ and angels" {1SP 53.3}.

Wednesday: The Cross and the Cost of Forgiveness – "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and to them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:28). He still bears the sins of many, even our sins. Yet in Him is no sin. But His work is not complete until He comes again to take His own upon Himself. As surely as He was here once, so surely will He come again. "This same Jesus" (Acts 1:11), "the Lord Himself" (1 Thessalonians 4:16), shall come again. Those who know Him as the sin-bearer, who have made His acquaintance in their flesh, cannot fail to look with longing for the time to come when they shall see Him whom not having seen they love.

Thursday: Judgment and the Character of God – If one rejects and despise the power of Christ, having once tasted it, it is impossible to renew him again to repentance (Hebrews 6:4-6). If now, one treads underfoot the Son of God, and counts the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing (Hebrews 10:29), it is evident that there is no hope for such person. Christ died to deliver every man from sin to everlasting life. All Christ's deliverance is "according to the will of our God and Father" (Galatians 1:4). The will of God is our sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:3). God wills that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). God "accomplishes all things to the counsel of His will" (Ephesians 1:11). It is the love of God that whosoever believes in Christ should not perish (John 3:16). This love is extended to everyone. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation has appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11). God has wrought out salvation for every man and has given it to him; but the majority spurn it and throw it away. Christ hath brought life to light for all (2 Timothy 1:10). The judgment will reveal the fact that full salvation was given to all men and that the lost have deliberately thrown away their birth right possession.