

The Teachings of Jesus

Our Mission

Lesson #9 for August 30, 2014

Scriptures: Matthew 5:14-16; 28:19-20; Luke 24:48-49; John 20:21; Revelation 14:6-12.

1. This lesson will focus on the mission of the church and of church members individually. What is our mission? What was Jesus's mission? Clearly, Jesus intended for His disciples and those who became Christians on the basis of their testimony to pass along the good news to as many people as possible. (Matthew 4:19; 10:5-15; Mark 3:14; Luke 10:1-12)
2. Christ made it abundantly clear that after His resurrection, the task of spreading the gospel to the world was given to all of His faithful followers. (1 Corinthians 15:3-8; Acts 1:2-5)
3. What was Jesus's mission?

The law of Jehovah was burdened with needless exactions and traditions, and **God was represented as severe, exacting, revengeful, and arbitrary.** He was pictured as one who could take pleasure in the sufferings of his creatures. The very attributes that belonged to the character of Satan, the evil one represented as belonging to the character of God. **Jesus came to teach men of the Father, to correctly represent him before the fallen children of earth. Angels could not fully portray the character of God, but Christ, who was a living impersonation of God, could not fail to accomplish the work. The only way in which he could set and keep men right was to make himself visible and familiar to their eyes. . . .[John 17]**

Christ exalted the character of God, attributing to him the praise, and giving to him the credit, of the whole purpose of his own mission on earth,—to set men right through the revelation of God. In Christ was arrayed before men the paternal grace and the matchless perfections of the Father. In his prayer just before his crucifixion, he declared, “I have manifested thy name.” [John 17:6] “I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” [John 17:4] When the object of his mission was attained,—the revelation of God to the world,—the Son of God announced that his work was accomplished, and that the character of the Father was made manifest to men.—*The Signs of the Times*, January 20, 1890, par. 6,9. Compare *ST* December 4, 1893; *Manuscript Releases*, vol 18, 358.3-359.1; *RH* August 14, 1900; *YI* November 21, 1883; *RH*, November 1, 1892 par. 12. [Bold type and content in brackets are added.]

4. If that was the mission of Jesus, what is our mission? Shouldn't our mission be the same?
5. Read Matthew 5:14-16. What does it mean to be a light to the world? As you look at the members of your Sabbath school class or the members of your church, are they seen as a light of the community? (Psalm 27:1; 1 John 1:5) We need to be abundantly clear that we are not lights ourselves; we can only reflect light from God. (Ephesians 5:8; 1 John 1:7)
6. It is God's plan for us to study the Scriptures and especially the life and death of Jesus Christ until, as we admire Him, we become like Him. (John 1:4,9; 2 Corinthians 4:6) Remember that we can only reflect the light. We can let Jesus shine through us, not to show off our goodness but to encourage people to look to Jesus and to the Father.

If Christ is dwelling in the heart, it is impossible to conceal the light of His presence. If those who profess to be followers of Christ are not the light of the world, it is because the vital power has left them; if they have no light to give, it is because they have no connection with the Source of light.—Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* 41.1. [Bold type is added.]

7. We need to practice thinking like God and thinking like the Devil. Try to imagine yourself as one of the disciples on crucifixion weekend. They were petrified, fearful, distressed, discouraged, and perplexed. They knew Jesus had the ability to escape from His enemies. They knew Jesus would have made a perfect king for the people of Israel. So, how could He allow Himself to be killed by the Romans? He was supposed to conquer the Romans!
8. He had predicted His death! (Luke 18:31-34) Then suddenly, on the third day after He was crucified, He appeared alive and well in the upper room, having passed through locked doors and walls! They must have thought they were seeing a ghost. But, slowly recovering from their shock, they began to realize that Christ had a very different plan from the one they had been trying to follow. He was commissioning them to be His witnesses. But, He told them to wait for something. What was that? (See Luke 24:48-49; Acts 1:8.) What was it that the Holy Spirit needed to do for them before they could become true witnesses? They had to set aside all their personal differences and come together as a unified group.
9. Christ had already sent them on several different missions going throughout Galilee (Matthew 10) and, later, through Perea as a group of seventy or seventy-two. (Luke 10:1-24) He gave them power and authority to do the same work He had been doing. Does God want us to do that same work? They were ready to die for Jesus!
10. Read John 20:21. Jesus proclaimed to them that just as the Father had sent Him, He was sending them. Does that commission include us? God had been grossly misrepresented by Satan and his followers who pretended to be followers of God. (See *Great Controversy* 536.2)
11. Seventh-day Adventists have often seemed to suggest that if we can convert as many people as possible, making them members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, our mission will be accomplished. Is that true? Is it possible that we have not yet received the latter rain because we are not giving the correct or accurate message that Jesus gave?
12. When a person in authority sends someone on a mission, it implies several things: 1) That the person who is sending has the authority to do so; 2) That there is a definite purpose for the mission; and 3) That the messenger can and is expected to accomplish the mission.
13. Read John 20:22 and Genesis 2:7. When God breathed into the dust—or clay—of the ground which He had formed into a human being, Adam began to live. What is supposed to happen when Jesus breathes into His disciples the power of the Holy Spirit? God expects a transformation to take place. And what is included in that transformation? When ordinary human beings with their usual selfish ambitions and motives become servants of God, they will have a compelling desire to teach the world the truth about their loving heavenly Father. What does it take to motivate people to take on that task? What kind of powerful evidence do we need to convince us that it is our task? The original disciples were transformed and motivated by the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When Jesus gave them permission and the commission to go, make disciples, baptize, and teach after the day of Pentecost and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, they were ready.
14. What kind of change took place in the disciples between the triumphal entry into Jerusalem and the day of Pentecost? Look at Peter whom many Christians in our world believe was given the task of leading the church. As Jesus was being tried, Peter denied Him, even with cursing and swearing three different times. And Peter had already been warned! (Mark 14:27-31, 50, 66-72) After Pentecost, he was a completely changed person. (Acts 4:8-13)
15. Even after the resurrection and realizing that Jesus was God, the disciples were reluctant to go beyond preaching to the Jews in Judea and Galilee. Even though Jesus had told them clearly that it was to be their job to reach out to the entire world, (Matthew 28:19-20) they were very reluctant to do so. It was not until persecution came with force three and one-half years later, (Acts 8:1) that the disciples were finally scattered and began to take the gospel to other areas. But, they were still not prepared to spread the gospel to anyone except Jews!
16. Look at Acts 11:19-21 (*GNB*).

¹⁹Some of the believers who were scattered by the persecution which took place when Stephen was killed went as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, **telling the message to Jews only.** ²⁰**But other believers, who were from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and proclaimed the message to Gentiles also, telling them the Good News about the Lord Jesus.** ²¹The Lord's power was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. [Bold type is added.]

17. Why do you think it was that believers from Cyprus and Libya (Cyrene) were the first ones to begin openly preaching the gospel to the Gentiles? The brethren from Jerusalem were so worried when news of this development reached them that they sent Barnabas to Antioch to investigate. (Acts 11:22-24) And he joined the revolution!
18. Barnabas realized that something remarkable was happening. After working for some time with the people from Antioch, he went in search of Paul to help him further the gospel. (Acts 11:25-26)
19. Remember that Peter had been directed—by a dream from heaven and a message sent by the Holy Spirit—to go and preach to Cornelius, a Roman centurion, and his family. (Acts 10) Peter was so worried about what would happen when he got back to Jerusalem that he took six witnesses with him to back up his story! (Acts 11:1-18)
20. Are we as Seventh-day Adventists in the 21st century still afraid to move out of our little ghettos to spread the gospel to the whole world?
21. Many modern Seventh-day Adventists will say: “I cannot go to the other side of the world to preach the gospel. I do not have the proper training, and I have a job and a family to support.” But, God does not tell us that everyone has to go far away to spread the gospel. What are we doing in our local communities?
22. Look again at Matthew 28:19-20. Notice that it says we are to go to *all* people and *all* nations, teaching them to observe *all* things pertaining to the gospel; and it gives us the assurance that God will be with us *always*, that is literally “*all* the days,” to the end of time. This commission is full of “*alls*.” Wouldn't it be fair to call this commission a promise?
23. Read Mark 16:15. Mark's version of the gospel commission is much shorter than Matthew's. “Go throughout the whole world and preach the gospel to the whole human race.” (GNB) Church members might read this and think: Okay, I'm off the hook; preaching is to be done by the pastor, not by me! But, the Greek word used means *to proclaim*, or *to announce* and does not involve preaching to a large gathering. In what ways can you spread the gospel at your work, at your school, and in your community?
24. Following the Great Disappointment on October 22, 1844—almost 170 years ago—those who were to become Seventh-day Adventists began to take another look at the three angels' messages. They compared Revelation 12:17 with Revelation 14:12 and Revelation 19:10 and determined that God is looking for a special group of people to proclaim His message at the end of time. Later, they claimed that task for every member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Are we doing it? The first angel said that we are supposed to tell the good news about God to every nation, language, tribe, and people.
25. John and Mark were not just giving us a task to try. Matthew 24:14 promises us that it will happen.

Thus Christ gave His disciples their commission. He made full provision for the prosecution of the work, and took upon Himself the responsibility for its success. So long as they obeyed His word, and worked in connection with Him, they could not fail. . . .

The Saviour's commission to the disciples included all the believers. It includes all believers in Christ to the end of time. It is a fatal mistake to suppose that the work of saving souls depends alone on the ordained

minister.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 822.1-2. [Bold type is added.]

26. Are we prepared to do our part?

Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary. He who drinks of the living water becomes a fountain of life. The receiver becomes a giver. The grace of Christ in the soul is like a spring in the desert, welling up to refresh all, and making those who are ready to perish eager to drink of the water of life.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 195.2.

27. God makes it very clear what He thinks about those who fail to carry out His purpose of spreading the gospel.

The very life of the church depends upon her faithfulness in fulfilling the Lord's commission. To neglect this work is surely to invite spiritual feebleness and decay. Where there is no active labor for others, love wanes, and faith grows dim. . . . (*The Desire of Ages* 825.2)

Heaven stands indignant at the neglect shown to the souls of men. Would we know how Christ regards it? How would a father and mother feel, did they know that their child, lost in the cold and the snow, had been passed by, and left to perish, by those who might have saved it? Would they not be terribly grieved, wildly indignant? Would they not denounce those murderers with wrath hot as their tears, intense as their love? The sufferings of every man are the sufferings of God's child, and those who reach out no helping hand to their perishing fellow beings provoke His righteous anger. This is the wrath of the Lamb. To those who claim fellowship with Christ, yet have been indifferent to the needs of their fellow men, He will declare in the great Judgment day, "I know you not whence ye are; depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity." Luke 13:27. (*The Desire of Ages* 825.4)

28. In light of the passage from *Signs of the Times* quoted in item #3 regarding Jesus's mission, how many—even of the members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church—understand our true mission? In the last 100 years, the means of communication have rapidly multiplied and expanded. Is it possible that God has allowed us to discover these new methodologies so the gospel can be carried quickly to the whole world?

29. Within the Seventh-day Adventist Church, a number of scholars have tried to figure out why the gospel seems to be moving so slowly in some parts of the world. Sophisticated research methods have been applied. Is it possible that if we were just willing to allow ourselves to be used by the Holy Spirit and if we worked giving the full and complete gospel like Jesus did, that we would see the latter rain descend with the power of the Holy Spirit? Has the church lost its mission? Are we focusing on hundreds of other things, perhaps even good things, instead of the most important thing? If the bridegroom should show up today, how many of us would be found without oil in our lamps and with no spare oil either? (Matthew 25:1-13)

30. God has commissioned every one of us to be ambassadors for Him. We are not to be ambassadors for ourselves or even for the church, but for Jesus Christ. There are only three or four things we need to understand and do to accomplish this task: 1) We must not be afraid to mingle with people of the world. 2) We must win their confidence. 3) We must clearly understand the good news about the character of God and His government. And 4) With the help of the Holy Spirit, we must appeal to people to become Christians. This does not mean we have to use some bold "bull in a china shop" approach. If we are acting in Christ-like ways, we will not be able to prevent our light from shining out to others. And they will ask us what it is that makes us different. Are we prepared to tell them?

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