God's Call To Mission

Lesson 3, 4th Quarter October 14-20, 2023.

Sabbath Afternoon - October 14

Memory Text:

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. KJV — Acts 1:8

The mission to save the world cannot be more important than the mission to save the church. Enlarging the church membership under the now prevailing lukewarm Laodicean conditions, could no more advance the Kingdom of Christ than could have been done under the conditions in the Jewish church in the days of His first advent. Understanding the true situation in that church, John the Baptist and Christ Himself and even the apostles at first, engaged themselves to work, not for the world in general, but only in the interest of their brethren in the church.

As the same departure from Christ exists within the church now as it did then (Testimonies, Vol. 5, p. 217), it will take much greater effort to rescue the people from the Laodicean "sad deception" (Testimonies, Vol. 3, p. 253), than if they were in heathenism. For in Laodicea they are made to believe that they have all the truth there is to be had, that they are rich increased with goods, and in need of nothing--their salvation forever secured as long as they hold membership in the church! Hence there is greater risk of their losing their souls in the church while she is "lukewarm" and about to be spued out, than if they remain in the world until the church awakes from her slumber, and anoints herself with the eyesalve (Truth)--sees right, does right, and leads and feeds the flock aright.

Sunday, October 15

Moving Beyond our Comfort Zone

Read Genesis 11:1-9. What were the intentions of the people? What were they wanting to do, and why would God thwart it?

One would think that after the deluge, the world would have had great respect for religion and for the prophets of God. But that was not the case. The antediluvians did not believe Noah's prediction that there was to be a flood, so they refused to go into the ark! But the flood came and they perished. The postdiluvians did not believe his prediction that there was not to be another flood so they set about to build the tower of Babel! But when God saw the tower sky-rocketing, He blasted the top of it, and confounded the builders' language. That is, He blotted their own language from their minds and carved into them the languages of today. Thus he caused the birth of various races and languages which we today find even in the remotest parts of the earth.

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It was not God's purpose that the people should stack themselves in the plains of Shinar, but that they should spread out and replenish the earth. And so when they refused to obey His command He gave them the next best He had for them, and that they had to obey.

Man's work independent of and contrary to God's, you see, is certain to meet with disaster. A house that is built on sand cannot survive a storm, and no man can possibly defeat God's purpose for men. Do not make a fool of yourself by trying.

It takes years in the schools of men to learn a language, but in the school of God, it takes but a moment. He can blot out one language from man's brains and carve in another, and at the same time change the features of his face and the color of his skin. Yes, God can do all this more quickly than a dentist can pull a tooth. But whether a change be made for better or for worse, all depends upon the individual.

Monday, October 16

Becoming a Blessing to the World

Read Genesis 12:1-3. In what way was God's instruction to Abram a call to mission?

Abraham's unquestioning and unfailing faith and his unhesitating obedience to the Lord's naked command in every instance, made him a "friend of God," the "father of the faithful," and a great pillar of living truth, with a name to be remembered and venerated throughout time and eternity.

Jacob's faith in the promises of God, and his overmastering desire to work himself into the Lord's plans and to carry them out, resulted in his becoming the progenitor of the first fruits or ministry of the Kingdom-church--those who stand with the Lamb on Mt. Zion (Rev. 14:1).

Joseph's uncompromising fidelity to principle brought him into highest estate, in which he became the world's greatest provisioner as a type of Christ, the Great Spiritual Provisioner.

Moses, in his meekness (humbleness) and in his determination "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. 11:25), rose to be the greatest general, leader, and deliverer of all times, and even to stand on the mount of transfiguration.

The apostles' sacrifice of life for the sake of Christ and His Truth, won them the exalted honor of having their names placed in the foundations of the Holy City (Rev. 21:14).

Luther's fearless and persevering efforts to lift up the down-trodden Truth (Dan. 8:11, 12; 11:31), fathered forth Protestantism.

"And now, behold, I go unto my people: come therefore, and I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days.... There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies: and Israel shall do valiantly." Num. 24:14, 17, 18.

In effect Balaam said to the king of Moab: "I have tried my best to obtain your favor and to curse Israel, but God has prevailed. Israel has won; you and I have lost. And further, let me tell you what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days: He that is to rule Israel shall smite Moab on all sides, and Israel shall do valiantly."

Thus was Balaam impelled to predict Christ's birth and His ruling, causing Israel to do valiantly against Moab and his neighboring peoples in the latter days

Tuesday, October 17

Abraham's Call

Read Genesis 12:10-13:1. What things happened to him next, and what mistakes did this man of God make?

"God had called Abraham to be the father of the faithful, and his life was to stand as an example of faith to succeeding generations. But his faith had not been perfect. He had shown distrust of God in concealing the fact that Sarah was his wife, and again in his marriage with Hagar. That he might reach the highest standard, God subjected him to another test, the closest which man was ever called to endure. In a vision of the night he was directed to repair to the land of Moriah, and there offer up his son as a burnt offering upon a mountain that should be shown him." PP 147.2

"At the time of receiving this command, Abraham had reached the age of a hundred and twenty years. He was regarded as an old man, even in his generation. In his earlier years he had been strong to endure hardship and to brave danger, but now the ardor of his youth had passed away. One in the vigor of manhood may with courage meet difficulties and afflictions that would cause his heart to fail later in life, when his feet are faltering toward the grave. But God had reserved His last, most trying test for Abraham until the burden of years was heavy upon him, and he longed for rest from anxiety and toil." PP 147.3

"In the obedience of faith, Abraham had forsaken his native country—had turned away from the graves of his fathers and the home of his kindred. He had wandered as a stranger in the land of his inheritance. He had waited long for the birth of the promised heir. At the command of God he had sent away his son Ishmael. And now, when the child so long desired was entering upon manhood, and the patriarch seemed able to discern the fruition of his hopes, a trial greater than all others was before him." PP 148.1

"Abraham's great act of faith stands like a pillar of light, illuminating the pathway of God's servants in all succeeding ages. Abraham did not seek to excuse himself from doing the will of God. During that three days' journey he had sufficient time to reason, and to doubt God, if he was disposed to doubt. He might have reasoned that the slaying of his son would cause him to be looked upon as a murderer, a second Cain; that it would cause his teaching to be rejected and despised; and thus destroy his power to do good to his fellow men. He might have pleaded that age should excuse him from obedience. But the patriarch did not take refuge in any of these excuses. Abraham was human; his passions and attachments were like ours; but he did not stop to question how the promise could be fulfilled if Isaac should be slain. He did not stay to reason with his aching heart. He knew that God is just and righteous in all His requirements, and he obeyed the command to the very letter." PP 153.3

Wednesday, October 18

The Early Church and Comfort Zones

Read Acts 8:1-4. In the early church, what brought about the scattering of believers beyond their comfort zones?

"And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Rev. 12:13-17.

Nearly all Christians agree that the only tenable interpretation of the "woman" here mentioned, is that she symbolizes the church. And the fact that she gave birth to the man child, Christ, shows that she is therefore symbolical of the church in at least the Christian dispensation.

While the dragon was persecuting her through the deceived Jewish priests who rejected Christ as the Messiah, "there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word." Acts 8:1-4.

To her were therefore given the wings of a great eagle--her means of transport into the wilderness. And being the opposite of the vineyard ("the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant"--Isa. 5:7), the wilderness obviously denotes the Gentile nations. The apostles, therefore, in fulfillment of this prophecy were commanded, and given the wings, speedily to go preach to all nations.

"Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles, heard this, they were glad, and glorified the Word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the Word of the Lord was published throughout all the region." Acts 13:46-49.

Thursday, October 19

Starting from where you are

Read Acts 1:8. What principle did Jesus present when doing the work of sharing or being His witnesses to the world?

"'And He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week." The "week" here brought to view is the last one of the seventy; it is the last seven years of the period allotted especially to the Jews. During this time, extending from A.D. 27 to A.D. 34, Christ, at first in person and afterward by His disciples, extended the gospel invitation especially to the Jews. As the apostles went forth with the good tidings of the kingdom, the Saviour's direction was: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' Matthew 10:5, 6. CIHS 85.1

"'In the midst of the week He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.' In A.D. 31, three and a half years after His baptism, our Lord was crucified. With the great sacrifice offered upon Calvary, ended that system of offerings which for four thousand years had pointed forward to the Lamb of God. Type had met antitype, and all the sacrifices and oblations of the ceremonial system were there to cease. CIHS 85.2

"The seventy weeks, or 490 years, especially allotted to the Jews, ended, as we have seen, in A.D. 34. At that time, through the action of the Jewish Sanhedrin, the nation sealed its rejection of the gospel by the martyrdom of Stephen and the persecution of the followers of Christ. Then the message of salvation, no longer restricted to the chosen people, was given to the world. The disciples, forced by persecution to flee from Jerusalem, "went everywhere preaching the word." 'Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them." Peter, divinely guided, opened the gospel to the centurion of Caesarea, the God-fearing Cornelius; and the ardent Paul, won to the faith of Christ, was commissioned to carry the glad tidings "far hence unto the Gentiles."' Acts 8:4, 5; 22:21. CIHS 85.3

"The disciples on their first missionary tour were to go only to 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' If they had now preached the gospel to the Gentiles or the Samaritans, they would have lost their influence with the Jews. By exciting the prejudice of the Pharisees they would have involved themselves in controversy which would have discouraged them at the outset of their labors. Even the apostles were slow to understand that the gospel was to be carried to all nations. Until they themselves could grasp this truth they were not prepared to labor for the Gentiles. If the Jews would receive the gospel, God purposed to make them His messengers to the Gentiles. Therefore they were first to hear the message." DA 351.1

Friday, October 20

Further Thought

"On this first tour the disciples were to go only where Jesus had been before them, and had made friends. Their preparation for the journey was to be of the simplest kind. Nothing must be allowed to divert their minds from their great work, or in any way excite opposition and close the door for further labor. They were not to adopt the dress of the religious teachers, nor use any guise in apparel to distinguish them from the humble peasants. They were not to enter into the synagogues and call the people together for public service; their efforts were to be put forth in house-to-house labor. They were not to waste time in needless salutations, or in going from house to house for entertainment. But in every place they were to accept the hospitality of those who were worthy, those who would welcome them heartily as if entertaining Christ Himself. They were to enter the dwelling with the beautiful salutation, "Peace be to this house." Luke 10:5. That home would be blessed by their prayers, their songs of praise, and the opening of the Scriptures in the family circle. DA 351.3

"These disciples were to be heralds of the truth, to prepare the way for the coming of their Master. The message they had to bear was the word of eternal life, and the destiny of men depended upon their reception or rejection of it. To impress the people with its solemnity, Jesus bade His disciples, 'Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.'" DA 352.1