

desire in this series of lessons to instil in the hearts of parents and children alike, the conviction that life does have a meaning—a profound and vital meaning—especially for all who live in harmony with God's purpose and plan for the human race. One who is acquainted with these essential truths of both reason and revelation is prepared to cope with the agnosticism and unbelief prevalent in our day, especially so-called Fatalism.

It is important that these fundamental matters should be impressed upon the minds of the children as well as adults. For the children, the illustration of a man setting out to build a great building, is suggested. He first draws up the plans and specifications for the structure he proposes to build; then he enters upon the actual construction of it with the definite intention of building it according to the plans already drawn, and for the specific use to which he intends to put it when it shall have been completed. There are three general steps in the entire process, viz., (1) origination, (2) execution, and (3) application. Origination takes in the formulating of the necessary plans and specifications for the building; execution, the actual construction of the building according to the plans and specifications; and application, the actual use of the completed structure for the purpose for which it was designed and built. So it is with God and His universe, which He designed and created, which He governs, and which He is slowly but surely directing toward that

“... one far-off divine event.

To which the whole creation moves.”

(Tennyson.)

Lesson Fourteen

GOD'S MORAL SYSTEM

Scripture Reading: Rom. 8:18-25.

Scripture To Memorize: “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to vani-

ty, not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God" (Rom. 8:18-21).

1. **Q. What do we learn about God from the world around us?**

A. That He is a God of order.

(1) It has been rightly said that "nature is a system—a cosmos, not a chaos." (2) "A disorderly Supreme Being is unthinkable . . . Without order there could be no number or measure; no music, no art. Without it there could be no growth, no progress, no life, no cause and effect; no liberty, no social relations, and no science" (Boswell, *God's Purpose Toward Us*, pp. 11-12). (3) Our world is a world of cause and effect. Even the abnormalities of nature, such as cyclones, earthquakes, tidal waves, pestilences, etc., have their respective causes. To deny that order prevails throughout the universe is to deny the known facts of observation and experience.

2. **Q. What great truth do we derive from our conviction that God created the heavens and the earth?**

A. The truth that He had a purpose in creating us and the world around us.

Order necessitates purpose, and vice versa. Our God is orderly and purposeful because He is intelligent. He commands that we ourselves do all things "decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40); therefore we may rightly expect Him to do His works in the same orderly manner. It follows, then, that God did not create the universe without first forming His purpose with respect to it and its creatures.

3. **Q. What do we mean by the physical universe?**

A. By the physical universe we mean the world around us, commonly called the natural or material world.

Heb. 1:10—"Thou, Lord, in the beginning didst lay the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands." Cf. Gen. 1:1, Heb. 11:3, Psa. 33:6-9.

4. **Q. What do we mean by God's moral system?**

A. By His moral system we mean His eternal purpose and plan with respect to His moral creatures.

(1) By moral creatures we mean all those who have free will, or the ability to choose between right and wrong. Call attention to the differences between you and the world around you. (2) By moral system, we have reference to all moral creatures; that is, to the whole realm of personality. (3) The terms moral universe and moral system, are used by way of contrast with the terms physical universe and physical system. The former allude to the realm of personality; the latter, to the realm of things. (4) For general purposes, when we speak of God's moral system, we have reference to His purpose and plan with respect to us. Thus the idea becomes a matter of personal interest.

5. Q. What was God's purpose in creating the physical universe?

A. It was evidently created for man's use and benefit.

(1) This is clearly indicated in Gen. 1:28-30. (2) The physical universe is in a sense incidental to God's moral system; for, without the human race, the physical universe and the brute creation would both be needless and superfluous. As God had no need Himself of the natural world, He must have created it for us. It should be made clear to the students that the world around us, or what we call Nature, with its manifold blessings of sunshine and shower, seedtime and harvest, of tree and fruit and herb, of fish and bird and beast, etc., was all created for us and for our use and benefit. (3) Hence the natural world was created first, the brute creation next, and man last. The order of creation as given in the first chapter of Genesis is in perfect accord with the nature of things. Everything led up to the creation of man and his establishment upon the earth as its lord tenant (Gen. 1:27-30). (4) How needless the creation of the natural world would have been without the human race to inhabit it, to make use of its vast resources, and to benefit from its operations and productivity! (5) Impress upon the students the fact that God bestows innumerable blessings upon us daily. How little we could accomplish if God did not send the sunshine and the shower, if He had not stored up in the earth its vast resources

of mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms! Should we not give thanks to God daily for all these blessings? Should we not cultivate the habit of offering Him our thanks each time we gather at the family table to partake of His bounties?

6. Q. What was God's purpose in inaugurating His moral system?

A. Evidently He purposed to have, ultimately, a holy universe.

(1) The primary reason for His moral system seems to have been that He wanted beings whom He could love and who could love Him in return. 1 John 4:16—"God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him." (2) Spirit is social, i. e., it seeks the fellowship of kindred spirits. It is quite probable that God was speaking from His own experience when He said, "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Gen. 2:18). Both creation and redemption, it would seem, have their source and foundation not so much in God's sovereignty as in His love. (3) "But God could not love sticks and stones and material things any more than we can. Neither could He love the brute creation, for they could not understand and appreciate Him. He could truly love only a proper object of love; and there is no proper object of affection but a free moral agent—one who can understand and appreciate affection, and especially that affection which has its foundation in moral qualities and character" (Cook, *The Origin of Sin*, p. 94). (4) Such perfect intimacy of association and fellowship with His moral creatures as God desires, is possible only among beings who are holy. 1 Pet. 1:16—"ye shall be holy; for I am holy." Matt. 5:8—"blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." We conclude, therefore, that the ultimate objective of God's eternal purpose and plan is a holy race.

7. Q. What may we expect, then, with regard to God's moral system?

A. We may expect it to have a consummation grander and more glorious than is possible for the human intelligence to imagine!

(1) The scriptures teach that this consummation will be realized in the ages to come. Eph. 2:7—"that in the ages to come he may show the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." (2) It will be realized no doubt in "the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:13). (3) We may expect it to be grand and glorious because it will be the accomplishment of God's eternal purpose and plan. Nothing in this world can compare with it in nobility, magnitude and preciousness. (4) This is all clearly taught in Rom. 8:18-21. Here it is taught that the human race was subjected to a state of vanity (literally, frailty, i. e., physical imperfection, mortality, and in fact all the consequences of having been clothed with a fleshly body); and that this was done according to the direct arrangement of the Creator, and in view of man's liability to temptation and sin; that it was done in the benevolent design and expectation that the human race would, by passing through this earthly state, be moved to seek deliverance from its various forms of bondage consequential to a fleshly organization, and would thus in cooperation with God on the terms and conditions of His Covenant, finally attain that desired freedom from the guilt and consequences of sin, and even from mortality itself, and finally be established for ever in the free and glorious service of God. (5) In this connection read the account of John's apocalyptic vision of the "holy city, new Jerusalem" in the "new heaven and new earth" (Rev. 21:1-4).

8. Q. In view of these truths how should we regard this present world?

A. We should look upon it as being only the stepping-stone to the future world.

(1) If it is not just the stepping-stone to a future glorious world, then life here is purposeless and to a large extent useless. As Browning says:

"Truly there needs another life to come!

If this be all,

And another life await us not, for one

I say 'tis a poor cheat, a stupid bungle,

A wretched failure. I for one protest

Against, and I hurl it back with scorn."

(2) God's moral system is probably yet in its infancy. "Our view is that God is just now laying the foundations of an endless moral universe; and that when these foundations have been laid securely, then the peopling of the material universe will go on through all the ages; so that the ultimate design which God has in view is a moral universe expanding in glory and blessedness forevermore. . . . The solution of the matter may be found in this—that God is building so vast a universe, and laying the foundations of a government over it that will stand the strain of eternity" (Cook, *The Origin of Sin*, pp. 21, 32).

9. Q. What lessons should we derive from these sublime truths?

A. Three great lessons, namely: 1. that God knows and is always doing what is best for the race as a whole; 2. that we should accept His dispensations in implicit faith that to all who love Him all things work together for good; 3. that we should always live and act in harmony with His will as revealed in the scriptures, for in so doing we shall attain that true holiness essential to unbroken fellowship with Him in the ages to come.

(1) Col. 1:12—"giving thanks unto the Father, who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Matt. 6:33—"seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness." Phil. 2:12, 13—"work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure." 1 John 3:2, 3—"Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is. And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (2) Impress the following truths upon the students: (a) that there is a life hereafter; (b) that life here is just preparatory; (c) that we should live here as God wants us to live; (d) that in so doing we shall be a blessing to this world and shall prepare ourselves to live with Him eternally in the next world; (e) that if we refuse to live here as He wants us to live, we can expect nothing hereafter but to

be separated from Him forever; (f) that such a tragic end would be the consequence of our own disobedience, and not of anything that God has desired or willed or done. God wants us to be saved. God pleads with us to forsake sin. God knows what is best for us. Therefore our eternal happiness depends on our working together with God according to the terms and conditions, and in the ways, which He has revealed in His word.

REVIEW EXAMINATION OVER LESSON

FOURTEEN

1. Q. What do we learn about God from the world around us?
2. Q. What great truth do we derive from our conviction that God created the heavens and the earth?
3. Q. What do we mean by the physical universe?
4. Q. What do we mean by God's moral system?
5. Q. What was God's purpose in creating the physical universe?
6. Q. What was God's purpose in inaugurating His moral system?
7. Q. What may we expect, then, with regard to God's moral system?
8. Q. In view of these truths how should we regard this present world?
9. Q. What lessons should we derive from these sublime truths?

Lesson Fifteen

THE FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Scripture Reading: Rom. 8:26-30.

Scripture To Memorize: "For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren: and whom he foreordained, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Rom. 8:29-30).

10. Q. What do we mean by the foreknowledge of God?