

Third Angel's Message Series



LESSON # 24

"...when the world will be bound as entirely under men's commandments and men's traditions and men's prejudices which make void the law of God, as those people were when Christ came into the world. And therefore as certainly as our allegiance shall be to Him, as it must be, so certainly we will be drawn so close to what God says that that alone will be our whole rule and definition of conduct. That alone will be our guide, and that in Christ, as it is lived in Christ and wrought out in Him."

ALONZO T. JONES, GENERAL CONFERENCE, 1895

The text for tonight is in **Acts 10:28: "And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company or come unto one of another nation."**

The Interlinear Greek that I have here, shows that this was spoken really stronger than our translation gives it. **"He said to them, Ye know how unlawful it is for a man, a Jew, to unite himself, or come near, to one of another race."** Not simply, Ye know that it is an unlawful thing; but, **"Ye know how unlawful it is"** to do so.

Now was it unlawful? Was it unlawful for a Jew to keep company or associate with one of another race? The Jews regarded it as being unlawful, but was it unlawful? The Jews were God's people. They had professed to be His people for ages. By this time they should have learned that whatever God said and that alone was lawful, and that nothing that anybody else should say had any force of law, and therefore could never properly be spoken of as lawful and consequently any violation of it could never be spoken of as unlawful. They should have learned that, but instead of learning it they learned the opposite of it, and so entirely opposite was it that what men said was counted really as more binding than what God Himself said. Men's commandments, men's customs, and men's ways made void the word of God itself, even as Jesus said. **"Ye have made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition."**

Now Christ in His work which He did in the world and which He has done in Himself for all who are in Him, was just the reverse of that whole order of things. He turned the matter so as to bring men to see that what man or any collection of men may say cannot be spoken of as lawful and has no place in the Christian category as lawful or the disregard of it as unlawful. But what God

alone says, that alone is lawful, and not to do what He says, that alone is unlawful.

Now this is the principle that we are going to examine in a study or two--maybe more--and this is the principle we need to examine now, because we have come to the borders of the time and shall soon be fully into the time when the world will be bound as entirely under men's commandments and men's traditions and men's prejudices which make void the law of God, as those people were when Christ came into the world. And therefore as certainly as our allegiance shall be to Him, as it must be, so certainly we will be drawn so close to what God says that that alone will be our whole rule and definition of conduct. That alone will be our guide, and that in Christ, as it is lived in Christ and wrought out in Him.

And when that shall be so with the world wedded to forms and ceremonies and traditions by which they make void the law of God, they will deal with those who do concerning their traditions as Christ did concerning the others, as they did in that day with Him. Therefore it was never God's purpose that it should be counted unlawful to associate with people of other nations, and if the Jews had remained faithful to God, it would never have been counted by anyone of them unlawful to associate or have anything to do with one of another nation. They had come to this position by a direct shutting of their eyes and a turning of their backs upon the Lord's dealings and God's teaching from the beginning and all the way down.

Just look a moment at the position of the Jews as set forth by Peter in the text which was the expression of the whole idea of the Jewish nation. In their estimation all the nations were shut away from God and had no place at all with Him. Yet all the way along,

the Lord had been constantly showing them that this was not so at all.

In the days of Jonah and the glory of the kingdom of Assyria, before the kingdom of Babylon had come into history at all--away back there God called one of his people--Jonah--to go to that heathen nation and tell them of the doom that was hanging over them and the destruction that was to come, if by means of the warning they might repent and escape the ruin. He said to the Lord, There is no use for me to do that, because thou art a gracious God and repenteth thee of the evil, and if I go over there and tell them what you have told me to tell them and if they repent of the evil and turn from their wickedness, you will not destroy the city. What then is the use of my going on that journey to tell them that the city will be destroyed? You will not do it if they turn from their evil ways.

But the Lord insisted that he should go to Nineveh. But he, still holding to his views, started off to Joppa to go to Tarshish. The Lord brought him back, and by that time he was convinced that he would better go to Nineveh. He went to Nineveh and entered the city--three days' journey--preaching, **"Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown."** Word came to the king of Nineveh and he sent word to all the people to turn from their evil ways, put on sackcloth and ashes, and cause even the animals to fast, and to have the people cry mightily unto God. The Lord heard their cry, accepted their repentance, and saved the city. Jonah went out and sat on a height before the city to see whether God was going to destroy it, and He did not destroy it, and then Jonah didn't like it at all. He said, Now that is just what I told you before I started. I told you that if I came here and told them what you told

me to tell them, they would repent of the evil and you would forgive them and not destroy their city and it came out that way, and I would better have stayed at home.

“And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil ways; and God repented of the evil that he said that he would do unto them, and he did it not. But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish.”

“For I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live. Then said the Lord, Doest thou well to be angry?” Jonah 3:10; 4:1-4.

Then it tells how Jonah went out and sat on the east side of the city and there made a booth and sat under it until he might see what would become of the city. And the Lord prepared a gourd, and it withered and Jonah got very angry about that and prayed again that he might die.

“And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death. Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?”

Well, it is supposed that Jonah himself learned this lesson finally. and further, this was recorded and it was kept as one of the holy books in the hands of the people from which they were taught. And they should have learned the lesson which it taught, that the Lord had a care for other nations and that He wanted His people to care for other nations.

Jonah knew and said that he knew that "**thou art a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness and repentest thee of the evil.**" Knowing that, he should have been that much more ready to go to those people and preach to them the Lord's message that they might repent and be delivered. But in spite of that book which they had, in spite of that lesson which it positively taught, from that day forward they went directly opposite to it. They thought that God cared not for the heathen except as they became as the Jews, and the Saviour told those who thought that way that the proselyte they had compassed "*sea and land to make*" was "*twofold more the child of hell*" than themselves. It was so.

After that they went on in their crooked course, away from the true idea of God respecting them and the nations around and became so self-inclusive, so shut up within themselves and so evil as to be worse than the heathen around them. Then the Lord scattered them among all the nations around them and they were obliged to associate with other people; they had to do it. And yet Peter says: "**Ye know how unlawful it is for a man, a Jew, to unite himself or come near to one of another race**"--with men that were uncircumcised. In the eleventh chapter, the brethren at Jerusalem charged him, "**Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised and didst eat with them.**"

Daniel and his three brethren had eaten at a heathen king's table and with heathen day in and day out for years, and God was with them all the time and made Daniel one of the great prophets, and He delivered the three from the fiery furnace. Now what was that recorded for and put in their hands for as one of the books which they were constantly to study? You can see that it was simply to teach them directly the opposite of what they were saying and doing.

More than this: Turn to the book of Daniel, fourth chapter:--

“Nebuchadnezzar the king, unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth. Peace be multiplied unto you. I thought it good to show the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me. How great are his signs! And how mighty are his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation.”

That is Nebuchadnezzar preaching to all nations, kindreds, and languages the truth as to the true God and how good He is and how great His wonders are. They had this in their hands. They had this in their own records, that God had given Nebuchadnezzar a dream and had given Daniel the interpretation of the dream for the king and that by this means God had brought Nebuchadnezzar to this place where he sends forth a proclamation to all nations and languages telling how good the true God is, how great He is, and how good it is to trust Him. Look at the last verses of that chapter. Nebuchadnezzar has told his experience; how he had offended against God and was driven out and the Lord brought him back in his own good time:--

“At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honor and brightness returned unto me; and my counselors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.”

There was a lesson, then, constantly before them, by which the Lord was trying to teach them that all these notions of theirs were directly the opposite of the truth. He was teaching them that He was ready to reach the heathen and wanted to reach them, and that He had separated Israel from among the nations that they might know more of Him and tell it to all nations. And if they had stood in the place where God wanted them to stand from the beginning, no such task as this would ever have fallen to a heathen king, for the people of God themselves would have proclaimed His glory to all the nations. But when they shut themselves away from God and in that shut themselves away from the nations, then God had to use the heads of these heathen nations to bring the knowledge of Himself to all the nations.

Look at the sixth chapter also. There is the instance of Darius and the persecution of Daniel and his deliverance. Let us read the decree of Darius in the twenty-fifth verse:--

“Then King Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel; for he is the living God, and steadfast forever, and his kingdom that which

shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lion.”

There again the knowledge of the true God is made known to all peoples, nations, and languages by the word of one who to the Jews was an outcast, utterly forsaken, and repudiated of God. But there it stood in their own language, in their own hands, year after year, and it was ever teaching them the opposite of the things that they were teaching and doing.

One more instance, related in the first chapter of Ezra, we will read in connection with the last two verses of the last chapter of 2 Chronicles:--

“Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation through all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. who is there among you of all his people? The Lord his God be with him, and let him go up.

Now we need the first three verses of Ezra 1:--

“Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in

writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, the Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? His God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (he is the God), which is in Jerusalem." Ezra 1:1-3.

That is enough. There are plenty more instances in the Scriptures to show how entirely the Jews had shut their eyes and turned their backs upon the Lord in order to reach the point where they stood when Christ came into the world and where He found them.

Now it is true that in the books of Moses, when the Lord brought the children of Israel out of Egypt and in other Scriptures, it was told them that they were to be separate from all the nations. That is so. It also told them how that separation was to be accomplished. In the thirty-third chapter of Exodus, in verses 14-16, this is told:--

"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth."

So shall we be separated. How is that "so"? Thou goest with us. Thus they were taught the means by which they should be separated from all the people.

Now, if they had courted His presence and also had His presence with them, they would have been separated from all the people

indeed, in heart and in life. Yet they would have associated with all people upon the earth. They would have gone to all people and nations and languages and tongues, telling them of the glories of God and His goodness and power, just as Nebuchadnezzar and Darius and Cyrus did.

But, instead, they did not court His presence and have Him ever with them to sanctify them--for to be separated from the world unto the Lord is to be sanctified. If they had had the Lord's presence to sanctify them, they could have gone anywhere on the earth and still they would have been separate from all the people.

But not having that which would separate them and which alone could separate them, then if they were to be separated from the world, how was it to be done? How alone could it be done? We know they did not have Him whose presence alone could do it. The only way, then, by which it could be done at all was for them to do it themselves according to their own ideas of what God meant when He said they should be separated. But a man's ideas of what God means--we know how near the truth they are, for He says, **"My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."** Isa. 55:8,9. So it is as far away from the truth as a man can get.

Having not the presence of God to do it for them and in them, they took it upon themselves and they had to take it upon themselves to do it if they were to be separated at all.

But when they did not have the presence of God, which alone could do it, then their attempting to separate themselves, what alone could it do? Think, now, what alone could that end in? It

could not possibly end in anything else than the building up, the enlarging, the great, overtopping growth, of self. Self-confidence, self-pride, self-exaltation, self-righteousness--every kind of selfishness--more and more increasing itself upon itself, and all in the vain effort of themselves to fulfill the Scriptures by which the Lord had said they should be separated from all the nations.

And when by this means they had reached the point at which they were worse than the heathen around about, the Lord had to take them out of the land and scatter them abroad among all the nations. And when they were so scattered, they were more separated from the nations than they had ever been at any time from the day that they came into the land. Because when they were scattered among the nations, they sought the Lord as they had not in their own land, they trusted Him as they had not in their own land; they found Him as they had not appreciated Him there, and His presence with them separated them from the heathen when they were scattered among the heathen.

In all these ways the Lord was trying to teach them that they were not going the right way, to teach them the true way in which it alone could be done. Yet in spite of it all they took the wrong way to do it. Yet more than this: Not having the presence of God, which would give meaning to all that He had said and all that He had appointed for them to observe in their services and worship, this self-seeking way led them to pervert the Lord's appointed forms of worship. It led them to make these a means of salvation. And when they had practiced these, they held that that made them righteous, and the other nations not having them, therefore they could not be righteous. They held that God had given these forms for this purpose and had not prescribed them to other

nations and therefore God thought more of them than He did of anybody else.

Thus they not only put themselves in the place of God but all the services which He had appointed for another purpose they perverted and turned altogether to the service of self-righteousness and self-exaltation and self-exclusion.

If they had had His presence as He appointed for them, all these appointed forms would have had to them a divine meaning and a divine life in every phase of service which God had appointed. Then they would have found Jesus Christ Himself and His living presence and converting power and that would have given living energy to every form that was appointed and to all these symbols that were before them. Then all these things would have had to them a living interest, for they would have represented only a present Christ--Christ present with them.

Thus the lack of the presence of Christ in the life by a converted heart led altogether to the enlarging of themselves in the place of God and to making all the divine forms which God had appointed, only forms and outward ceremonies, by which they expected to obtain life. It led to the putting of these things in the place of Christ as the way of salvation.

Now I think we have just about time enough in the present hour to read some passages respecting what they had made of all this in the time of Christ. I ask you to think carefully on this.

I have here some of the advance chapters of the new "*Life of Christ*," by Mrs. E. G. White, and a great deal is said upon this subject which we have studied so far tonight, and I thought it would be valuable to all our ministers and workers especially and

to all people also, if we could bring these statements together here, where we can have them in the Bulletin before our eyes to use in the time to which we are coming.

I have therefore brought this down and will now read passages without making any particular comment upon them tonight, but the next lesson will follow the consequence of this and all these points are necessary to our further study. As the "*Life of Christ*" is not yet printed but still in manuscript, I cannot, of course, give references.

"The Jewish leaders refrained from associating with any class but their own. They held themselves aloof, not only from the Gentiles but from the majority of their own people, seeking neither to benefit them nor to win their friendship. Their teachings led the Jews of all classes to separate themselves from the rest of the world in manner which tended to make them self-righteous, egotistical and intolerant. This rigorous seclusion and bigotry of the Pharisees had narrowed their influence and created a prejudice which the Saviour desired to remove, that the influence of his mission might be felt upon all. This was the purpose of Jesus in attending this marriage feast, to begin the work of breaking down the exclusiveness which existed with the Jewish leaders and to open the way for their freer mingling with the common people.

"The Jews had so far fallen from the ancient teachings of Jehovah as to hold that they would be righteous in the sight of God, and receive the fulfillment of his promises, if they strictly kept the letter of the law given them by Moses. The zeal with which they followed the teachings of the elders gave them an air of great piety. Not content with performing those services which God had specified to them through Moses, they were continually reaching for rigid and difficult

duties. They measured their holiness by the number and multitude of their ceremonies, while their hearts were filled with hypocrisy, pride, and avarice. While they professed to be the only righteous nation on the earth, the curse of God was upon them for their iniquities.

"They had received unsanctified and confused interpretations of the law given them by Moses; they had added tradition to tradition; they had restricted freedom of thought and action, until the commandments, ordinances, and services of God were lost in a ceaseless round of meaningless rites and ceremonies. Their religion was a yoke of bondage. They were in continual dread lest they should become defiled. Dwelling constantly upon these matters had dwarfed their minds and narrowed the orbit of their lives".

Now a question: What was the root of that whole thing? Self, self, self-ishness all the time!

"Jesus began the work of reformation by bringing himself into close sympathy with humanity. He was a Jew and he designed to leave a perfect pattern of one who was a Jew inwardly. While he showed the greatest reverence for the law of God and taught obedience to its precepts, he rebuked the Pharisees for their pretentious piety and endeavored to free the people from the senseless exactions that bound them.

"Jesus rebuked intemperance, self-indulgence, and folly; yet he was social in his nature. He accepted invitations to dine with the learned and noble, as well as with the poor and afflicted. On these occasions his conversation was elevating and instructive. He gave no license to scenes of dissipation and revelry, but innocent happiness was pleasing to him. A Jewish marriage was a solemn and impressive occasion, the joy of which was not displeasing to the Son of man.

The miracle at the feast pointed directly toward the breaking down of the prejudices of the Jews. The disciples of Jesus learned a lesson of sympathy and humility from it."

In another chapter, on Nicodemus and his visit to Christ, we have this:--

"At that time the Israelites had come to regard the sacrificial service as having in itself virtue to atone for sin and thus had lost sight of Christ to whom it pointed. God would teach them that all their services were as valueless, in themselves, as that serpent of brass, but were, like that, to lead their minds to Christ, the great sin-offering."

Of the woman of Samaria at the well:--

"Sinful though she was, this woman was in a more favorable condition to become an heir of Christ's kingdom than were those of the Jews who made exalted professions of piety, yet trusted for their salvation to the observance of outward forms and ceremonies. They felt that they needed no Saviour and no teacher; but this poor woman longed to be released from the burden of sin. . . .

"Jesus was a Jew, yet he mingled freely with the Samaritans, setting at naught the customs and bigotry of his nation. He had already begun to break down the partition wall between Jew and Gentile, and to preach salvation to the world. At the very beginning of his ministry, he openly rebuked the superficial morality and ostentatious piety of the Jews. . . .

"In the temple at Jerusalem there was a partition wall, separating the outer court from the apartment of the temple itself. Gentiles were permitted to enter the outer court, but it was lawful only for the Jews to penetrate to the inner enclosure. Had a Samaritan

passed this boundary, the temple would have been desecrated, and his life would have paid the penalty of its pollution. But Jesus, who was virtually the originator and foundation of the temple, drew the Gentiles to him by the ties of human sympathy and association, while his divine grace and power brought to them the salvation which the Jews refused to accept.

"The stay of Jesus at Samaria was not alone to bring light to the souls that listened so eagerly to his words. It was also for the instruction of his disciples. Sincere as they were in their attachment to Christ, they were still under the influence of their earlier teachings--of Jewish bigotry and narrowness. They had felt that in order to prove themselves loyal to their nationality, it was incumbent upon them to cherish enmity toward the Samaritans."

Do you see the connection between that and the previous quotation? Talking with the woman of Samaria, Jesus had begun to break down the partition wall between the Jews and other nations; and the disciples thought it was incumbent upon them to cherish "enmity." Do you see that when Jesus wanted to break down that partition wall, he did it by abolishing the enmity?

"They were filled with wonder at the conduct of Jesus, who was breaking down the wall of separation between the Jews and the Samaritans and openly setting aside the teachings of the scribes and Pharisees. The disciples could not refuse to follow the example of their Master, yet their feelings protested at every step. The impulsive Peter and even the loving John could hardly submit to this new order of things. They scarcely endure the thought that they were to labor for such a class as those Samaritans.

"During the two days while they shared the Lord's ministry in Samaria, fidelity to Christ kept their prejudices under control. They

would not have failed to show reverence to him; but in heart they were unreconciled; yet it was a lesson essential for them to learn. As disciples and ambassadors of Christ, their old feelings of pride, contempt, and hatred must give place to love, pity, and sympathy. Their hearts must be thrown open to all, who, like themselves, were in need of love and kindly, patient teaching....

"Jesus did not come into the world to lessen the dignity of the law, but to exalt it. The Jews had perverted it by their prejudices and misconceptions. Their meaningless exactions and requirements had become a by-word among the people of other nations. Especially was the Sabbath hedged in by all manner of senseless restrictions. It could not then be called a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; for the scribes and the Pharisees had made its observance a galling yoke. A Jew was not allowed to light a fire upon the Sabbath nor even to light a candle upon that day. The views of the people were so narrow that they had become slaves to their own useless regulations. As a consequence, they were dependent upon the Gentiles for many services which their rules forbade them to do for themselves.

"They did not reflect that if these necessary duties of life were sinful, those who employed others to do them were fully as guilty as if they had done the act themselves. They thought that salvation was restricted to the Jews, and that the condition of all others being entirely hopeless, could neither be improved nor made worse. But God has given no commandment which cannot be consistently kept by all. His laws sanction no unreasonable usage nor selfish restrictions. . . .

"The simplicity of his teachings attracted the multitudes who were not interested in the lifeless harangues of the rabbis. Skeptical and

world-loving themselves, these teachers spoke with hesitancy when they attempted to explain the word of God, as if its teaching might be interpreted to mean one thing or exactly the opposite. . . . Both by his words and by his works of mercy and benevolence, he was breaking the oppressive power of the old traditions and man-made commandments, and in their stead presenting the love of God in its exhaustless fullness....

"The Sabbath, instead of being the blessing it was designed to be, had become a curse through the added requirements of the Jews. Jesus wished to rid it of these encumbrances. . . .

"The Old Testament Scriptures, which they professed to believe, stated plainly every detail of Christ's ministry. . . . But the minds of the Jews had become dwarfed and narrowed by their unjust prejudices and unreasoning bigotry....

"The Jewish leaders were filled with spiritual pride. Their desire for the glorification of self manifested itself even in the service of the sanctuary. They loved the highest greeting in the marketplaces and were gratified with the sound of their titles on the lips of men. As real piety declined, they became more jealous for their traditions and ceremonies."

We will have one more quotation:--

"These admonitions had effect, and as repeated calamities and persecutions came upon them from their heathen enemies, the Jews returned to the strict observance of all the outward forms enjoined by the sacred law. Not satisfied with this, they made burdensome additions to these ceremonies. Their pride and bigotry led to the narrowed interpretation of the requirements of God. As time passed, they gradually hedged themselves in with the traditions and

customs of their ancestors, till they regarded the requirements originating from them as possessing all the sanctity of the original law. This confidence in themselves and their own regulations, with its attendant prejudices against all other nations, caused them to resist the Spirit of God, which would have corrected their errors, and thus it separated them still farther from them.

*“In the days of Christ these exactions and restrictions had become so wearisome that Jesus declared: **“They bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders.”** Their false standard of duty, their superficial tests of piety and holiness, obscured the real and positive requirements of God. In the rigid performance of outward ceremonies, heart-service was neglected.”*

Another

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