

Sabbath School Lesson #13 – “I Make All Things New” – 23-29 March 2019

Christ would have His faithful saints know that just as in the beginning God had a perfect earth as the abode of perfect men, so again God will have a perfect abode for the men who are made complete in Christ, – a new earth for His new men. Thus we read: And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful” (Revelation 21:5). We “look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13). But make no mistake, this new creation begins here on earth with the man who abides in Christ. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Looking beyond that which to the mere physical eye seems to be all there is, he who abides in Christ sees all things transformed, and tastes even here the power and the joy of the world to come – he has in earth a heaven in which to go to heaven.

Sunday: The Wedding Supper of the Lamb – The nineteenth of Revelation says “Rejoice for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.” The Lesson rightly quotes from the Spirit of Prophecy that the Lamb’s bride is New Jerusalem. But you may wonder why then in the Bible we often find Christians referred to as the bride of Christ.

Saints, and by extension, their city, is the bride. From the beginning, God has considered Himself as occupying the close relation of husband to His people. Read the prophecies of Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and the whole of Hosea. The third chapter of Jeremiah is especially plain. “Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you” (verse 14). And then the Lord tells what He will do if they will return, using words that can apply only to the redeemed state. God says, speaking of the making of the new covenant, that His people broke the old covenant, “although I was an husband unto them” (Jeremiah 31:32). So, turning to the New Testament, we read that we are to be married to Him that is raised from the dead, that we may bring forth fruit unto God (Romans 7:4); Paul writes, “I have espoused you to one husband, and I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:2); and in the fifth chapter of Ephesians we read that the same close relation exists between Christ and His people that exists between a man and his wife (see verses 22-32). So by a change in the symbol, or an enlargement of it, the city of God, Jerusalem, is considered as married to Christ. The very land itself where God’s people dwell, is married to Him. This is perfectly in harmony with the fact that Christ, who is “the firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8:29), is also “the everlasting Father” (Isaiah 9:6). Paul says, “Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all” (Galatians 4:26); and since it is Christ alone that gives freedom (Romans 8:1; John 8:33-36), the New Jerusalem is very properly called the mother of all those who are saved from sin. It is not a mixed symbol, but the expression of a deeper meaning, a more intimate relation, than human minds have conceived. The fifty-fourth of Isaiah presents Jerusalem as a wife forsaken by her husband, mourning her widowhood and childlessness, but comforted by the assurance that she has not really been cast off, and is not forgotten, but is still owned by her husband, and will be honoured by Him. The time when these promises will be fulfilled is set forth in Revelation 21; Zechariah 14:1-11; and Isaiah 49:13-23, all of which should be read in connection with the Lamb’s wife.

Monday: Armageddon Ends – Whilst in a sense that when the scene of Revelation 19:11-16 opens up, when Christ appears, the Armageddon by then going on will end, we should not think that Christ and His angels fight the Armageddon battle. A commentary to the verses 11-21 of Revelation 19 is here summarised from Uriah Smith’s book, 1882 edition:

At the second coming of Christ, His glory shall consume the wicked, their bodies will not be buried but eaten by the fowls. The angel is presented standing in the sun and calling upon the fowls of heaven to come to the supper of the Great God. And the fowls will be obedient to the call, and fill themselves with the flesh of kings, captains, mighty men, and horses. Thus while the saints are partaking of the marriage supper of the Lamb, the wicked are themselves food for the fowls of heaven. The beast and the false prophet are taken. It appears from verse 21 that there is a remnant not numbered with the beast or false prophet. These are slain by the sword of him that sits upon the horse, which sword proceeds out of his mouth, This sword is doubtless what is spoken of elsewhere as the spirit of his mouth,

and breath of his lips, with which the Lord shall slay the wicked at his appearing and kingdom. Isa. 11:4; 2 Thess. 2:8. (Uriah Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation*, 1882, 773-775).

Tuesday: The Millennium – The coming of the Lord brings the translation and resurrection of the righteous, who are caught up in the air to meet the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:15-16), to accompany Him to those mansions in the Father's house, according to His promise (John 14:1-3). There they live and reign "with Christ a thousand years," during which time the earth is desolated; for only the righteous are raised at the coming of the Lord (Rev. 20:6). "The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." With the righteous reigning with Jesus in the heavenly Jerusalem, and the wicked in their graves, Satan finds himself bound, and helpless to carry on his work of deception. He can meditate on the fruits of rebellion in the midst of the chaotic desolation which he has brought upon the world once fair and beautiful. Then comes the resurrection of the wicked, at the end of the thousand years, the coming down of the New Jerusalem from heaven, the gathering of a host of the wicked to war against the city, and then the final destruction of sin and sinners and the author of sin, "the second death." Then from out the purifying fires of the final judgment will spring the new heavens and the new earth, wherein will dwell righteousness (2 Peter 3:13).

Wednesday: "A New Heaven and a New Earth" – The power of "a new heaven and a new earth" is the power that is in the preaching of the gospel; we can see that it is so, because it creates men, makes new creatures. The kingdom is to be restored, and the power of it is to be seen before the new heavens and earth can be made; because when it comes down to the very last time before probation has ceased, there must be a complete, clearcut line of demarcation between the righteous and the wicked. When that time comes, everybody will be able to discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not; and there must be a power in the gospel so extensive that every soul on earth will not only have heard the gospel, but will have heard it in the fullness of its power, so that having rejected it, there will be nothing more for him. He will have rejected the full power of God, and having rejected all that God has, if probation should be continued thousands of years, there would be nothing more to bring him back; and consequently there will be no longer any use to delay probation; for every man has intelligently made a decision.

Thursday: The New Jerusalem – The gates of this city have the names of twelve tribes of Israel. Paul, before King Agrippa, said, "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" (Acts 26:6-7). We find that the twelve tribes were in existence in the days of Paul, and were looking forward in hope to the fulfillment of the promise which God made to the fathers. James addressed his Epistle "to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad" (James 1:1). We have here sufficient evidence that no one tribe of Israel was ever lost more than another. All tribal distinctions are now lost, and no Jew can tell to which of the twelve tribes he belongs. God, however, keeps the list, and in the world to come will put every person in his proper place, for the city for which Abraham looked, the capital of the inheritance promised to him and his seed, the New Jerusalem, has twelve gates, and on the gates are "the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel" (Revelation 21:12). These texts suggest that God's reckoning of the tribes is not after man's reckoning. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh upon the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7), and "he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; ... but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; ... circumcision is that of the heart" (Romans 2:28-29). All those who are saved will "enter in through the gates into the city" (Revelation 22:14), but each of those gates has the name on it of one of the twelve tribes, showing that the saved compose the twelve tribes of Israel. This is evident also from the fact that "Israel" means an overcomer. The Epistle of James is addressed to the twelve tribes, yet there is not a Christian who does not know that its instruction and promises are for him. And this brings us to the fact that in reality all the tribes are lost, "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6); therefore when the Lord Jesus came, He said, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Christ declared, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24).