

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

John the Baptist Preparing the Way for Jesus

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph "John is one..." – thoughts?

Read first paragraph in MONDAY's lesson – thoughts? Can we answer these questions?

John was called for a special mission before birth? Can you think of other examples from Scripture?

ISA 44:28 who says of Cyrus, "He is my shepherd
and will accomplish all that I please;
he will say of Jerusalem, "Let it be rebuilt,"
and of the temple, "Let its foundations be laid." "

ISA 45:1 "This is what the LORD says to his anointed,
to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of
to subdue nations before him
and to strip kings of their armor,
to open doors before him
so that gates will not be shut:

ISA 45:13 I will raise up Cyrus in my righteousness:
I will make all his ways straight.
He will rebuild my city
and set my exiles free,
but not for a price or reward,
says the LORD Almighty."

God called Cyrus as the king who would set captive Israel free
150 years before Cyrus was born? What does this mean?

RO 9:10 Not only that, but Rebekah's children had one
and the same father, our father Isaac. ¹¹ Yet, before the

twins were born or had done anything good or bad--in order that God's purpose in election might stand: ¹² not by works but by him who calls--she was told, "The older will serve the younger." ¹³ Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

Here we have God calling Jacob to be the leader of God's people and not Esau, what does this mean? Do these stories tell that God predetermines the course of someone's life? Did these individuals have any choice in the matter? When God prophesied what would happen did He then enter their minds and make the choices for them? Were they preprogrammed to do this? Were they really human or were they robots?

What do these texts tell us about God? Does God call some to Him and others He doesn't call? Is God calling all humans back to Him for salvation? 1 Tim 2:4 God wants "all men" to come to salvation.

Do these texts tell us about God's foreknowledge? As soon as sin entered what did God begin doing? Did God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit instantly put in action all the agencies of heaven to save, redeem and heal mankind? Does God have the ability to know the future? Then do these texts tell us that God is pouring His Spirit out upon all mankind, calling all mankind, wanting all of us to be agents in His cause, but all don't respond and looking into the future He knows who will respond and who won't and these texts reveal a few cases where people have responded to God's call?

Are people required to respond? Do we have any examples of people called by God who didn't respond as He wanted?

King Saul, Jonah, the rich young ruler, the religious leaders when Christ was on earth.

What seems to be the key to whether someone is used by God or not? Their willingness to be used!

Read bottom green section – thoughts?

What are the ideals and values and goals of the world? What are Gods?

Worldly – fame, fortune, power, position, success, self-exaltation and promotions:

- Examples – valedictorian, blue ribbons, gold medals, first place, winning sports events, national champions, job promotions, titles....
- Disciples vying for first place, Jews pride in the Temple, seeking the head of the table, wanting Christ to take David's throne and kill the Romans, Joseph's brothers selling him...

Godly – selfless love, kindness, patience, goodness, gentleness, wisdom, care for others,

- Examples – serving others, volunteering, giving of self, time, money to benefit others, letting others go first, seeking to excel in order to glorify God
- Jesus washes feet, Joseph forgives brothers, David refuses to raise hand against Saul, Paul gives of himself for God's cause...

Worldly values want worldly success, Godly values make development of Godlike character number one.

Often parents get confused on this and instill in their children worldly success as number one, first in the class, win at all costs, self promotion rather than remembering character development is the most important goal in God's kingdom.

TUESDAY

Read first two paragraphs – thoughts?

What is the last two verses of the Old Testament say?

MAL 4:5 "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. ⁶ He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse."

What do they mean?

Somehow before the great and dreadful day of the Lord Elijah will come –

Is there a war going on on planet earth? A cosmic war? What kind of war is this?

2 Cor 10:3-5 tells us that this war is a war for the mind

Revelation 12:7 there was war in heaven, the Greek is *polemos* and is the word we get politics or political from, what kind of war is this?

Is this war a war of physical might, power and force or is it a battle for hearts and minds?

When this war draws to a conclusion what will be the focus then? Will it change from a war for the mind to suddenly become a war of physical might and power?

Revelation 16:12-16—12Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. **13**And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. **14**For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day

of God Almighty. **15**“Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.” **16**And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.

What kind of battle do you think this will be? Is this a battle of earthly forces with human weapons, or is this a battle for the mind, a battle with those divine weapons Paul spoke about? Is this the conclusion of the great polemos that began in heaven? Does this have something to do with Elijah?

Armageddon has been interpreted multiple ways but two interpretations seem to be more consistent with the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan. The Greek for Armageddon is a combination of two Hebrew words that have two applications one we find in Isaiah 14:13:

"I will ascend to heaven;
I will raise my throne
above the stars of God;
I will sit enthroned on the **mount of assembly**,
on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain.

The other way to understand the word Armageddon, is as the Greek form of a couple of Hebrew words that mean ‘Mountain of Meggido.’ Meggido was a city on a small elevation at the edge of the Plain of Jezreel. Looming over the place where the city of Megiddo was, however, is a range of mountains called Carmel” (Jon Pauline, *John’s Apocalyptic Matrix*, p. 13).

Putting both together what do you see?

What about the other symbolism in the Revelation text?

Euphrates=The river that ran through Babylon, diverted by Cyrus so he could enter the city and conquer (Isa. 44:28; 45:1). In Revelation what does Babylon represent? The forces

apposed to God, the false systems of religion? What do waters represent? People (Rev 17:1,15).

Kings of the East=The kingly priesthood of all believers who take the gospel to all the world (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 7:1-3; Dan. 11:44-45; Ez. 43:2).

Three unclean spirits are the Dragon, the Beast and the False Prophet= composed of Spiritism (paganism), Catholicism and False Protestantism (Rev. 12-13; 2 Cor. 11:4).

2TH 2:1 Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, ² not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. ³ Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. ⁴ He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

What temple is this? Is this a building in heaven? Did the man of sin enter heaven and throw Christ off His throne or is this part of this great war for the mind in which the man of sin sets himself up in the spirit temple? How would he do it? With lies, about what? About God!

Back to Elijah and the Elijah message:

What was the issue in Elijah's day? Was it down to the God one believed in? Was it down to which God one held? Choose you this day whom you will serve if the Lord is God serve Him, if Baal is god serve him. Is this not the message?

In John the Baptist's day, what was his message? Who is God, which God do you value and which God are you prepared to

receive. John was calling them to receive the true God here in human form, but they rejected this call.

In the great battle right before us is it going to come down to which God do you serve, which God do you value?

Ty Gibson has written:

“Armageddon will not be a military battle in the middle east over the possession of land, but rather a spiritual battle in human minds between true and false pictures of God. It will be a worship war, not a martial war. God’s people will completely vanquish all untrue images of God’s character. Armageddon is the end-time parallel to the battle of Elijah against the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. The issue in Elijah’s showdown was the true identity of God. His God was placed in contrast to the popularized picture of God being promoted by the false prophets. The question urged by Elijah was, “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.” *Choose the lie that bears God’s name or choose to believe the truth about God.* Just as Elijah’s war was against the worship of a false image of God, so “Armageddon” is a battle to rescue hearts from false pictures of God by magnifying His true image revealed in the self-sacrificing incarnation, life and death of Jesus Christ.”

Thoughts?

Read last paragraph – thoughts? What is the judgment message to be taken to the world? Is it that God is in heaven passing judgments on us, or the time is come when God is to be judged? That “the hour of HIS judgment has come”?

WEDNESDAY

Read first three paragraphs – thoughts? What do we need to change? How does our outlook need to change? What about the larger Christian community, is there a need for an outlook change – what they/we are looking out for? How so?

Read fifth paragraph “Baptism was closely associated...”
Thoughts? Jesus said:

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:19,20

What does this mean? What are we to do? What is baptism? Was Jesus teaching we are to go and dunk people in water while saying “in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost”?

The Greek word for baptize is “*baptizo*” What happened in the translation? The Greek word *baptizo* means to immerse, but when the translators translated the Bible they realized the king had been sprinkled so rather than translate immerse, they made a new word baptize. But it means to immerse.

What to you think it means when Jesus said “go and make disciples of all nations, immersing them in the name of the Father...”

In Jewish culture what does “name” mean? Character, we are to go throughout the world, immersing the minds, hearts and characters of people into the character of God.

Read bottom green section – thoughts? What are the dangers of such a statement? How can such language lead to misunderstanding? Are there underlying assumptions imbedded within the questions?

What does it mean to believe in Jesus? Could it mean that we have been won over to believe that God is exactly as Jesus

revealed Him to be? We believe that God is love, selfless love, that we have rejected the lies of Satan about God? Could it mean this? If we believe that God is like Jesus revealed Him to be, then can we still believe that Jesus died to pay a legal penalty to His Father to satisfy divine wrath and justice, or would such a belief actually contradict the truth about God as revealed by Jesus?

What about the idea He did for our “sins”? Did He die for our bad acts or did He die because of sinfulness, because our condition was terminal and His death was the means of curing, fixing, healing the problem?

What about this idea of having His righteousness “credited” it to us? What does this mean? Does it mean that our problem is not in our selfish, sinful hearts and minds, but in our account book in heaven and we need some “credit” applied to our heavenly account in order for God to be able to forgive us or cancel our sins, or pardon us?

Or is it that God actually applies to our hearts and minds the very nature of Christ, “we become partakers of the divine nature” and are transformed to be like Christ by the work of the HS?

THURSDAY

Read bottom two paragraphs “An essential part...” thoughts?

What traditions do we struggle with in our church that obstructs God’s work in our individual lives and God’s work in the church?

Only men can be in leadership? Is this a tradition? Only men who have graduated from seminary or with a degree in theology can hold leadership positions in the church or can be pastors, conference presidents and ordained? What about the Apostles, how many of them were trained in theology? Was there a tax collector, physician, fishermen? Is this a tradition

of restricting ministers to those trained in the schools something that could be modified?

Was John's message merely a message against sin, speaking against sin in all its form, stating sin is bad and don't do it? Or was John's message more than this? Was John's message a call for repentance, in other words not merely sin is bad, but there is a better way, there is a remedy, there is a cure?

Imagine someone going around and stating sickness is bad, illness is bad and hurts so don't get sick, but they don't provide any more than that, would such a message be helpful? Or is the helpful part of the message the part about how to avoid getting sick and if sick how to partake of the remedy?