

Agents of Hope God's Great Missionaries Lesson 11 3Q 2008

Mission in a Pagan Land: Daniel and Company

SABBATH

Read memory verse – thoughts? What was the issue? What kind of food did they ask for? Was this primarily about vegetarianism? Have you ever heard this put forth as an argument? What evidence could we have that these Hebrew men were not primarily concerned about being vegetarians?

EX 12:1 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, ² "This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. ³ Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household... ⁶ Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. ⁷ Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs. ⁸ That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast...¹⁰ Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it. ¹¹ This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the LORD's Passover.

Do you think Daniel and his friends were vegetarians? Then what was the issue? Possibly unclean meats, which would have been unclean to the Jew because of health concerns or ceremonial religious concerns?

Throughout the book of Daniel what seems to be the primary concern of these four Hebrew men? Representing God rightly!

Then would refusing the king's meats and wines have anything to do with this goal?

The first paragraph is quoting Romans 8:28 "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

Thoughts? – Does it mean all things are good? All things in this world are not good but from all things God can bring good and works for our good. Any examples from scripture? Any examples in your own life?

SUNDAY

Today's lesson suggests that the success of Daniel and his friends was due to their parents and the spiritual training received at home – thoughts about this?

Are parents responsible for the outcome of their children's lives? No, parents are responsible for their conduct in parenting! How do we know? Even when parenting is perfect, as in God parenting Lucifer and Adam the outcome didn't turn out right.

Read second paragraph – thoughts? How is the idea that following God's commandments leads to life and disregarding them leads to death often taught to children? How have you heard it taught?

In the Passover why did some live and some die? What was the cause of their death? In Sodom what was the cause of their death? When Nadab and Abihu disobeyed the commands of God regarding fire in the temple what caused their death? What caused the death of the wicked at Noah's time, who did it?

DT 6:13 Fear the LORD your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name. ¹⁴ Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you; ¹⁵ for the LORD your

God, who is among you, is a jealous God and his anger will burn against you, and he will destroy you from the face of the land. ¹⁶ Do not test the LORD your God as you did at Massah. ¹⁷ Be sure to keep the commands of the LORD your God and the stipulations and decrees he has given you. ¹⁸ Do what is right and good in the LORD's sight, so that it may go well with you and you may go in and take over the good land that the LORD promised on oath to your forefathers,

What ideas about why obedience leads to life and disobedience leads to death might someone draw? Are these ideas accurate? Are these ideas correct? What is the problem with believing that disobedience results in death at God's hand?

The Law of Liberty is a law which says that love cannot exist in an atmosphere without freedom, when we violate freedoms love is destroyed, a desire to rebel is instilled and if we voluntarily choose to stay individuality is destroyed.

Imagine saying to your spouse, love me or I'll kill you...

Love cannot exist in an atmosphere with out freedom

This law is not an enacted, legislated or created law – this law emanates from the very nature and character of God Himself

It is one of the principles that life is designed to operate upon and our health and happiness is dependent upon harmony with it.

God is LOVE and love cannot exist in an atmosphere without freedom!

This is a law you can test it – test it on your spouse

- And once you are convinced that this law is real, that it works, that it is a constant, that it never changes
- THEN WE have something

- Something measurable, tangible, reliable, predictable,

We have a standard against which we can test our theories, our doctrines, our beliefs about God. God will never violate His own character of love, which means God will never violate freedom, the law of liberty.

Love cannot exist in an atmosphere without freedom. God is love and with God we are always free!

God has given us evidence upon evidence demonstrating this:

From the beginning of the war in heaven Satan has been on a character assassination crusade against God. He has been lying about God suggesting the God will use His power to hurt, torture and kill His creatures- this is the ultimate root of the rebellion against God and this is the ultimate issue in the closing of the war.

When Lucifer started his rebellion in heaven, did God have the power to destroy Lucifer or was God impotent, powerless? Then why didn't God destroy him? Because God doesn't work that way, love cannot exist in an atmosphere without freedom

Notice the progression of God concepts through history – What God concepts are taught in Paganism?

- All forms of paganism have a God who must be appeased
- Where did Catholicism come from? Paganism
 - Mary, Jesus and saints pleading to God, indulgences, penance
- All protestant churches came from the Catholic church
 - Core of paganism – appeasement
 - Core of Catholicism – appeasement Mary, Jesus, Saints, indulgences, penance, works
 - Core of Protestantism – appeasement Jesus pleading His blood to the Father, Jesus paying the price to the Father –

And what is the final contest over? What will be the culmination of events? A conflict over worship, over two systems over two pictures of God

- The Beast System which violates liberty, neither buy and sell
- God's system of love, these are they who did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death

What is the result of worshipping a God who does not value our freedom? A God who will use His power to destroy, a God who much be appeased?

We either become shadow people who worship out of fear of punishment and become non thinking empty shells afraid to have an independent thought, rigidly clinging to rules, rituals and ceremony. God said it, I believe it, That settles it. We become like that god and will use power to control others, dominate others, coerce others into our way, bombing abortion clinics, flying planes into buildings. No one can buy or sell save him who is like this god.

OR

We rebel completely and reject the idea of God altogether and become a post modernist agnostic -

This is Satan's goal – to destroy love and trust for God and thus destroy humanity!

Love cannot exist in an atmosphere without freedom and pastors who preach a God who must use His power to torture and kill the wicked in the end are teaching Satan's lies about God!

Thus the Bible says,

- “Not by might nor by power but by the way the Spirit works says the Lord.” Zech 4:6

One of the founders of our church saw it similarly –

In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. DA 761

God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power. {DA 759.1}

The kingdom of Christ does not and cannot bear any resemblance to the kingdoms of the world. In the kingdom of Christ there is no instrument of coercion. In it force has no place. The gospel of Him who gave His life for the life of the world is a gospel of peace. It is the Saviour's grace, His love, His tender compassion, that breaks every barrier down. The gospel is a power of itself, above all and encompassing all. It is a divine, immutable principle, as well-spring fed by the stream that flows from the throne of God. {21MR 152.4}

What is the gospel? The Good News about God's character of love! God is Love, love has no coercion, no force, no intimidation – any concepts of God which put Him in the role of executioner of the wicked in the end are lies of Satan.

Christianity has become infected with Satan's lies about God and rather than preparing a people ready to meet God

Christianity that presents a punishing, severe, cruel God is either turning people into rebels or destroying their very souls!

Then how do we understand the stories in the Bible where God does put children to rest in the grave?

First recognize that according to God's definition of death God has killed no one. When Jesus was on earth, God in human flesh how did He describe what we call death?

- MT 9:23,24 When Jesus entered the ruler's house and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd, he said, "Go away. The girl is not dead but asleep." But they laughed at him.
- John 11:11-14 After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up." His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead,

So according to God, in human flesh, has He put many of His children to sleep? Yes, is that the same as being dead? Not in God's eyes, not from God's perspective.

Have you ever asked questions? Why would God use His power to put people in the grave? Have you ever asked what it means? Have you ever asked what were the circumstances?

Have you ever notice that God has not acted to put His children in the graves since the time of Christ as He did before the time of Christ? Have you ever wondered why?

Has the world since the time of Christ been a more loving, kind, gracious and Christlike place? Has evil gone away? Are there no problems of hedonism, idolatry, violence, abuse equal to what transpired prior to Christ's arrival on earth?

- Nero, Stalin, Hitler, Amin, Pol Pot, Cannibalism, the worship of Kali the Hindu goddess of death, WW I, WWII, Rwanda, Bosnia

But despite all this abuse since the Cross do you see God intervening as He did before the Cross? Have you ever wondered why?

Because prior to the Cross Satan was working with all his might to prevent the Messiah from coming to earth. Satan was working to close every avenue through which Jesus would come and God was working to keep open the channel for the Messiah!

Genesis as soon as man sinned God said to the serpent that a Messiah was coming that would crush his head –

Satan knew that his hold on this world was not secure, that Jesus was coming to rescue us, to break the bonds of Satan's kingdom, to set us free – so Satan immediately began working with all his ability to prevent Jesus from coming, to close the avenue through which the Messiah would come.

- Flood- 1 righteous man – so God acted to keep open the channel
- God's channel was near Sodom, God acted to protect the avenue through which Jesus would come
- But don't confuse what God did with the death that is the wages of sin – everyone put in the grave by God will be resurrected, this is not the case when the wicked die in the end

But then why would God speak such harsh language to the people in Bible times threatening them? What was He dealing with? Do parents ever threaten their disobedient children? Do the threats get more intense if the child is engaged in some life threatening activity?

The last paragraph on Sunday asks if it is important for parents to do the same today in training their children as parents in Bible times – thoughts?

Can religious instruction and Bible training actually drive children away from God? How and why?

Rules without reason, religious observance without relationship, obedience without thinking, conformity without explanation, fear of punishment without love of person – all of these types of actions will destroy individuality and the unhealthy will surrender and become non thinking shadows perpetuating the lies about God, the health will rebel against it.

MONDAY

Read second paragraph, “It is all too true...” thoughts?

Were Daniel and his friends 10 times wiser than all the other wise men in Babylon? Would that mean they understood all of this as well? What do you think about exposing our children to such concepts?

Last paragraph read “From the beginning...” thoughts?

What was the key to their success? They were more concerned about doing what was right than protecting self. Their love for God was stronger than their love for self!

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph “The biblical story...” thoughts?

What does this tell us about God’s attitude toward people, cultures, races, nationalities? Does God value one group of people more than another?

What then was the purpose of Abraham's descendents? To be God's acting troupe to act out the plan of salvation in their mini theater and to thus prepare the world for Christ's arrival.

WEDNESDAY

Nebuchadnezzar has a dream and wants the wise men to tell him what it is – they can't Daniel does and then explains it – what do you make of this event?

Why did God send the dream to Nebuchadnezzar?

In the life of Daniel do you notice a progression in his journey with God and God's communicating with Daniel.

In this story how does the message of the future events come to Daniel? Through the instigation of the king, the dream came to Nebuchadnezzar and his threat resulted in Daniel seeking God's wisdom.

So God communicates future events initially through a pagan ruler to Daniel. Then later Daniel has dreams and visions directly from God, then later the angel Gabriel comes to talk with him directly. As we accept the truth, internalize the truth and are transformed by the truth then we are able to handle more and more and more of God's presence. As we cooperate with Him for our healing He will change us so that we are able to receive more and more of Him culminating in the day we will see Him face to face!

THURSDAY

The fiery furnace and lion's den, what is the key that enabled Daniel and the three worthies to stay faithful?

Fear had been replaced with love in their hearts. Is it possible they realized the greater issues in the war between Christ and Satan? Is it possible they understood the difference between the kingdom of love and the kingdom of fear and selfishness?

Is it possible that they not only loved God but the people of that foreign land? Is it possible they in love they were willing to give their lives as a means of demonstrating the power of God's kingdom to free us from fear? That they were willing to sacrifice themselves if that is what it took to not only be true to God but to reveal the power of God's character of love?

What about those who are ready to meet Jesus when He comes?

They overcame him
by the blood of the Lamb
and by the word of their testimony;
they did not love their lives so much
as to shrink from death. Rev 12:11

FRIDAY

Question 2 read and discuss