

Sabbath School Lesson #12 – Worship That Never Ends – 16-22 March 2024

Christ would have us learn to sing praises unto God as long as we live. “I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being” (Psalm 104:33). “It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High; ... for thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work; I will triumph in the works of thy hands” (Psalm 92:1, 4). “The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein” (Psalm 111:2). These works, the heavens and the earth, are so wonderful that when they were finished “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” Now God “hath showed his people the power of his works, that he may give them the heritage of the heathen” (Psalm 111:6). “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works,” by the same power by which God in the beginning created the heavens and the earth. The creation of a new man in Christ is as wonderful a work as the creation of a new world. This is why there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repents, even as there was when the earth was created. All heaven is witness to the fact that it is a good thing to sing praises to the name of the Most High. What makes it so good a thing for us, is the fact that in God’s works we triumph, and His works are our salvation.

Sunday: Lift Up Your Hands in the Sanctuary – Read Psalm 134. Where is the worship offered here? What is the outcome of the worship of the Lord? We read this: “Behold, bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, which by night stand in the house of the Lord. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord. The Lord that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion” (Psalm 134:1-3). The worship takes place in the sanctuary on earth, which was a pattern of the heavenly sanctuary, and the outcome is that the Lord bless those who worship Him in the sanctuary. What about the worship style that involves waiving and lifting hands? The practice of the waiving of hands during worship is increasing in our churches. This practice is often seen as a non-verbal way of showing appreciation or an assent to what is being preached or sang. Sometimes the uplifted hand is also used during prayers. Often, the book of Psalms is used as the main support. A careful study of the Bible reveals that hands were only lifted in prayer, and the waving and lifting hands in other times as we see it today is unbiblical. There are a number of Bible passages that speak about the raising of hands. The overwhelming evidence in Scripture, however, suggests that the practice was normally employed in prayer and supplication. For example, in Psalm 28:2, “Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, when I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle” is an attitude to prayer (see Lamentations 3:41 “Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens”). Psalm 63:1-6, communicates “joy, praise, thanksgiving, and longing for God” in prayer, especially the tone of verse 4. Other texts are all in the context of prayer: Psalm 119:48; Psalm 141:2; Psalm 143:1, 6-7; 1 Kings 8:54; Nehemiah 8:6; Lamentations 2:19; Lamentations 3:40-43. It is quite clear from the relevant Bible texts that the “lifting of hands” was used during prayer. It was not used to show appreciation, approval, or as a form of non-verbal applause. It was a gesture showing a person’s desire to walk in the ways of the Lord and this was only used in prayer. Moreover, even in prayer, it is only holy hands that should be lifted, Paul says “lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting” (1 Timothy 2:8). The lifting of hands in prayer is figurative of a character without moral defilement, with the hands symbolising holy deeds. God calls for leaders who will have a living connection with God to lift-up their holy hands in supplication for the people they lead to be spared.

Monday: Sing to the Lord a New Song – “O sing unto the Lord a new song; for he hath done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory” (Psalm 98:1). Why should we sing because the Lord’s right hand and holy arm have gained the victory for Him? Because His victory is ours. The Lord has made common cause with us, linking His fate with ours. Every assault on us, is an assault on Him. Nay, more, He has assumed the sole responsibility, so that the battle is not ours, but Lord’s. Therefore, whenever tempted to doubt if you can ever gain the victory, forget yourself, and fall to wondering if the Lord can withstand His foes – Oh, but there is no chance for wondering even about that. The Lord has the victory already. Then rejoice because you are safe.

Tuesday: Lord, Who May Abide in Your Tabernacle? – How does the psalmist in Psalm 15 portray the power of the tongue? The Psalmist writes, “Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.... He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not” (Psalm 15:1-4). As the helm controls the ship, so the tongue controls and carries with it the whole body. A lying tongue will go into the lake of fire, but it will take the body with it (Revelation 21:8). While some men may view lying as an occasional necessity, it is not so in the eyes of the Lord. Men are not to speak idly, without thought of the truthfulness or import of their words. He who trifles with the tongue, trifles with life and death. The power of the tongue is one which affects the individual who wields it more than it can affect anyone else. Though it may shoot barbed arrows that cause pain and sorrow in other hearts, their deadliest poison is imparted to the place from whence they came. No greater folly can actuate the mind than that which leads a person to seek revenge on others by poisonous words. They may cause some injury to the one against whom they are spoken, but they must inevitably be more injurious to the speaker. What folly to soil the stream from which we think others must drink, by stirring up filthy and mire within our own minds! Moses made the greatest mistake of his life when, at the rock at Horeb, he “spake unadvisedly with his lips” (Psalm 106:33). Ananias made the greatest mistake in his when, in reply to Peter’s question, he dared to utter a lie (Acts 5:1-5). Such examples might well be kept before the minds of the people of this generation. “What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile” (Psalm 34:12-17). The tongue is a mighty power for good when it is used in the cause of truth. By the blood of Christ and the word of his testimony the Christian overcomes Satan, witnessing as Christ did before Pilate, “a good confession” (1 Timothy 6:13), for “with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:10). When you utter that which is not true, you lower yourself to vanity, and condemn yourself in judgment.

Wednesday: Declare His Glory Among the Nations – What is the significance of the psalmist’s keynote message that “Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth” (Psalm 96:10)? It is to acknowledge and teach others to acknowledge God – the literal Father of our Lord Jesus, a single person – as the only true God above all gods. Thus, the psalmist, in Psalms 96, opens with a call to sing: “O sing unto the Lord a new song....” This is exactly parallel with a passage in Isaiah 42:10-13, where the call to sing unto the Lord a new song is immediately followed by a description of the going forth of the Lord as a warrior. It is the triumph of the Lord over all false gods. It is the same thing that is described in Isaiah 2, when “the day of the Lord shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty.” In this time the new song is to be sung by the people of God. This new song is the song of deliverance. After the 144,000 have gain victory over the Papacy, they will sing “a new song” (Revelation 14:1-3).

Thursday: When God Does Not Delight in Sacrifices – Why does God not delight in mere sacrifices? To teach that salvation is of God, not rooted in our worth or effort. No man could do anything to induce God to bestow salvation upon him; nor could he do anything to earn it (see Ephesians 2:8-9). Salvation is God’s free gift (see Romans 5:15-18; 6:23). There is no intrinsic value in any man’s works. There is nothing pleasing to God in mere sacrifices. 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). The sacrifices God accepts are not of human wealth in the form of works; but “the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise” (Psalm 51:17). The ancient Hebrews had so perverted the worship of God that they imagined there was virtue in the sacrifices which they offered upon their altars, losing sight of the great truth that only as the works of men are connected with what God has Himself provided for man’s salvation have his works any value whatever; that the intrinsic value is in the thing which God has provided, and that the value of works is but derived from connection with this. In Christ’s words in Psalms, “Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire; Mine ears hast Thou opened; burnt offering and sin offering hast Thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God; yea, Thy law is within My heart” (Psalm 40:6-8).