

Sabbath School Lesson #9 – Jerusalem Controversies – 24-30 August 2024

Christ says, “And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses” (Mark 11:25).

This rule requires that we forgive even without a confession on the part of the one who has injured us. Jesus on the cross forgave His greatest enemies, and that without any confession. And our Lord Jesus Christ has taught us to pray, “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matthew 6:12). Says the Apostle, “Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door” (James 5:9).

Sunday: The Triumphal Entry – Read Mark 11:1-11, and Matthew 21:6-16. What mark of respect was paid to Jesus? Who was one of the guests? In the days of Rome, when some leader had been especially successful in conquest, it was customary for the Senate to grant him a triumph, and in the triumphal procession there would often be led some captives brought from the conquered province as evidences of the victory gained. Now it was the mission of Jesus to this world “to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound”, and to wrest this world from the hands of the enemy by His death on the cross. Thus Jesus, in proof of the success of His mission, was attended in His triumphal entry by those whom He had released from the power of His and their enemy. There was Lazarus, who had been rescued “from the power of the grave,” leading on the way; there were those who had been dumb, now using their tongues to shout His praise; there were those who had been deaf, who now hear their own voices calling the chorus of shouts; there were those who had been blind, looking with gratitude upon their benefactor; there were those who had been lame, now conspicuous among those “that went before.” This is a triumphal procession indeed, and the evidences of victory are abundant. No such triumphs as this had ever been accorded to any Roman consul, since no such victory could be gained by force of arms. Infinite love had gained the victory and it was Love’s triumph.

Who were on that procession at the triumphal entry? “The blind to whom He had restored sight pressed on, leading, the way. The dumb whose tongues He had loosed, shouted the loudest hosannas. The cripples whom He had healed, bounded freely on, the most active in breaking the palm branches and in waving them before the Saviour. Widows and orphans were among the multitude, exalting the name of Jesus for His works of mercy to them. The lepers who had been cleansed by a word from Him, and rescued from a living death, spread their untainted garments in His path and hailed Him as the King of Glory. Those who had been awakened by His magic voice from the sleep of death were in that throng. Lazarus, whose body had seen corruption in the grave, now restored to the full strength of glorious manhood, guided the humble beast upon which his Liberator rode” – EG White {2SP 388.2}.

Monday: A Cursed Tree and a Cleansed Temple – Read Mark 11:12-26. What is the significant of the events depicted here? “The disciples could not understand the action of Christ in punishing a tree for its barrenness, and they said unto Him, “Declare unto us the parable of the fig tree.” {13LtMs, Ms 32, 1898, par. 3}. “Just before this Christ had made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. For the second time He had cleansed the temple, and had driven out from its courts the traffickers, saying, “Take these things hence. It is written, My Father’s house shall be called a house of prayer but ye have made it a den of thieves.” [John 2:16; Matthew 21:13.] Dishonest dealing was practiced by the men who brought cattle to sell in the temple courts; but the word of command was given; divinity flashed through humanity, and no priest in his gorgeous dress, or trafficker looking on that countenance, dared to remain. They fled from the temple courts in great haste” {par. 4}. “Now Christ, under the symbol of the blighted tree, presents before His disciples the righteous anger of God as He sees the temple courts desecrated to obtain unlawful gain, and the destruction of the Jewish nation. That tree, flaunting its pretentious foliage in the very face of Christ, was a symbol of the Jewish nation, who had been separating from God until, in their pride and apostasy, they had lost their power of discernment, and knew not their Redeemer. When Christ came into His own nation, they would not receive Him. They were seeking to put Him to death, and this act was to prove their ruin.” “When Christ looked upon the sacrilege of the temple courts, He acted the parable before His disciples as an avenger of the honor of God” {par. 5; par. 6}.

Tuesday: Who Said You Could Do That? – Read Mark 11:27-33. In what ways do our Seventh-day Adventist leaders today question the authority of Christ to work through those He chooses even the laity? The most remarked way is the attack on independent ministries, and instead of celebration that another voice would be proclaiming the gospel, leaders react in horror that it is an independent ministry. “It was as a self-supporting missionary that the apostle Paul labored in spreading the knowledge of Christ throughout the world” – EG White {MH 154.1}. “Let not any living hand, of minister or layman, be laid upon you with the statement, “You cannot go here, you must not go there; we shall not support you if you do not go at our bidding; or if you do not give yourself to the work of bringing souls into the truth in some certain place designated by us.” God will bless you as you continue to search for lost souls in out-of-the-way places” – EG White {PH113 14.2}. “Shall the “regular lines”, which say that every mind shall be controlled by two or three minds at Battle Creek, continue to bear sway? The Macedonian cry is coming from every quarter. Shall men go to the “regular lines” to see whether they will be permitted to labor, or shall they go out and work as best they can, depending on their own abilities and on the help of the Lord, beginning in a humble way and creating an interest in the truth in places in which nothing has been done to give the warning message?” – {SpM 176.5}. “Satan has laid every measure possible that nothing shall come among us as a people to reprove and rebuke us, and exhort us to put away our errors. But there is a people who will bear the ark of God. Some will go out from among us who will bear the ark no longer. But these cannot make walls to obstruct the truth; for it will go onward and upward to the end. In the past God has raised up men, and He still has men of opportunity waiting, prepared to do His bidding – men who will go through restrictions which are only as walls daubed with untempered mortar. When God puts His Spirit upon men, they will work. They will proclaim the word of the Lord; they will lift up their voice like a trumpet. The truth will not be diminished or lose its power in their hands. They will show the people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins” {TM 411.1}.

Wednesday: Earthly Duties and Heavenly Outcomes – Read Mark 12:13-27. How are we to apply the words of Jesus, especially on rendering to Caesar and to God? This applies well on the Sabbath. What is Sabbath? It is rest. Who rested on the seventh day? The Lord thy God. Mark well this fact: the seventh day is never in the scriptures called the Sabbath of the Jews, or of the Greeks, or of the Romans, but always and invariably the Sabbath of the Lord. It was His; and He made it for man (Mark 2:27), to glorify Him, the Creator, and to benefit man, the creature. In the upcoming Sunday Law, men will seek to render to Caesar what belongs to God. Even today, men give the Sabbath to their employers. It is right to be strictly just toward our fellowmen, and to render to all, that which is their due; but while we render to Caesar that which is Caesar’s, let us be very careful to render unto God that which is God’s. The Sabbath is the Lord’s. He Himself hath said so; and so let us render it to Him.

Thursday: The Greatest Commandment – Read Mark 12:28-34. Is the Sabbath the greatest commandment? In what way is it? “The pope has changed the day of rest from the seventh to the first day. He has thought to change the very commandment that was given to cause man to remember his Creator. He has thought to change the greatest commandment in the Decalogue and thus make himself equal with God, or even exalt himself above God” – EG White {EW 65.1}. It is the greatest in a way that it is the only commandment by which we can know and remember God, that we may love and serve him in Spirit and in truth. God is to be known through the works of creation and remembered by keeping His holy Sabbath. We may keep the greatest commandment in the book of the law (Matt 22:36-38; Deut 6:5). “For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments” (1 John 5:3). How can we love him unless we know him? And how can we know him unless we keep his holy Sabbath (see Ezekiel 20:20). When Paul made known the unknown God to the Athenians he referred them back to creation, to the God that made the world (Acts 17:23; 14:15). It is sad that the only commandment that God ever gave in honour of His holy name, should be lightly regarded. Sadly, we are told that within Adventism, “The Sabbath of course, would be lightly regarded, as also the God who created it” {1SM 204.2}. Upon the fourth commandment rests the true obedience of the first, second and third; for not one of these can be kept as they should be, without the knowledge of the true God, which is to be gained by the knowledge of the fourth.