

LESSON 10 - March 10, 1888.

ABRAHAM AND MELCHIZEDEK

1. WHERE did Abraham dwell when Lot was taken captive ? Gen. 14 : 13.
2. When he heard of Lot's misfortune, what did he do ? Verse 14.
3. What success did he have ? Verses 15, 16.
4. Who went out to meet Abraham on his return with the spoil ? Verse 17.
5. Who else met him and brought refreshments? Verse 18, first part.
6. Who was Melchizedek? Verse 18 ; Heb. 7 : 1, 2.
7. What besides giving him refreshments did Melchizedek do for Abraham ? Gen. 14 : 19.
8. Which was the greater man, Abraham or Melchizedek ? Heb. 7 4, 7.

9. What did Abraham give to Melchizedek? Gen. 14 : 20; Heb. 7 :4.

10. What did the king of Sodom say to Abraham? Gen. 14 : 21.

11. What reply did Abraham make? Verses 22, 23.

12. What only did Abraham reserve of the spoil ? Verse 24.

13. What had he taken out before he reserved the portion for the young men who went with him? Verse 20.

14. Since Abraham said that he would not take so much as a shoe latchet that belonged to the king of Sodom, whose property must he have regarded the tithe which he gave to the priest of the Lord? Lev. 27 :30.

15. Who is our priest? Heb. 4 : 14.

16. Of what order is he the priest ? Heb. 6:20.

17. Then ought we not to pay tithes as well as Abraham?

18. What words of the apostle Paul indicate that our great High Priest should receive tithes of us? Heb. 7 : 8.

19. What did Jesus himself say concerning men's duty to pay tithes? Matt. 23: 23.

NOTE.-The paying of tithes was not a Jewish arrangement, nor a ceremonial ordinance. "The tithe is the Lord's ; " and when we pay a tithe of our income into the Lord's treasury, we simply give him that which is his own. When we withhold the tithe, we rob God of his due. See Mal. 3 : 8. In the seventh of Hebrews, in showing the superiority of the Melchizedek priesthood to the Levitical priesthood, the apostle shows that in the person of Abraham, Levi himself paid tithes to Melchizedek. Christ is a priest "after the order of Melchizedek," and so, although we are not under the Levitical priesthood, as Abraham was not, Christ is our priest, "of whom it is witnessed that he liveth," and he should receive tithe from us.

December 8, 1896 God's Claim Upon Us. - By Mrs. E. G. White. -

God has a claim on us and all that we have. His claim is paramount to every other. And in acknowledgment of this claim, he bids us render to him a fixed proportion of all that he gives us. The tithe is this specified portion. By the Lord's direction it was consecrated to him in the earliest times. The Scriptures mention tithing in connection with the history of Abraham. The father of the faithful paid tithes to Melchisedec, "priest of the Most High God." Jacob also recognized the obligation of tithing. When, fleeing from his brother's wrath, he saw in his dream the ladder connecting heaven and earth, the gratitude of his heart found expression in the vow to God: "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God: and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee." {RH, December 8, 1896 par. 1}

When God delivered Israel from Egypt to be a special treasure unto himself, he taught them to devote a tithe of their possessions to the service of the tabernacle. This was a special offering, for a special work. All that remained of their property was God's, and was to be used to his glory. But the tithe was set apart for the support of those who ministered in the sanctuary. It was to be given from the first-fruits of all the increase, and, with gifts and offerings, it provided ample means for supporting the ministry of the gospel for that time. {RH, December 8, 1896 par. 2}

God requires no less of us than he required of his people anciently. His gifts to us are not less, but greater, than they were to Israel of old. His service requires, and ever will require, means. The great missionary work for the salvation of souls is to be carried forward. In the tithe, with gifts and offerings, God has made ample provision for this work. He intends that the ministry of the gospel shall be fully sustained. He claims the tithe as his own, and it should ever be regarded as a sacred reserve, to be placed in his treasury for the benefit of his cause, for the advancement of his work, for sending his messengers into "regions beyond," even to the uttermost parts of the earth. {RH, December 8, 1896 par. 3}

God has laid his hand upon all things, both man and his possessions; for all belong to him. He says, I am the owner of the world; the universe is mine, and I require you to consecrate to my service the first-fruits of all that I, through my blessing, have caused to come into your hands. God's word declares, "Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits." "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase." This tribute he demands as a token of our loyalty to him. {RH, December 8, 1896 par. 4}

We belong to God; we are his sons and daughters,--his by creation, and his by the gift of his only begotten Son for our redemption. "Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." The mind, the heart, the will, and the affections belong to God; the money that we handle is the Lord's. Every good that we receive and enjoy is the result of divine benevolence. God is the bountiful giver of all good, and he desires that there shall be an acknowledgment, on the part of the receiver, of these gifts that provide for every necessity of the body and the soul. God demands only his own. The primary portion is the Lord's, and must be used as his entrusted treasure. The heart that is

divested of selfishness will awaken to a sense of God's goodness and love, and be moved to a hearty acknowledgment of his righteous requirements. {RH, December 8, 1896 par. 5}

God gives to us, that we may give. He desires us to be laborers together with him. In heaven he is carrying forward the great work of redemption. That work engages the divine councils. It requires the ministry of angels upon the earth; and it requires also our co-operation. In the natural world, man must do his part in the work of the earth. He must till and prepare the soil. And God, working through nature, giving sunshine and showers, quickens the seed sown, and causes vegetation to flourish. Thus the sowing is rewarded in the reaping of earth's treasures in bountiful harvests. The lesson is true in spiritual as in temporal things. Man must work under the guidance of the divine hand; for unless God co-operates with him, there will be no increase. Human power cannot cause the seed sown to spring into life. But there can be no reaping unless the human hand acts its part in the sowing of the seed. {RH, December 8, 1896 par. 6}

The reaping will testify of what the sowing has been. God, through the inspired apostle, has said: "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity," feeling compelled to do so because of the pressure brought to bear upon him, when his heart is not in the work; "for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work (as it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth forever. Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness); being enriched in everything to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God. For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men; and by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." Here the matter is plainly laid out, specifying the privilege and duty of every believer. Let this ninth chapter of 2 Corinthians be read and reread. How could language express more than is here given? The inspired pen traces the advantages reaped by every soul who will become a laborer together with God in his work of beneficence. {RH, December 8, 1896 par. 7}

Many who profess to be Christians provide abundantly for themselves, supplying all their imaginary wants, while they give no heed to the wants of the Lord's cause. They have thought it gain to rob God by retaining all, or a selfish proportion, of his gifts as their own. But they meet with loss instead of gain. Their course results in the withdrawal of mercies and blessings. By their selfish, avaricious spirit, men have lost much. If they had fully and freely acknowledged God's requirements and met his claims, his blessing would have been manifest in increasing the productions of the earth. The harvests would have been greater. The wants of all would have been abundantly supplied. The more we give, the more we shall receive. {RH, December 8, 1896 par. 8}

This subject of the use of the means entrusted to us should be carefully considered; for the Lord will require his own with usury. While in poverty, many regard systematic giving as a Bible requirement; but when they come into possession of money or property, they do not acknowledge God's claim upon them. They look upon their means as their own. But not so did

King David regard his possessions. He understood that God is the great proprietor of all things, and that he himself was highly honored in that he had been taken into partnership with God. His heart was filled with gratitude for the favor and mercy of God, and in his prayer when presenting offerings for the building of the temple, he said, "Of thine own have we given thee." {RH, December 8, 1896 par. 9}

The cause of God is ever demanding. Industry is therefore required on the part of all, high and low, rich and poor, in order that due returns may be made to God, that there may be "meat" in his house, and that the servants whom he has called to do the work of communicating the truth to a perishing world may be supported. {RH, December 8, 1896 par. 10}

Not only does God require the tithe, but he requires that all we have be used to his glory. There must be no spendthrift habits; it is God's property that we are handling. Not one dollar or one shilling is our own. The squandering of money in luxuries deprives the poor of the means necessary to supply them with food and clothing. That which is spent for the gratification of pride in dress, in buildings, in furniture, and in decorations, would relieve the distress of many wretched, suffering families. God's stewards are to minister to the needy. This is the fruit of pure and undefiled religion. The Lord condemns men for their selfish indulgence while their fellow beings are suffering for the want of food and clothing. {RH, December 8, 1896 par. 11}

God's money is needed. It is hoarded and buried in the world, while multitudes are starving for temporal food and spiritual knowledge. It is spent in foolish amusements, in dissipating games and sports and idolatrous practises. God says, "Shall I not visit for these things?" Already he is sending his judgments upon the earth. Terrible plagues are visiting our world, in famines, in floods, in calamities by sea and land, in earthquakes in divers places. And because of men's wickedness the Lord does not restrain the destroying power. {RH, December 8, 1896 par. 12}

Professed Christians reject the Lord's plan of raising means for his work; and to what do they resort to supply the lack? God sees the wickedness of the methods they adopt. Places of worship are defiled by all manner of idolatrous dissipation, that a little money may be won from selfish pleasure-lovers to pay church debts or to sustain the work of the church. Many of these persons would not of their own accord pay one shilling for religious purposes. Where, in God's directions for the support of his work, do we find any mention of bazaars, concerts, fancy fairs, and similar entertainments? Must the Lord's cause be dependent upon the very things he has forbidden in his word--upon those things that turn the mind away from God, from sobriety, from piety and holiness? And what impression is made upon the minds of unbelievers? The holy standard of the word of God is lowered into the dust. Contempt is cast upon God and upon the Christian name. The most corrupt principles are strengthened by this unscriptural way of raising means. And this is as Satan would have it. Men are repeating the sin of Nadab and Abihu. They are using common instead of sacred fire in the service of God. The Lord accepts no such offerings. All these methods for bringing money into his treasury are an abomination to him. It is a spurious devotion that prompts all such devising. O what blindness, what infatuation, is upon many who claim to be Christians! Church members are doing as did the inhabitants of the world in the days of Noah, when the imagination of their hearts was only evil continually. All who fear God will abhor such practises as a misrepresentation of the religion of Jesus Christ. {RH, December 8, 1896 par. 13}

There is sin, enormous sin, charged against many who profess to be Christians. The great Pleader says, My claims upon the human heart have been ignored. God calls for repentance, for reformation. {RH, December 8, 1896 par. 14}

The Lord calls upon every one of his children to let heaven's light--the light of his own unselfish love--shine out amid the darkness of this degenerate age. If he sees you acknowledge him as the possessor of yourself and all your possessions, if he sees you use your entrusted means as a faithful steward, he will register your name in the books of heaven as a laborer together with him, a partner in his great firm, to work in behalf of your fellow men. And joy will be yours in the final day, as it is seen that the means wisely used in helping others has caused through you thanksgiving to God. {RH, December 8, 1896 par. 15}

The Lord declares that what a man sows he shall also reap. Shall we not, then, by our good works, seek to sow the very best quality of seed? In the last days of the old year shall we not make our account right with God by bringing all the tithes into his storehouse? Will any venture longer to rob God in tithes and offerings? In the coming holidays, let our gifts be not to one another, but to the house of God, "that there may," he says, "be meat in mine house." In place of spending our time and means in getting up something to surprise and gratify our friends, shall we not turn all our offerings into God's treasury? Shall we not make a thank-offering to the Lord? Will those who profess to be Christians see this matter in its true bearing? Will they awake to a sense of their obligation to God, and render to him his own?" Every man as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." {RH, December 8, 1896 par. 16}