

**SUNDAY SCHOOL.**

Lesson II.—Third Quarter, For July 9, 1916.

**THE INTERNATIONAL SERIES.**

Text of the Lesson, I Thess. i and iv, 13-18—Memory Verses iv, 16, 17. Golden Text, iv, 14—Commentary Prepared by Rev. D. M. Stearns.

It is grand to have a whole epistle to meditate upon this week, and especially such a one as this, so full of the glorious truth of our Lord's second coming and its two stages, first to the air for His church—and to the earth with us to set up His kingdom of righteousness and peace. The references to His coming in each chapter we gave in last week's lesson, and before taking it up more fully let us receive a few heart lessons from the whole letter. It is from the three with whom we have been traveling recently, Paul and Silas and Timothy, faithful and devoted witnesses to the risen living Christ, and it is to the believers who lived on earth at Thessalonica, but were really in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ as to their heavenly standing (I Thess. i, 1; II Thess. i, 1). It was by the gospel of God and of Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, that they were led into this holy position and the assurance of it, and the apostles' desire for them was that they would walk worthy of God, who had given them this great joy and called them unto His kingdom and glory (chapter i, 5, 6; II, 2, 4, 8, 9, 12; III, 2; IV, 1).

The one only thing that a sinner is asked to do and can do is to turn from his sins to God and receive the Lord Jesus Christ as his own personal Saviour. That makes him to be in God and in Christ and secures to him all the benefits of the finished work of the Lord Jesus, life eternal, the forgiveness of sins, acceptance in Christ and a joint heirship with Him without any works whatever or any merit on the part of the sinner.

Having eternal redemption, our one occupation is summed up in serving the living and true God, which means with "quietness" doing our own business, filling the place He assigns us, living together with Him, as children of light rejoicing in everything giving thanks and trusting the God of Peace to do all in us and through us because of His faithfulness (chapters i, 9; iv, 11; v, 5, 10, 16-18, 23, 24).

Having become followers of Christ, who suffered everything and was killed for our sakes, we must not shrink from suffering with Him and being killed for His sake, never pleasing men, but only and always pleasing God, who trieth our hearts (chapters i, 6; iv, 14, 15; III, 4). Being delivered from the wrath to come, of which He speaks more fully in the second epistle, our attitude should always be that of waiting for His return. Our individual personal salvation is threefold—we are saved, we are working it out, and we wait for the redemption of the body at His coming. This is simply stated in chapter i, 9, 10, but see also Rom. v, 1-2; Tit. II, 11-13; I John III, 1, 2. There is another and larger threefold view of salvation, covering the whole church, which shall be caught up at His coming, then the salvation of all Israel at His coming back with us in His glory, and after that the salvation of all nations, so that "salvation," one of the greatest words in the Bible, has a sixfold significance, reaching on to the kingdom when the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.

Paul seems to have taught so much about the blessed hope and associated events that the believers feared lest those who had died had missed a great blessing and privilege, but he assured them that those who might remain until the Lord came would not prevent or go before or gain any advantage over those who had died or, as to their bodies, fallen asleep (chapter iv, 13-15). I have many friends who think that between death and resurrection the soul sleeps and that there is no conscious existence, but I cannot find any foundation in Scripture for such a belief, so I tell my friends that if I shall die I will be more alive than I am now, believing Phil. i, 21, 23; II Cor. v, 8; Rev. vi, 9-11; Luke xvi, 22.

As to His coming for us and our meeting Him in the air, chapter iv, 16-18, with I Cor. xv, 23, 51, 52, makes it very real. The Lord Himself shall descend, the same Jesus who ascended from the Mount of Olives (Acts i, 11), a trumpet shall sound, and all the dead bodies of believers, whether buried in the earth or in the depths of the sea or burned to ashes, shall come to life, and those who once lived in them when they were mortal bodies, but have since death been with Christ in glory, shall live again in those resurrected, glorified bodies. At the same moment, in the twinkling of an eye, all living believers shall be changed without dying and, together with the raised ones, be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. There is comfort in these truths for all who will receive them. The words "They that are Christ's at His coming" (I Cor. xv, 23) convince me that no true believers shall be omitted in this great event. The dead bodies of unbelievers shall not be raised till after the thousand years (Rev. xx, 5, 6). There is no foundation for believing that death or the destruction of Jerusalem or any other great event or the coming of the Holy Spirit has any connection or association with the second coming of Christ.

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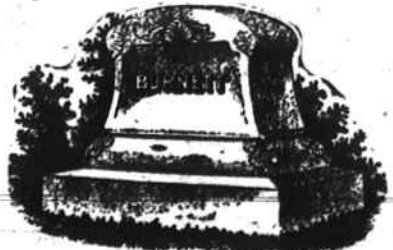
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