

Sabbath School Lesson #2 – God’s Grand, Christ Centered Plan – 1-7 July 2023

Christ would have us know God’s grand plan to reconcile and sustain us. Paul says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3). What does this mean? “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Romans 5:10). It is the death of Christ that brings us to God; what is it that keeps us there? – It is the life of Christ. We are saved by His life. In John 1:4 we read, “In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.” He alone has life, and He gives that life to as many as will accept it (John 17:2). Then Christ has the life, and He is the only one who has it, and He is willing to give it to us. Now what is that life? “And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent” (verse 3). Has a person who knows Christ eternal life? He says in John 3:36: “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” How do we know that we have this life? “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him” (1 John 3:14-15). “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son” (1 John 5:10). “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son” (verse 11). We are to believe that God has given to us eternal life in Christ. As long as we have the literal Son of God, we have eternal life. By our faith in the word of God we bring Christ into our hearts. Paul prays that he may know Him and the “power of His resurrection.” What is the power of that resurrection? In Ephesians 2:4-7 we read: “But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us [made us alive] together with Christ (by grace ye are saved).” Notice, He “hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” We were dead, we are quickened, and we are raised up to sit in heavenly places with Christ. We must have, and we can have, the life of Christ today; for when He comes, He will change our vile bodies by the same power by which He has changed our hearts. The heart must be changed now. It cannot be changed except by the life of Christ coming in and abiding in it.

Sunday: Chosen and Accepted in Christ – Let us dwell on Ephesians 1:4, which says that we have been chosen in Him, Christ, “before the foundation of the world.” What does that mean? How does it reveal to us God’s love for us and His desire for us to be saved? Everything is in Christ. We receive all spiritual blessings in Him; we are chosen in Him unto holiness; in Him we are predestinated unto the adoption of children; in Him we are accepted; and in Him we have redemption through His blood. “God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:9). All are chosen to serve and be saved, but many reject God’s calling to salvation. Paul was “called to be an apostle” (Romans 1:1). That God chose Saul to be an apostle, before Saul himself had any thought that he should ever be even a Christian, is evident from the sacred narrative. On his way to Damascus, whilst, “breathing out threatening and slaughter,” he was proceeding with full authority to seize, bind, and drag to prison all Christians, both men and women, Saul was suddenly arrested, not by human hands, but by the overpowering glory of the Lord. Three days afterward the Lord said to Ananias, when sending him to give Saul his sight, “He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles” (Acts 9:15). God arrested Saul in his mad career of persecution, because He had chosen him to be an apostle. So we see that the pricks against which Saul had been kicking were the strivings of the Spirit to turn him to the work to which he had been called. How long before this had Saul been chosen to be the messenger of the Lord? – from his mother’s womb (Galatians 1:15). From his birth Saul had been “separated unto the Gospel of God.” This was no new thing. The work of Samson and of John the Baptist was laid out for them before they were born (Judges 13:2-14; Luke 1:13-17). Jeremiah was chosen before his birth for a prophet of God (Jeremiah 1:4-5). Pharaoh, the haughty, defiant king of Egypt, had also been chosen to make the name of God known throughout all the earth (Exodus 9:15-16), but he refused to do it as the

acknowledged servant of the Lord, and so the work had been accomplished through his obstinacy. Judgment will reveal wonderful opportunities men have recklessly flung away.

Monday: Costly Redemption; Lavish Forgiveness – Read Ephesians 1:7-8;

“Redemption” is an idea that is used frequently in the New Testament; Compare the uses of the idea in Colossians 1:13-14; Titus 2:13-14; and Hebrews 9:15.; What themes do these passages share in common with Ephesians 1:7-8? The theme is indicated by the apostle when he says that to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ is to make all see “what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world have been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 3:9), that in the fulness of times He will gather together in one household all things in Christ, both things in heaven and things on the earth.

Tuesday: God’s Grand, Christ-Centered Plan – What is God’s “plan for the fullness of time,” and how extensive is its reach? God’s plan is “that in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth” (Ephesians 1:10). God’s plan is extensive in its reach that after putting everything under Christ, then Christ will be under God. “For He hath put all things under His feet. But when He saith all things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted, which did put all things under Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:27-28). Then from “every created thing which is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and on the sea, and all things that are in them,” will be heard with one voice, “Unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honour, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever” (Revelation 5:13).

Wednesday: Living in Praise of His Glory – What is the difference between working to get something and inheriting it instead? How does this idea help us understand what we have been given in Jesus? We need humility to understand it. God’s way must be prepared in the hearts of His people. This preparation is humility of heart, the acknowledgment that “all flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field” (Isaiah 40:6-7). And when the heart is thus brought low, the way is prepared for the Lord to manifest Himself. But God is light, so that whenever He appears in the way, His glory is revealed. That way is in His people; so that the glory of the Lord is to be revealed in the hearts and lives of men, and all are to see it there, even if they do not recognise it as God’s glory. Some will see it, and will rejoice in the light. “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth’s sake” (Psalms 115:1). The heavens make no claim for themselves, so they show forth God’s glory, and are themselves glory. So when we are willing that self shall sink out of sight, confess that we are nothing, and make no claim to distinction, we also may be “to the praise of His glory” (Ephesians 1:12). The glory will show as good works wrought by God in us, and will be nothing to attract people to us. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2).

Thursday: The Holy Spirit: Seal and Down Payment – What does Paul mean that “ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise” (Ephesians 1:13)? Christ hath redeemed us, “that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Galatians 3:14). Do not make the mistake of reading this as though it were ‘that we might receive the promise of the gift of the Spirit.’ It does not say that, and it does not mean that, as a little thought will show. He has redeemed us, and that fact proves the gift of the Spirit, for it was only “through the eternal Spirit” that He offered Himself without spot to God (Heb. 9:14). But for the Spirit, we should not know that we were sinners; much less should we know redemption. The Spirit convinces of sin and of righteousness (John 16:8). “He that believeth hath the witness in himself” (1 John 5:10). Christ is crucified in every man; that is shown in the fact that we are all under the curse, and Christ alone, on the cross, bears the curse. But it is through His own Spirit that Christ dwells on earth among men. Faith enables us to receive the testimony of this witness, and rejoice in that which the possession of the Spirit assures. Thus Paul says, “God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Galatians 4:4-6).