

Worship Lesson 3 3Q 2011

The Sabbath and Worship

SABBATH

Read first paragraph, "As we saw..."

What does the lesson define the gospel to be? "the good news of salvation in Jesus..."

Do you agree with this as the everlasting gospel?

How would you define the gospel?

What is the eternal good news? Is it not that:

- God is good
- God is trustworthy
- God is love
- God is faithful
- God is kind, patient, loyal
- God is NOT as Satan alleged

And isn't this knowledge, knowing God, not in a Gnostic, intellectual knowing, but in an experiential knowing that results in salvation and eternal life?

John 17:3 This is life eternal that they might know you the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.

Do you notice how the gospel has become a formula for our salvation? Is the eternal good news primarily about us, about what happens to us, or is the good news primarily about God?

What if we misidentify the gospel? Do we miss the meaning of the message? Do we miss the message we are to take to the world? Do we struggle in our ability to fulfill our purpose in this time in history?

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, "Remember the Sabbath..." Can we make the Sabbath unholy? Can we do things that cause the Sabbath to no longer be holy?

When they mistreated and abused Jesus, the holy one of God, did their unholy treatment of Jesus make Him unholy?

Can unholy human behavior make the Sabbath unholy?

Then what does the commandment mean when it says to "keep the Sabbath Holy?"

Doesn't it mean for us to keep ourselves holy on the Sabbath?

But in order to keep the Sabbath holy, men must themselves be holy. Through faith they must become partakers of the righteousness of Christ. When the command was given to Israel, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy," the Lord said also to them, "Ye shall be holy men unto Me." Ex. 20:8; 22:31. Only thus could the Sabbath distinguish Israel as the worshipers of God. {DA 283.3}

And what does it mean to be holy? Does it mean to be set apart for sacred use?

Set apart from what? Would it be from the world? What makes something of the world? Would it be selfishness? So would set apart from selfishness mean?

So does keeping the Sabbath holy mean we are to keep ourselves apart from selfishness?

Turn to WEDNESDAY, which asks us about Exodus 31:13

Say to the Israelites, 'You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy.'

How is the Sabbath and our holiness connected? Who made the Sabbath holy? Who makes us holy?

What does it mean to be holy? Does this mean we are to avoid work? Only if it is to promote self – but if it is work to bless others, to avoid it would be to break the Sabbath.

This is why Jesus said that His Father is always at work and so is He. The Jews avoided work on Sabbath and created a long list of rules for their behavior in order to keep the Sabbath Holy. The Sabbath became a day of restriction, rather than freedom and a day which was a test of their orthodoxy, a test of their righteousness, a test of their holiness, in other words, the Sabbath became a day about them.

Jesus stated to them that the **work of relieving the afflicted was in harmony with the Sabbath** law. It was in harmony with the work of God's angels, who are ever descending and ascending between heaven and earth to minister to suffering humanity. Jesus declared, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." All days are God's, in which to carry out His plans for the human race...

Should God forbid the sun to perform its office upon the Sabbath, cut off its genial rays from warming the earth and nourishing vegetation? Must the system of worlds stand still through that holy day? ...

In such a case, men would miss the fruits of the earth, and the blessings that make life desirable. Nature must continue her unvarying course. God could not for a moment stay His hand, or man would faint and die. **And man also has a work to perform on this day.** The necessities of life **must** be attended to, the sick **must** be cared for, the wants of the needy **must** be supplied. **He will not be held guiltless who**

neglects to relieve suffering on the Sabbath. God's holy rest day was made for man, and acts of mercy are in perfect harmony with its intent. God does not desire His creatures to suffer an hour's pain that may be relieved upon the Sabbath or any other day.

The demands upon God are even greater upon the Sabbath than upon other days. His people then leave their usual employment, and spend the time in meditation and worship. They ask more favors of Him on the Sabbath than upon other days. They demand His special attention. They crave His choicest blessings. God does not wait for the Sabbath to pass before He grants these requests. Heaven's work never ceases, and **men should never rest from doing good.** The Sabbath is not intended to be a period of useless inactivity. **The law forbids secular labor on the rest day of the Lord; the toil that gains a livelihood must cease; no labor for worldly pleasure or profit is lawful upon that day;** but as God ceased His labor of creating, and rested upon the Sabbath and blessed it, so man is to leave the occupations of his daily life, and **devote those sacred hours to healthful rest, to worship, and to holy deeds.** The work of Christ in healing the sick was in perfect accord with the law. It honored the Sabbath. - Desire of Ages, pp. 206-207

Thoughts?

Read third paragraph SUNDAY, "Creation and Redemption..." thoughts?

This reminds me of a time when Christie and I were visiting another church. It was Sabbath morning and for the introductory prayer the pastor prayed, "Lord we are here today, in church, on your Sabbath day, not to visit with friends, not to hear the special music, not even to hear the sermon. No, Lord, we are here for one reason and one reason only, Because you have commanded us to be here."

Is this a good reason because God has ordered it? What is your reason for valuing the Sabbath? Why are you here today?

First question – Has God ordered it? Has God commanded it?

Are not the 10 Commandments a distillation of God's law of love uniquely designed for humans in sin? Didn't Christ say the greatest commandment is to love God and second is to love man, all the law and the prophets hang on these?

Can love be commanded? So how do we understand the 10 Commandments, are they the 10 suggestions?

Is there a difference from a military order, a governmental command, a dictator's dictate, and a doctor's prescription, a doctor's order?

What is the difference?

How do you hear the 10 Commandments? As an order to obey, or as a prescription to take?

Does it make a difference?

From the White Estate:

ELLEN WHITE ONCE WROTE, "**A SULLEN SUBMISSION TO THE WILL OF THE FATHER WILL DEVELOP THE CHARACTER OF A REBEL.**"--"THAT I MAY KNOW HIM," P. 120. IN WRITING THIS, GOD'S SERVANT ANTICIPATED THE NUMBER ONE PROBLEM CONFRONTING EDUCATORS AND PARENTS: HOW TO CREATE A POSITIVE ATTITUDE ON THE PART OF CHILDREN TOWARD THE CHURCH. THIS IS THE SUBJECT IN THE FOLLOWING LETTER. {PCP 45.1}

YOUNG PEOPLE ARE CONSTANTLY URGED TO FOLLOW THE ADVICE GIVEN IN 2 PETER 1. BUT MANY REBEL. WHY? **BECAUSE WITHOUT A POSITIVE CONCEPT OF GOD AND WHAT HE WISHES TO DO FOR THEM,** CHILDREN RELATE TO THEIR CHURCH AND TO GOD OUT OF FEAR OR SHEAR DUTY RATHER THAN ADMIRATION. RELIGION BECOMES

OPPRESSIVE, AND IT IS EVENTUALLY REJECTED. {PCP 45.2}

CLEARLY OUR DUTY IS TO INTRODUCE CHILDREN TO THE GOD WHO STANDS BEHIND THE CHURCH'S DOCTRINES AND STANDARDS. SECOND PETER HELPS US DO THIS: **THE EMPHASIS IS ON OBEDIENCE AND GROWTH BASED UPON KNOWING GOD AS A FRIEND.** {PCP 45.3}

Isn't that great! Did you experience things this way when you were growing up? I didn't – and many of my friends didn't either. And do you notice, we in our class have tried to do this very thing, and what have we experienced?

How about when it comes to the Sabbath? Is our focus on the God of the Sabbath or on the Sabbath and its do's and don'ts? What does the Sabbath tell us about God?

MONDAY

Read bottom green section, "If we truly..."

The lesson points us to the Sabbath as a reminder that we were created by God and didn't evolve from lower life forms.

I am a creationist – six literal days followed by the Sabbath, the evidence of design is too great and the idea of spontaneous generation too preposterous. Also, understanding the law of love versus survival of the fittest, makes it clear creation occurred.

I also agree the Sabbath exists because God created – if we evolved over billions of years, why a 7 day week in every culture of the world?

The year, month, day all have astronomical basis – but not the seven day week – no astronomical reason for it – why then a seven day week if no creation?

But, having said all that, what about our friends who worship the creator God on Sunday of a seven day week and call it Sabbath?

Can our Sunday keeping friends worship and appreciate the creator and redeemer each seven days on Sunday?

Can Sunday keeping remind our Sunday keeping friends of the creator God? Or when one worships on Sunday are they suddenly incapable of appreciating God as creator and believing a literal six days creation?

Do you think there are more six day creation believing people who worship weekly on Saturday the Sabbath or Sunday?

When God created Adam and Eve in Eden was the Sabbath given for Adam's physical rest? Was it given to remind Adam he didn't evolve from lower life forms? Was it given to remind Adam Jesus died to save him?

In Eden why was the Sabbath given to man – Adam? What was its purpose then? Did it only have a future purpose for fallen man? Was there no purpose for the Sabbath before the fall of man? What was that purpose?

When did it originate? Under what circumstance? What was transpiring in the universe when the Sabbath was created? What does it mean that this day exists? What is its evidence of?

Why is Christ our Creator and Redeemer instead of another member of the Godhead?

- Christ's creating us was demonstration, evidence, that God was not arbitrary in including Christ in counsels that Lucifer was not included in
- Christ built us so He can rebuild or fix any damage from sin
- Christ proves through His life on earth that there was no manufacturer's defect in the creation of man
- Christ reveals, through His life on earth, that even though He has power to create, He is completely trustworthy with that power and would never use it to coerce or control.

What makes the Sabbath Holy? Is it not the fact the Sabbath very existence is a day invested with the truth presented in love with freedom to think without coercion? What does it mean that God would use power to create the Sabbath but not use power to force His intelligent creatures into line?

How do we then keep the Sabbath holy? Is it not by incorporating God's character, methods, principles into our lives such that we present the truth in love and leave others free – this is genuine Sabbath observance, and is much more than avoiding work on the “right” day every seven.

Do you see how without proper appreciation for the Sabbath people can be religious and use Satan's methods of coercion to force others into line? How such Sabbath keepers could crucify Christ? What about today?

Could Sabbath keepers use coercive tactics?

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph, “As we have...” thoughts? What did the Lord do to bring the people out of slavery in Egypt? What was revealed? What was the purpose of acting as He did?

Could God not have arranged for Moses to be Pharaoh and then have Moses set the people free? Why did it go this way? Was the setting of the people a legal problem? We need a ruler who has the legal right to set the people free, so God will get Moses to be Pharaoh and then he can legally set the people free.

No, the people could have been legally set free by Pharaoh, but would they have been free? What was the purpose of the way God did it? What was He really trying to free them from? What was revealed? Was it not the impotence of all the other false gods?

What was God really trying to free them from, human slavery, or free their minds from slavery to superstition and false thinking?

Did God pay a legal penalty to anyone to bring the Jews out of Egypt? Is there a lesson for us? Slavery in Egypt is symbolic of slavery to sin in this world. God acted in power to give evidence of the worthlessness of the pagan gods in order to free the minds of the people, both Jew and Egyptian.

God has acted throughout history to give evidence of the worthlessness of false gods, money, power, science, self.

A sacrificial animal was slain and the blood of the animal was applied to the door post – was this a legal penalty or symbolic of the remedy, the key to freedom?

Russell shared with you last week that the custom at that time was when a ruler came to a town the friends of the ruler would offer a sacrifice and apply the blood to the doorpost as an invitation to the king, inviting him into their home.

According to scripture the life is in the blood, so the blood on the doorpost reveals those who have internalized Christ into their hearts, thus those who are taken out of the world of sin are those who have taken the remedy of Jesus.

In other words the blood on the doorpost symbolized those whose hearts were in harmony with Christ, those who were sympathetic to God, those who were friends of God!

Where is the legal penalty in this?

The last sentence of Tuesday's lesson states, "Thus, for us the Sabbath worship experience should be a celebration of God's grace in freeing us not only from the legal penalty of sin (which fell upon Jesus in our behalf) but from the power of sin to enslave us."

The legal penalty for sin idea is projected constantly from historic pagan concepts into the sacred text. Show me a text from Scripture that says Jesus paid our legal penalty?

Thoughts?

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph, "Creation, Redemption..." thoughts? Is forgiveness of sin and redemption from sin different or the two ways to say the same thing?

But forgiveness has a broader meaning than many suppose. When God gives the promise that He "will abundantly pardon," He adds, as if the meaning of that promise exceeded all that we could comprehend: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:7-9. **God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness for sin, but reclaiming from sin.** It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart. David had **the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."** Psalm 51:10. And again he says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath **He removed our transgressions from us.**" Psalm 103:12. {MB 114.1}

Read second paragraph, "Of course..." is redemption and sanctification different or are they two ways of saying the same thing?

Can God redeem without sanctifying us? Can he sanctify without redeeming?

What do you understand holiness to be?

- It is not a conclusive evidence that a man is a Christian because he manifests spiritual ecstasy under extraordinary circumstances. **Holiness is not rapture: it is an entire surrender of the will to God; it is living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God; it is doing the will of our heavenly Father; it is trusting God in trial, in darkness as**

well as in the light; it is walking by faith and not by sight; it is relying on God with unquestioning confidence, and resting in His love. {AA 51.2}

- **True holiness is wholeness in the service of God.** This is the condition of true Christian living. Christ asks for an unreserved consecration, for undivided service. He demands the heart, the mind, the soul, the strength. Self is not to be cherished. He who lives to himself is not a Christian. {COL 48.4}

How do we experience holiness?

- The work of transformation from unholiness to holiness is a continuous one. Day by day God labors for man's sanctification, and man is to co-operate with Him, putting forth persevering efforts in the cultivation of right habits. He is to add grace to grace; and as he thus works on the plan of addition, God works for him on the plan of multiplication. Our Saviour is always ready to hear and answer the prayer of the contrite heart, and grace and peace are multiplied to His faithful ones. Gladly He grants them the blessings they need in their struggle against the evils that beset them. {AA 532.2}

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, "The 'rest' Jesus offered..." thoughts?

It is true that we need a weekly rest, nightly rest for the body, weekly rest for the mind, to set aside the cares, worries, problems, trials, tasks, and come into rest with God.

How would this have worked in Eden before sin? Were they worn down from a week of trials, worries, cares, problems, struggles, burdens? Did they need to come away from the burdens of the world to rest? Or was there a different purpose in Eden?

But today, we are burdened, we do face trials, we do struggle, how is the Sabbath a blessing to us today?

Is the Sabbath a blessing only 1 day in 7 or does the Sabbath, when rightly experienced, bless us all the time? How?

FRIDAY

Read and discuss question number 1