

Agents of Hope: God's Great Missionaries Lesson 7 3Q 2008

The Apostle John

SABBATH

Read the entire day starting with "A church tradition..."

Thoughts?

What do you think about the idea of love being commanded?

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13:34,35

And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. 1 John 3:11

What do these texts mean? Can love be commanded? Can God get love from His creatures by exercising His authority and ordering it? Can He get love by use of His omnipotent power and commanding it?

'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty. Zech 4:6

The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's deceptive power was to be broken. This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one

Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. Upon the world's dark night the Sun of Righteousness must rise, "with healing in His wings." Mal. 4:2. {DA 22.1}

Is there a contradiction here between the DA and Jesus' words? How do we understand Jesus' words a new command to love and DA "love cannot be commanded?"

The Greek translated command or commandment is *entole* and is also translated precept – does it make a difference if we read Jesus words as precept rather than command?

Precept means: "a command or principle intended especially as a general rule of action" Webster's Dictionary

Does it make a difference if Jesus was saying a new principle I give you "love one another"? Which do you think is the accurate translation Jesus commanding them by His authority to tow the line and love each other or Jesus informing them of the principle of love His kingdom is built upon?

Why is loving one another enough? What did Paul say was the fulfillment of the law? What did Jesus say all the law hangs upon? Why?

What about 1 John 2:1?

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

The word translated "one who speaks in our defense" is "paraclete" and means a helper who is parallel, or is along side. It is the word Jesus used for the Holy Spirit and is translated "comforter". So with that in mind what is the most likely meaning here?

1 John 2:1 My precious children, I am writing you so that you will realize the power of God's love to free you from selfishness and therefore experience God's healing and no longer live selfishly. But, if during the healing process, relapses into selfishness occur don't be discouraged, Jesus Christ stands at the helm of all power, right next to God, and is pouring his love into our hearts to complete his restoring and healing work. TRJ paraphrase

SUNDAY

A Special Calling – who does Jesus call? What makes the call “special”? Does God's calling of an individual have anything to do with the individual, their willingness or their mindset? God can equip people with abilities, talents, skills – can you think of any?

OT – metal working ability, working with fabrics etc for those working on the Temple

OT – Samson – strength, Elijah endurance, Solomon Wisdom

NT – gifts of languages, wisdom

But can God give people willingness or does the person have to choose to be willing? Is it possible that our usefulness in God's cause is limited by our own selves not by God?

Does that mean God would use every person for what that person wants to be used for? For instance, if someone wanted to be a great musician but they have no natural talent, if that person presented themselves to God for this purpose does that mean God has to gift them with musical ability or use them in the way they want?

Does God have a divinely chosen vocation for each person? Or, does God generally leave people free to choose their own vocation because most the time God's purpose for our lives supersedes vocation? What is God's purpose for our lives?

Does God ever choose a vocation for someone?

Read third paragraph "No question, those..." Thoughts?

What about if there were no Satan or demonic forces? Or another way to ask it, is our problem only with Satan and demonic forces? Do we have our own carnal natures, human evil with which to contend?

MONDAY

The lesson asks us to read Mark 10:35-45

MK 10:35 Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask."

MK 10:36 "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.

MK 10:37 They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."

MK 10:38 "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"

MK 10:39 "We can," they answered.

Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, ⁴⁰ but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared."

MK 10:41 When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. ⁴² Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ⁴³ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wants

to be first must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Thoughts? What did James and John think they were asking for? What were they in actuality asking for? Why? What is God's glory? His character! When they asked to sit right and left of His glory they were asking to sit right and left of ultimate self sacrificing love.

What do you think of greatness in God's kingdom? What do you make of the term ransom for many?

TUESDAY

Read second paragraph, "Though not able..." thoughts? Why is it important that Jesus came in human flesh?

Read Hebrews 2:14-18

HEB 2:14 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil-- ¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. ¹⁶ For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. ¹⁷ For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

What does this mean? How have you heard it in the past?

First let's talk about sharing in our flesh and blood? Why did He have to come as a baby rather than come in the human form the He had when He visited Abraham in Genesis?

If Christ's purpose was to experience temptation and overcome and then to suffer and die without sin could He not have done that by being a human like He appeared in Genesis to Abraham? But what would not have happened?

He would not have grown in wisdom and stature, He would not have developed a perfect character by His own choices with His own human brain that He assumed through His own life experiences.

Hebrew 5:8,9:

Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him

How did He destroy him who holds the power of death? What is Satan's power? Lies and selfishness!

John 17:3, life eternal is knowing God, then eternal death is not knowing God, then Satan's power is the lies about God we believe that keep us from knowing Him. This is also the same thing as breaking the circle of love, since God is love. And broken love and trust result in fear and selfishness. Thus Satan's power is lies and selfishness.

How did Jesus destroy Satan's power? By revealing the truth which destroys the lies and wins us to trust and by living perfectly in love culminating at the Cross where in Christ Jesus love overcame and destroyed selfishness!

How do you make sense of the part that says it is not angels but descendents of Abraham He helps? Doesn't the Bible teach other place that all things in heaven and earth are reconciled to Christ on the Cross? Didn't the angels need the truth about God which Christ revealed in order to confirm them in their loyalty? How then do we understand this passage?

The angels only needed the truth to confirm their trust, the loyal angels' character was not warped by sin. But mankind not only needed the truth to win to trust, but we needed a new heart and right spirit, we needed the law of God written on the heart and mind. God's law of love had to be restored back into the human species and this is what Jesus did for us as well!

How do you understand verse 18? How have you heard that passage? That Jesus, having been tempted now understands how hard we have it and is in heaven as our High Priest pleading to the Father telling Him, "But Father you don't understand what it is like for them..."

The SDA Bible commentary on this passage states:

The human nature of Christ felt the full force of temptation. Otherwise, Christ would not have understood the terrific struggle of a poor sinner who is mightily tempted to yield. Vol 7 p 407.

Do you think that the infinite God had to actually become human for Him to "learn" something He didn't already know? That somehow by becoming human God gained something in knowledge He didn't already possess? Would that mean that prior to becoming human God was not all knowing? That there was some aspect of God that needed completion before He was aware of our plight?

Or, as my model would say, that Christ became human in order to develop a perfect character, the remedy to sin and it is this He freely offers to all who will accept it. Christ didn't need to become human in order for God to know something, He became human in order to procure, in humanity, a perfect character and thus is now equipped, with a perfect human character wrought out by His own life experience that enables Him to heal and save all who trust Him!

One of the founders of our church saw it similarly to me:

The law requires righteousness,--a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them. His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. God can "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Rom. 3:26. {DA 762.2}

WEDNESDAY

Read Bible verse and then first paragraph – thoughts?

Why is it true that life is only through Jesus? What is the basis of life?

The law of love
A relationship with God
Connection with God

All mean the same thing receiving from God and giving as we have received, which is the fulfillment of the law of love! Christ came and restored this law, God's character of love, back into humanity and thus becomes the connecting link for humanity to receive God's life giving love again!

Read John 12:25

The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

THURSDAY

Read top Bible text and then question immediately below-thoughts?

Jesus said to Nicodemus:

In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. " Jn 3:3

Jesus said to those who condemned Him to death:

MK 14:60 Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" 61 But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer.

Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?"

MK 14:62 "I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

REV 1:7 Look, he is coming with the clouds,
and every eye will see him,
even those who pierced him;

Will these wicked men see Jesus coming in the clouds of glory? Will they see God's kingdom? No! Why?

Because their minds are so settled into the lies about God that when He appears they don't see Him for who He is, but they see Him as their twisted and warped minds think He is, a God who is like Satan has alleged Him to be!

Read last paragraph "If you read..." thoughts? Why do you think the gospel of John is so different from the other gospels?

Could it be John was the only Apostle to actually be at the Cross and witness what Jesus did there?

FRIDAY

Read question 2 and discuss