

Sabbath School Lesson #1 – The End – 24-30 Sep 2016

Christ is our life and resurrection. “Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live” (John 11:25). In this first Lesson for this quarter that studies the book of Job, we study “the end” – the question of death and resurrection. Although our memory text is from the New Testament, we note that it is from the Old Testament the doctrine of death and resurrection is derived.

In fact, according to the Saviour’s words, he who does not find the resurrection and the life in the Old Testament will not understand or appreciate it in the New. Jesus says of the Scriptures, meaning the Old Testament, for that is all that was in existence when He spoke, “They are they which testify of Me” (John 5:39). But He is “the resurrection and the life.” We focus here on how the Old Testament testifies of Christ and of “the resurrection and the life.”

Further, Jesus says, “Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me; for He wrote of Me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe My words?” (John 5:46-47). That is to say, that if we do not find Christ in the writings of Moses we shall not find Him at all; if we do not perceive Him, the resurrection and the life, in the Old Testament, we shall not be able to grasp the real significance of the words which Christ spoke in person.

Let us now study a few passages, to see how accurately the Gospel of life is set forth in the Scriptures from the very beginning. Let us begin with three passages of Scripture. The first is Job 19:25, 27: “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; ... whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.” The other two are from Psalm 16:9-11 and 17:15: “My heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave My soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life; in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.” “As for me, I shall behold Thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness.”

Nowhere in the New Testament can you find any more triumphant expressions of hope in the resurrection and the future life! See in what clear and confident words the resurrection is set forth in the book of Job. The question is asked, “If a man die, shall he live again?” and immediately the answer comes, “All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer Thee; Thou wilt have a desire to the work of Thine hands” (Job 14:14-15). This is as clear as the words of Jesus, “The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the grave shall hear His voice, and shall come forth” (John 5:28-29). The “change” of which the patriarch Job spoke, is described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52.

The apostles “went everywhere preaching the Word,” the Old Testament being all they had, and “they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead” (Acts 4:2). Paul went to Thessalonica, into a synagogue of the Jews, he “went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead” (Acts 17:2-3). We do well to note that the Christians of the first century were not converted by the writings of the apostles, but by their preaching. The epistles were written to those who were already Christians, and who had become Christians by means of the teaching of the Old Testament.

Note also that when the apostles did write, they drew very largely from the Old Testament Scriptures. Take for instance that wonderful chapter on the resurrection, and the triumphant close of the argument is a quotation from the prophets: “So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” (1 Corinthians 15:54-55) – These expressions are taken from Isaiah 25:8 and Hosea 13:14. In the former passage we find those beautiful words used by John in Revelation 21:4, “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” So some of the brightest passages of the New are drawn from the Old. The prophets ministered the very same things that the apostle afterwards did, by the same Spirit of Christ (1 Peter 1:11-12).

The promise of resurrection to the fathers formed the basis of the hope of God’s people of old. The Apostle Peter tells us that in the last days there should come scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell

asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Peter 3:3-4). This suggests a connection between "the fathers" and the promise of the coming of the Lord.

The apostle then proceeds to show that those who disbelieve in the coming of the Lord, and who say that there has been no change since the creation, are wilfully ignorant of the facts. He reminds us that the earth of creation was once destroyed by the flood, and that the same word which created it, and which caused its destruction by the flood, still keeps it "reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

Then He reminds us that "the Lord is not slack concerning His promise." Not *promises*, but *promise*, having special reference to "the promise of His coming," mentioned in verse 4. The fact that God delays the fulfilment of His promise for what seems a long time to men, is no evidence that He is slack in performing it, for time is nothing to Him. But the day of the Lord will come, "wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless we, *according to His promise*, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3:12-13).

Here we find a positive statement that our hope of the future life is based on the promise of God to the fathers. Let us turn, then, and note that promise very briefly. Take the brief note given by Stephen in Acts 7:2-5: "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran; and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell. And He gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on; yet He promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child."

Here we have a promise unfulfilled. Was God slack in this instance? Impossible; for the promise was confirmed by the oath of God, who swore by Himself, "that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us" (Hebrews 6:13-19). So we see that instead of God's promise to Abraham having failed, it is all our hope and consolation.

God promised to give Abraham an inheritance in the land of Canaan, yet Abraham died without receiving it. Now since it is impossible for God to lie, the only possible explanation is that God meant that Abraham should receive it at the resurrection. And this is just what Abraham expected, for not only he, but his children also, "died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13).

The fact that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob died "in faith," without having received the promised inheritance, but "were persuaded" that they should, shows that they had not expected it in this present life. If they had, they would have died disappointed, instead of in faith. If we turn to Genesis 15:15-16, we shall find that God plainly told Abraham that he should die before the inheritance was bestowed, thus leaving him no other ground of hope but the resurrection. This hope was his consolation through life and in death.

It is this hope of the resurrection that Paul witnessed to when he stood before Agrippa in chains because of his loyalty to Christ and the Gospel: "And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers; unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" (Acts 26:6-8). Thus we see that the hope of the resurrection of the dead was the hope of the promise of God to the fathers, and that this was the hope that engrossed the thoughts of the true Israelites day and night. We know that Paul was persecuted only for preaching the resurrection of the dead through Christ, yet he himself declared, "For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain" (Acts 28:20).

It was this hope that was Job's anchor in the sea of trouble: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." "If a man die, shall He live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer Thee: Thou wilt have a desire to the work of Thine hands" (Job 19:25-26; 14:14-15).