

Sabbath School Lesson #2 – Causes of Disunity – 6-12 October 2018

Christ lamented that the children of this world are wiser than those who profess to be Christians. The wise man wrote: “The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy *is* understanding” (Proverbs 9:10). James tells us, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (James 1:5). If only those who profess to be Christians, even among Seventh-day Adventists, were truly Christians, there would be no causes of disunity.

Sunday: “Return, O Backsliding Children” – Our backsliding started in Eden. By his artful wiles, the tempter succeeded in beguiling our first parents away from their Maker and rightful Husband, and inducing them to yield themselves wholly to him. Here was the first adultery, which has bred a host of evils. It brought death into our world with loss of Eden. “Ye adulteresses! know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God.” “Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished bringeth forth death” (James 1:14-15). That in the first sin man committed adultery, is evident from this: It was the attraction of the world that led them astray, for in the yielding to the temptation that was presented, we see the power of “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,” which constitute the world (1 John 2:16). The pride of life was appealed to in the words, “Ye shall be like God;” “and when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat” (Genesis 3:6). Thus they became wholly joined to the world, which is adultery. The perfect union between man and his Maker, wherein they were “one flesh,” – for the Word was made flesh in the beginning when man was created, – was completely broken, and a new union with Satan and sin was entered into. Then men began to walk “according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2).

Then began the long career of marital infidelity. But God did not break His covenant, which is everlasting, nor did He cast off the unfaithful bride. He begs her to come back. O nothing is humiliating than a man to beg for reconciliation with one who has wilfully turned away from him, despising his love, publicly putting him to shame; yet that is just what the Lord did. Read the third chapter of Jeremiah, and the whole of the book of Hosea. He says: “Return thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause Mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed My voice, saith the Lord. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you; and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion” (Jeremiah 3:12-14).

Monday: “Right in His Own Eyes” – He who lives by what is right in his own eyes lives in carnal security. “For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died” (Romans 7:9). In the first clause of this verse is a picture of carnal security. It is the confidence of the man who is insensible to danger. “Without the law” means that the law had not been driven by the Spirit into his heart. Many a man who has read the ten commandments scores of times, has never felt them searching his heart. Therefore his way is “right in his own eyes,” and he feels secure. An easy mind is by no means a sure test of acceptance with God. It was forgetfulness or ignorance of this fact that caused David so much trouble (Psalms 73). He saw the wicked wholly at ease. But when he learned their end, he found that such a condition is not an enviable one. But as soon as a personal application of the law is made to one’s heart, the sin stands out in bold relief.

“When the commandment came, sin revived.” The law did not create the sin; it simply brought to his view that which already existed. A room may be very dusty and dirty, yet if it is dark, the filth will not appear. But let a bright light be brought in, and the foulness becomes all too noticeable. So the law of God lights up the dark corners of the heart and reveals the depravity within. When this had been done, says Paul, “I died.” He does not here mean

death to sin; for the next verse says: "And the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death." The law had shown him that he was a sinner, and "the wages of sin is death;" therefore he felt himself to be virtually a dead man. He did not actually die, but he speaks as though that which was inevitable had already come. In like manner the Lord said to Abimelech, who had taken Abraham's wife, "Thou art but a dead man" (Exodus 20:3).

Tuesday: The Division of the Hebrew Nation – Starting with the promise that David's kingdom should be established forever, and that Israel should be a people forever (2 Samuel 7:16-24), one can trace the history of that kingdom. It continued undivided only through the remainder of his reign, and through the reign of his son Solomon. When Solomon died, his son Rehoboam succeeded to the throne (1 Kings 11:43). No sooner was Rehoboam seated upon the throne than the people came to him to learn what would be the policy of his reign, and asking that he would lighten the burdens imposed on them by his father. Following the counsel of the young men, Rehoboam replied arrogantly (1 Kings 12:14). It led to a division of the Hebrew nation (1 King 12:16-20). This division of the kingdom was effected in the year 975 BC. It was in fulfillment of a prophecy made to Jeroboam, by Ahijah, and the reason for the division is given in 1 Kings 11:31-33 largely due to the Hebrews worshipping other gods.

Wednesday: Schism in Corinth – The plea of Paul to the Corinthians apply to Seventh-day Adventists today: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10). "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus; that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 15:5-6). The secret of avoiding schism: is to have the mind of Christ. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5).

Thursday: "Wolves Will Come" – Our Seventh-day Adventist Church has greatly changed since the time of Ellen White! Wolves have come in and brought Babylonian teachings such as the trinity into our Church! Ellen White died on 16 July 1915, but warned us of these changes just a few months before her death: "I am charged to tell our people, that do not realize, that the devil has device after device, and he carries them out in ways that they do not expect. Satan's agencies will invent ways to make sinners out of saints. I tell you now, that when I am laid to rest, great changes will take place. I do not know when I shall be taken; and I desire to warn all against the devices of the devil. I want the people to know that I warned them fully before my death" (*Manuscript 1*, February 24, 1915). Adventist pioneers served in a non-trinitarian Seventh-day Adventist Church, but our Seventh-day Adventist Church today has so changed that our pioneers would be grieved! "Most of the founders of Seventh-day Adventism would not be able to join the church today if they had to subscribe to the denomination's Fundamental Beliefs. More specially, most would not be able to agree to belief number 2, which deals with the doctrine of the trinity" (George Knight, *Ministry*, October 1993, p 10). "Adventist beliefs have changed over the years under the impact of 'present truth'. Most startling is the teaching regarding Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord ... the Trinitarian understanding of God, now part of our fundamental beliefs, was not generally held by the early Adventists" (William G Johnsson, *Adventist Review*, January 6, 1994, p 10). Adventist pioneers, worshiped the true God, but we corporately worship the false gods of the trinity. "Satan's snares are laid for us as verily as they were laid for the children of Israel just prior to their entrance into the land of Canaan. We are repeating the history of that people" {5T 160.2}. Like ancient Israel, modern Israel has cast off their fealty to Jehovah, to be accepted by protestant churches we adopted the trinity gods and, "Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor" {PP 454.4}. Ancient Israel was awakened to their sin by the destruction that first fell on the leaders: "By swift-coming judgments the people were awakened to the enormity of their sin. A terrible pestilence broke out in the camp, to which tens of thousands speedily fell a prey. God commanded that the leaders in this apostasy be put to death by the magistrates. This order was promptly obeyed. The offenders were slain, then their bodies were hung up in sight of all Israel that the congregation, seeing the leaders so severely dealt with, might have a deep sense of God's abhorrence of their sin and the terror of His wrath against them" {PP 455.1}. Let us grieve for our Church leaders who may face judgments!