

Sabbath School Lesson #10 – The Last Days – 31 August-6 September 2024

Christ, speaking of the events connected with His coming, said: “And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then shall He send His angels, and shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven” (Mark 13:26-27). Jesus “shall so come in like manner” (Acts 1:11) as He went into heaven. How did He go? While they beheld, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. Then when He comes a cloud will attend Him, and He will be seen. And John testified: “Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him” (Revelation 1:7). He will come “in the glory of His Father” (Matthew 16:17), accompanied by “all the holy angels” (Matthew 25:31). He will then “sit upon the throne of His glory,” and “a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him” (Psalm 50:3). He shall descend “with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God” (1 Thessalonians 4:16), and “the heavens and the earth shall shake” (Joel 3:16). None will be able to hide from their eyes “the brightness of His coming;” “for as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven, so shall also the Son of man be in His day” (Luke 17:24).

Sunday: The Two Little Coins in the Offering – Read Mark 12:41–44. How much ought I to give? This question, frequently asked, means very often, ‘How little can I give?’ ‘How much is necessary in order to have it, look well in comparison to the gifts of others?’ There is just one standard of liberality, just as there is but one standard of everything good and that is the Lord Himself. He “giveth to all liberally” (James 1:5). Whoever gives less than God gives, does not give enough, and cannot be called liberal. What does God give? He gives Himself. “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself” (2 Corinthians 5:19), who loved us, and “gave Himself for us” (Ephesians 5:2). This gift of God includes everything; for “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32). It could not be otherwise; for “in Him all things consist” (Colossians 1:17). God gives Himself and His grace is manifest in Christ. “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9). He “emptied Himself” (Philippians 2:7). The spirit of Satan is directly opposed to the Spirit of Christ. Christ would not hold on to what was His by right; Satan, on the other hand, was determined to get everything for himself, even when he had no right to it. When the spirit of Satan controls, there is selfishness, so that even though large donations be made, an evil motive takes away all their value. When the Spirit of Christ prevails, there is unselfish liberality. A man may give all his goods to the poor, and yet really give nothing. If love be lacking, – the love that purifies the heart, – there is no liberality. The offering that God accepts is the “offering in righteousness” (Malachi 3:3). It is with the “sacrifices of righteousness” (Psalm 4:5), that God is well pleased. The poor widow gave “two mites; which make a farthing,” yet Christ declared that she had given more than they all. She gave all she had. Her gift showed that her soul was in the work of God; she had given herself. The brethren in Macedonia gave liberally out of their deep poverty, because they “first gave their own selves” (2 Corinthians 8:5). To settle the question of giving, we need a heart given to God, that He may purify it, and then the life of God, which has cleansed it, flowing out to others, is the whole of the matter. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1).

Monday: Not One Stone on Another – Read Mark 13:1–13. “When shall these things be?” This is an important question. When Christ had pointed to the wondrous buildings of the temple and said: “See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down,” the disciples connecting this catastrophe with the end of all things came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?” (verse 5). There are some who tell us that we have no business to inquire anything about the time of Christ’s coming. If that were so, what a good opportunity Jesus had to emphasise the fact, so that his disciples should never forget it, when they asked Him, the question just quoted.

Did He say to them, 'Do not bother with such questions; you will know when it comes?' Not at all. Not a word of censure or reproof did He utter, but simply said, "Take heed that no man deceive you." And then He proceeded to give them certain infallible signs by which they might know when His coming should be near, and so avoid being imposed upon. We do well to know the signs all around us, within and outside the church, to avoid being deceived.

Tuesday: The Abomination of Desolation – What is the significance of this? In Mark 13:14-18; Matthew 24:15-16, Christ told His disciples that when they see the abomination of desolation, they ought to flee to the mountains. In Luke 21:20, it says that when they see Jerusalem compassed with armies, they ought to flee to the mountains. In olden days, in tactics of war, armies could compass cities, kind of starving people inside the city. So, Jesus tells us to flee when we see this tactic used. Roman armies came to Jerusalem in AD66 and they compassed around Jerusalem. For some reasons, they withdraw, which made it possible for God's people to flee. The Judean Christians who heeded what Christ had said, left the city and went to live in the country. In AD70 the Romans returned and destroyed the city. "Not one Christian perished in the destruction of Jerusalem. Christ had given His disciples warning, and all who believed His words watched for the promised sign" {GC 30.2}. How does the siege of old Jerusalem relate to us today? "As the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman armies was the signal for flight to the Judean Christians, so the assumption of power on the part of our nation in the decree enforcing the papal sabbath will be a warning to us. It will then be time to leave the large cities, preparatory to leaving the smaller ones for retired homes in secluded places among the mountains" {5T 464.3}. In prophecy, the United States, lamb-like beast, is to pass a national Sunday law in honour of the papacy, leopard-like beast (revelation 13). By a universal Sunday decree, "no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark" (Revelation 13:17). "Early 1888, Senator HW Blair, of New Hampshire, introduced into the United States congress a Bill that, if passed, would have enforced in all Federal territories the observance of Sunday as a day of worship" {3BIO 376.4}. This was a signal to flee the cities. The flight from the cities takes place between 1888 Sunday Bill (equivalent to AD66) and the coming Sunday law (equivalent to AD70). As AD66 siege of the city was the signal for flight to the Judean Christians, so the Bill by Blair attempting to decree Sunday worship was a signal for Adventists to leave the cities for country living. As AD70 siege of the city was too late for the nominal Judean Christians to escape, so the coming Sunday law will be too late for nominal Adventist Christians to leave the cities. "But ere long there will be such strife and confusion in the cities, that those who wish to leave them will not be able. We must be preparing for these issues. This is the light that is given me" (GCB, April 6, 1903)!

Wednesday: The Great Tribulation – Read Mark 13:19. What does this verse refer to? How did the martyrs go to the stake with songs of joy on their lips? Christ bore their burden, and in Him they had peace. "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). In Christ we can bear it. Gain an experience in Him now, and in the trying time He will not forsake you. He can bear that great burden as well as a small one.

Thursday: The Coming of the Son of Man – Read Mark 13:24–32. What great event is described here? What is meant by this generation? and what generation is referred to? These are questions which have exercised many minds. Christ addresses those who had seen "all" of a certain class of events; and those events were the ones which are mentioned as "signs" of the great event which is here the object of discourse; namely, the appearing of Christ in the clouds of heaven. Those who saw only the darkening of the sun, had not seen all these things; those who saw the falling of the stars had not seen them. Those now living, who have a historical knowledge of the past, and see what we see, – those before whom all these things are held up, as they are now, in consolidated array, as signs of the end, – have seen them, and do see them. The language is addressed to the mass of the people now living; that the present is the generation; and that this generation shall not pass before all is consummated; that is, that the mass of the world's inhabitants now living will witness the coming of the Son of man. Whilst we would fully appreciate the fact that one person dies, and more are born, every second of time, and that, with this rapid influx and exit, it takes no great length of time to change the mass of the world's inhabitants, yet we believe the Lord is now so near that the people living at the present time, as a body, will behold His coming.