

Lesson 10

"Worship: From Exile to Restoration"

Our Sabbath School lesson for Monday makes a statement that "The fourth commandment, the Sabbath commandment, will be the outward issue in the last days."

On August 16, United States senator Joe Lieberman's publisher released his new book, *The Gift of Rest: Rediscovering the Beauty of the Sabbath*. Lieberman, an orthodox Jew, has for many years been very influential in U. S. politics. However, he leaves considerable latitude in when and how to keep the Sabbath. "I hope that when people read this book, in their own way they will accept the gift of rest and bring it into their own lives--maybe just deciding for one day or part of one day not to use their Blackberry or iPads or to watch television, ..." (Newsmax). Glowing reviews of the book by various religious and secular leaders are posted on Amazon.com and elsewhere, and Timothy M. Dolan, Archbishop of New York, says, "Senator Lieberman reminds us that the God-given day of rest--whether we call it Sabbath or Sunday--should be honored by all believers."

But does this "outward issue in the last days" really get to the heart of the matter? This is the "old covenant" perspective under which Laodicea suffers and, in the end, will cause her to capitulate to the mark of the beast fear issue, unless there are 144,000 which emerge from her. Here's why:

The seventh-day Sabbath is the "seal of God." "Remember the Sabbath day to *keep* it holy." The holiness of the Sabbath is God's gift of *agape*-love. It's His gift to mankind. We are to "keep" what He has given. In other words, faith is motivated by *agape*. The Sabbath, the gospel, the sanctuary truth, and the cross are intimately interwoven into one.

The old covenant perspective views the Sabbath as obedience manifested in "keeping" the seventh-day. "All that the Lord has spoken *we* will do." This is exemplified in our Senator Lieberman's telling about the presidential Inauguration Day in 2001 when he and his wife walked four and a half miles from their home to the Capitol. He said, "We didn't want to drive. That would have been a violation of the rules of the Sabbath. We walked ... and I was glad that we did."

It's good for the human psyche and physical well-being to take regular time off. But none of this old covenant observance is true Sabbath-keeping because it is motivated by self-

interest. The new covenant observance of the Sabbath is motivated by a "faith which works by love."

The lesson forthrightly tells us that "even now, all the world is divided into two camps: those who are faithful to the Lord and those who are not. There is no middle ground: either we are on one side or the other." And for Seventh-day Adventists, there should be absolutely no confusion about the Sabbath.

In reading Wednesday's lesson one wonders if there is a parallel between the Old Testament "from exile to restoration" and the time in which we are living--the last days? The Bible text quoted in Wednesday's lesson, "Your fathers, where are they?" (Zech. 1:5), may give us some clues. The lesson goes on to say, "... learn from the mistakes of those who came before you; do not do what they did; learn from the past, learn from what happened before you."

In a letter to O. A. Olsen, written from Tasmania in 1895, Ellen G. White had some strong words for the brethren. In quoting Matthew 23, she said:

"If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.' ... 'Wherefore,' said Jesus, 'ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.' What lessons are here, fearful and decisive! Jesus said, '... I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city.' This prophecy was literally fulfilled by the Jews in their treatment of Christ and of the messengers whom God sent to them. Will men in these last days follow the example of those whom Christ condemned?"

"These terrible predictions they have not as yet carried out to the full; but if God spares their lives, and they nourish the same spirit that marked their course of action both before and after the Minneapolis meeting [1888 General Conference Session], they will fill up to the full the deeds of those whom Christ condemned when He was on the earth.

"The perils of the last days are upon us. ... Some have been cultivating hatred against the men whom God has commissioned to bear a special message to the world. They began this satanic work at Minneapolis. ... They went on in their own spirit, filled with envy, jealousy, and evil surmisings, as did the Jews." [1]

As our lesson says, "... learn from the mistakes of those who came before you."

Several years later, in 1907, Ellen White, in an article in the *Review and Herald*, brought encouragement: "[Christ] made an offering so complete that through His grace every one may reach the standard of perfection. Of those who receive His grace and follow His example it will be written in the book of life, 'Complete in Him,--without spot or stain.' ... He can bring us to complete restoration." [2]

That "complete restoration" will include restoration of Christ's true Sabbath by His true church in the closing period before Christ comes again.

Jones and Waggoner, the 1888 messengers, saw that the Sabbath truth is embedded in a full and complete view of justification by faith because the Sabbath is the "sign" of that true faith. Where the Sabbath truth is denied, there has to be either a counterfeit or an immature view of justification by faith. Rightly conceived, with no "mixture of poisonous error," justification by faith itself becomes the message that will raise up people all over the world to "keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" [3].

--*Carol A. Kawamoto* (with thanks to Paul E. Penno for his contribution)