

Sabbath School Lesson #7 – Matthew 24 and 25 – 12-18 May 2018

Christ says that just before the end “there shall arise false Christ’s, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matthew 24:24). Again, Paul says, Satan will work “with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness” (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10). In Revelation 13, John warns of the enforcement of the mark of the beast, which will be aided by the deception of spiritualism as shown in verses 13 and 14, working wonderful miracles in order to beguile men into accepting a lie as the truth. So wonderful are the miracles that, as Christ says, if it were possible, even the people of God would be deceived. But this is not possible; the conflict will be sharp and short: the decision between truth and error will be quickly made in the minds of men; and the Lord will quickly come to reward His own. In Revelation 16:13-15, the same deceptive work is brought to view, with the spirit of devils working miracles. These passages harmonise and show that the coming of the Lord will be the next thing after Satan performs the deceiving miracles.

Sunday: A Powerful Confirmation of Prophecy – In the remarkable discourse concerning the signs of His second coming, our Saviour warned: “Take heed that no man deceive you” (Matthew 24:4). This was given in answer to the question: “What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” Let us bring home this part of the Lesson. Are there prophecies within Adventism that have been fulfilled and therefore a powerful confirmation of prophecy? Look at this prophecy: “The enemy of souls has sought to bring in the supposition that a great reformation was to take place among Seventh-day Adventists, and that this reformation would consist in giving up the doctrines which stand as the pillars of our faith, and engaging in a process of reorganization. Were this reformation to take place, what would result? The principles of truth that God in His wisdom has given to the remnant church, would be discarded. Our religion would be changed. The fundamental principles that have sustained the work for the last fifty years would be accounted as error. A new organization would be established. Books of a new order would be written. A system of intellectual philosophy would be introduced. The founders of this system would go into the cities, and do a wonderful work. The Sabbath of course, would be lightly regarded, as also the God who created it. Nothing would be allowed to stand in the way of the new movement. The leaders would teach that virtue is better than vice, but God being removed, they would place their dependence on human power, which, without God, is worthless. Their foundation would be built on the sand, and storm and tempest would sweep away the structure” {Ellen G White, 1SM 204.2}. Only to sweep away the structure remains to be fulfilled of this prophecy! Principles of truth have been discarded; our religion has changed; books of new order were written; a system of intellectual philosophy was introduced; and the fundamental principles our pioneers believed have been accounted as error!

Monday: Enduring to the End – The apostle Paul admonishes us: “And let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1). Christ tells us: “He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved” (Matthew 24:13). The figure itself which the apostle introduces – that of a race – implies constant progress. No man who runs a race with any intention of winning, ever stops in the course; much less does he ever turn back. “No man having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62). “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith” (Hebrews 12:2). The idea of continuity is still brought to view. We are to look to Jesus, to the exclusion of all others. We are to look to Him for “grace to help in time of need.” We are saved, not through our natural goodness, but by the blood of Christ, and that is free for all. He has no choice of persons to whom He shall impart His grace, His love is infinite, and therefore can reach the vilest sinner as easily as if to one whose life has apparently been upright. Abraham was called the “friend of God” (James 2:23), not because his natural disposition was better than that of anybody else, but because he believed God; and Cain was rejected solely on account of his lack of faith. We have no business to look at ourselves or others, or to compare ourselves with others. We have only one on whom to fix our eyes; this is the faith that gives us the victory. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1). Christ is the author of the faith. “There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). There is no faith except in Christ; faith put in any other is presumption.

Tuesday: The “Abomination of Desolation” – In 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, build trenches, kind of starving people inside the city. So, Jesus tells us to flee when we see this tactics 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 do 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).

Whether or not you accept that the failed 1888 Blair Sunday Bill was equivalent to the AD66 first siege, it is clear that it was soon thereafter that Ellen White made calls for Adventists to leave the cities. "The time has come, when, as God opens the way, families should move out of the cities. The children should be taken into the country. The parents should get as suitable a place as their means will allow. Though the dwelling may be small, yet there should be land in connection with it, that may be cultivated" (Manuscript 50, 1903) {CL 24.2}. "Again and again the Lord has instructed that our people are to take their families away from the cities, into the country, where they can raise their own provisions; for in the future the problem of buying and selling will be a very serious one. We should now begin to heed the instruction given us over and over again: Get out of the cities into rural districts, where the houses are not crowded closely together, and where you will be free from the interference of enemies" (Letter 5, 1904) {CL 9.5}. 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" (General Conference Bulletin, April 6, 1903) {CL 11.1}!

Wednesday: The Ten Virgins – The parable of the ten virgins found in Matthew 25 reveals light on what distinguishes the wise from the foolish virgins. The obvious difference is the supply of oil that the wise virgins had. The oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit which sustained the wise virgins in following the Bridegroom to the marriage supper. The second factor that distinguished the wise from the foolish virgins was the fact that the admittance to the marriage feast is determined by whether the Bridegroom knew the guests. Getting to know someone obviously takes time and the foolish virgins ran out of time to get to know the Bridegroom. Is there a connection between having a supply of oil and knowing the Bridegroom? Jesus made clear to the disciples the connection between Himself and the operation of the Spirit. "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you" (John 14:16-18). Jesus said, that He is the one that would come to us. Through His Spirit, Christ abides with us. Notice these statements: "The Saviour is our Comforter. This I have proved Him to be" {19MR 293.3}. "Let them study the seventeenth of John, and learn how to pray and how to live the prayer of Christ. He is the Comforter. He will abide in their hearts, making their joy full. His words will be to them as the bread of life..." (RH Jan 27, 1903). "As by faith we look to Jesus, our faith pierces the shadow, and we adore God for His wondrous love in giving Jesus the Comforter" {19MR 297.3}.

Thursday: Using Your Talents – In the parable of talents in Matthew 25:13-30 is set forth our duty as Christians waiting the return of Christ. Christ has given us talents – everything with which we are endowed. These talents comprise of intellect, health, influence, property, and everything the possession of which is counted as a benefit to mankind. To everyone is given "according to his several ability" (verse 15). The servants whose talents had increased on their hands, were praised and rewarded by their lord when he returned. The one who had simply kept his talent was called a "wicked and slothful servant." The Lord expects us to constantly improve all our gifts. If our talents do not increase, then we are of no more value than the beasts, for they answer with the end of their existence. And it is not enough that we gain something, but we must gain all that is possible.