



2023 4Q God's Mission My Mission Lesson 11 Mission to the Unreached Part 2

by Tim Jennings

SABBATH

Read first paragraph:

- From the beginning, a loving God sought His lost children (Gen. 3:9); and, to our day, this same loving God is still seeking to reach the lost (see Rev. 14:6–12), including the lost in the cities. In 2018, the United Nations published its latest findings, which say that 55 percent of the planet's population lives in urban areas, and this will grow (if time should last) to 68 percent by 2050. We have no choice: we must witness to those in the cities. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God's Mission My Mission p. 88).

Has anyone done ministry or mission in the cities? Any thoughts on what this entails? What might it look like? The ministries in the cities that I am most familiar with are for the most vulnerable populations, which represent a very small percentage of the population of cities. Such things as:

- Homeless shelters
- Food kitchens
- Battered women's shelters
- Goodwill
- Toys for tots
- Free medical clinics

All of these are worthy and righteous ministries—yet is the majority of a city's population reached with these services?

How do we reach those who do not need such services?

- I have seen street preachers standing on the street shouting about the end of days or some other issue they are passionate about—do you think this would be an effective means to reach people in the cities?
- I have seen people standing on streets or subway stations handing out literature to anyone walking by—do you think this is effective?
- What about door to door canvassing by literature evangelists seeking to sell various books?
- What about door to door ingathering, asking people to donate to our missions, is this likely to be an effective way to reach them with the truth?
- What about TV, radio, internet, social media programming that contains the truth?
- What about advertising of websites that contain the truth?

- What about moving to the city and living in a community and seeking to meet your neighbors and inviting them to your church?
- Other ideas?

SUNDAY

The lesson asks us to read Judges 3:1-6:

- These are the nations the LORD left to test all those Israelites who had not experienced any of the wars in Canaan (he did this only to teach warfare to the descendants of the Israelites who had not had previous battle experience): the five rulers of the Philistines, all the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites living in the Lebanon mountains from Mount Baal Hermon to Lebec Hamath. They were left to test the Israelites to see whether they would obey the LORD's commands, which he had given their forefathers through Moses.

The Israelites lived among the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. They took their daughters in marriage and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods. (Judges 3:1-6 NIV84).

What do you understand these verses to mean?

- What law lens do you read them through?
- What is the overall context of Scripture, the grand central theme?
- What is the purpose of God in having the Scriptures written and inspiring which stories are recorded?

When the Lord puts someone to the test—what is He testing? It is always the same ultimate test—will they trust God or not, will they choose to exercise faith/trust/confidence in God or not?

And when they do then their faith/trust/confidence grows beyond the belief of devils who tremble, to the faith that is a living faith that results in loyalty to God.

We cannot grow in faith, in trust, unless we are placed in position where we are required to exercise our faith, where our faith is tried or tested and we choose to say no to the fear, the insecurity, the doubts, the temptations to act to save self and instead choose the truth and choose to do what is right in governance of ourselves while we trust God with the outcome.

This is the issue, it has always been the issue—are we faithful, loyal friends of God who actually trust Him? Not people who believe in Him but distrust Him and do things the world's way, the devil's way, the way of fear and selfishness while claiming to be friends of God.

Jesus asked this very question about the second coming:

- When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth? (Luke 18:8 NIV84).

When Jesus comes again will He find people who trust Him, who are faithful to Him, who have chosen to trust Him with their lives, future, fortunes, and families. Or will He only find people who claim to believe in Him, but who have put their trust in their rules, rituals, ceremonies, blood payments, wealth, institutions, and the power they can wield over others?

Paul said,

- Everything that does not come from faith is sin (Romans 14:23 NIV84).

God wants us to return to a living confidence, trust, faith in Him and He allows events to come upon us that will test our faith, put us into positions where we have to decide, do we scheme, calculate, plot, plan, connive, manipulate, bend the rules, make excuses, cheat in order to save self, or do we stand for what we know is right and trust God with how things turns out.

David, when he was dedicating materials and his son for the building of the temple, prayed:

- I know, my God, that you **test the heart and are pleased with integrity**. All these things have I given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you. O LORD, God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel, keep this desire in the hearts of your people forever, and **keep their hearts loyal to you**. (1 Chronicles 29:17-18 NIV84).

Examples of testing faith throughout human history?

- The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil
- Abraham when he was told to sacrifice Isaac—
 - Some time later God **tested** Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!”
 “Here I am,” he replied. Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.” (Genesis 22:1-2 NIV84, emphasis mine).

Why does God “test” like this? Is it a test to trip people up, to trap them, to get them to fall, or is it some aspect of the outworking of design law?

These are the laws of truth, love, liberty, and exertion—what God wants cannot be created by Him nor chosen by Him. God wants our love, devotion, trust, friendship, and loyalty—He wants us to internalize and live out His living laws and thus develop Christlike character.

Loyalty, trust, devotion, friendship cannot be created—it is developed between two intelligent and free beings based on their mutual trustworthiness and righteousness of character and then the experiences they have with each other over time.

God provides everything for our healing, our salvation, and our deliverance from sin—fear and selfishness.

- He provides the truth that destroys lies and wins us to trust
- He provides the love that casts out the fear
- He provides the Savior, His Son, who became a real human and as a human, using only human abilities, chose to love and trust His Father in all things and received as a human the empowering of the Holy Spirit to succeed in all things. And as a human, Jesus developed a perfect righteous and mature human character and destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness that Adam introduced into humanity when he broke trust with God. Thus Jesus became the new head of humanity, the second Adam.
- He provides the Holy Spirit to bring the truth home to our hearts and minds, to convict of sin, to convict of duty, and then
- He provides freedom, real freedom to accept and choose the truth or reject it and when we choose the truth
- He provides the opportunity to test our faith, situations that require us to choose—do we trust God? Do we choose what we know is in harmony with His will, purposes, instructions, guidance, design laws for life and trust Him with outcomes, or do we choose to break trust with Him and seek to advance and save ourselves and
- When we choose to trust Him, then He provides divine power, the indwelling Holy Spirit to give us the ability to carry out the truth, to stand firm in the face of fear, threat, selfish temptations with a peace that passes understanding, with love for our enemies, with a vision of eternity as we choose to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and our hearts loyal to Him.

So what was the test that God wanted the Israelites to face and pass?

The lesson asks us to read 1 Kings 11:1-6:

- King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. They were from nations about which the LORD had told the Israelites, "You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods." Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been. He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely, as David his father had done. (1 Kings 11:1-6 NIV84)

What was the test they were to pass? Was it about killing enemies? Was it about being friendly? Was it about marrying people of foreign descent? If we say yes, then what about Moses marrying Zipporah or Salmon marrying Rahab who had a son Boaz who married Ruth, and both Rahab and Ruth are in the genealogy of Jesus?

So was it that they broke a rule not to marry non-Israeli women, or was it something else? What was the true test about? It was about not being loyal to God—about giving one’s heart to other gods. The marrying of other women did not have to do with genetics, ethnicity, or race, it had to do with character, with loyalty to God. When the women of foreign nations chose to give their hearts to God then they were perfectly fine to marry—but when the women of other nations remained loyal to their false gods, then they were not suitable to marry. Why?

Read the fifth paragraph,

- Yet, despite the history of paganism and idolatry, and their negative influence on the chosen nation, Jesus still brought His disciples to these places. In this way He initiated them in cross-cultural urban mission, confronting their bias and bigotry, and modeled for His followers wholistic urban mission to all cultures and nationalities. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God’s Mission My Mission p. 89).

Why did Jesus seek out these people who had been a source of temptation, false god worship and interference with God’s purpose for Israel?

Because there is only one human race all descended from Adam, and every single human being is infected with the same terminal sin condition, and every single human being needs the same remedy of Jesus Christ, and God’s plan for Israel was for them to be the branch of the human family through whom He would come to provide that remedy, and they were to share the light, the truth, with all other peoples to bring them to salvation. So His going to visit these other groups was the exact working out of the plan of salvation—bringing the only healing solution to every single son and daughter of Adam and Eve.

MONDAY

The lesson asks us to read Matthew 9:35-38:

- Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” (Matthew 9:35-38 NIV84).

We at Come and Reason Ministries have resonated with this passage, we look around and see so many people both in the organized churches and outside of them in need of the gospel, the eternal gospel, the truth about God and His design law methods of truth, love, and freedom. And we see how limited we are and how we need workers to come and join us in sharing this. We have been praying for years for more people around the world to take up this message and share it in their communities. And we have seen a steady growth in people embracing and supporting this eternal good news about God from all different denominational backgrounds, why? Because the truth about God is not restricted by

denomination, it is not restricted by race, by national origin, or by any other human division. It is restricted only when people refuse the truth and cling to lies, but when the truth is embraced it is unifying, people from all backgrounds find common purpose, common understanding, common principles for life and health, and common respect for the individuality of others.

What suggestions do you have on how we could be more effective in reaching the multitudes?

What have you found to be helpful?

TUESDAY

The lesson asks us to read Matthew 15:22-28:

- A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession.” Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, “Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.” He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.” The woman came and knelt before him. “Lord, help me!” she said. He replied, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs.” “Yes, Lord,” she said, “but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” Then Jesus answered, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed from that very hour. (Matthew 15:22-28 NIV84).

What do you think of this story?

Did Jesus not care about this woman? Did Jesus have any less love for her than the Jews? What is going on here?

The lesson cites commentary from the book *The Desire of Ages*:

- “Christ did not immediately reply to the woman’s request. He received this representative of a despised race as the Jews would have done. In this He designed that His disciples should be impressed with the cold and heartless manner in which the Jews would treat such a case, as evinced by His reception of the woman, and the compassionate manner in which He would have them deal with such distress, as manifested by His subsequent granting of her petition.” (The Desire of Ages, p. 400).

Do you agree with this understanding? This is an interpretation for the Bible itself doesn’t give us these motives for the action. Much of the Bible is like this, it provides historical events, describes what happened, but doesn’t always explain why, the motives, or other contextual details that make the story understandable—like the woman caught in adultery and cast before Jesus.

So why should we accept this interpretation of why Jesus did what He did here? I have had others who reject the Bible use this story to prove that Jesus was just as prejudiced as the other Jews and was demeaning to this woman calling her a dog.

Because the rest of Scripture, the record of Jesus' life shows that He never went around hurting others, seeking for self, but was always living out love and seeking to save people. So the action here was the outworking of love and truth for the saving of others because Jesus has proven that is what He does.

Who are the primary recipients of Jesus' work, activity, concern in this text? Isn't it the disciples? Hasn't he chosen them to invest in, to spend extra time and energy upon them to train, teach, and equip them to be His agents to spread the gospel to others?

So, in this story, while He loves this woman, Christ's way of dealing with the situation was a teaching moment for the disciples. But what enabled Christ to have this opportunity? It was not only the need of the woman's child—but the strength of the woman's faith. Because her faith was strong enough, Jesus could work through the event to expose bigotry in the disciples. But had this woman's faith been weak such that His initial response would have discouraged her and caused her to turn away in depression, then Jesus could not have used that moment as an opportunity to teach His disciples.

This is similar to how Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego's faith was of such a quality that God could use the circumstance of the fiery furnace to reach Nebuchadnezzar.

God longs for people to trust Him enough to allow Him to work through their real life circumstances to reach others who would not be reached without those circumstances, or to enlighten and improve the faith of those who already are followers of Jesus.

The lesson points in the bottom pink section to 1 John 2:2, let's read 1 John 2:1-2:

- 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. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2:1-2 NIV84).

The NIV in the footnote says:

- Or He is the one who turns aside God's wrath, taking away our sins, and not only ours but also but the sins of the whole world.

What law lens are you hearing this through? What law lens are these translators translating through? This is a great example of the bias people can have when they translate—I want to say this translation is an honest, linguistically legitimate translation—yet it connotes the imposed law view and thus misrepresents the true meaning.

Here is the Good News translation:

- I am writing this to you, my children, so that you will not sin; but if anyone does sin, we have someone who pleads with the Father on our behalf—Jesus Christ, the righteous one. And Christ himself is the means by which our sins are forgiven, and not our sins only, but also the sins of everyone. (1 John 2:1-2 GNT).

A little better as the “pleads with” is ambivalent, can be pleading to the Father or can be pleading along side in harmony with the Father, in other words both the Father and Jesus are pleading together for a common cause.

If we believe Jesus is pleading to the Father then that would contradict Jesus’ own testimony in John 16:26 where He said He would not pray the Father for us. So harmonizing those two texts leads us to consider that Jesus is pleading along with the Father, not to the Father.

The Greek word translated intercessor, or one who pleads in our behalf, is the word: *parakletos* /par·ak·lay·tos—which is the word translated in other places as counselor or comforter and refers to the Holy Spirit, the one who walks along side, the helper, the comforter, the advocate, the one who pleads to another.

So if we accept the imposed law lie, the belief that God’s law works like human law, then we believe God is required by law to use His power to inflict punishment for sin and thus the pleading must be done by Jesus to God to get God to accept His blood as payment and offer us forgiveness. This is Satan’s view, it is pagan, and it is not what the Bible is teaching.

Jesus said in John 14:16:

- I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, who will stay with you for ever. (John 14:16 NIV84)

The word “Helper” is *parakletos* /par·ak·lay·tos. Jesus is saying that *another* Helper, *another*, Counselor, *another*, Advocate, *another* Intercessor—the Holy Spirit is the new other, so who is the first Helper, Counselor, Advocate, Intercessor?

Jesus Himself:

- For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6 NKVJ).

Jesus is our Helper, Intercessor, Advocate—the question is to whom and for what?

But Jesus is already working with *another* for our good, so Jesus said to His Father, I will ask for *another*, one in addition to you and I Father. Notice what Paul wrote in Romans 8:

- What, then, shall we say in response to this? If **God is for us**, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom **God has chosen**? It is **God who justifies**. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is **also** interceding for us. (Romans 8:31-34 NIV84).

What does “also” mean? In addition to, Jesus is interceding in addition to the Father, NOT to the Father. So the Father is interceding for us, or helping us, or working for our good and thus He sent His Son Jesus because He loved the world so much, and the fullness of the Godhead dwelled in Jesus, and God was in the Son reconciling the world to Himself. And Jesus said to His disciples, even though the Father and I are already interceding for you, I will ask the Father to send a Third intercessor, another counselor, comforter to come to you the Holy Spirit who will not speak on His own but will take what I mine and make it known to you.

This is the reality of our human sin situation, as soon as Adam and Eve sinned the entire Godhead began interceding for us. And they intercede in three places. They intercede:

- In our hearts and minds to convict of sin, to put a desire for healing and reconciliation, to break up an alignment and unity with Satan. God did this in Eden when speaking to the serpent God said, “I will put enmity between you and the woman between you offspring and hers.” This desire for good instead of evil is a result of God interceding in sinful hearts.
- With the principalities and powers of darkness holding at bay the winds of strife and demonic powers to allow the plan of salvation to be worked out in our individual lives and throughout human history.
- With the natural course of sin itself when Jesus who knew no sin became sin in order to destroy death and bring life and immortality to life and open a new path, a new way back into unity with God and eternal life.

God has never had a member of the Godhead interceding with Him, we have had God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit interceding for and with us.

This historical description makes it very clear what the issues are, who is pleading with who when one returns to design law understanding:

- **As Satan accused Joshua** and his people, **so in all ages he accuses** those who are seeking the mercy and favor of God. In the Revelation he is declared to be the “accuser of our brethren,” “which accused them before our God day and night.” **The controversy is repeated over every soul that is rescued from the power of evil** and whose name is registered in the Lamb's book of life. Never is one received from the family of Satan into the family of God without exciting the determined resistance of the wicked one. **Satan's accusations against those who seek the Lord are not prompted by displeasure at their sins.** He exults in their defective characters. Only through their transgression of God's law can he obtain power over them. **His accusations arise solely from his enmity to Christ. Through the plan of salvation, Jesus is breaking Satan's hold upon the human family and rescuing souls from his power.** All the hatred and

malignity of the archrebel is stirred as he beholds the evidence of Christ's supremacy, and with fiendish power and cunning **he works to wrest from Him the remnant of the children of men who have accepted His salvation.** (5 Testimonies 470.1) [where is such a battle taking place? Where is the work of Jesus occurring that will rescue a sinner from Satan's power? Where does Satan's powers of lies and selfishness occur? Who listens to Satan's lies, who believes Satan's accusations? Who would Christ need to plead with to persuade them that His sacrifice is sufficient to free the sinner from sin? Would God need to be persuaded that the sacrifice of Christ is sufficient? Would the sinner?]

He [Satan] leads men into skepticism, causing them to lose confidence in God and to separate from His love; [who is listening to Satan's accusations? With whom will Christ need to plead in order to overcome the accusations and restore their confidence?] he tempts them to break His law, and then he claims them as his captives and contests the right of Christ to take them from him. **He knows that those who seek God earnestly for pardon and grace will obtain it; therefore he presents their sins before them to discourage them.** [Notice the dynamic here. The author doesn't say that Satan knows if he can find a sin the person committed that they forgot to confess and ask forgiveness for that it remains on the legal registry in heaven and God will be forced to pronounce them guilty and Satan wins his legal case. NO! Satan knows that all who trust God will, as Isaiah 55 says, receive FREE pardon from God and grace that heals and restores them and gives them a new heart and empowers them to overcome the accusations and temptations of Satan. So Satan accuses the sinner to the sinner to discourage the repentant sinner tempting them to give up and let go of their faith in Jesus. So, again, where is Christ plea directed?] He [Satan] is constantly seeking occasion against those who are trying to obey God. **Even their best and most acceptable services he seeks to make appear corrupt.** [To whom is Satan seeking to make our best seem corrupt? To the repentant sinner in order to discourage and dishearten them so THEY GIVE UP. So, to whom would Christ be pleading for them not to listen to the accusations of Satan?] **By countless devices, the most subtle and the most cruel, he [Satan] endeavors to secure their condemnation.** [By whom? From whom is Satan seeking to get the sinner condemned? Christ Jesus He is at the Father's right hand and is also interceding for us—also, in addition to who, the Father and who is the Father interceding with? With the accusations of the devil that try and discourage us!] **Man cannot meet these charges himself.** In his sin-stained garments, confessing his guilt, he stands before God. [Exactly, we don't stand before God and say, "I don't need Jesus. I can cure my own sin condition. In fact, I really haven't sinned, I am righteous in my own strength." NO! We stand before God and say, "Father I acknowledge I was born in sin and conceived in iniquity. I was born with a terminal sin condition I didn't choose this condition and I have had many symptoms along the way many sins and shortcomings from your glorious ideal. I have been fearful and selfish and acted out against your law. I have no ability to change my heart, to heal my condition. I confess I am dead in trespass and sin. I am only here before you because Jesus overcame where I cannot and Jesus has gifted me His victory, His mind, His heart, His love, His motives, His character and it is no longer I that live but Jesus lives in me through the indwelling Spirit." Note what happens next.] **But Jesus our Advocate presents an effectual plea in behalf of all who by repentance and faith have committed the keeping of their souls to Him. He pleads their cause and**

vanquishes their accuser by the mighty arguments of Calvary. [For all who acknowledge their condition Jesus pleads effectively TO THEM, “My grace is sufficient for you.” I have engraved YOU on the palm of my hand. My victory is your victory. Trust me and I will make you whole! The accusations of Satan that we are too sinful to be saved are vanquished by the effectual plea of Jesus to you and to me!] His perfect obedience to God's law, even unto the death of the cross, has given Him all power in heaven and in earth, and **He claims of His Father mercy and reconciliation for guilty man.** [Whose mercy? God's mercy, God so loved the world that He sent Jesus to procure the Remedy and then empowers Jesus with all the power of heaven to distribute it to us to heal and save us. God doesn't win God's mercy, or beg God to be merciful, He claims the mercy that is God's, because of God's mercy Jesus was sent and became our Remedy to sin.] **To the accuser of His people He declares: “The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan.**’ These are the purchase of My blood, brands plucked from the burning.” [Jesus doesn't plead His blood to the Father, Jesus rebukes Satan and refutes his accusations. And listen to what Jesus says to us.] **Those who rely upon Him** in faith receive the comforting assurance: **“Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.”** [He removes the fear, the guilt, the shame, the selfishness, the sin-condition and gives us a new heart and right spirit, writes His law of love into our inmost beings so that it is no longer I that live but Christ lives in me.] All that have put on the robe of Christ's righteousness will stand before Him as chosen and faithful and true. Satan has no power to pluck them out of the hand of Christ. Not one soul that in penitence and faith has claimed His protection will Christ permit to pass under the enemy's power. His word is pledged: “Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me.” The promise given to Joshua is made to all: “If thou wilt keep My charge, ... I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by.” Angels of God will walk on either side of them, even in this world, and they will stand at last among the angels that surround the throne of God. (5 Testimonies 470.2)

The fact that the acknowledged people of God are represented as standing before the Lord in filthy garments **should lead to humility and deep searching of heart on the part of all who profess His name.** Those who are indeed purifying their souls by obeying the truth will **have a most humble opinion of themselves.** [This is the investigative judgment. The investigation of our own hearts/minds/characters and the investigating the truth about God to experience the healing power of Christ purging and cleansing us from sin to prepare us to meet Him face to face.] The more closely they view the spotless character of Christ, the stronger will be their desire to be conformed to His image, and the less will they see of purity or holiness in themselves. But while we should realize our sinful condition, we are to rely upon Christ as our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption. **We cannot answer the charges of Satan against us. Christ alone can make an effectual plea in our behalf. He is able to silence the accuser with arguments founded not upon our merits, but on His own.** (5 Testimonies 471.1)

So this is how I paraphrased 1 John 2:1-2:

- My precious children, I am writing to 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 relapses into selfishness occur during the healing process, 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. He is the reconciling Remedy to the infection of selfishness and fear, and not just for our terminal condition: he is also the Remedy—freely available—to heal the entire world. (1 John 2:1-2 REM).

WEDNESDAY

Read the second paragraph,

- While waiting for lunch, Peter was given a vision of a rooftop buffet complete with a tablecloth filled with unclean animals and birds. Three times he was told in this vision to get up and eat. God used these visions to confront Peter’s religious pride and bigotry against the Gentiles. Peter eventually understood this truth: “Then Peter opened his mouth and said: ‘In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him’ ” (Acts 10:34, 35, NKJV). (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God’s Mission My Mission p. 92).

Then in the last paragraph the lesson states,

- Jesus patiently taught His disciples, who did not yet fully understand that God’s great plan of salvation was for the entire human family, not just one nation or rural ethnic group. The Holy Spirit can help us to overcome our prejudice and bias in order to complete our mission to the cities. (Adult SS Guide 4th Q 2023, God’s Mission My Mission p. 92).

Why is there division of human beings in the world—why are we not one as Jesus prayed that His followers would be?

Did God create human beings to be divided into different antagonistic groups that do not love and trust each other?

When did humanity divide like this? In Eden when Adam and Eve sinned they immediately divided and Adam blamed Eve for his sin.

Cain and Abel were divided by sin, by fear, envy, and jealousy.

But the world seemed to be on the verge of almost uniting against heaven at the time of the Flood. At that time there was only one righteous man left and his family so God put that hardened rebellious generation to sleep in order to keep the avenue for Messiah open. And after the Flood what did the people do?

The rejectors of God's mercy began to unite again in a unified rebellion against God, seeking to build a tower into heaven. And what did God do?

God therapeutically intervened by confusing the languages and scattering the people around the world (leading to the distinct racial divisions we see today), steps designed by God to slow the lies of Satan and impede humanity's rebellion against heaven and, thereby, allow the plan of salvation to be completed (Genesis 11:8, 9).

The language, tribal, racial, national, and ethnic differences we see in the world are not evil; these differences are not sinful—they have no bearing on our worth as human beings, they have no value in determining good or evil, but God did foresee that these differences along superficial characteristics would work to keep the sinful human race from uniting in a worldwide rebellion against Him and heaven, like the people did at the time of the Flood.

But there is evil in this world, and we are to recognize it and separate from it. There is to be an intelligent and purposeful division that we actively seek to create and promote among all people, without regard to their language, tribe, race, nationality, or ethnicity, for God loves all people equally. The Bible recognizes this division as the only one that righteous people are to act upon—the division between good and evil. The Bible describes this division between the righteous and the unrighteous in these terms:

The sheep and the goats
The wheat and the tares
The fruitful vine and withered vine
The pure woman and the harlot
The faithful and unfaithful
The holy and the unholy
The saved and the lost

Dividing along these lines is godly. Differentiating the righteous from the unrighteous in order to wisely discriminate regarding whom to associate with, date, marry, hire, place on our boards, and allow to be our friends is a very godly approach to life.

- Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people. Therefore come out from them and be separate" (2 Corinthians 6:14–17 NIV84).

We are called to discriminate the honest from the dishonest, the loyal from the disloyal, those who love others from those who are selfish and exploit others. We are to actively discern the wise from the foolish, the kind from the cruel, and the merciful from the vengeful. The apostle Paul taught that as we

approach the second coming of Christ, we are to be purposeful in disassociating ourselves from certain people:

- But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them (2 Timothy 3:1–5 NIV84, emphasis mine).

We are to be discriminating in our associations, relationships, hiring, and friends because, as Paul also wrote, “Bad company corrupts good character” (1 Corinthians 15:33 NIV84).

Jesus Himself said that He came to divide society:

- I have come to ignite the fire of truth and love upon the earth, and oh how I wish it were already an inferno! But I have a mission to complete, and the pressure on me to complete it is overwhelming. Do you think I have come to make peace with this selfish world? Absolutely not! I have not come to make peace with selfishness but to cut selfishness out of the hearts of people. From now on, those who choose the Remedy will cut dysfunctional family ties, and a family of five will be divided — two against three and three against two. Love will free a son from selfish loyalty to his father’s ambitions and feuds, and a father from the selfish exploits of his son; love will sever a daughter from the control of an oppressive and manipulative mother, and a mother from the selfish demands of her daughter; love will cut through the fear and hostility a daughter-in-law has toward her mother-in-law, and mother-in-law toward daughter-in-law (Luke 12:49–53 REM).

God created human beings to be united in love and trust, but humanity became divided when Adam and Eve sinned. The natural state of this sinful world is selfishness, and Jesus did not come to unite with sin and selfishness but to set people free from sin and restore them to righteousness and eternal life. This necessarily means separating people from all that is unholy and ungodly.

Jesus cannot provide eternal life to people who refuse to leave sinfulness behind.

Therefore, Jesus seeks to separate people from sin—and all associations that keep sin active in their lives!

Yes, there is a real division in the world; it is a division between God and Satan, between holiness and vileness, between good and evil, between love and selfishness, truth and lies, freedom and coercion. And as Jesus is uplifted, as the gospel advances, as people surrender to Him and draw closer to Him, then fear and selfishness are replaced with love and trust and we are drawn together as a united people (Ephesians 4:13), just as Jesus prayed:

- I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me (John 17:20–23 NIV84).

The Bible describes this end-time unity, when the gospel is advanced, as the reversal of the scattering God initiated at Babel. The Bible describes

- “a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They [are] wearing white robes,” (Revelation 7:9 NIV84) which represent their characters having been purified to be like Jesus.

These diverse people come together in love, loyalty, and devotion to God, a united human family woven together in the bonds of godly love and trust, practicing the principles of Jesus in how they live and treat others. But this restoration into one united human family is only possible when Jesus is placed at the center.

Satan knows he cannot win if Jesus is uplifted, if the gospel is made central. Therefore, he actively opposes it. The evil one does not want people to focus upon Jesus and then recognize the righteous divide between truth and lies, love and selfishness, good and evil, so he has a two-step trap to keep people from turning to Jesus and thereby inflame evil divisions.

Step One: Satan replaces the godly dividing line between moral and characterological good and evil with some other superficial difference occurring among people groups—race, gender, language, ethnicity, national origin, etc.—and causes people to attribute value, privilege, and superiority/inferiority to those differences, thereby inflaming fear, selfishness, jealousy, envy, hate, and violence and inciting acts of injustice against those deemed inferior.

In step one, he deceives some people into believing the lie that skin color or gender or national origin makes some people inferior or less valuable or worthy. This lie leads to the creation of various caste systems (including the historical notion of “divine right” of rulers and the lie that there is an actual difference between people in the royal class and commoners). And these false divisions cause people to inflict real injustice upon the innocent—slavery, Jim Crow, aristocratic oppression of the commoner, and many other forms of exploitation, abuse, and restrictions of human freedom.

His step-one lie has divided society for millennia—and people still fight over this lie today. But as evil as Satan’s step-one deception is, his step-two lie is even more diabolical.

Step Two: Satan’s second step to ensnare people into becoming like him and dividing society is by tricking good people who recognize his step-one lie into seeking to rectify the step-one injustices by using Satan’s methods.

This means that rather than pursuing justice by advancing the gospel and placing Jesus and God's methods of doing right at the center, Satan tricks people into placing the various injustices of the wicked at the center. Racism, sexism, and various other wrongs are focused upon, which inflames anger, outrage, and our sense of injustice—and then he offers his solution, “social justice,” by the application of law, coercion, and external power to force behavior change, rather than winning people to love and trust. This two-step deceit keeps society divided, inflicts more layers of injustice upon more innocents, and actively keeps Jesus out of heart and mind, obstructing the only solution to racism and all other forms of human injustice.

What makes this so diabolical is that this method of seeking “justice” causes people to feel good, to feel they are doing right, to even believe they are advancing God's kingdom—after all, they are opposing evil—but all the while, they are advancing Satan's kingdom, practicing his methods, spreading more evil, corrupting their own character, obstructing the gospel, and inciting greater societal division.

The only solution for division is to cut fear, selfishness, and sin out of human hearts. And the only way that can happen is to place Jesus Christ at the center. We must advance the gospel of Jesus Christ. As people open their hearts to Him, focus upon Him, make Christ their supreme Lord, the One whom they long to be close to and to emulate in all things, they draw closer to Him and, simultaneously, to each other. We become unified in love, just as Jesus prayed, and experience the unity that inherent in our faith (Ephesians 4:13).

THURSDAY

The lesson brings us full circle back to Luke 18 where Jesus asks when He returns if He will find faith on the earth. Let's read the fuller context from The Remedy:

- Then Jesus told a parable to his interns to help them understand the importance of regular conversations with God and not quit talking with him. He said: "There was a judge who didn't believe in God or care about the welfare of people. And a widow, who had been exploited, kept petitioning the judge to do what was right and restore what her adversary had taken.
"The judge refused for a long time, but he finally said to himself, 'Even though I don't believe in God or care about people, I am tired of this woman bothering me, so I will do what is right and she will finally leave me alone!' "
Then the Lord explained: "Take a lesson from this unjust and godless judge: If he — not caring about anyone but himself — finally did the right thing, won't God set all things right for his children who cry out to him constantly? Will he ignore them? I tell you truly, he will set all things right, and quickly. But when the Son of Man comes, will he find any on earth who trust him to set things right?" (Luke 18:1-8 REM).
- Do we trust Jesus to set things right or do we get drawn in by the injustice to use Satan's methods to set things right?

- Do we join forces with various political groups to seek to pass laws that coerce others to conform to our way of living?
- Do we believe that the injustices of this world can be solved by law and law enforcement?
- Do we believe that the injustices will be solved by God using the exact same methods of this world, a legal tribunal followed by inflicted punishments?

The only way for their to be eternal peace, health, harmony, happiness is to restore God's living law of love into the hearts and minds of people—to win people to loving loyal trust, i.e. faith, so that they trust God with outcomes and are willing to lay down their lives for Him and others.