

Sabbath School Lesson #4 – The Flood – 16-22 April 2022

Christ speaking of the times which should immediately precede His coming, said, “But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Matthew 24:37). And in reading the Scripture we find that “violence” was one of the principal evils that characterised the days of Noah. “The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.” As therefore violence specially characterised the days of Noah, we are to expect the growth and prevalence of violence as time draws on toward the coming of Christ. Paul says that “in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof” (2 Timothy 3:1-5). It is a fearful picture, but the same word says, “But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse.” When men are possessed with such dispositions as are here named, it would seem that time would be about as bad as it could be; but when it is clearly and positively stated that these same characters and dispositions shall grow worse and worse, it is plain that the days of Noah will be repeated, and earth will be filled with violence.

Sunday: Preparation for the Flood – Why was only Noah’s family saved? What lesson can we learn from the Noah story regarding our role in warning the world about coming judgment? The Apostle Paul writes, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting” (1 Timothy 1:15-16). There is another pattern held up before men, in contrast with this. Peter tells us that God “spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly” (2 Peter 2:5-6). The one pattern can be distinctly seen only by those who believe; the other is visible to all persons, whether they believe or not. The contrast here is not in the dealings of God with men, but in the attitude of men toward God. God displays His mercy and longsuffering toward all. His judgments have never fallen without this. “The longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing” (1 Peter 3:20). It waited in the days of Lot, while he “sat in the gate of Sodom.” The fate of the wicked city has passed down in the history linked with the wonderful testimony of God’s forbearance which appears in His conversation with Abraham, when He declared that for the sake of ten righteous persons only, it should still be spared. So also God “endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction” before sending destruction upon Pharaoh and his host of Egyptians (Romans 9:22). The same longsuffering and grace that was manifested in the life of the great apostle was held out to those who perished, but they did not see it. They did not have faith. Paul believed, and they did not believe. That made all the difference in their history. Saul persecuting and making havoc of the church, and Pharaoh oppressing the chosen people of God, stood in a similar position. The apostle declared that he was the chief of sinners. He had no more claim upon the mercy and grace of God than had Pharaoh or the inhabitants of Sodom. His glorious career as Paul the apostle was the result simply of his faith. He believed on the name of Christ, and was set forth for a pattern to those that should believe thereafter, that all might be encouraged to have faith. By faith we see not merely condemnation and impending judgment where sin abounds, but grace “much more” abounding. We see God not only as just, but as the justifier of him who believes. We see mercy standing before judgment in all His dealings; we see the bow of the covenant before His throne, and the lightnings and thunders in the background. The patterns He has set before us encourage us to put our trust in Him. Sin, not God, is our enemy; and faith in Him-simple trust-is the victory over every foe.

Monday: The Event of the Flood – Let us learn the lesson from the flood destroying the old to have the new. What in us needs to be destroyed in order to be created anew? Paul

helps us to answer that question when we read Romans 6. "If I build up again those things which I destroyed, I prove myself a transgressor." We ask again, What was destroyed, the building up of which will prove us to be transgressors? Remembering that the apostle is talking of those who have believed in Jesus Christ, that they might be justified by the faith of Christ, we find the answer to the question in Romans 6:6: "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Also Colossians 2:10-11: "Ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power; in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." That which is destroyed is the body of sin, and it is destroyed only by this personal presence of the life of Christ. It is destroyed in order that we may be freed from its power, and may no longer need to serve it. It is destroyed for everybody, for Christ in His own flesh has abolished "the enmity," the carnal mind; not His own, for He had none, but ours. Our sins, our weaknesses, were upon Him. For every soul the victory has been gained, and the enemy has been disarmed. We have only to accept the victory which Christ has won. The victory over all sin is already a reality; our faith in it makes it real to us. The loss of faith puts us outside the reality, and the old body of sin looms up again. That which is destroyed by faith is built up again by unbelief. Remember that this destruction of the body of sin, although performed by Christ for all, is, nevertheless, a present, personal matter with each individual.

Tuesday: The End of the Flood – What does the expression "God remembers" mean? What does this truth mean for us — how has God shown you that He "remembers" you? When the Lord says that he remembers a certain thing, He does not imply that that thing has ever passed from His mind, for that is impossible. Nothing can ever escape Him. But, as we find in various instances, He thus indicates that He is about to perform that thing. In the final judgment of Babylon it is said, "God hath remembered her iniquities" (Revelation 18:5). "And great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath" (Revelation 16:19). "God remembered Noah," and caused the flood to cease, but we know that not for one moment while Noah was in the ark was he forgotten, for not even a sparrow is forgotten. See also Genesis 19:29; 30:22: and 1 Samuel 1:19, for the use of the word "remember" in the sense of being about to fulfil the thing promised.

Wednesday: The Covenant: Part 1 – What do we learn from Genesis 9:2? In order 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." 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 restored.

Thursday: The Covenant: Part 2 – What is the significance of the rainbow? forgiveness. God said to Noah: "This is the token of the covenant which I make between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set My bow in the cloud." Ezekiel saw "visions of God," he saw "the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud ... the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord." When God sets His bow in the clouds, it is the bow of promise, for He gave His word. Jeremiah, on pleading for forgiveness for the people of God, said, "do not disgrace the throne of Thy glory." For God to break His word would be to make His glorious bow of no effect. The rainbow shows the steadfastness of God's word, no more flood, and assurance of the mercy of God in the forgiveness of sins. To His people God says: "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee" (Isaiah 54:7-9). Let clouds of sins be never so threatening, the glory of God's word of grace shining upon it will bring into full view the bow of promise, and we shall remember that there is forgiveness with Him, that He may be feared. So even the clouds of darkness that overshadow the earth may bear to us a message of comfort.