

Th131 God's Plan

Lesson Th131-38 The Church Age

Every father wants his children to grow into mature and wise adults. If the father runs a business he often wants his children to develop the skills and experience needed to work in the business. How does a father accomplish this? How can he train his children to not only learn the skills needed, but also develop the character and integrity necessary to be successful in the business? Trade skills are important, but obedience, discipline, honesty, leadership, and fairness are important also. In a similar way, God wants His children to grow and develop into mature and wise spiritual children who can eventually fulfill their place in God's business.

What is God's business? What is it that He is training His children for? We find the answer in Jesus.

Jesus has many names and titles. First and foremost, Jesus is the Son of God. We too are children of God, adopted into God's family, and Jesus is our elder brother. But Jesus is also the King of all Kings and the Lord of all Lords. The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus will rule over all of the earth and implies that He will rule over all of creation, both the physical universe and the spirit world. Both God the Father and Jesus the Son sit upon thrones in heaven. They are the rulers of all that has ever been created.

In our last lesson we quoted the apostle Paul. He wrote in a letter to the church in Rome this amazing statement: "For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ... the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, 'Daddy, Father.' The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory" (Rom 8:14-17). Despite the fact that Christians may presently suffer, they are assured a future glory. The apostle Paul clearly teaches us that by grace we share in Christ's inheritance.

The letter written to the Hebrews tells us that in these last days God "has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe" (Heb 1:2). Jesus will inherit all of creation and we, His brothers and sisters, will share in this inheritance. What then is God's business? It could be stated that God and His Son Jesus, rule and reign over all of creation. And it is into this family business that all of His children must grow.

How then does a king rule? A king rules first and foremost because he is the king and thus has the authority to rule. But kings also must have the power to implement their authority. Obviously, God has all authority and all power. He is more than able to rule and reign. But, power and authority can be very dangerous in the hands of the weak and immature. Many nations in history have suffered severely when they have had rulers who did not know how to rule wisely. And thus God had to implement a method for His children to learn the proper use of power and authority. But how does a child practice using power and authority? If they were to

practice on each other, it would be very painful and the children would cause incredible pain and suffering to each other.

This is the majestic beauty of God's perfect plan. For Satan, the adversary of God and His children, would become the target upon which God's children would learn to use their God-given power and authority. Satan is the one who has deceived all of mankind and holds them captive. But Jesus has stripped Satan of all power and authority. Satan has become weak and can only advance using lies and deceit. Jesus has given His authority to all of His followers. He has also given us the power of the Holy Spirit—all for one purpose, to defeat Satan and to rescue those who are under his oppression. It is through this conflict with Satan that the children are to learn how to use God's power and authority. We are never to use God's power or authority to rule over each other.

The apostle Paul understood the proper use of power and authority and dedicated himself to winning people to the Lord. While in the city of Ephesus, which is in modern-day Turkey, Paul was used by God. Extraordinary miracles took place so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, so that their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.

Some Jews, who were not believers in Christ, went around driving out evil spirits and trying to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, "In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out."

Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. One day the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?" Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding (Acts 19:13-16).

When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their sins. A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas, equal to the entire annual income of over 150 people of that time! In this way the Word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.

With this lesson we see that God's plan for His children is greater than just to know God and to one day be in His presence in heaven. God's revelation to us through the entire Bible is an amazing story of an all-powerful and all-loving God choosing to have children and to have them grow and develop into mature men and women who will share in the inheritance of their elder brother, Jesus Christ, the King of all kings and Lord of all lords.

This lesson is **important** because it shows that God's family business, which includes Jesus and all those He has redeemed, is to rule and reign over all of creation. Believers are learning how to do this by taking authority over Satan and rescuing those he has oppressed. We are never to use God's power or authority to rule over each other.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that during the Church Age, believers will learn how to use the power and authority given by God through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Let's **review** what you learned in this lesson.

1. What is God's business? [Pause 5 seconds]

A. If you said that God rules over all of creation, you are correct.

2. Why does God want His children to learn how to use the power and authority He has given them? [Pause]

A. If you said that the children of God will one day rule and reign with Jesus, then you answered correctly.

3. How are God's children to learn to use their God-given power and authority? [Pause]

A. If you said that the children of God are to practice using power and authority over Satan by freeing those under his bondage, then you are right.

Your **assignment** is to review this lesson at least three times. Find a friend and discuss with them the implications of the truth of being a joint-heir with Christ. Help them to understand that our inheritance is not just about riches and glory, but ruling and reigning with Christ in the age to come.

Memorize this verse: "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory" (Rom 8:14-17).