

10. Discipling the Nations (1Q 2014—Discipleship)

Biblical material: Isa. 56:6–8; Matt. 11:20–24; John 12:20–32; Rom. 15:12; Acts 1:7, 8.

Quotes

- Jesus-shaped spirituality hears Jesus say “believe and repent,” but the call that resonates most closely in the heart of a disciple is “follow me.” The command to follow requires that we take a daily journey in the company of other students. It demands that we be lifelong learners and that we commit to constant growth in spiritual maturity. Discipleship is a call to me, but it is a journey of “we.”
Michael Spencer
- My life is too short, and God’s work is too great for me to think of making a home for myself in this world. *George Eliot*
- Those who aren’t following Jesus aren’t his followers. It’s that simple. Followers follow, and those who don’t follow aren’t followers. To follow Jesus means to follow Jesus into a society where justice rules, where love shapes everything. To follow Jesus means to take up his dream and work for it. *Scot McKnight*
- Have you no wish for others to be saved? Then you’re not saved yourself, be sure of that! *Charles H. Spurgeon*
- Have you ever wondered what it feels like to have a love for the lost? This is a term we use as part of our Christian jargon. Many believers search their hearts in condemnation, looking for the arrival of some feeling of benevolence that will propel them into bold evangelism. It will never happen. It is impossible to love “the lost”. You can’t feel deeply for an abstraction or a concept. You would find it impossible to love deeply an unfamiliar individual portrayed in a photograph, let alone a nation or a race or something as vague as “all lost people”. Don’t wait for a feeling or love in order to share Christ with a stranger. You already love your heavenly Father, and you know that this stranger is created by Him, but separated from Him, so take those first steps in evangelism because you love God. It is not primarily out of compassion for humanity that we share our faith or pray for the lost; it is first of all, love for God. *John Piper*

Questions

How do we show that we truly care for everyone on this planet, whatever their race or nationality? Why are we told to “go into all the world”? What was Israel’s role meant to be? What does this experience tell us? In what way are we to be a “spectacle to angels and to men”? What about witnessing at the United Nations?

Bible summary

Isa. 56:6–8 NIV speaks of the blessings given to “foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord.” In Matt. 11:20–24 Jesus reprimands the local towns, saying that if his miracles had been performed in Tyre and Sidon they would have repented long ago. When the Greeks came to see Jesus, (John 12:20–32), Jesus responded with a wonderful description of his sacrificial death and what it would accomplish for all people. In Rom. 15:12 Paul quotes Isa. 11:10, saying “foreigners will put their hope in him.” Jesus’ disciples are to “be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the

furthest places on earth.” Acts 1:8 FBV. The third angel has “the eternal good news to announce to those who lived on the earth, to every nation, tribe, language, and people.” Rev 14:6 FBV.

Comment

The Greeks who wanted to see Jesus are the symbol of all the world outside Judaism. And the fact that Jesus accepted them and invited them to follow him shows that his offer of salvation was for all. In fact in his response to the Greeks, Jesus points to his death that will bring about a great harvest, like the seed dying in the ground. This is confirmation that Jesus wanted his message of healing salvation to go to everyone.

Jesus broke down the discriminatory barriers (see John 7:35, 8:48, and Luke 10:27–37). His acts of healing and his words showed he did not discriminate, and that he welcomed all peoples. In the story of the Canaanite woman he pointed out the way people discriminated against her people, and was pleased to honor her request.

The story of the Samaritan woman at the well again eloquently demonstrates Jesus’ care and concern for every human being. In this marvelous exchange we see salvation dawning on this woman who was used to being mistreated and discriminated against, and her eager acceptance of Jesus the living water.

Jesus’ commendation of the faith of the centurion illustrates the inclusiveness of the gospel message, and how those from “outside” can be more dedicated than those “inside.” It certainly shows that God is no respecter of persons and invites all to come to him and be healed. As a faith community we have tended to focus on certain classes and social groups, as well as concentrating our work in certain geographic areas. While this may be understandable based on history and circumstances, we certainly need to recognize the importance of globalization and the opportunities it now provides for sharing the good news of God. In addition we must not ignore the chance to influence those at the highest level of international leadership, and ensure we are there in these assemblies to speak for God.

The great commission is given to all of us, and it centers on Jesus, the one who says “if you’ve seen me you’ve seen the Father.” For this is the good news—both from God and about God.

Ellen White Comments

There is need of Nehemiahs in the church today,--not men who can pray and preach only, but men whose prayers and sermons are braced with firm and eager purpose. The course pursued by this Hebrew patriot in the accomplishment of his plans is one that should still be adopted by ministers and leading men. When they have laid their plans, they should present them to the church in such a manner as to win their interest and co-operation. Let the people understand the plans and share in the work, and they will have a personal interest in its prosperity. The success attending Nehemiah’s efforts shows what prayer, faith, and wise, energetic action will accomplish. Living faith will prompt to energetic action. The spirit manifested by the leader will be, to a great extent, reflected by the people. If the leaders professing to believe the solemn, important truths that are to test the world at this time, manifest no ardent zeal to prepare a people to stand in the day of God, we must expect the church to be careless, indolent, and pleasure-loving. {SW, March 29, 1904 }

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