

The Christian Life Lesson 13 2Q 2009

Mission

SABBATH

Read memory text – 1 Peter 3:15 – are we ready to give an answer to everyone for the reason for the hope in us? Let's practice -

- What hope do you have?
- What is your hope based upon?
- What evidence do you have for your hope?

Read last paragraph “We, as followers of Christ...” thoughts? Are we as a church fulfilling our mission? Are we moving forward in the truth? Are we taking the final message of mercy to the world? Are we in danger of becoming institutionalized? How can we protect ourselves from this?

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph “Theologians through the ages...” thoughts?

Do you like the way this is expressed? Is it true there are things for which we don't have the answers? Does that mean we can't have the answers to them?

Let's take the philosophy expressed in this paragraph and explore it in history:

- In 1844 a group of people believed Christ was coming that year. When He didn't what should they have done? “There are questions which we don't have answers” and leave it at that or should they search the Scriptures to find answers they didn't have?
- In the 15th Century the Black Death, bubonic plague ravaged Europe. They didn't have answers to what was

happening. Priests and laity alike believed it was God's wrath upon the people. Should they have taken the approach, no answers, God hasn't revealed it, which they did, or should they have searched for answers, which later revealed this was a bacterial infection carried by fleas?

Jesus said to His disciples I have much to tell you but you cannot bear it, did Jesus want them to know and understand more? Where was the limitation on the followers of Jesus knowing more, God's unwillingness to reveal or the limited ability of the followers to understand?

Does our attitude toward what may be known impact our willingness to seek and find, to inquire, to search, to stretch our minds beyond current understanding?

- Whenever the people of God are growing in grace, they will be constantly obtaining a clearer understanding of His word. They will discern new light and beauty in its sacred truths. This has been true in the history of the church in all ages, and thus it will continue to the end. But as real spiritual life declines, it has ever been the tendency to cease to advance in the knowledge of the truth. Men rest satisfied with the light already received from God's word, and discourage any further investigation of the Scriptures. They become conservative, and seek to avoid discussion. {CW 38.3}

The fact that there is no controversy or agitation among God's people, should not be regarded as conclusive evidence that they are holding fast to sound doctrine. There is reason to fear that they may not be clearly discriminating between truth and error. When no new questions are started by investigation of the Scriptures, when no difference of opinion arises which will set men to searching the Bible for themselves, to make sure that they have the truth, there will be many now, as in ancient times, who will hold to tradition, and worship they know not what. {CW 39.1}

Thoughts? Does this sound like we should rest satisfied with our current understanding or push forward to know more?

MONDAY

Read second paragraph “The gospel...” thoughts?

What is the gospel? Can we assume that if there is a Christian presence somewhere in the world that the gospel has been preached there? What about if an SDA presence is there? When Christ came to earth the first time, at that time in human history, what was the organized body on earth that God had chosen, blessed and empowered to take the gospel to the world? The Jewish nation – and what message did they take?

- “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are. Matthew 23:15

Now Jesus had told the woman at the well that salvation was from the Jews – but yet He tells these Jews that they are enslaving people into hell – what is going on?

Could Christians today and SDAs included be in danger of the same problem? What were the Jews doing that made people in bondage to hell?

- Worshipping on the wrong day?
- Wrong health practices?
- Failing to pay tithes and offerings?
- Wrong dress code?
- Teaching evolutionary origins of humanity?
- Allow homosexual leaders into the church?
- No, none of these – what was the problem?
- Teaching lies about God!

What good news do we have to take to the world?

The Father is exactly like Jesus and will heal all who trust Him!

TUESDAY

Read top question – thoughts? What is your understanding of the message of the three angels?

Let's read Revelation 14:6-12

- Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.” A second angel followed and said, “Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries.” A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: “If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name.” This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God’s commandments and remain faithful to Jesus.

What do the angels represent? Do they represent heavenly beings or messengers, including human messengers?

The Greek is ἄγγελος [*aggelos* /*ang*·el·os/ a messenger, envoy, one who is sent, an angel, a messenger from God.

- Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” John 20:21

An envoy, messenger flying in midair with the eternal gospel – what does it mean flying in midair? Or mid heaven as in some translations.

- When translated heaven, which heaven? The message is to go to the people of the earth so mid heaven means the atmosphere of the earth, thus midair is more accurate in this context. This means first the worldwide proclamation of a saving message. But could it mean more?
- As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. Eph 2:1,2

Who is the ruler of the kingdom of the air? What is the kingdom of the air? The kingdom of selfishness, the kingdom of fear, the kingdom of sin and this angel of Revelation has a message that flies through midair – right through the lies of the Satan! And what is that message?

- “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.”

What does it mean to fear God? In this context, who are the ones told to fear God? Those who are to bring Him glory, would that be the lost or the saved? Will these people know God? God is love and perfect love casts out all fear so in the context this means to be in awe, in reverence, in admiration for God. Let your life reveal His character of love because the time has come for all to decide which God they will serve. God’s judgment has come. We must decide which God we will worship – we are to worship the One who made all things!

But another messenger comes with a second message:

- “Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries.”

What does this mean? This angel is the same angel as Revelation 18:1-4

- After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor. With a mighty voice he shouted: “Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! She has become a home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit, a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird. For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries. The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries.” Then I heard another voice from heaven say: “Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues;

What is the message of the second angel? What is this movement?

The “glory” radiating from the angel of Revelation 18—so brilliant and beautiful that it illuminates the whole world—is

- “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6).
- He is “the brightness” of God’s “glory” and the “express image of His person” (Hebrews 1:3). Jesus is the complete and accurate revelation of the Father’s character to a world that does not know Him as He is.
- “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.... No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him” (John 1:14, 18).

The prince of the air – has corrupted the atmosphere of earth, filled it with every foul and detestable lie about God. The entire world is reacting to the lie about God – what is the lie about God?

That God is a power monger, someone who uses power to force His way, a being who doesn't value the freedom of His creatures. God is a being who must be appeased by the blood of His Son.

How has the world reacted to this teaching?

- Corrupt systems of appeasement and atonement to pay off the anger of the Father
- Rejection of God and agnosticism and atheism
- Legalistic religions
- Religions that depersonalized God into a force without personality

Satan began his war in heaven by lying about God. He spread his rebellion to earth by lying about God. The world was covered in darkness, minds were held in bondage but Christ came to set the minds free.

- For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. 2Cor 10:3-5

So if this is how the war is fought what did Christ do by His death?

- “Having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the Cross” (Colossians 2:15, NIV)

How did Christ disarm the devil? By revealing the truth! Now all Satan's lies stand impotent, powerless. We now are able to go forward and the gates of hell cannot prevail against us. Lies cannot stand up to the truth. Satan took this world by deceit. Christ has revealed the truth which destroys the lies of Satan, and the truth demolishes Satan's strongholds and sets people free.

We as a church are to be taking forward the truth about God as revealed in Jesus to free minds held in bondage of fear of God.

- “From the beginning it has been God’s plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency. The members of the church, those whom He has called out of darkness into His marvelous light, are to show forth His glory. The church is the repository of the riches of the grace of Christ; and through the church will eventually be made manifest, even to ‘the principalities and powers in heavenly places,’ the final and full display of the love of God.’ Ephesians 3:10” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 9).

What is the message of Revelation we are to take to the world?

- “It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy and truth...The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is the revelation of His character of love.” *Christ's Object Lessons*, p.415

Read bottom pink section – thoughts? Could focusing on self rather than mission have something to do with preaching a fear inducing message? Could it have something to do with preaching a God who will burn and destroy those who don't love Him rather than preaching the truth about God's character of love?

WEDNESDAY

Witnessing – read second paragraph – “Not all of us...” thoughts? Anyone want to share how they have found ways to witness the truth about God?

Read bottom pink section – thoughts? What does it mean to grow in grace? To become more like Christ? To have selfishness replaced with love? What does it look like?

THURSDAY

Read first paragraph “There is no doubt...” thoughts? How do you hear this paragraph? Do you hear it as “Christ, who along with His Father, is interceding in our situation to save us from the devastation caused by sin?” Or do you read it as “We sure are glad that Jesus is interceding with His Father to protect us from the anger and wrath of God”?

Read second paragraph “If we want...” and then the last paragraph states, “If there is no connection with Jesus Christ, a doctrine will be no more than a piece of technical information, which may be interesting and intellectually challenging, but nothing more. But if rooted in Jesus Christ, a doctrine will help us better understand the plan of redemption and will enhance our relationship with the Lord.”

Thoughts? Is there something more to doctrine that what is suggested here? I like the connection the lesson is making between doctrine and Jesus Christ. Isn't the purpose of all doctrine to reveal to us some aspect of God's character? Some truth about God's methods, Person, motives, law of love?

If a doctrine isn't connected to Christ it isn't as benign as the lesson would have us think and is nothing more than an intellectually challenging. When doctrine is not connected to Christ it actually damages the mind, obstructs the path to God and becomes an obstacle to salvation.

With that in mind let's explore some of the doctrines and see what they teach us about God:

- What do we learn about God if we believe man is immortal? What do we learn about God if we believe man is mortal
- What do we learn about God if we believe Christ was a created being? What do we learn if we believe Jesus is fully God as well as becoming fully man?
- What do we learn about God if we believe the wicked die in the end because God inflicts it? What do we learn if we believe the wicked die in the end as a natural result of being so out of harmony with God they cannot survive in His presence?
- What do we learn about God if we believe Jesus died to pay our legal debt, assuage the wrath of His Father, to meet the demands of divine retributive justice? What do we learn about God if we believe Jesus died to reveal the truth about the Godhead, the nature and character of sin, expose Satan as liar and to reverse the damage sin caused humanity achieving a remedy for sin?
- What do we learn about God if we believe God doesn't know the future choices His creatures will make? What do we learn about God if we believe He does know our choices before we make them?
- What do we learn about God if we believe He predetermines all our choices, some for salvation and some for damnation? What do we learn about God if He gives us genuine freedom to choice for ourselves?
- What do we learn about God from the Bible Sabbath? What do we learn about God from Sunday sacredness?

- What do we learn about God if we allege the Sabbath is an arbitrary test of obedience?
- What do we learn about God from the sanctuary message? What do we learn about God if we allege Christ is pleading to His Father in heaven in our behalf? Or if we allege Christ is covering us with His robe of righteousness so the Father cannot see our wickedness? What do we learn if we teach Christ is working as His Father's agent to reveal the truth to win us to trust and then to reproduce in us Christlike character so when the Father sees us He sees the perfection of His Son?
 - What do we learn about God if we teach that the genetic descendents of Abraham have a special opportunity for salvation that the non-genetic descendents don't have? What do we learn if we recognize all humanity is descended from Adam and thereby all are terminal and all in need of the one remedy procured by Christ and freely offered to all?
 - What do we learn about God if we teach that He is keeping records in order to judge us by and that His judgment is what determines our eternal destiny? What do we learn if we teach God's records are there as evidence of His unfailing love and perfection in all His actions?
 - What do we learn about God if we teach a secret rapture? What do we learn if we teach a literal visible appearing?

FRIDAY

Read second paragraph "The church is God's..." thoughts?

Read questions 2,3 and discuss