

The Book of Luke

The Mission of Jesus

Lesson #8 for May 23, 2015

Scriptures: Luke 15:4-7,11-32; 16:19-31; 18:35-43; 19:1-10.

1. **Why did Jesus come to this world? Why did He have to die?** Could you write a mission statement for the life of Jesus? Luke 19:10 *GNB* says, “The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” Was that only for lost human beings? This statement is clear; but, it describes only a part of the reason why Jesus came. While humanity was lost and totally subject to death, nevertheless, this tiny, sinful planet, this little blue marble in space, has become the lesson book of the universe. (1 Corinthians 4:9; Ephesians 1:7-10; 3:7-10; Colossians 1:19-20) By His life and His death, Jesus came to teach us a number of very important lessons.

In the apostasy, man alienated himself from God; earth was cut off from heaven. Across the gulf that lay between, there could be no communion. But through Christ, earth is again linked with heaven. With His own merits, Christ has bridged the gulf which sin had made so that the ministering angels can hold communion with man. Christ connects fallen man in his weakness and helplessness with the Source of infinite power.—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 20.1. Compare *PP* 184.2.

Why is Satan, the originator of sin, still able to enter God’s presence without dying while we cannot?

2. But, the salvation of man was only a part of Christ’s reason for coming to this earth. There was a larger, broader, deeper reason that Adventists have been helped to see through the insights given to us by Ellen G. White. Shouldn’t we be putting this larger view together so we can see the whole picture?

Through the plan of salvation, a larger purpose is to be wrought out even than the salvation of man and the redemption of the earth. Through the revelation of the character of God in Christ, the beneficence of the divine government would be manifested before the universe, the charge of Satan refuted, the nature and result of sin made plain, and the perpetuity of the law fully demonstrated.—Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, February 13, 1893 par. 12; December 22, 1914 par. 4; *The Messenger* June 7, 1893 par. 5; *Bible Echoes* July 15, 1893 par. 3; *That I May Know Him* 366.4.

But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe. To this result of His great sacrifice—its influence upon the intelligences of other worlds, as well as upon man—the Saviour looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said: “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me.” John 12:31, 32. **The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only**

make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* 68.2-69.0 (1890); *Reflecting Christ* 50.3 (1985).

By coming to dwell with us, Jesus was to reveal God both to men and to angels...Not alone for His earthborn children was this revelation given. **Our little world is the lesson book of the universe.** God's wonderful purpose of grace, the mystery of redeeming love, is the theme into which "angels desire to look," [1 Peter 1:12] and it will be their study throughout endless ages.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 19.2 (1898); *AG* 45.3; *LDE* 31.1; *OFC* 200.3; *Reflecting Christ* 15.4 (1985).

To the angels and the unfallen worlds the cry, "It is finished," had a deep significance. **It was for them as well as for us that the great work of redemption had been accomplished. . . . Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds.** The archapostate had so clothed himself with deception that even holy beings had not understood his principles. They had not clearly seen the nature of his rebellion.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 758.3 (1898). [Content in brackets and bold type are added.]

Christ came primarily to reveal the truth about God. That is how we are to be saved!

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. . . .**

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.—Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, January 20, 1890, par. 6,9. **Contrast** *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. [Content in brackets and bold type are added.]

3. From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible is primarily a book about God. (John 3:16; 16:25-27; 1 John 4:8,16) It is to teach us about His loving character and about His law; it is to win us to love Him. In this lesson we will look at several parables, a miracle, and a visit Jesus made—events as recorded in Luke 15-19.
4. The parables in this section of Luke are found almost exclusively in Luke. Why do you think that is? These parables were spoken during the last 6 months of His life while Jesus was ministering in Samaria and Perea to primarily non-Jewish audiences since the Jews in Judea and Galilee were determined to arrest Him and kill Him. (Luke 9:51)
5. Read Luke 15:4-7 and Matthew 18:12-14. Doesn't God care about the "good people"? The sheep recognized that it was lost but could not do anything about it. This story was told by Jesus at two different times in His ministry. On the first occasion, it was to a Jewish audience; but, on the second, it was to an audience in Perea on the other side of the Jordan. This parable speaks to the fact that God loves each one of us with an incredible, undying love. What is implied by Luke 15:7? Doesn't God care about His faithful children in the rest of the universe? Why did Jesus risk everything to come and deal with Satan and sin on this one tiny planet? Christianity is the only religion in which God seeks out His lost children. Is that important in your understanding of the plan of salvation?

The soul that has given himself to Christ is more precious in His sight than the whole world. The Saviour would have passed through the agony of Calvary that one might be saved in His kingdom. He will never abandon one for whom He has died. Unless His followers choose to leave Him, He will hold them fast. —Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 483.0.

We should feel the responsibilities that rest upon us as Christians, and labor as though we realized the value of souls, remembering that one soul saved in the kingdom of God is worth more than ten thousand worlds like this.—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, April 1, 1880 par. 1. [Bold type is added.]

Is our mission the same as the mission of Jesus? If Jesus came primarily to die to pay the penalty for sin, then we could not be a part of that mission. Our deaths wouldn't help.

Remember that Christ risked all. For our redemption, heaven itself was imperiled. At the foot of the cross, remembering that for one sinner Christ would have laid down His life, you may estimate the value of a soul.—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* 196.4.

By the lost sheep Christ represents not only the individual sinner but the one world that has apostatized and has been ruined by sin. . . . God gave Himself in His Son that He might have the joy of receiving back the sheep that was lost.—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 190.3. [Bold type is added.]

6. Read Luke 15:8-10. The coin spoken about in this parable was equivalent to a working man's daily wage. It was of great value. In biblical times, some married women wore headdresses decorated with 10 of these coins as a symbol of their family's wealth. This coin had intrinsic value; but, it had no recognition that it was lost. Nevertheless, the coin bears the image of and mark of the reigning power just as we are supposed to bear the image and mark of and belong to our Creator. (See *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 194.3.) We are not the result of random events following a massive explosion somewhere in the

universe; we bear the divine imprint in our very existence.

7. Read Luke 15:11-32. Undoubtedly, this parable has served as the basis for many, many sermons. It is the story of an incredibly loving and forgiving father and what could be described as two lost sons. This parable has been called the parable of the prodigal son. The younger son demanded his part of the inheritance and traveled to a far country where he lost it in “riotous” living! When he found himself penniless and feeding pigs, he began to think about the love of his father. But, it was not until he arrived home that he really began to understand the full truth. His older brother never left home. Despite staying home, the older brother certainly did not understand the love of his father.
8. Our lesson suggests we divide the story into seven sections. (See *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, p. 66,67 for Monday and Tuesday.)
 1. “Give me.” (Luke 15:12) The younger son thought that life at home was too rigid, too hard, too confining; and rumors of a far country with so-called unhindered freedom led to his demand.
 2. “Why me?” (Luke 15:13-16) After selling his property, the son departed to the far country. “The Greek word for ‘riotous’ (*asoros*) appears three other times as a noun in the New Testament: for drunkenness (*Eph. 5:18*), rebelliousness (*Titus 1:6*), and debauchery that includes ‘lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries’ (*1 Peter 4:3, 4, NKJV*).” (*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, p. 66) But, it was not long before he found himself caring for pigs.
 3. “Make me.” (Luke 15:17-19) In contrast to the stories of the sheep and the coin, the prodigal son “came to his senses” and still had the ability to find his way home. He began to realize what a blessing home was. He was prepared to accept any position his father offered him. What attractions allure us in the world today? Are we allowing them to consume our time and efforts instead of focusing on our loving, heavenly Father who calls us to come home? How many of us are trying to get in as much of this world’s “pleasures” as possible without losing heaven?
 4. Try to imagine the thoughts of that young man as he journeyed home. (Luke 15:17-20) No doubt, he spent considerable time thinking about what he would say to his father. He must have been trying to remember everything he could about his father. He must have thought a great deal about his goodbyes. In his speech, he determined to emphasize the following points: 1) To recognize the father as “my father.” (Luke 15:18) 2) He had to confess his mistakes and his sins against his father and God. 3) He had to go on to say that he was not claiming once again his position as son because he was no longer worthy; he was merely throwing himself on the father’s mercy. 4) Finally, he planned to plead, “Just make me one of your hired servants.” (Luke 15:19)
 5. But, the younger son had completely misunderstood his father’s love. (Luke 15:20-21) The father had kept a constant vigil, looking down the long road hoping for his son’s return. “He was still a long way from home when his father saw him; his heart was filled with pity, and he ran, threw his arms around his son, and kissed him.” (*GNB*) The moment had come for the son’s prepared speech. But, apparently, the father did not hear a single word. It is hard to imagine a better picture of God than this story. He did not want people to see what a mess the son had gotten himself into. He ignored the filth and the rags.
 6. The father had been waiting a long time for this moment. He did not impose any conditions on the prodigal before he accepted him back. The father called his servants to

bring a new robe, to get that signature ring for his finger, to put new shoes on his feet, and to prepare a feast to begin as soon as possible. While we are not told anything about the mother, we certainly hope that she shared in the father's rejoicing. It was as if their son had died, but then he was resurrected. And the entire home was full of rejoicing. The feast was for the father's benefit, not the younger son's.

7. But, the elder son, dutifully carrying out his tasks in the field, returned home with a very different attitude. (Luke 15:25-32) When he found out why there was rejoicing, he was angry, complaining, and self-righteous! What kind of people are angered at God's incredible love? And he refused to recognize his brother. He was very unhappy and unwilling to recognize why the father was so happy that this prodigal who had been effectively dead was alive again and had come home. The older son could think of nothing but himself! Was he worried that he might lose some of his inheritance?

Try to put yourself in the older brother's shoes. Is it any surprise that he felt the way he did? He had stayed home, worked hard, and felt like he was living a monotonous life. He was very upset that the father was spending some of his inheritance on his prodigal brother. Why are we not told what happened later? The story is still unfinished!

9. While God has incredibly risked everything to come and seek and save those who are willing to respond, He never uses force.

The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. Upon the world's dark night the Sun of Righteousness must rise, "with healing in His wings." Malachi 4:2.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 22.1. [Bold type is added.]

10. Read Luke 16:19-31. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus is recorded only in Luke. While many Christians who believe in the immortality of the soul use it to support many unbiblical ideas, the intention of Jesus seems to be clear—that it teaches only two great truths. 1) Now is the time to respond to God's call because there will not be another opportunity after death. It is not a parable about the sin of riches or the righteousness of poverty. 2) Since there will be no second chance, we need to recognize that we have no time to delay. (2 Corinthians 6:2) Unfortunately, many look at this parable and think that even if they do not change their behavior and their thinking now, they will have another opportunity. They take for granted God's love and His offer of salvation. But, if Christ's whole mission was for the purpose of teaching us the truth about God, how could we take that for granted? Often God's love for sinners is preached about in the context especially of His forgiveness. But, God's love is not intended to be an excuse for us to keep on sinning so God can forgive us more! What is represented by the "great gulf" mentioned in this parable? There is no way this parable could be a true representation of a God who is omnipresent and omnipotent!

It is interesting to observe that when the real Lazarus was raised from the dead, (John 11) all they could think about was how to get rid of him as well as how to get rid of Jesus! Even someone coming back from the dead did not change them at all!

11. Read Luke 18:35-43. The story of blind Bartimaeus (He is named in Mark 10:46.) emphasizes to us, once again, that the mission of Jesus is to have a totally transforming effect on our lives: physically, mentally, spiritually, and socially. As He was leaving Jericho on His final journey to Jerusalem, He met two men who represent this point. One was a blind beggar, and the other was a wealthy tax collector. The blind beggar heard the crowd talking as they passed by and realized that his moment for possible healing had arrived. And he cried out in a loud voice: "Jesus! Son of David! Take pity on me!" (Luke 18:38-39, *GNB*) Jesus, as usual, heard the cry of the oppressed, stopped the procession, and healed the man on the spot. God is like that.
12. Read Luke 19:1-10. Why do you suppose this story is told only by the Greek physician, Luke, and not by Zacchaeus's fellow tax collector, Matthew? How did Zacchaeus learn about Jesus? What was it about Jesus that attracted him? The chief tax collector of Jericho was a very short man, but he desperately wanted to see Jesus. He was not physically blind; but, he could not see Jesus over the heads of taller people. Running ahead of the crowd, he found a tree overhanging the road which he hoped would give him the opportunity to see Jesus. Try to imagine his surprise when Jesus stopped right under him and said, "I'm coming to stay at your house today!"
13. Jericho was a city full of priests, Roman soldiers, many tax collectors, and many merchant travelers. Zacchaeus had already learned about Jesus and had begun to change his ways to live a better life even before this encounter with Jesus. (See *The Desire of Ages* 552-556.)
14. Try to imagine having Jesus invite Himself unexpectedly to your home! Would you be embarrassed? Would there be any need to do some clean up? What do you think they talked about?
15. If you had been in the place of blind Bartimaeus, what would you have asked for?

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