

13. Turning Hearts in the End Time (2Q 2019—Family Seasons)

Biblical material: 1 Kings 16:29–17:24; Mal. 4:5, 6; Matt. 3:2; Matt. 11:14, 15; 17:10; 18:20-45.

Quotes

- There is no public spectacle without violence to the spirit. *Tertullian*
- As I got up in front of them, I felt an intoxication that had nothing to do with alcohol. It was the intoxication of being a public spectacle. *Homer Simpson*
- I seem fated to pass through the world without colliding with it or moving it -- and I'm sure I can't tell you whether the fate's good or evil. I don't die—I don't fall in love. And if other people die or fall in love they always do it when I'm just not there. You are quite right; life to me is just a spectacle... *E. Forster*
- All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players: They have their exits and their entrances... *Shakespeare*

Questions

Do we want to turn people heads—in what way? Does our being part of God's family assume even greater importance in the End time? What does the story of the widow of Zarephath have to say to us today? What methods of evangelism should we use to turn heads? What is the great attraction of the gospel, and how can we best share this?

Bible summary

1 Kings 16:29–17:24 tells the story of conflict between the prophets and the kings/people that eventually ended in disaster for Israel. Elijah was prophesied to return to repair family relationships (Mal. 4:5, 6). John the Baptist called for repentance (Matt. 3:2). Jesus says John the Baptist fulfilled the return of Elijah (Matt. 11:14, 15. See also Matt. 17:10). Jesus calls for unlimited forgiveness (Matt. 18:20-45).

Comment

Jesus used the powerful story of the prodigal son to illustrate repentance, the return of the lost son to his Father. Similarly Elijah, John the Baptist, and Jesus himself, made strong calls to repentance—to come back to God. For in the end, important as our earthly families are, the vital issue is to make sure we are part of God's family, looking forward to an eternity with him.

The good news is that God has already made that possible—he first loved us. “The heavenly Father has turned the hearts of His children back to Himself and has turned the hearts of His children to each other through the Cross of Christ.” (Thursday's lesson). How would you explain what happened? How is the text from Malachi to be fulfilled?

John summed up the message we can share: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and

heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.” 1 John 1:1-3 NIV.

We proclaim what we have seen and heard. And what is this message, this record of what we have discovered about God—

“This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.” 1 John 1:5 NIV.

To illustrate the point, what does John do? He appeals to the evidence—the Biblical record—and gives a specific example.

“This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother’s were righteous.” 1 John 3:11, 12 NIV.

By wisely using this evidence, understanding what the Bible says about God, his nature and actions, then we can discern truth from error, right from wrong: “This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.” 1 John 4:6 NIV.

That is what the Bible is for—to reveal God to us in all the very human situations that have existed, to place his glorious plan of salvation in the context of its great need in a world of sin. Only by understanding this setting do the “bad bits” become clearer, as recognition dawns that instead of Plan A God is operating at the level of Plan Z, due to our sinful desires and choices.

Through not denying or ignoring the problems, God demonstrates his absolute commitment to the truth, even though he may be terribly misunderstood at times. This commitment again shows the true character of God who is the trustworthy truth-teller, the one who lays out all the evidence just as it is.

Yet for all such words of appreciation, it is the God of the Bible who wishes to be seen and understood. He is the one who calls us, “Come, let us reason together.” (Isaiah) God asks each of us: Let us examine the evidence together, recognize truth for what it is, see the right, understand what is happening in the bad bits, and accept my free and full salvation, your only hope in this sad and dying world.

Jesus tells us, if you have seen me, you have seen the Father. All the misconceptions about God are swept away by the evidence of Jesus, who shows us who God truly is. No other salvation. “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.” 2 Corinthians 4:6 NIV.

Ellen White Comments

It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy, and truth... Those who wait for the Bridegroom’s coming are to say to the people, “Behold your God.” The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love. {COL 415}