

AFTER THE RESURRECTION WHAT?

by

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CHAPTER EIGHT

CHRIST'S MAJOR MESSAGES DURING THE FORTY DAYS

OF COURSE the first outstanding message the Saviour gave after His resurrection was to prove to His disciples that He was risen from the dead. So His first convincing purpose was to prove the tomb empty and His resurrection real. This was the greatest barrier and difficulty that the disciples faced. He had told them about His resurrection and the prophets of old had foretold His resurrection, but the disciples were slow to believe. He had to open their eyes. He had to make visible and impressive demonstrations of the reality of His survival of the grave. They had expected another kind of kingdom, a temporal, earthly kingdom, not a spiritual, eternal kingdom. In many ways He proved His existence and the reality of His resurrection body.

There was another important message which it seems to have been His principal purpose to impress upon their hearts, and that was His victorious, all-pervasive power. He bore down on their consciences this revelation also.

- In Matthew 28:19, 20 He told them that all power in heaven and earth was in His hands,
- In Acts 1:8 that He would give them the power of the Holy Spirit, which was all-conquering power,
- He promised them in Matthew 28:20 that this triumphant power lodged in Him would be a perpetual presence with them.

He did not say "*I will or shall be with you,*" but He put it in the eternal present tense—"**I am with you.**"

These two important messages were preliminary and preparatory to the other messages which He gave them.

HIS MISSIONARY WORLD-WILL

In various expressions and on a number of occasions and in different places He set out His missionary program to His disciples. Let us review this expression of His permanent and primary program.

He said to *Mary* and to the other women, “**Go tell my disciples.**” That is the message of the resurrection and is the primary message in His missionary program.

To the ten He said, “**As my Father hath sent me, so also send I you**” (John 20:21). Here He set Himself up as under the orders of God, as the Father’s missionary Messiah, and He sets out that we are to take Him as a model missionary, with the same love, as far as possible, and the same power, the same territory, with the same message and the same methods. In the same interview He gave them peace and took the fear of men out of their hearts and breathed on them the one successful power of missionary enterprise, the Holy Spirit.

To the seven disciples on the Sea of Tiberias He told to cast the net on the right side of the ship. He told them in the early part of their ordination and call, “**Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.**” So, in this commission on this occasion He told them to cast the net, and that is His command to all His disciples through the widening centuries.

In this interview He put on them the question of super-devotion to Him, as a preliminary condition to the right sort of spiritual feeding, the right kind of spiritual fertilization of souls, and He outlined the feeding process that covers all ages—His lambs, His little sheep, and the adults of His kingdom.

To the five hundred on a mountain in Galilee, as recorded in Matthew 28:16-20 and Mark 16:15 and as mentioned in I Corinthians 15:6, He set out His world-orders. In this group Matthew says the eleven apostles were there and Paul says there were five hundred. He puts His divine authority and power back of this great commission, and it was thus divinely authorized and ordered.

In this commission He tells us to go teach all nations.

Mark says, “**Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.**” Therefore it is a universal order as well as an individualistic order. It is a duty binding on us to go, and that is spiritual activity; to preach and to teach, and that is a heavenly message delivered in the twofold form of public address and in the private form of personal teaching; and it says to baptize, and there is the ordinance of baptism; and hence it is organized because the church only has the authority to administer baptism.

And then after baptism and church membership His command is to teach all the commandments and doctrines and teachings of His Book. And then He gives a great, perpetual promise of His presence, “**I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.**”

To the eleven apostles, and probably others, He delivered on the occasion of His final appearance His commission, as recorded in Mark 16:19, 20, probably, and Luke 24:44-53, and Acts 1:1-14. It tells us here in Mark’s record that after He spoke His commission He was taken up into heaven and the disciples departed and preached everywhere. Luke tells us in his record that Christ thus tied His missionary commission on to the prophecies and laws of Moses and the Psalms of David.

He opened their understanding that they might understand all these things, and He said that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations.

He tells of His Father's promise of enduring power and His orders for them to tarry in Jerusalem, and then it says that the Saviour led them out as far as Bethany and lifted up His hands and blessed them, and they returned to Jerusalem with great joy. The commission, as delivered in Acts 1:1-14, tells us, first, to wait for power, and, second, not to worry about the times and seasons which the Father holds within His own hands, but to receive this power and go forth witnessing into all parts of the world.

And then it tells us that two men in white told them they would see the same Jesus coming from heaven. They saw Him ascend; we will see Him return.

So, in these many places on different occasions and to different groups, He delivered His major missionary message.

AN ANALYSIS OF THESE OBLIGATIONS

What He meant could be summed up, describing these obligations, as follows: *Loyalty to His authority and obedience to His power.*

At any cost we are to go into all the world and to all individuals of every nation, to every creature, and give this gospel.

We are to go, either personally or by representatives, to teach the gospel and to teach the commandments of His truth. He has laid these commandments on us and they are a binding obligation. We are to baptize the believers and to teach the saved in His name.

He furnishes the Father's promised power in the personality of the Holy Spirit, and He Himself will give His divine presence every step of the way to the uttermost ends of the earth.

Here is an authorized world task, with sufficient guaranteed power, a simple message, binding upon the saved consciences of His people, an inescapable obligation, and it involves evangelism, education, enlistment and cooperation.

CHRIST'S SILENCES

What Jesus did not say in these forty days is interesting.

He seems to have made no reference to His mother. He had already committed her to John, the beloved disciple, and put on him the obligation to see after her. He made no reference, so far as the record goes, to John, the beloved disciple, no reference to baptism except to command that it be practiced. He was silent on the financial problem except as it is involved in carrying out the commission. He made no reference to His churches, and on many other important matters He seems to have been silent.

He evidently had finished His message on these vital matters before His resurrection, or sufficient had been said to satisfy the divinely inspiring mind and the will of God in this matter.

His silence on any of these great questions does not at all mean His neglect of them, nor does it mean to take any of the emphasis off them that He had put on them during the days of His flesh! But He did major on His loving orders to His churches and people to carry His gospel around the world.

LOVE'S BINDING DEBTORSHIP

I would say that the Master put major emphasis on another matter, as recorded in the twenty-first chapter of John.

After the night of fruitless angling the disciples, with their empty nets, saw the Saviour coming to them in the mists of the early morning. They at first did not recognize Him, but He made Himself known. He filled their nets. He called them to shore and fed them with a morning meal, and warmed them by a fire which He had made; and then He asked a question. He propounded it three times.

He shot it straight at the heart of Simon, but I think He meant it to bear upon the consciences of the other six disciples, and upon yours and mine as well. He said, "**Lovest thou me more than these?**"

What was included in the bounds of this question of contrast and comparison?

There were the nets, the fishes, representing Simon's business and his pleasure; and there were the disciples, who represented his comrades and his fellowships. Just what the Saviour meant I do not know, but am inclined to believe that He meant all that tugs at the human heart, whether business, pleasure, friends, family, ambition, money, or whatever knocks at the door of the soul for affection.

The Saviour was about to leave the earth. He had a big task. He left it to His disciples and to those who would believe on His name through their preaching. He had a right to ask these disciples how much they loved Him.

The basis of all human achievement in many of its deeper meanings is love. And Christ based the prosperity of the future on the devotion that men had to Him.

When He got Simon's answer He assigned the task, "**Feed my lambs, my little sheep, my sheep.**"

This is an important question. "If you love me, serve me." And He magnified here our responsibilities. God's people must pass God's spiritual food on to all classes and ages of men.

There is much that rests on our hearts which is described by the debtorship of love.

God's other name is Love, and He desires of us love's service. We cannot pay any debt we owe to Christ, and one of the largest of all debts is love's debtorship. When we look at Christ's emphasis on the mission obligations in the light of love's debtorship it becomes a mammoth affair and ought not to be shirked nor dodged nor disregarded. God allows no shifts in love's obligation.

Looking back over the grave and cross and Garden and the price He paid, love's redemption price, He certainly had a right to ask you and me and all of His disciples this question, "**Lovest thou me more than these?**" "If so, feed, feed my lambs, my sheep." And one of His ascension expectations of all of us is that we seek to pay love's eternal debtorship.

~ end of chapter 8 ~

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