

MAT-MAR-BON-CHRIST MISSION

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(“Come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest.” -Mathew-11:28)

SETH AND ENOCH

To Adam was given another son, to be the inheritor of the divine promise, the heir of the spiritual birthright. The name Seth, given to this son, signified “appointed,” or compensation;” “for,” said the mother, “God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain killed” (Gen.4:25). Seth was of more noble stature than Cain or Abel, and resembled Adam more closely than did his other sons. He was a worthy character, following in the steps of Abel. Yet he inherited no more natural goodness than did Cain. Concerning the creation of Adam it is said, “In the likeness of God made He him;” but man, after the fall, “he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image” (Gen. 5:3). While Adam was created sinless, in the likeness of God, Seth, like Cain, inherited the fallen nature of his parents. But he received also the knowledge of the Redeemer, and instruction in righteousness. By divine grace he served and honored God; and he labored, as Abel would have done, had he lived, to turn the minds of sinful men to revere and obey their Creator.

“To Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of Jehovah” (Gen. 4:26). The faithful had worshiped God before; but as men increased, the distinction between the two classes became more marked. There was an open profession of loyalty to God on the part of one, as there was of contempt and disobedience on the part of the other.

Before the fall, our first parents had kept the Sabbath, which was instituted in Eden; and after their expulsion from Paradise they continued its observance. They had tasted the bitter fruits of disobedience, and had learned what everyone that tramples upon God’s commandments will sooner or later learn, - that the divine precepts are sacred and immutable, and that the penalty of transgression will surely be inflicted. The Sabbath was honored by all the children of Adam that remained loyal to God. But Cain and his descendants did not respect the day upon which God had rested. They chose their own time for labor and for rest, regardless of Jehovah’s express command.

Upon receiving the curse of God, Cain had withdrawn from his father's household. He had first chosen his occupation as a tiller of the soil, and he now founded a city, calling it after the name of his eldest son. He had gone out from the presence of the Lord, cast away the promise of the restored Eden, to seek his possessions and enjoyment in the earth under the curse of sin, thus standing at the head of that great class of men who worship the god of this world. In that which pertains to mere earthly and material progress, his descendants became distinguished. But they were regardless of God, and in opposition to his purpose for man. To the crime of murder, in which Cain had led the way, Lamech, the fifth in descent, added polygamy, and boastfully defiant, he acknowledged God, only to draw from the avenging of Cain an assurance of his own safety. Abel had led a pastoral life, dwelling in tents or booths, and the descendants of Seth followed the same course, counting themselves "strangers and pilgrims on the earth," seeking "a better country, that is, an heavenly" (Heb. 11: 13, 16).

For some time the two classes remained separate. The race of Cain, spreading from the place of their first settlement, dispersed over the plains and valleys where the children of Seth had dwelt; and the latter, in order to escape from their contaminating influence, withdrew to the mountains, and there made their home. So long as this separation continued, they maintained the worship of God in its purity. But in the lapse of time they ventured, little by little, to mingle with the inhabitants of the valleys. This association was productive of the worst results. "The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair" (Gen. 6:2). The children of Seth, attracted by the beauty of the daughters of Cain's descendants, displeased the Lord by intermarrying with them. Many of the worshipers of God were beguiled into sin by the allurements that were now constantly before them, and they lost their peculiar, holy character. Mingling with the depraved, they became like them in spirit and in deeds; the restrictions of the seventh commandment were disregarded, "and they took them wives of all which they chose." The children of Seth went "in the way of Cain;" (Jude. 11) they fixed their minds upon worldly prosperity and enjoyment, and neglected the commandments of the Lord. Men "did not like to retain God in their knowledge;" they "became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." Therefore "God gave them over to a mind void of judgment" (Rom.1: 21). Sin spread abroad in the earth like a deadly leprosy.

For nearly a thousand years, Adam lived among men, a witness to the results of sin. Faithfully he sought to stem the tide of evil. He had been commanded to instruct his posterity in the way of the Lord; and he carefully treasured what God had revealed to him, and repeated it to succeeding generations. To his children and children's children, to the ninth generation, he described man's holy and happy estate in Paradise, and repeated the history of his fall, telling them of the sufferings by which God had taught him the necessity of strict adherence to his law, and explaining to them the merciful provisions for their salvation. Yet there were but few who gave heed to his words. Often he was met with bitter reproaches for the sin that had brought such woe upon his posterity.

Adam's life was one of sorrow, humility, and contrition. When he left Eden, the thought that he must die thrilled him with horror. He was first made acquainted with the reality of death in the human family, when Cain, his first-born son, became the murderer of his brother. Filled with the keenest remorse for his own sin, and doubly bereaved in the death of Abel and the rejection of Cain, Adam was bowed down with anguish. He witnessed the wide-spreading corruption that was finally to cause the destruction of the world by a flood; and though the sentence of death pronounced upon him by his Maker had at first

appeared terrible, yet after beholding for nearly a thousand years the results of sin, he felt that it was merciful in God to bring to an end a life of suffering and sorrow.

Notwithstanding the wickedness of the antediluvian world, that age was not, as has often been supposed, an era of ignorance and barbarism. The people were granted the opportunity of reaching a high standard of moral and intellectual attainment. They possessed great physical and mental strength, and their advantages for acquiring both religious and scientific knowledge were unrivaled. It is a mistake to suppose that because they lived to a great age their minds matured late; their mental powers were early developed, and those who cherished the fear of God and lived in harmony with his will, continued to increase in knowledge and wisdom throughout their life. Could illustrious scholars of our time be placed in contrast with men of the same age who lived before the flood, they would appear as greatly inferior in mental as in physical strength. As the years of man have decreased, and his physical strength has diminished, so his mental capacities have lessened. There are men who now apply themselves to study during a period of from twenty to fifty years, and the world is filled with admiration of their attainments. But how limited are these acquirements in comparison with those of men whose mental and physical powers were developing for centuries!

It is true that the people of modern times have the benefit of the attainments of their predecessors. The men of masterly minds, who planned and studied and wrote, have left their work for those who follow. But even in this respect, and so far as merely human knowledge is concerned, how much greater the advantages of the men of that olden time! They had among them for hundreds of years him who was formed in God's image, whom the Creator himself pronounced "good," – the man whom God had instructed in all the wisdom pertaining to the material world. Adam had learned from the Creator the history of Creation; he himself witnessed the events of nine centuries; and he imparted his knowledge to his descendants. The antediluvians were without books, they had no written records; but with their great physical and mental vigor, they had strong memories, able to grasp and to retain that which was communicated to them, and in turn to transmit it unimpaired to their posterity. And for hundreds of years there were seven generations living upon the earth contemporaneously, having the opportunity of consulting together, and profiting each by the knowledge and experience of all.

The advantages enjoyed by men of that age to gain a knowledge of God through his works have never been equaled since. And so far from being an era of religious darkness, that was an age of great light. All the world had opportunity to receive instruction from Adam, and those who feared the Lord had also Christ and angels for their teachers. And they had a silent witness to the truth, in the garden of God, which for so many centuries remained among men. At the cherubim-guarded gate of Paradise the glory of God was revealed, and hither came the first worshipers. Here their altars were reared, and their offerings presented. It was here that Cain and Abel had brought their sacrifices, and God had condescended to communicate with them.

Skepticism could not deny the existence of Eden while it stood just in sight, its entrance barred by watching angels. The order of creation, the object of the garden, the history of its two trees so closely connected with man's destiny, were undisputed facts. And the existence and supreme authority of God, the obligation of his law, were truths which men were slow to question while Adam was among them.

Notwithstanding the prevailing iniquity, there was a line of holy men who, elevated and ennobled by communion with God, lived as in the companionship of heaven. They were men of massive intellect, of wonderful attainments. They had a great and holy mission,- to develop a character of righteousness, to teach a lesson of godliness, not only to the men of their time, but for future generations. Only a few of the most prominent are mentioned in the Scriptures; but all through the ages, God had faithful witnesses, true-hearted worshipers.

Of Enoch it is written that he lived sixty-five years, and begat a son. After that he walked with God three hundred years. During these earlier years, Enoch had loved and feared God, and had kept his commandments. He was one of the holy line, the preservers of the true faith, the progenitors of the promised seed. From the lips of Adam he had learned the dark story of the fall, and the cheering one of God's grace as seen in the promise; and he relied upon the Redeemer to come. But after the birth of his first son, Enoch reached a higher experience; he was drawn into a closer relationship with God. He realized more fully his own obligations and responsibility as a son of God. And as he saw the child's love for its father, its simple trust in his protection; as he felt the deep, yearning tenderness of his own heart for that first-born son, he learned a precious lesson of the wonderful love of God to men in the gift of his Son, and the confidence which the children of God may repose in their heavenly Father. The infinite, unfathomable love of God through Christ, became the subject of his meditations day and night; and with all the fervor of his soul he sought to reveal that love to the people among whom he dwelt.

Enoch's walk with God was not in a trance or a vision, but in all the duties of his daily life. He did not become a hermit, shutting himself entirely from the world; for he had a work to do for God in the world. In the family and in his intercourse with men, as a husband and a father, a friend, a citizen, he was the steadfast, unwavering servant of the Lord.

His heart was in harmony with God's will; for "can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos. 3: 3). And this holy walk was continued for three hundred years. There are few Christians who would not be far more earnest and devoted if they knew that they had but a short time to live, or that the coming of Christ was about to take place. But Enoch's faith waxed the stronger, his love became more ardent, with the lapse of centuries.

Enoch was a man of strong and highly cultivated mind, and extensive knowledge; he was honored with special revelations from God; yet being in constant communion with heaven, with a sense of the divine greatness and perfection ever before him, he was one of the humblest of men. The closer the connection with God, the deeper was the sense of his own weakness and imperfection.

Distressed by the increasing wickedness of the ungodly, and fearing that their infidelity might lessen his reverence for God, Enoch avoided constant association with them, and spent much time in solitude, giving himself to meditation and prayer. Thus he waited before the Lord, seeking a clearer knowledge of his will, that he might perform it. To him prayer was as the breath of the soul; he lived in the very atmosphere of heaven.

Through holy angels, God revealed to Enoch his purpose to destroy the world by a flood, and he also opened more fully to him the plan of redemption. By the spirit of prophecy he carried him down through the generations that should live after the flood, and showed him the great events connected with the second coming of Christ and the end of the world.

Enoch had been troubled in regard to the dead. It had seemed to him that the righteous and the wicked would go to the dust together, and that this would be their end. He could not see the life of the just beyond the grave. In prophetic vision he was instructed concerning the death of Christ, and was shown his coming in glory, attended by all the holy angels, to ransom his people from the grave. He also saw the corrupt state of the world when Christ should appear the second time, - that there would be a boastful, presumptuous, self-willed generation, denying the only God and the Lord Jesus Christ, trampling upon the law, and despising the atonement. He saw the righteous crowned with glory and honor, and the wicked banished from the presence of the Lord, and destroyed by fire.

Enoch became a preacher of righteousness, making known to the people what God had revealed to him. Those who feared the Lord sought out this holy man, to share his instruction and his prayers. He labored publicly also, bearing God's messages to all who would hear the words of warning. His labors were not restricted to the Sethites. In the land where Cain had sought to flee from the divine presence, the prophet of God made known the wonderful scenes that had passed before his vision. "Behold," he declared, "the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds" (Jude. 14,15).

He was a fearless reprove of sin. While he preached the love of God in Christ to the people of his time, and pleaded with them to forsake their evil ways, he rebuked the prevailing iniquity, and warned the men of his generation that judgment would surely be visited upon the transgressor. It was the Spirit of Christ that spoke through Enoch, that Spirit is manifested, not alone in utterances of love, compassion, and entreaty; it is not smooth things only that are spoken by holy men. God puts into the heart and lips of his messengers truths to utter that are keen and cutting as a two-edged sword.

The power of God that wrought with his servant was felt by those who heard. Some gave heed to the warning, and renounced their sins; but the multitudes mocked at the solemn message, and went on more boldly in their evil ways. The servants of God are to bear a similar message to the world in the last days, and it will also be received with unbelief and mockery. The antediluvian world rejected the warning words of him who walked with God. So will the last generation make light of the warnings of the Lord's messengers.

In the midst of a life of active labor, Enoch steadfastly maintained his communion with God. The greater and more pressing his labors, the more constant and earnest were his prayers. He continued to exclude himself, at certain periods, from all society. After remaining for a time among the people, laboring to benefit them by instruction and example, he would withdraw, to spend a season in solitude, hungering and thirsting for that divine knowledge which God alone can impart. Communing thus with God, Enoch came more and more to reflect the divine image. His face was radiant with a holy light, even the light that

shineth in the face of Jesus. As he came forth from these divine communings, even the ungodly beheld with awe the impress of heaven upon his countenance.

The wickedness of men had reached such a height that destruction was pronounced against them. As year after year passed on, deeper and deeper grew the tide of human guilt, darker and darker gathered the clouds of divine judgment. Yet Enoch, the witness of faith, held on his way, warning, pleading, entreating, striving to turn back the tide of guilt, and to stay the bolts of vengeance. Though his warnings were disregarded by a sinful, pleasure-loving people, he had the testimony that God approved, and he continued to battle faithfully against the prevailing evil, until God removed him from a world of sin to the pure joys of heaven.

The men of that generation had mocked the folly of him who sought not to gather gold or silver, or to build up possessions here. But Enoch's heart was upon eternal treasures. He had looked upon the celestial city. He had seen the King in his glory in the midst of Zion. His mind, his heart, his conversation, were in heaven. The greater the existing iniquity, the more earnest was his longing for the home of God. While still on earth, he dwelt by faith, in the realms of light.

"Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God" (Math. 5 :8). For three hundred years, Enoch had been seeking purity of soul, that he might be in harmony with Heaven. For three centuries he had walked with God. Day by day he had longed for a closer union; nearer and nearer had grown the communion, until God took him to himself. He had stood at the threshold of the eternal world, only a step between him and the land of blest; and now the portals opened, the walk with God, so long pursued on earth, continued, and he passed through the gates of the holy city, - the first from among men to enter there.

His loss was felt on earth. The voice that had been heard day after day in warning and instruction was missed. There were some, both of the righteous and the wicked, who had witnessed his departure; and hoping that he might have been conveyed to some one of his places of retirement, those who loved him made diligent search, as afterward the sons of the prophets searched for Elijah; but without avail. They reported that he was not, for God had taken him.

By the translation of Enoch the Lord designed to teach an important lesson. There was danger that men would yield to discouragement, because of the fearful results of Adam's sin. Many were ready to exclaim, "What profit is it that we have feared the Lord and have kept his ordinances, since a heavy curse is resting upon the race, and death is the portion of us all?" But the instructions which God gave to Adam, and which were repeated by Seth, and exemplified by Enoch, swept away the gloom and darkness, and gave hope to man, that as through Adam came death, so through the promised Redeemer would come life and immortality. Satan was urging upon men the belief that there was no reward for the righteous or punishment for the wicked, and that it was impossible for men to obey the divine statutes. But in the case of Enoch, God declares "that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). He shows what he will do for those who keep his commandments. Men were taught that it is possible to obey the law of God; that even while living in the midst of the sinful and corrupt, they were able, by the grace of God, to resist temptation, and become pure and holy. They saw in his example the

blessedness of such a life; and his translation was an evidence of the truth of his prophecy concerning the hereafter, with its award of joy and glory and immortal life to the obedient, and of condemnation, woe and death to the transgressor.

By faith Enoch "was translated that he should not see death, ---- for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God" (Heb. 11:5). In the midst of a world by its iniquity doomed to destruction, Enoch lived a life of such close communion with God that he was not permitted to fall under the power of death. The godly character of this prophet represents the state of holiness which must be attained by those who shall be "redeemed from the earth" (Rev. 14 :3) at the time of Christ's second advent. Then, as in the world before the flood, iniquity will prevail. Following the promptings of their corrupt hearts and the teachings of a deceptive philosophy, men will rebel against the authority of Heaven. But like Enoch, God's people will seek for purity of heart, and conformity to his will, until they shall reflect the likeness of Christ. Like Enoch they will warn the world of the Lord's second coming, and of the judgments to be visited upon transgression, and by their holy conversation and example they will condemn the sins of the ungodly. As Enoch was translated to heaven before the destruction of the world by water, so the living righteous will be translated from the earth before its destruction by fire. Says the apostle: "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump." "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God;" "the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed;" "The dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in Heaven; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." (1.Cor.15:51-52, 1 Thess. 4: 16-18)