

Sabbath School Lesson #10 – Rules of Engagement – 1-7 March 2025

Christ would have us know that “he that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). All the sin and misery that have ever blighted this earth, are the result of a look; and all the righteousness and peace that will glorify the earth made new will also be the result of a look. Satan was once Lucifer, one of the cherubim, “full of wisdom and perfect in beauty,” perfect in his ways from the day that he was created, until iniquity was found in him (Ezekiel 28:12-17). He sinned, and was cast down to the earth, where he succeeded in instilling his wicked spirit into the minds of men. The fall of Satan was the result of his pride, and his pride was on account of his beauty and brightness. Why did his beauty cause him to be proud? – because he looked at it. He began to look at himself, to consider his own beauty and accomplishments, all of which had been lent him by the Lord, and the result was a rebellion that contemplated nothing less than the dethronement of Jehovah. “He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). All evil springs from love of self (2 Timothy 3:1-5). Men love themselves because they look at themselves so much. Thus, the spirit of Satan is manifest in men. Now if Christ destroys the works of the devil and men, it must be by getting them to cease looking at self. And this He does by offering them something better to look at, namely, Himself. “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, and even so must the Son of man be lifted up” (John 3:14). The serpent was lifted in order that people might, by looking, be healed of their wounds; Christ is lifted in order that, by looking at Him, men may be healed of sin. Men always become like those with whom they constantly associate. Reading bad books, looking at evil sights, tends inevitably to corruption. So, he who looks at his own sinful self will become only more sinful. “Looking unto Jesus” (Hebrews 12:2) takes one away from self. There is nothing of self in Him, because, although He was perfect, He emptied Himself (Philippians 2:7), that the Father alone might appear. So, we read, “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18). “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6). The rule of engagement is to look away from self to Christ. Let us be among those who will heed the general invitation: “Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 45:22).

Sunday: An Angel Delayed – Read Daniel 10:1-14. What caused the angel to delay coming to Daniel in answer to Daniel’s prayer? When the Jews would have proceeded with speed in rebuilding the temple at Jerusalem, Satan used the Samaritans to frustrate the work. The Samaritans “hired counsellors against them” at the court of the Persian kingdom, “to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia” (Ezra 4:5). Daniel was still prime minister at the court of Persia, and it was not a great while before he discovered that the work in Jerusalem was being hindered, and his own efforts hampered in the court of Cyrus, by influences of these Samaritan counsellors. Instead of using political diplomacy to deal with these counsellors, Daniel appealed directly to God in prayers for three weeks. As Daniel had been at these three full weeks, and yet “the first day” his words were heard and the angel was sent, what had delayed the angel all this time? The next verse tells why. “But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days.” This is precisely the three full weeks. To answer Daniel’s prayer the angel had to go to the court of Cyrus and deal with the king in his counsels, against those hired counsellors there. Thus, through prayer and faithfulness to God, Daniel and his people were victorious against all the machinations of Satan and his instrumentalities. And so shall it ever be. The heavenly agencies are always ready to co-operate with the faithful ones of earth today, as in the days of Daniel. Prayer to God, that obtains the co-operation of heavenly messengers, is even today worth infinitely more in securing the co-operation or restraint of the powers of earth, than could be all the political wire-pulling and lobbying that could ever be employed. The hearts of earthly kings are in the hand of the Lord, and only He can move them right.

Monday: The Dragon of Revelation – Read Revelation 12:9; How can we escape this “great dragon”? We can only escape him in Christ. Jesus said, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.” “And there was war in heaven: Michael and His angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was there place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world” (Revelation 12:7-9). Satan has been conquered again and again by the power of heaven. He was defeated and cast out of heaven in the beginning, and when Christ came to this earth, He “spoiled principalities and powers,” “triumphing over them” in Himself (Colossians 2:15). Therefore, whoever meets the devils with the power of heaven, is sure to triumph over them. Satan fell as lightning from heaven. He is still an angel, though fallen. Sin has robbed him of his original glory, yet the brightness which he still retains far surpasses all human conception of glory. “Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14). It is no wonder that he deceives men who trust in appearances. By reason of the brightness which he still retains, he will be able to cause many to believe that he is the Christ. The life of Christ cherished in the heart will alone enable us to detect his devices, and to quench his fiery darts (Ephesians 6:16).

Tuesday: The Case of Job – Reflecting on the case of Job, how can we learn to trust God even amid the harsh unfairness of life? “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him: but I will maintain mine own ways before Him” (Job 13:15). These were not stereotyped words which fell from lips of a thoughtless person; but they came from the heart of one who had been severely chastened by the hand of the Lord, who “doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men” (Lamentations 3:33). Death had again and again entered his home, clothed in its most terrible forms; and afflictions, compared with which death seemed a message of mercy, had fallen to his lot. Repeatedly had he been almost crushed beneath the weight of his trials; but in the darkness, however, his faith had gained the victory, and he could say triumphantly, “Though he slay me yet will I trust in him.” How many of us can adopt his language? Are we not prone to complain of our condition, even when called upon to endure the comparatively trifling cares of every-day life? Do we not murmur against God every hour, and continually charge Him with injustice? While enjoying prosperity, we persuade ourselves but too easily that we possess true and living faith in God; but when He allows trials upon us, when those dear to us are fallen in death, and we see the instability of earthly things, our cry is oftener, “Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!” (Job 23:3) than “Yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15). Oh! do not let us be satisfied with our cold, weak, half-hearted faith; but let us, by earnest pleading at the throne of grace, through strength given us by the Lord Jesus Christ, gain the victory over unbelief, and so confide in our heavenly Father, that, whatever may befall, we may acknowledge His goodness, and accept seeming evil, as well as known good, from His loving hand with thankful hearts.

Wednesday: The (Temporary) Ruler of This World – Who is the ruler of this world and what power has he? Satan is the ruler of this earth, “the god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4) and none can doubt that it was to Satan that Christ referred, when he said, “The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me” (John 14:30). In all this, never forget that as Christ is raised to the throne of God, “far above all principality and power and might and dominion,” and we are made to sit together with Him in heavenly places (Ephesians 1:20-21; 2:1-6), we have thus with Him power “over all the power of the enemy” (Luke 10:19); so that in Christ we may assert our freedom from every bondage. Since Christ has given us power over “the prince of this world,” “the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience,” how can we have any fear of what wicked men may do to us. God can restrain the wrath of man, and that which He allows to manifest itself, He makes to praise Him (Psalm 76:10).

Thursday: Limits and Rules – Read Romans 8:18; How does this give help you to trust God? “The sufferings of this present time,” says Paul, “are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed *in us*.” That glory is *in us* now, for the Spirit of glory is there; but it is not manifest now, the Spirit is not now revealed in glory, but in the fruits of grace. The sons of God must now wait till the final separation between the wicked and righteous, when the former shall have been gathered out and cast into a furnace of fire (Matthew 13:42), and “then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”