

Sabbath School Lesson #1 – The Missionary Nature of God – 27 Jun - 3 Jul 2015

Christ leads God's mission to save the lost. "Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people" (Isaiah 55:4). God has given us Christ, as "a leader and commander" of the church for a witness of God's mission to save humanity. The missionary nature of God follows the divine order of relations: "the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God" (1 Corinthians 11:3); "the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church" (Ephesians 5:23); and Christ "is the head of the body, the church" (Colossians 1:18). This Christ was the "leader and commander" who instructed Moses when the children of Israel left Egypt. It is said of Moses, "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible" (Hebrews 11:27). Christ is still the invisible head of His church. No human is head of a true church; ministers in our Seventh-day Adventist Church are but brethren, not kings and lords over Christ's heritage, for Christ alone is the "leader and commander" of His church. "But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren" (Matthew 23:8). It says in *Desire of Ages*:

"The head of every man is Christ.' God, who put all things under the Saviour's feet, 'gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.' 1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:22, 23. The church is built upon Christ as its foundation; it is to obey Christ as its head. It is not to depend upon man, or be controlled by man. Many claim that a position of trust in the church gives them authority to dictate what other men shall believe and what they shall do. This claim God does not sanction. The Saviour declares, 'All ye are brethren.' All are exposed to temptation, and are liable to error. Upon no finite being can we depend for guidance. The Rock of faith is the living presence of Christ in the church. Upon this the weakest may depend, and those who think themselves the strongest will prove to be the weakest, unless they make Christ their efficiency. 'Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm.' The Lord 'is the Rock, His work is perfect.' 'Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.' Jeremiah 17:5; Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 2:12" {DA 414.3}. Christ is "the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2).

God created man and woman – the creation of man and woman in Genesis 1:26 is also an affirmation that "to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him" (1 Corinthians 8:6). In Genesis 1:26 God spoke to His Son alone. "After the earth was created, and the beasts upon it, the Father and Son carried out their purpose ... And now God says to His Son, 'Let us make man in our image'" {1SP 24.2}. The Lesson suggests that apart from Jesus, a third Being was consulted, "Now the command was turned into consultation: 'Let us make man ...' The Three Persons of the Godhead – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – consulted about it." This embodies a trinity doctrine "through which Satan is working to make a nonentity of God and of Christ" {9T 68.1}. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God (Matthew 10:20; 1 Peter 1:11; Romans 8:9; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:4), but this false doctrine separates the Spirit of God from Him and makes it a third god of the trinity. Before the fall of Satan, heavenly order of Beings was: "God is a moral governor ... the Lawgiver" {12MR 208.2}; "The Son of God was next in authority to the great Lawgiver" {2SP 9.1}; and "Satan was ... next in power to Christ Himself" {CTr 200.2}. After the fall of Satan, he was the third Being who wished to be consulted in creating man. "But when God said to His Son, 'Let us make man in our image,' Satan was jealous of Jesus. He wished to be consulted concerning the formation of man, and because he was not, he was filled with envy, jealousy, and hatred" {EW 145.1}. In the trinity, Satan not only poses as the third Being that was *consulted*, but Satan is worshiped.

"After the earth was created, and the beasts upon it, the Father and Son carried out their purpose, which was designed before the fall of Satan, to make man in their own image. They had wrought together in the creation of the earth and every living thing upon it. And now God said to His Son, 'Let us make man in our image.' As Adam came forth from the hand of His Creator he was of noble height and of beautiful symmetry. He was more than twice as tall as men now living upon the earth, and was well proportioned. His features were perfect and beautiful. His complexion was neither white nor sallow, but ruddy, glowing with

rich tint of health. Eve was not quite as tall as Adam. Her head reached a little above his shoulders. She, too, was noble, perfect in symmetry, and very beautiful" {SR 20.2}.

Free will – Man is a free moral agent. "God might have created man without the power to transgress His law; He might have withheld the hand of Adam from touching the forbidden fruit; but in that case man would have been, not free moral agent, but a mere automaton. Without freedom of choice, his obedience would not have been voluntary, but forced" {PP 49.1}. "It is not God's purpose to coerce the will. Man was created a free moral agent. Like the inhabitants of all other worlds, he must be subject to the test of obedience; but he is never brought into such a position that yielding to evil becomes a matter of necessity. No temptation or trial is permitted to come to him which he is unable to resist. God made ample provision that man need never have been defeated in the conflict with Satan" {PP 331.4}.

The fall – It was for not accepting the simplicity of the Word of God that man sinned. "We are to take the Word of God as it reads, the words of Christ as He has spoken them" {LHU 265.2}. This Word of God is the thought of God, which is but the expression of God's mind. Thus man, receiving this Word, would be a constant partaker of the mind of God – fulfilling the Scripture to, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). The Word of God to man was: "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:16-17). But to Eve came another word, which was opposite to the word of God. This second word was the thought of Satan, which was but the expression of Satan's mind. To receive this word would be to receive the thought expressed in the word; and to receive the thought was to be partaker of the mind of Satan. Eve sinned through departing from the simple Word of God and instead heeding to the second word and partaking of the mind of Satan. "Now the serpent ... said unto the woman" (Genesis 3:1-5).

Before the fall, Eve lived by the simplicity of the Word of God and partook of the mind of God. Of this forbidden tree, Eve had before seen as not pleasant to the eyes and certainly not good for food, for apart from this tree, "made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food" (Genesis 2:9). All this changed when Eve departed from the simplicity of the Word of God and accepted Satan's mind. With this mind of Satan, of the forbidden tree, "when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, ... she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat" (Genesis 3:6). That Satan's mind had been received was apparent in that Eve now saw things that were not so before. If Eve had stayed with the simplicity of the Word of God, taking God to mean what He said, she could not have sinned.

Christ our Lord, when here in human flesh, was kept from sinning by the simplicity of the Word of God. "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalms 119:11). "The word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it" (Deuteronomy 30:14). Eve sinned by departing from the simplicity of the Word of God and that was manifested in the disobedient act of eating from the forbidden tree. Shall we hold firmly to the Word of our Creator and thus be kept from sinning, or shall we fall for the second word and thought reminiscent of the mind of Satan? "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3). "Believe that Jesus means just what He says; take Him at His word, and hang your helpless soul upon Him" (RH, June 23, 1896).

God's initiative to save us – While we were yet sinners, God sent His Son to die for us (Romans 5:8). The fifteenth chapter of Luke is devoted to illustrate that God through Christ took the initiative to seek lost sinners – the shepherd left his ninety-nine sheep that were safe and risked his life to find the one that was lost; the woman lit a candle and searched her house until she found the one lost coin; and the Spirit of God searched for the heart of the prodigal son and brought him home. There is no story in all the Bible of a lost sheep that must go find his shepherd. "The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost. A lost sheep never finds its way back to the fold of itself. If it is not sought for and saved by the watchful shepherd, it wanders until it perishes. What a representation of the Savior is this! Unless Jesus, the Good Shepherd, had come to seek and to save the wandering, we should have perished" {ST November 20, 1893 Par. 6}. Let us allow Christ to save us.