



The Majesty of God: His Sovereignty

Study 3

*Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
Nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might;
Thy justice, like mountains, high soaring above,
Thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love.*

Memory Verse

And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? (Daniel 4:34,35)

Homework

Monday = (1) Read Questions I and II. (2) Memorize Hymn and Verses.

Tuesday = (1) Read Introduction and Genesis 14:18-20. (2) Memorize Hymn and Verses.

Wednesday = (1) Read Question III. (2) Memorize Hymn and Verses.

Thursday = (1) Read Question IV. (2) Memorize Hymn and Verses.

Friday = (1) Read Question V. (2) Memorize Hymn and Verses.

Saturday = (1) Read Question VI. (2) Complete the Activity. (3) Memorize Hymn and Verses.

Activity

We have learned that the most high God is the Owner and Blessor of this whole world. However, we do not always practice this great truth in our lives. There is a story about a man who was so rich that he always had more than he could eat. At the end of each meal, he would order the servants to gather the scraps that remain and feed them to the poor. Like that rich

man, we too are enriched with so many blessings. We sometimes think only of ourselves and after we have had fun and grown tired of our blessings, we then offer the Lord our left-overs. In order to fix this problem, answer the following questions and make a plan that will help you walk closer with the Lord.

(1) How can you tithe on your money?

(2) How can you tithe on your time?

(3) How can you tithe on your talents?

(4) How can you tithe on your daily activities?

I. What Does the "Sovereignty of God" Mean?

The sovereignty of God is the absolute reign of the King of kings and Lord of lords. Like a two-sided coin, sovereignty necessarily includes two essential characteristics: the authority to make a decision and the ability to carry out that decision. As Creator, God is the supreme authority over all creation and is absolutely able to accomplish all that He desires. To understand the importance of this two-fold aspect of sovereignty, consider the following illustration. A fragile grandmother is babysitting her 8 year old grandson. The grandson is angry that he cannot eat ice cream. The grandmother disciplines her grandson by demanding he go to his room for an hour. The grandson refuses to obey his grandmother, pushes

her to the ground and runs out of the house to play with his friends down the street. Think of it: the grandmother has the authority over her grandson, but because of her age, she does not have the ability to carry out her instructions. On the other hand, the grandson has the ability to carry out his wishes, but because of his youth, he does not have the authority to rebel against his grandmother. When we speak of the sovereignty of God, we mean that God has the right (authority) and the might (ability) to do whatever He chooses to do. God is not subject to anything or anyone outside of Himself and nothing or no one is able to hinder God from achieving His purpose. (Dan. 4:34,35; Prov. 21:1; Acts 9:5; 1 Tim. 6:15,16)

II. What is the Meaning of the Words in the Stanza of the Hymn?

First Line: (1) God is Unresting, meaning that God is not exhausted of His strength and therefore never sleeps; (2) God is unhasting, meaning that God is not excessive in His action and therefore never hurries; (3) God is silent as light, meaning that God is not extravagant through His revelation, yet like light, His presence is everywhere seen.

Second Line: (1) God is not wanting, meaning that God does not lack anything, and is therefore perfect in Who He is; (2) God is not wasting, meaning that God does not do anything without purpose, and is therefore perfect in what He does; (3) God rules in might, meaning that God reigns supreme, and is therefore King of kings and Lord of lords.

Third Line: The justice of God is the execution of God's judgment upon every

person according to His righteous Law (Ten Commandments). As mountains are so tall that they can oversee everything beneath them, so God sees everyone who breaks His Law and therein upholds His justice by rewarding them according to their deeds. "For the wages of sin is death." (Rom. 6:23)

Fourth Line: The grace of God is gloriously manifested in the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. As clouds are the fountains from which rain falls and waters the earth, so the grace of God is the fountain from which His goodness and love flows and saves sinners. "But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 6:23)

The Most High God: Owner and Blessor (Genesis 14:18-20)

Introduction: There was a confederation of four kings who took charge of the people who lived in the surrounding area of Babylon. These kings had imposed a tax on the citizens of this region and for twelve years the people were obedient to their masters. However, the people were not happy living under the autocratic yoke of these kings and therefore formed their own alliance resulting in their rebellion and refusal to pay their taxes. The confederacy of kings organized an army to subdue the people alliance and regain control of the land. One such battle was fought in Sodom. The commander of the people alliance was not very skilled in the art of combat. He allowed his men to put up their defense in front of slime pits which cut off their retreat and ultimately ended with the confederacy of kings conquering the alliance. After their victory, the confederacy of kings took as their reward all the treasures of the city and enslaved the people. Among the captives was Abraham's nephew, Lot. Upon discovering this news, Abraham gathered 318 men whom he had skillfully trained for combat. He led his army to the top waters of the Jordan River and waited until dark. Strategically dividing his men into two groups, he led a charge against the confederacy of kings in the middle of the night which literally took the bewildered army by surprise. Through all the confusion, Abraham successfully defeated the confederacy of kings and became the owner of the great treasures that had been accumulated by the opposing army. He chose to return home by passing through Jerusalem, which at the time was called Salem. As he approached the city, a man named Melchizedek greeted him and the following transaction took place between them. Read the passage carefully and pay special attention to Abraham's response to Melchizedek.

Melchizedek: A King and a Priest

And Melchizedek

The Position: King of Salem

King of Salem

*The Presentation: Redemption Symbolized - bread and wine
brought forth bread and wine:*

The Position: Priest of the Most High God

and he was the priest of the most high God.

The Presentation: Sovereignty Magnified - Owner and Blessor

And he blessed him, and said,

The Benediction: Dominion of Most High God - over Abraham ("Blessed")

Blessed be Abram of the most high God,

*The Reason: God is the Possessor - Heaven and Earth
possessor of heaven and earth:*

The Benediction: Sovereignty of Most High God - in Himself ("Blessed")

and blessed be the most high God,

*The Reason: God is the Distributer - Righteous and Wicked
which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand.*

The Principle: Recognizing & Acknowledging God as Owner and Blessor

And he gave him tithes of all.

III. Who is Melchizedek and What is His Connection with the Sovereignty of God?

First, consider who Melchizedek is: (1) Melchizedek is the King of Salem. The purpose of a king is to rule a people in righteousness and peace. He had been given this responsibility and there is every reason to believe he was faithful to his charge. (2) Melchizedek is the Priest of God. The purpose of a priest is to represent a people to God. Although he lived in a country which believed in a plurality of gods, Melchizedek was a believer in the Most High God. He was faithful to fulfill his work as a priest as his encounter with Abraham demonstrates.

Second, consider how Melchizedek is connected with the Sovereignty of God. (1) The Biblical References. Melchizedek is mentioned three times in the Bible. The first reference is Genesis 14 which is a historical record of the man who met Abraham; the second reference is Psalm 110 which is a prophetic account of the man who was yet to come; the third reference is Hebrews 7 which explains the historical record and shows how the prophetic account is fulfilled. (2) The Biblical Explanation. Ultimately, Jesus Christ is our great "Melchizedek" as He rules over His people with righteousness and peace and is the only Mediator between God and men. "Mercy and truth met together, and righteousness and peace kiss each other." (Psalm 85:10) If we cannot come to God without a Mediator because

of our sin, then how does the Mediator take away our sin? How does the Mediator bridge the gap between the righteousness of God on one end and the peace of God on the other end, with our sin against God and His judgment upon us in between? The gap has been bridged by Jesus Christ when He, the Son of God (absolutely God), became the Son of Man (completely man); born of a virgin and therefore conceived without sin; living an obedient life to the God the Father; dying as a voluntary sacrifice to God and perfect substitute for His people through the blood of His atoning death; buried in the grave for three days and three nights thereby completing the required penalty as a result of our sins; rising from the dead on the third day therein guaranteeing our salvation and conquering death by His sovereign power; ascending up to heaven after forty days where He now sits at the right hand of the Father as our continual Priest; and will one day return to this earth when all of His people shall be gathered with Him in heaven.

This is what Hebrews 7 is teaching us. The Melchizedek that Abraham met was only a figure of who Jesus Christ truly is. Jesus is our King and He is our Priest. This is why Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." (Jn. 14:6)

IV. What was the First Thing Melchizedek did when He Met Abraham?

When Melchizedek met Abraham, he offered him bread and wine. Why did he do this? Was Melchizedek being a good host and providing refreshments for his guest? This

appears to be improbable since Abraham had just received the spoils from his victory in battle. He had plenty of refreshment at his disposal. There is an

interesting suggestion that this "bread and wine" carried a prophetic meaning, just as Melchizedek himself was a prophetic figure of Jesus Christ. What then does the "bread and wine" represent? Jesus Christ instituted a special commemoration of His atoning death called "The Lord's Supper". The Lord's Supper has two elements that are shared by the baptized Christians who are members of the church. The Apostle Paul said, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" The wine represents the blood of Christ and the bread His body. The blood of Christ is the bond that unites the body together. On the one hand, the body of Christ was broken when He was crucified on the cross and His blood was thereby shed. On the other hand, the body of Christ is a metaphor for the church and it is His

blood that unites the baptized believers who are members together. All of this may sound rather complicated, but it is actually very simple. The body and blood of Christ, represented by the bread and wine, is a commemoration of the atoning death of Jesus Christ which is the basis for our communion with God and other believers. The sovereignty of God is manifested most powerfully when God the Father sent His only begotten Son to save His people from their sins through the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ. Melchizedek highlights this wonderful truth prior to his pronouncement of the greatness of God by bringing forth "bread and wine". Can you think of a better demonstration of God's sovereignty than His accomplishment of delivering sinners from their sin and condemnation by offering Himself as a sacrifice for sin and substitution for sinners?

V. What is the Second Thing Melchizedek did when He Met Abraham?

When Melchizedek met Abraham, he also pronounced a special blessing on him. The blessing is an explanation on the sovereignty of God. First, consider the title of God. Twice Melchizedek refers to the Lord as "the most high God". Four truths can be gathered by the title: (1) His Singular Glory: He is "the" most high God - not just "a" god; (2) His Supreme Glory: He is the "most" high God - greater than all other gods; (3) His Sovereign Glory: He is the most "high" God - the King of kings and Lord of lords; (4) His Sacred Glory: He is the most high "God" - the almighty God by which for Him, through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. These four truths expressed by

Melchizedek are staggering to think about when we remember that he was living in a place where the majority of people worshipped many different gods. Standing almost alone in his convictions on the one true God, he embraces Abraham as a fellow believer and confers upon him a blessing. Second, consider the dominion of God. There are two aspects to the sovereignty of God which Melchizedek highlights. (1) The Most High God is the Owner of All Things. He is the "possessor of heaven and earth". There are two realms God has created - the spiritual world and the material world. For example, when God created the first human, He first made the man from the dirt of the ground which

became his physical (material) body; He then breathed into the man's nostrils the breath of life after which he became a living soul (spiritual being). Everything created in the spiritual and material worlds belongs to the Creator. You may live in a house, own a wardrobe of clothes, have a collection of toys and games, make regular additions to a piggy bank; but all of these things belong foremost to God Himself. You may use phrases like: "My parents", "My shoes", "My money", "My friends", "My time", "My life", etc., but we must always remember that all of these things are owned by God. For example, you may say to your friend, "I want to invite you to my house." Although it is your house because it is where you live, it doesn't actually belong to YOU because you did not buy it. Your house really belongs to your parents who bought it. You get to call it your house only because your parents own it. In the same way, we can only say we own something in this world because God owns it and allows us to use it. (2) The Most High God is the Blessor for His People. He not only owns all things, but He also distributes the things He owns for His people to enjoy. In the case of Abraham, God had given to him and his 318 men the victory in battle. Unless

God had delivered this blessing to Abraham, he would not have received it. Along with the victory, was also given all the treasures of the enemy. Abraham had therefore become a very rich man. Melchizedek is simply telling Abraham that every specific blessing he enjoys has been given to him by God the Blessor. Let us look at another example. Imagine there is a very wealthy man who owns a large house. This man hires a servant to look after the house. This servant does not really own the things in the man's house, but he is given the responsibility to oversee the things the man owns. His job is to be a good steward of another man's riches. In the same way, God owns all things He has made. We are His stewards who are responsible to oversee God's possessions. We must therefore always be thankful for whatever we have been given in life (even life itself is a gift from God); we must be faithful to look after the things God has given to us; we must be wise to make investments with the things God has given to us; we must never enjoy the things God has given to us in themselves, but rather always enjoy God through the things we have received. We must glorify the Blessor by enjoying Him through the blessings.

VI. How did Abraham Respond to Melchizedek?

After Melchizedek pronounced a blessing on Abraham by magnifying the sovereignty of God, Abraham responded by giving to him a tithe of all his possessions. A tithe means 10 percent. Abraham therefore took one tenth of everything he had gained through his victory and gave that percentage to Melchizedek. Why did he do this? Tithing is the way a believer in Christ acknowledges the sovereignty of God in his

life. God Himself established the principle by the way He chose to create and govern this world. For example, when He called into existence this universe, He chose to set apart for Himself one solar system (Milky Way) from an innumerable number of solar systems; He chose to set apart for Himself one planet (Earth) from many planets; He chose to set apart for Himself one day (Sabbath) out of the

seven in a week; He chose to set apart for Himself human beings (giving them a spiritual capacity) from all other creatures; He chose to set apart for Himself one garden (Eden) for man to live in from among all other places on the earth; He chose to set apart for Himself one tree (Knowledge of Good and Evil) from among all other trees in the garden; He chose to set apart for Himself one way of salvation (atoning death of a sacrificial offering) from all other ways attempted by sinners; He chose to set apart for Himself His own people (election) from other sinners, for "blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." (Eph. 1:3-6) Now, this great principle of God setting apart one

portion from the whole is the basis for His people setting apart 10 percent from the whole of their blessings unto the Lord. It is the practical way in which you and I always acknowledge that God owns our lives and we are only stewards faithfully overseeing what belongs to Him. Just as the Sabbath is set apart to the Lord in a special way, so 10 percent of our blessings are also set apart in a special way to Him. Furthermore, when Abraham gave his tithe, he offered it to Melchizedek. Hebrews 7 tells us that Jesus Christ is the Great Melchizedek and believers offer their tithes to the living Lord and Saviour, the Head of the church. This is why Christians put their tithes in the offering plates during church services - they are not giving the tithes to the church, but rather giving their tithes to Jesus Christ through the church, as He is Head of the church.