

Sabbath School Lesson #13 – The Triumph of God’s Love – 22-28 June 2024

Christ is soon coming, as King of Kings, and His reward is with Him. To those whose lives have revealed that they have received Christ as their Saviour from sin, the word is, “Come” (Matthew 25:34); and to those who have refused the gift of His love, the word is, “Depart” (Matthew 25:41). The one class have chosen the fellowship of Jesus by His indwelling Spirit (Romans, 8:9; Galatians 4:6), and to them it is granted to enjoy that fellowship to all eternity in the earth made new and fully relieved from the curse and all its effects. “They shall see His face, and His name shall be in their foreheads” (Revelation 22:4). “And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Revelation 21:3-4). The other class have said by their actions, “We will not have this Man to reign over us” (Luke 19:14). Instead of separation from the world they have chosen separation from God, and now this choice is for ever confirmed and they “shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power” (2 Thessalonians 1:9). In the judgment that fellowship with God, which is life, is granted throughout eternity to those who have opened their hearts to the indwelling of God’s presence in Jesus Christ, but eternal separation from God is the lot of those who have refused His presence here. But separation from God is death, “For in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). So, the punishment of the wicked and the reward of the righteous will be of equal duration. Sustained by His own life, the righteous will live as long as God lives. But the wicked, being eternally separated from that life by their own choice, they shall “be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous” (Psalm 69:28); “For yet a little while and the wicked shall not be” (Psalm 37:10).

Sunday: Hope in the Time of Trouble – The Lesson writer says, “there are some who have misunderstood the concept of living through the time of trouble without a mediator.” So, what does it mean? Mediatorial work of Christ begun when man lost his innocence and became a sinner. It will cease only when God’s children in the flesh have been restored to that complete harmony with God which was enjoyed by man before he sinned. When the saints are in perfect harmony with God, the services of the mediator will no longer required. Fully surrendered to Christ, He will make them “holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:27), for “He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25). The words, “to the uttermost” in the Greek reads, “unto all completeness.” He is thus able to save because He lives to intercede, or mediate, for us. Then when He ceases His intercessory work for us just before the end, it will be only when we are saved “unto all completeness,” and have no further need of an intercessor. Then, He will declare: “He that is unjust let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still” (Revelation 22:11). The “filthy” and “unjust” will ever remain so. They are incorrigible. No hope remains for them. Their probation is closed, and the terms of salvation are withdrawn. They need no mediator, for their case is hopeless. On the other hand, the righteous and holy, having passed through the trials of the last days, have reached a state of fixedness, when righteousness and holiness, the qualities of God, have become a permanent possession. They are saved. Their probation is closed. They have no need of a mediator, for they are saved to the uttermost, unto all completeness. The image of God, lost through Adam, has been completely restored through the saving and intercessory work of Christ. And mark well, this occurs before Christ comes, while we are still in the flesh, not having yet received our reward. This enables us to appreciate fully Paul’s prayer: “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

Monday: Hope in Jesus’ Soon Return – What should be our attitude towards Jesus’ soon return? When Jesus was about to leave His disciples, He said: “Let not your heart be troubled ... I will come again” (John 14:1-3). When the thought of Christ’s soon coming

troubles people something is wrong. Many shut their eyes to the evidence that the end is near and are startled when the doctrine of Christ's return is presented. What is needed is such an entire surrender of the heart and a turning to God in the obedience of faith that the thought of the coming of the Saviour in power and glory will be a precious one. It is to those that "love His appearing" that He will give the crown of life "in that day" (2 Timothy 4:8). How can you not be troubled in the time of trouble? In Christ we have the rest; but in order to be made partakers of Christ we must "hold fast the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end" (Hebrews 3:14). Jesus says, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Yet in the very same talk He said, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you" (John 16:27). What! peace in the midst of tribulation? Yes; for take notice that He says, "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." To have tribulation, and yet not be troubled; to be in the midst of danger, and yet have no fear; to be in the heat of battle, and yet enjoy perfect peace, – truly this is giving in a far different way from what the world gives.

Tuesday: The Millennium on Earth – What will be the condition of the earth after the saints are taken to heaven, and of Satan during the millennium? The earth will then be in its original chaotic state; in the condition described as "the deep," "the abyss" or the "bottomless pit." Upon the dark, dreary, desolate place, Satan will be left for a thousand years. Says the prophet: "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled; and after that he must be loosed a little season" (Revelation 20:1-3). Unable to practise any of his hellish deceptions upon men, because there are no living men upon the earth, Satan will be most effectually bound. No humble convict in solitary confinement in the dark cell was ever more surely deprived of liberty.

Wednesday: Judgment in the Millennium – Who will pass judgment on who in the millennium? During the thousand years the righteous will be in heaven, engaged with Christ, in passing judgment upon fallen angels and wicked men (Revelation 20:4; 1 Corinthians 6:1-3). This period of one thousand years comprises the "many days," at the end of which the wicked are to "be visited" (Isaiah 24:22). At the end of that time Satan shall be loosed from his prison, for the wicked will then be raised (Revelation 20:5), and they will have opportunity to practise for a little season the deceptive arts which are his very life. The holy city, the New Jerusalem, will have descended from God out of heaven, and Satan will gather the hosts of the wicked round it, making them believe that they can capture it for their own (Revelation 20:8-9). And then fire shall come down from God out of heaven and devour Satan and all his hosts. That fire shall burn as an oven and the proud and all that do wickedly shall be stubble; and the fire shall burn them up, and shall leave neither root nor branch (see Malachi 4:1).

Thursday: Two Eternities – What does the Lesson writer mean by two eternities? It is the false concept that the wicked live in eternal torment, while the righteous live in eternal joy. Jesus said, "And they shall go away into eternal punishment; but the righteous into life eternal" (Matthew 25:46). A parallel text: "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). Then since that is the punishment of the sinners, and they are to go into everlasting punishment, it follows that they go away into everlasting death. That is as plain as words can make it. And it is further corroborated by the inspired statement that the righteous shall have rest "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). What about "unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:12)? If the firefighters cannot quench fire in a building, it shall utterly be consumed. So shall the wicked be "burned up" with the unquenchable fire. The wicked are called chaff – the case with which they may be consumed. "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch" (Malachi 4:1).