

## Agents of Hope: God's Great Missionaries Lesson 1 3Q 2008

Introduction to the new Study Guide read the first four paragraphs – thoughts?

Why do millions reject God? Could it have to do with the God they have been presented? Is it possible that not believing in god is actually healthier than believing in god, depending on the god presented?

I have patients who state they don't believe in God and I ask them, "Tell me about the god you don't believe in." And after they finish describing this cruel, tyrannical, abusive, coercive, power mongering God I say, "Good for you I don't believe in him either." In fact they have not described God, they have described Satan. To reject such a god is better than to believe in god if that is the god you believe in.

Paragraph five states, "As Christians, we are God's agents to bring these people hope, to show that there is a God who loves and cares for them, to show that although life has many outrageous horrors, it is not ultimately an outrageous horror but that God will finally make all things right." How? By doing what? Making an outrageous horror?

Lesson 1 For Such a Time as This: The Apostle Paul

SABBATH

Read first paragraph – thoughts?

Why was it a "shocker"? What lay at the root of the idea that the Jews were especially chosen for salvation? Narcissism, which is self-centeredness, which results in forming a god who is also elitist, arbitrary and selective. Thus at the root was the worship of a god who actually valued some people more than others on the basis of genetics rather than character.

Do people still struggle with this today? What Biblical evidence can we give to demonstrate this is not true, that God is “not a respecter of persons” that God shows no favoritism, that all mankind are sinners and need the same salvation and that God wants all men to come to salvation?

How many intelligent sentient species did God create on planet earth? One!

Was the Jewish nation called by God? For what? Jewish nation called for exclusive salvation? Or were they called to fulfill a role, a function?

They were called as an acting troupe to act out in a micro drama the plan of salvation. God was the director and they were the actors. Now, in order to be saved, even in OT times, people were not required to be part of the acting troupe and thus they were not required to participate in the rituals of the Jewish economy. Examples Naaman, Nebuchadnezzar, two individuals who were saved and as far as the Biblical record is concerned never participated in the Jewish rituals. Why?

Because the actors put on the drama to teach others the reality and those who learned the reality of who God is and came back to trust in God were saved.

Even in the OT God made it clear through the prophets that the rituals in the sanctuary services were not what He wanted:

PS 51:16 You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.

PS 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart,  
O God, you will not despise.

MIC 6:6 With what shall I come before the LORD  
and bow down before the exalted God?  
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,  
with calves a year old?

MIC 6:7 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of  
rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil?  
Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression,  
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

MIC 6:8 He has showed you, O man, what is good.  
And what does the LORD require of you?  
To act justly and to love mercy  
and to walk humbly with your God.

#### Chapter 1 of Isaiah –

The Children of Israel were God's specially chosen people to evangelize the world, to teach the plan of salvation in a theatrical drama. But that drama became reality in the life of Jesus and now the act, the play, the drama is no longer needed.

What today is the responsibility of the Christian church? What are we to be revealing to the world to prepare it for Christ's return? How can we be more effective in this revelation?

#### SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, "He took the good news about Jesus to the world."

RO 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. <sup>17</sup> For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

How is the gospel the power of God? And what does it mean “a righteousness from God is revealed”?

Read –

GAL 1:6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel-- <sup>7</sup> which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. <sup>8</sup> But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! <sup>9</sup> As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!

Thoughts about this? How can you tell the difference between the true gospel and false gospels?

Many patient’s of mind struggle with the question “how can I tell what to believe”? What would you say?

Should we be able to establish our beliefs on truths that are evidence based, testable, reliable and predictable? How does the gospel demonstrate this?

MONDAY

Read first paragraph –

How did Paul change after the Damascus Road experience?

What do you think was the core change Paul experienced internally that resulted in the changed behavior externally?

Was it His concept of God that changed, which resulted in a change of his own values, methods and principles?

Read fourth paragraph “Though Paul saw himself...” Do you see yourself as a special envoy for God? Do you see yourself as an ambassador for the government of God? Do you see yourself as a herald of the kingdom of light? Do you see yourself as the emissary of the kingdom of love?

If not how do we become such? What difference would it make in your life to realize that as soon as you accepted the name Christian you became an ambassador for the government of Christ?

## TUESDAY

Read fourth paragraph “It is a comfort...” Thoughts? Do we have the idea that God only anoints perfect people to His ministry? If God only anointed the perfect who would be anointed?

Examples from the Bible of the imperfect being called and anointed by God?

Noah was a wine bibber

Moses was a murderer

Abraham was a polygamist

Jacob was a deceiver

David was an adulterer and murderer

Solomon was a mega polygamist and practiced idolatry

Peter was an impulsive, power seeker who used foul language

How many of these men would we allow as elder, deacon, pastor, teacher? Do we have wrong ideas as to what it means to be qualified to serve in God’s cause?

What qualifies someone to serve in God’s cause?

The lesson said that Paul “needed the daily grace and forgiveness of Jesus” what does this mean? How does it apply to our lives?

The lesson asks us to read Romans 7:24

What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

What does this text mean?

Here are 10 verses from my paraphrase of Romans 7:14-24

<sup>7:14</sup> We know that the law is consistent, reliable and reasonable; but I am inconsistent, unreliable and unreasonable, because the infection of distrust, fear and selfishness has warped my mind and damaged my thinking. <sup>15</sup> I am frustrated with what I do. For having been restored to trust, I want to do what is in harmony with God and his methods and principles; but I find that even though I trust God, old habits, conditioned responses, preconceived ideas and other remnants of the devastation caused by distrust and selfishness are not yet fully removed. <sup>16</sup> And if I find an old habit causing me to behave in ways that I now find detestable, I affirm that the law is a very helpful tool revealing residual damage in need of healing. <sup>17</sup> What is happening is this: I have come to trust God and desire to do his will, but old habits and conditioned responses, which present almost reflexively in certain situations, have not yet been totally eliminated and thus cause me to do things I do not want to do. <sup>18</sup> I know that my mind was completely infected with distrust, fear and selfishness which totally perverted all my desires and faculties, so that even when distrust has been eradicated and trust has been restored, the damage caused by years of distrustful and selfish behavior has not yet been fully healed. So I find, at times, I have the desire to do what is right, but do not yet have the ability to carry out the desire. <sup>19</sup> For the old habits and conditioned responses are not the good I want to do; no, they are remnants of my selfish unconverted mind. <sup>20</sup> So, if I find myself doing what I no longer desire to do, it is not I, but vestiges of old habits and conditioned responses that have yet to be removed, and through God's grace will soon be removed.

<sup>7:21</sup> So, I find this reality at work: When I want to do good, old selfish habits and residual feelings of fear are right there with me. <sup>22</sup> For in my mind I rejoice in God's methods and principles; <sup>23</sup> but I recognize I remain damaged from years of being infected with distrust and practicing Satan's methods, so that even though the infection of distrust has been removed, the old habits of fear and self-promotion tempt me from within. <sup>24</sup> What a damaged and

corrupt man I am! Who will deliver and heal me from a brain and body so diseased and deformed? <sup>25</sup> Praise be to God – for he has provided the healing solution through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, I find that in my mind I am now renewed with trust for God and love of his methods, but my brain and body remain damaged by years of self-indulgent behavior.

Thoughts? is it important to realize that while God is working to heal us we are still vulnerable to making mistakes?

I have patients who want to live healthy lives. I will teach them methods of healthier communication, coping, living and they will comprehend and intend on applying this to their lives. But I have to prepare them for one of Satan's traps.

I point out they have a habit pattern in how they brush their teeth. If I told them to go through the opposite way every time from this point forward and they agreed could they do it without mistake? No, why? Because of ingrained habit. Does that mean they are stupid, incapable of change, rebellious, unruly, wicked or does it mean that habits take time to change? This is what Paul is describing in Romans 7.

But the devil comes behind and as soon as the old habit causes us to act in the old way, without even thinking, the devil is there to say, "See you are hopeless, you are a loser, the grace of Christ just doesn't work in your life. Why bother..."

We must recognize these lies and realize, it takes time to change habits and be gracious to ourselves as we grow with God.

WEDNESDAY

Read first paragraph – thoughts? Why was this so important to Paul? Why is it important to us?

If this is the most important aspect of God's salvation plan, do you think Satan will also make it the central focus of His

attack in order to confuse and mislead? How has that happened?

The Lesson asks us to read several texts and discuss:

Romans 5:10 For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

Thoughts? How did Christ's death reconcile us to God? What was the problem sin caused that the plan of salvation was designed to fix?

GAL 2:15 "We who are Jews by birth and not `Gentile sinners' <sup>16</sup> know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified

Thoughts? What does it mean to be justified? Set right? What was wrong that needed setting right? Two things:

1. What we believed about God – we needed our minds set right about God's character, methods principles. We were in darkness, gross darkness covered the people.
2. But we needed more than setting us right about the truth of God's character and trustworthiness. We also needed healing, recreation, regeneration. Our characters, our minds needed to be set right, or rightified, or justified. And Christ accomplished this for us as well.
  - i. Hebrews 8:10 the law is put on our hearts and minds
  - ii. Zech 3 the filthy garments are removed and the rich garment is placed upon us

- iii. Revelation 3:18 we are to obtain from Christ the white raiment and gold tried in fire, which represents character
- iv. EGW states, "This robe, woven in the loom of heaven, has in it not one thread of human devising. Christ in His humanity wrought out a perfect character, and this character He offers to impart to us." COL 311
- v. What does it mean to have this robe put upon us?
- vi. "When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness." COL 312

1 Timothy 2:5, 6 For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men--the testimony given in its proper time.

Thoughts? How do you understand mediation? Does this mean Christ pleading to His Father or is this as we discussed Christ as an ambassador of His Father to us? One who mediates God's truth, love and healing to us?

What about the idea of ransom? What does a ransom do? Sets free from captivity. What holds us captive? Lies about God and sinfulness of character. Did Christ provide us a "ransom" that sets us free from this? What? The truth which sets us free from lies and wins us to trust and a perfect character which sets us free from sinfulness.

1 Peter 1:18,19 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers,

but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

Thoughts on this text? What does it mean?

THURSDAY

Read second paragraph – “Living a godly...” thoughts?

What is salvation? Healing, and when someone is healed do the symptoms resolve? So is it expected when we cooperate with God for healing of heart and mind that there is a natural remission of the symptoms?

Read next paragraph “Paul writes...”

We might then say, “we don’t stop coughing in order to get well, we stop coughing when we are well.”

Read dark section near bottom “Paul wrote that he...”

Thoughts? What is the truth about death? How has the idea of death caused confusion over the truth about God?

Some believe that God created Adam and Eve with some aspect of their being that was immortal, what evidence demonstrates this is not true?

Where do we struggle with confusion about death? When we take examples of God putting people in the grave in the OT and then state God “kills” and use it as an example of what God will do to the wicked in the end.

Jesus, God in the flesh never called going into the grave death. He called it a sleep. Jesus specifically distinguished the two issues when He said “Don’t be afraid of him who can kill the body but the one who can kill body and soul (psyche)”

Has God, on many occasions used His power to put human beings in the grave? He has killed the body, but has God ever, anywhere in history, yet, killed the body and soul (psyche)? Or is everyone going to be resurrected?

When God told Adam and Eve in the day you eat you will die, was He speaking of sleep in grave (body death) or eternal destruction (death of body and soul)? So, has God, according to Jesus definition of death, killed anyone?

Is it important to make this distinction? Those who fail to make this distinction then present God as one who is the source of death rather than sin as the source of death.

FRIDAY

Question 1 read and discuss