

Sabbath School Lesson #6 – Laying Up Treasure in Heaven – 4-10 February 2023

Christ would have us lay-up treasure in heaven, and thus He asks, “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mark 8:36-37). Many a man has exchanged his soul for something far less than a world. No man this side of Adam ever owned a continent. Very few have more than a few square metres of the earth’s surface or hold even this much by more than a precarious tenure. Yet even this is sufficient to blind the eyes of men to the value of their souls. Men have bartered away their souls for a little worldly honour. They are making just such bargains today. They do not do this understandingly of course; but they do it because their eyes are blinded by the god of this world, and they have no realisation of what the soul is worth. But the prophet David, with mind enlightened by a higher wisdom, exclaimed, “When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained, -what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?” (Psalm 8:3-4). Man, considered by himself, becomes very small when the eye looks over creation; so small that, as an individual, he sinks into absolute nothingness. Astronomy reveals the globe upon which man dwells to be nothing but a tiny speck among the myriads of lights that fill the heavens, – in which it is lost like a grain of sand upon the seashore! Man is only one among the countless myriads that have been born and lived and moved upon the earth since it became the home of the human family, – an indistinguishable speck upon an indistinguishable speck, compared with a great creation which exists and moves and lives and fills the immensity of space, upheld by the life of God! But only God Himself can estimate the soul at its true value. The cross of Calvary tells what the soul is worth to God; and its worth to Him is also its worth to us. For we belong to Him, and were created for His pleasure and His glory. But apart from God the worth of the soul is lost. Without Him life would not be worth living. The sinner apart from God would eventually long for death. Connected with God, the soul is of infinite value; but severed from Him it is lost both to man and to Himself. The cross of Calvary is the link that connects the soul with God. Life has its value to us by virtue of that alone. Let us say therefore with the apostle, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Galatians 6:14).

Sunday: Noah Found Grace – How shall men stand when Christ comes if they sold their souls for the world? A flaming fire will take “vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8). “As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all” (Luke 17:26-27). Why was only Noah and his family that were shut in the ark saved and all other destroyed, were others not warned in the days of Noah? They all had ample warning. Noah preached to them all about it. The trouble was not that they could not know about it, but that they would not know. They would not believe what was told them. Christ sends a message to the world, that His coming is at the doors. This message should make ready a people prepared for the Lord; but it will be believed by but a few, compared to earth’s millions. For instead of believing it and acting accordingly, “Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days 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. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water; whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished” (2 Peter 3:3-6). There is where lies the difficulty, not that they are ignorant of these things, but that they are willingly ignorant. It is told them but they will not know nor believe.

Monday: Abram, the Father of the Faithful – How did Abraham get the title of being the father of the faithful? We pass on to the time when Isaac, the child of faith and promise, had been born, and had grown to be a young man. Abraham’s faith had grown stronger and more intelligent, for he had learned that God fulfils His own promises. But God is a faithful teacher and does not allow His pupils to leave a lesson until it is thoroughly learned. It is not enough for them to see and acknowledge that they have made a mistake in the lesson that

He has given them. Such acknowledgement of course ensures forgiveness; but, having seen the error, they must go over the same ground again, and possibly many times, until they have learned it so well that they can go without stumbling. It is solely for their own good. It is no kindness for a teacher to allow pupils to pass by lessons that are unlearned, simply because they are difficult. So, God tested Abraham: "Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering" (Genesis 22:2). God had said to Abraham, "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed," and, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." The blessing of the Gospel, which comes through Christ and His cross, was to be fulfilled through Isaac. To cut Isaac off would be, so men would reason, to cut off all prospects of the Messiah, and so to cut off all hope of salvation. To all appearance Abraham was called upon virtually to put the knife to his own throat, and to cut off the hope of his own salvation. A severer test no man was ever called to undergo, for no other man ever could be in the same position. The hope of the whole human race was bound up in Isaac, and Abraham was asked apparently to destroy it with a stroke of the knife. Well might the one who could stand such a test be called "the father of the faithful." We may well believe that Abraham was strongly tempted to doubt if this requirement came from the Lord; it seemed to be so directly contrary to God's promise.

Tuesday: Lot's Bad Decisions – What is one bad decision that Lot made that many Adventists are making today in terms of where they choose to live? Living in the cities. 'But souls in cities need the gospel, and Adventist living in the cities are there to warn souls', you say. Shall the cities not be work? "As God's commandment-keeping people, we must leave the cities. As did Enoch, we must work in the cities but not dwell in them" "When iniquity abounds in a nation, there is always to be heard some voice giving warning and instruction, as the voice of Lot was heard in Sodom. Yet Lot could have preserved his family from many evils, had he not made his home in this wicked, polluted city. All that Lot and his family did in Sodom could have been done by them, even if they had lived in a place some distance away from the city. Enoch walked with God, and yet he did not live in the midst of any city, polluted with every kind of violence and wickedness, as did Lot in Sodom" {CL 30.4; CL 30.5}. "We are to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves in our efforts to secure country properties at a low figure, and from these outpost centers we are to work the cities" {CL 31.3}. The other mistake Lot did was to linger: "Had Lot hastened as the Lord desired him to, his wife would not have become a pillar of salt. Lot had too much of a lingering spirit. Let us not be like him" {RH December 11, 1900, Art. B, par. 10}. As we approach Sunday Law, it will be hard 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" {GCB April 6, 1903, page 88.1; RH April 14, 1903, par. 33}.

Wednesday: From Deceiver to Prince – What lessons do we learn from Jacob gaining inheritance promised to Abraham by deceiving in the story told in Genesis 25:29-34? In this, Jacob acted the part of a deceiver, which was his natural disposition. His case is an illustration of a crude unintelligent faith. He believed that there was something to the promise of God, and he respected his father's faith, although as yet he really possessed none of it. He believed that the inheritance promised to the fathers would be bestowed, but he had so little spiritual knowledge that he supposed the gift of God might be purchased with money. We know that even Abraham thought at one time that he himself must fulfill the promise of God. So, Jacob doubtless thought, as many do still today, that God helps those who help themselves. Afterwards he learned better, and was truly converted, and exercised as sincere faith as Abraham and Isaac. His case should be an encouragement to us, in that it shows what God can do with one who has a very unlovely disposition, provided he yields to Him.

Thursday: Moses in Egypt – When tempted with worldly pleasures, what can we learn from Moses? "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt" (Hebrews 11:24-25). We are told most positively that the treasures of Egypt were the pleasures of sin; that refusing the treasures of Egypt was to refuse to live in sin; like Moses, let us cast our lot with God's saints, which is to suffer the reproach of Christ.