

Sabbath School Lesson #4 – The Old Testament Hope – 15-21 October 2022

Christ would have us know the old Testament hope. Paul wrote: “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure” (Hebrews 11:17, 19).

Sunday: I Shall See God – Reflecting on the story of Job, how can we learn to trust God even amid the harsh unfairness of life? “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him: but I will maintain mine own ways before Him” (Job 13:15). These were not stereotyped words which fell from lips of a thoughtless person; but they came from the heart of one who had been severely chastened by the hand of the Lord, who “doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men” (Lamentations 3:33). Death had again and again entered his home, clothed in its most terrible forms; and afflictions, compared with which death seemed a message of mercy, had fallen to his lot. Repeatedly had he been almost crushed beneath the weight of his trials; but in the darkness, however, his faith had gained the victory, and he could say triumphantly, “Though he slay me yet will I trust in him.” How many of us can adopt his language? Are we not prone to complain of our condition, even when called upon to endure the comparatively trifling cares of every-day life? Do we not murmur against God every hour, and continually charge Him with injustice? While enjoying prosperity, we persuade ourselves but too easily that we possess true and living faith in God; but when He allows trials upon us, when those dear to us are fall in death, and we see the instability of earthly things, our cry is oftener, “Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!” (Job 23:3) than “Yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15). Oh! do not let us be satisfied with our cold, weak, half-hearted faith; but let us, by earnest pleading at the throne of grace, through strength given us by the Lord Jesus Christ, gain the victory over unbelief, and so confide in our heavenly Father, that, whatever may befall, we may acknowledge His goodness, and accept seeming evil, as well as known good, from His loving hand with thankful hearts.

Monday: From the Power of the Grave – How does David in Psalms 49 compare the death of the wicked to the death of the righteous? Let us do this comparison as if standing in the very time of David, knowing that the righteous that died back then would be in the First resurrection, whereas all the righteous that died in the third angel’s message, since around 1844, can only be in the special or partial resurrection (Daniel 2:2; see Thursday below). At the First resurrection, the wicked shall “remain in the tomb” when the righteous are raised. It will not be until after a thousand years after the righteous are raised that the wicked are also raised. Those who remain in the tomb when the righteous are resurrected will be subjects of the second death. Says David, “He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light. Man that is in honour and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish” (Psalm 49:19-20). Regarding the contrast in verse 15, “God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave.” The wicked are not redeemed from the power of the grave, for they are raised to receive sentence, just as the prisoner is brought out of prison into the court to receive his sentence. “The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law” (1 Corinthians 15:56). Thus, the wicked are brought forth to the day of wrath because the law holds them under condemnation; the law holds them because sin is in them; they died with sin in their hearts.

Tuesday: “From the Depths of the Earth” – What did David mean when he asked God to bring him up “again from the depths of the earth” (Psalm 71:20)? He meant to follow in the faith of Abraham who believed in the resurrection unto salvation when he offered up Isaac. David says, “Thou which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken [give life to] me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth” (Psalm 71:20). And, “As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness” (Psalm 17:15). And what shall we more say. For space would fail us to tell of Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Micah, and all the prophets and apostles, and of our fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – the hope of resurrection they all had, – for Jesus Himself, speaking to Sadducees who did not believe in resurrection, declared that it was the resurrection of the dead of which God spake when He said, “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Matthew 22:31-32).

More than this, Jesus pointed His disciples always to the resurrection of the dead, through which alone they could obtain the reward which He promised. In reading John 6:29-54 we find that no less than four times, the Saviour, in giving promise to those who believe in Him, sets it forth as the consummation of that belief that, "I will raise him up at the last day."

Wednesday: "Your Dead Shall Live" – As the sting of death is sin, as it is sin that will hold men in the prison of death until raised for destruction, what lesson do we who are still alive learn from the power of resurrection? The prophet Isaiah sang thus to God's people concerning the resurrection: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead" (Isaiah 26:19). The power by which this will be accomplished, is the power by which men are now made alive, who are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). Jesus set it forth in these words: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:25-29). No one who believes in the resurrection of the dead, can have any doubt as to Christ's power to raise any man from the death of sin to the life of righteousness; and no one can doubt His power to raise the dead, if he but diligently reads the story of His life in the four Gospels.

Thursday: Those Who Sleep in the Dust – Reading Daniel 12, what resurrection hope is found here, in the writings of this great prophet? It is the special resurrection hope (Daniel 12:2), which is the only resurrection hope for the righteous who die between when the third angel's message begun to be proclaimed just after 1844 and when the probation shall close at the commencement of the last seven plagues. After John saw the work of the third angel, he exclaimed: "Here is the patience of the saints" (Revelation 14:12). And then, John heard a voice from heaven command him: "Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth;" and the response of the Spirit was, "Yea, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them" (Revelation 14:13). "From henceforth" must signify from some particular point of time. This time is marked by the commencement of the third angel's message, which third angel's message begun around after 1844. "From henceforth," those who die in that message are blessed to be among the 144,000 (Revelation 7 and 14). If you die before close of probation by commencement of the last seven plagues, then you form part of the 144,000 literal number (Revelation 14:1-4). Those who die after having become identified with the third angel's message (Revelation 14), are evidently numbered as a part of the 144,000; for this message is the same as the sealing message of Revelation 7, and by that message only 144,000 were sealed. If you have had a religious experience under the third angel's message, but die before close of probation, you die in the Lord, and hence are counted as sealed, and will be saved. But the third angel's message results in the sealing of only 144,000; hence very important that we heed this counsel: "Let us strive with all the power that God has given us to be among the hundred and forty-four thousand" {RH March 9, 1905 Par 5}. There are only two resurrections for those who die in Christ – the great multitude (from Abel to just after 1844), and the 144,000 (from just after 1844 to the close of probation). Those who die since after 1844, being raised in the special resurrection (Daniel 12:2; Revelation 1:7) which occurs when the voice of God is uttered from the temple, at the beginning of the seventh and last plague (Revelation 16:17; Joel 3:16; Hebrews 12:26), they pass through the period of that plague, and hence may be said to come "out of great tribulation" (Revelation 7:14), and being raised from the grave only to mortal life, they take their stand with believers who have not died, and with them receive immortality at the last trump (1 Corinthians 15:52), being then, with the others, changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Thus, though they have passed through the grave, it can be said of them at last, that they are "redeemed from among men" (Revelation 14:4), that is, from among the living; for the coming of Christ finds them among the living, waiting for the change to immortality, like those who have not died, and as if they themselves had never died.