

Worship Lesson 10 3Q 2011

Worship: From Exile to Restoration

Read memory text – Haggai 1:6 – thoughts? What is the message? Is there any application for today?

Could this be reminding us not to put our energy into things that don't matter, into things that pass and fade, into things that are only about getting ahead on earth, but bring no eternal benefit?

What does it matter to gain the entire world and lose your soul?

How do we find ourselves seduced into investing into what does not matter?

What is the difference between investing in what doesn't matter and dealing with the realities of day-to-day living, food, shelter, clothing?

Read first two paragraphs, "It is very hard..." thoughts?

What was the problem they had with the Temple? Did the Temple in Jerusalem have any ability to save sinners? Was the Temple in Jerusalem the literal reality of God's kingdom, or merely a God inspired theater, lesson book, to help them learn the true reality for which it stood?

What did Jesus say or do to try and help them shift their thinking about the temple?

- Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up – designed to teach what?
- I am the bread of heaven – designed to teach what?
- Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood – designed to teach what?

- You will neither worship on this mountain nor at the Temple but in spirit and truth – designed to teach what?
- Cleansed the temple from buyers and sellers – designed to teach what?

What was the problem the Jews had with the Temple?

Do we have a similar problem when it comes to the heavenly sanctuary?

Why was the Temple in Jerusalem destroyed, twice? What caused this to happen, what led to its destruction?

Did God destroy it? Did it happen as an object lesson? What is the object lesson?

What does the Temple at Jerusalem symbolize?

- In the cleansing of the temple, Jesus was announcing His mission as the Messiah, and entering upon His work. That temple, erected for the abode of the divine Presence, was designed to be an object lesson for Israel and for the world. From eternal ages it was God's purpose that **every created being, from the bright and holy seraph to man, should be a temple for the indwelling of the Creator. Because of sin, humanity ceased to be a temple for God...God designed that the temple at Jerusalem should be a continual witness to the high destiny open to every soul.** DA 161

So, the temple is a symbolic representation of the human soul – why did the temple in Jerusalem get destroyed twice? Because the people did what?

- But the Jews had not understood the significance of the building they regarded with so much pride. They did not yield themselves as holy temples for the Divine Spirit. The courts of the temple at Jerusalem, filled with the tumult of unholy traffic, **represented all too truly the**

temple of the heart, defiled by the presence of sensual passion and unholy thoughts. In **cleansing the temple** from the world's buyers and sellers, Jesus announced His mission to **cleanse the heart from the defilement of sin**,--from the earthly desires, the selfish lusts, the evil habits, that corrupt the soul.{DA 161.1}

Why did the temple at Jerusalem get destroyed? What does it symbolize? The destruction of the actual temple of the human soul – and why will the human soul get destroyed? What happens to the human soul if Christ is forbidden from cleansing it?

Who destroyed the temple at Jerusalem? Does this give us any insight as to the source of the destruction of the human soul?

Many argue for God to be the destroyer – Did God destroy the temple at Jerusalem? Why did it happen? Because God no longer intervened to stop the armies Satan from destroying Jerusalem – what is the lesson?

Sin destroys, sin unremedied results in death (Romans 6:23, James 1:15).

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, “Apostasy...” thoughts?

Apostasy doesn't happen over night, it is a gradual slow process. But, are they suggesting that less rigidity leads to apostasy? What does inspiration and history tell us regarding rigidity and apostasy?

Were the Jews in the OT given a rigid set of guidelines to abide by? What happened to them? Did they suffer with apostasy? What about in the days of Christ? Did the Jews have a rigid set of guidelines to abide by? What happened, did it result in apostasy?

What about the Apostolic church? Did they have a rigid set of guidelines or was there very loose guidelines and great openness and acceptance of a wide variety of theology and practices?

Acts 15:19,20

“It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. ²⁰ Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood.

- When the eunuch got baptized was there a requirement for study of the doctrines before baptism?
- What does history tell us about the theology of the early church?
 - Arians and Trinitarians both accepted and tolerated, those who were circumcised and those who were not, those who valued and practiced the Jewish feasts and those who did not.

Was there a rigid set of rules and doctrines in the Apostolic church or was their wide love and acceptance?

What about during the Dark Ages, rigid rules? Was there apostasy?

The lesson equates ancient Israel and the early church, did they start out from the same place? What was the spiritual state of Israel coming out of Egypt? What did they know? What was their attitude? What was the condition of their hearts?

How did one become a member of the camp of Israel?

What about the early church? What was the condition of the people? How did one become a member of the Apostolic church?

Did the two groups start at the same spiritual point? Did God need to deal differently with the two groups? Did apostasy occur in both groups?

How did apostasy enter the church? The greatest divergence of the church occurred in the 4th century when Constantine converted and called for the council of Nicaea. This council did not occur at a religious organization, because up to this point in church history there were no church buildings. This council occurred at Constantine's Palace and Constantine seduced church leaders and a huge list of problems began:

- Distorted ideas of God as God came to be viewed through the lens of paganism
- The church began to model itself structurally after Rome with an authoritarian head, thus misrepresenting God's character as authoritarian in nature
- Creeds were developed as tests of fellowship, orthodoxy of thought began and thought police were established, thus misrepresenting God as dictatorial, petty, and arbitrary
- Church buildings began to be built to model after Rome, designed to overwhelm thinking and reasoning and instead overwhelm with a sense of awe and the mystical
- A division between royalty and commoners, which was part of the Roman culture, entered the church with clergy and laity, undermining the priesthood of believers
- The church building elevated the clergy, modeled after the emperor of Rome, on an elevated platform, a elevated seat and pulpit – all designed to communicate a separation of rank, and instill a top down, authoritarian idea regarding church and God.
- The church authority became more rigid, establishing rules, requirements for behavior and tests of fellowship.
- Membership in the church became the new political party and only those in right standing with the church could wield political power or even be crowned king.

Then, once these practices became entrenched through hundreds of years, they became accepted as holy and orthodox.

And he said to them: “You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! MK 7:9

Do we struggle with such problems? Has the reformation really freed us from all the infection and distorted ideas about God and the way He runs His universe?

Here is a poem I really liked, which depicts the power of tradition and the tendency of people to go along with tradition without ever considering its real value or source:

The Calf Path

by Sam Walter Foss (1858-1911)

One day, through the primeval wood,
A calf walked home, as good calves should;
But made a trail all bent askew,
A crooked trail, as all calves do.

Since then three hundred years have fled,
And, I infer, the calf is dead.
But still he left behind his trail,
And thereby hangs my moral tale.

The trail was taken up next day
By a lone dog that passed that way;
And then a wise bellwether sheep
Pursued the trail o'er vale and steep,
And drew the flock behind him, too,
As good bellwethers always do.

And from that day, o'er hill and glade,
Through those old woods a path was made,
And many men wound in and out,

And dodged and turned and bent about,
And uttered words of righteous wrath
Because 'twas such a crooked path;
But still they followed — do not laugh —
The first migrations of that calf,
And through this winding wood-way stalked
Because he wobbled when he walked.

This forest path became a lane,
That bent, and turned, and turned again.
This crooked lane became a road,
Where many a poor horse with his load
Toiled on beneath the burning sun,
And traveled some three miles in one.
And thus a century and a half
They trod the footsteps of that calf.

The years passed on in swiftness fleet.
The road became a village street,
And this, before men were aware,
A city's crowded thoroughfare,
And soon the central street was this
Of a renowned metropolis;
And men two centuries and a half
Trod in the footsteps of that calf.

Each day a hundred thousand rout
Followed that zigzag calf about,
And o'er his crooked journey went
The traffic of a continent.
A hundred thousand men were led
By one calf near three centuries dead.
They follow still his crooked way,
And lose one hundred years a day,
For thus such reverence is lent
To well-established precedent.

A moral lesson this might teach
Were I ordained and called to preach;
For men are prone to go it blind

Along the calf-paths of the mind,
 And work away from sun to sun
 To do what other men have done.
 They follow in the beaten track,
 And out and in, and forth and back,
 And still their devious course pursue,
 To keep the path that others do.

They keep the path a sacred groove,
 Along which all their lives they move;
 But how the wise old wood-gods laugh,
 Who saw the first primeval calf!
 Ah, many things this tale might teach —
 But I am not ordained to preach.

Thoughts?

Read second paragraph, “The secret sins...” thoughts? Are we in danger of doing this very thing today? How? How can we guard against it?

MONDAY

Read first paragraph, “As we have...” thoughts?

What do you believe the main issue will be in this contest for worship?

- Sabbath?
- Lifestyle?
- Atonement theories?
- Beliefs about hell?
- The character of God versus the character of Satan?

Read third paragraph, “The second commandment...” thoughts?

How can we tell the difference between the two systems of worship, which is in harmony with God and which is against God?

The lesson suggests it will be in relationship to God's law? What do you think? The lesson points out that the false system and those who support the false system will support a change in God's law, do you agree?

How has the false system sought to change God's law?

The lesson suggests by changing the 10 Commandments number 2 and 4, and certainly this is a change – but is this the most significant change, or has the false system instilled another more insidious change in God's law that we miss because we focus only on number 2 and 4, but the more insidious change is the real test at the end of time and these two commandments are only expressions of that change?

What does the Inspiration tell us about God's law?

- Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore **love is the fulfillment of the law.** Romans 13:10
- The **entire law** is summed up in a single command: “**Love** your neighbor as yourself.” Galatians 5:14
- If you really keep the **royal law** found in Scripture, “**Love** your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. James 2:8
- Jesus replied: “**Love** the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘**Love** your neighbor as yourself.’ **All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.**” Matt 22:37-40
- In the **way of righteousness there is life**; along that path is immortality. Pr 12:28
- He who pursues **righteousness and love finds life**, prosperity and honor. Pr 21:21
- The **law** of the Lord is perfect, **reviving** the soul. Ps 19:7
- In living for self he has rejected that divine love which would have flowed out in mercy to his fellow men. Thus he has rejected life. **For God is love, and love is life.** COL 258

- Our only definition of sin is that given in the word of God; it is "the transgression of the law;" it is the outworking of a principle at war with **the great law of love which is the foundation of the divine government.** GC 493
- **The law of love being the foundation of the government of God,** the happiness of all created beings depended upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. GC 493
- But turning from all lesser representations, we behold God in Jesus. Looking unto Jesus we see that it is the glory of our God to give. "I do nothing of Myself," said Christ; "the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father." "I seek not Mine own glory," but the glory of Him that sent Me. John 8:28; 6:57; 8:50; 7:18. In these words is set forth **the great principle which is the law of life for the universe.** All things Christ received from God, but He took to give. So in the heavenly courts, in His ministry for all created beings: through the beloved Son, the Father's life flows out to all; through the Son it returns, in praise and joyous service, a tide of love, to the great Source of all. **And thus through Christ the circuit of beneficence is complete, representing the character of the great Giver, the law of life.** DA 21

According to inspiration what is God's law? The law of love? What kind of law is this? Where did it originate? Is it a natural law or an imposed law?

How did the false system seek to change this? Did the false system create an idea that the law of God is arbitrary, that God imposed it, that God enacted a law, that God created a law and put it upon His creatures and now God uses His power to enforce it?

Do we see God's law as an expression of His character of love, the design template upon which life is built, or do we see it as an imposed law He places upon His creation?

Has the beast system, the little horn, the man of perdition changed the very foundational understanding of God's law in the minds of men from the law of love, to an imposed law?

Do we as a Christian people still struggle with this distorted idea of God's law?

Christ came to save fallen man, and Satan with fiercest wrath met him on the field of conflict; for the enemy knew that when divine strength was added to human weakness, man was armed with **power and intelligence**, and could break away from **the captivity** in which he had bound him. Satan sought to intercept every **ray of light** from the throne of God. He sought to cast his shadow across the earth, **that men might lose the true views of God's character**, and that the knowledge of God might become extinct in the earth. He had caused **truth of vital importance to be so mingled with error that it had lost its significance. The law of Jehovah was burdened with needless exactions and traditions, and God was represented as severe, exacting, revengeful, and arbitrary.** He was pictured as one who could take pleasure in the sufferings of his creatures. **The very attributes that belonged to the character of Satan, the evil one represented as belonging to the character of God. Jesus came to teach men of the Father**, to correctly represent him before the fallen children of earth. Angels could not fully portray the character of God, but Christ, who was a living impersonation of God, could not fail to accomplish the work. The only way in which he could set and keep men right was to make himself visible and familiar to their eyes. That men might have salvation he came directly to man, and became a partaker of his nature. {ST, January 20, 1890 par. 6}

What about the Sabbath Commandment? How does it fit in to the end time events? Has the Sabbath Commandment been

changed beyond seeking to change the day, but by changing the concept of the Sabbath to an arbitrary test of obedience?

What is the significance of the Sabbath and how does it become a test in the end time?

Is there a difference between a test given at school and a test done at a hospital? What is the difference?

Which way is God's law a test? How does the Sabbath play in?

As school, are there "examinations?" At the doctors office are there "examinations?" In the end the issue is not an examination of your heavenly records, but an examination of your character!

When people use the metaphor of a birthday and suggest we can't replace your birthday with any other day, therefore we can't replace the Sabbath with any other day. Consider this, what if your spouse said to you:

- Remember my birthday to celebrate with me and show me your love and devotion. 364 days you have to work and play and do your own thing, but the 365th day is my birthday and in it you shall only do those things that celebrate me. And if you choose to ignore my birthday and make it like all the other days of the year, then for breaking this law I have commanded you to observe, I will be forced to kill you. Now, shall we celebrate my birthday?

Is that how we understand the Sabbath? If so, even if we get the day of the week right, are we still partaking of the change in God's law instituted by the false system, specifically that God's law is imposed and thus are not Sabbath keepers?

The Sabbath is an expression of God's character of love, provided for mankind in the context of a war over God's trustworthiness. The first six days of creation we learn God has power, the seventh reveals His character, which presents

truth, in love and leaves others free. Thus true Sabbath keepers have God's law of love written on their hearts and therefore, present the truth in love and leave others free. They understand that the test is a lab test, an "examination" of the character to see if we will practice God's methods in our life. The final test is not merely a check of the calendar to see if we go to church on the right day. The Jews in Christ day wanted Him off the cross to keep the right day, but their characters were selfish and not renewed to be like God's.

So, I am suggesting that those who teach God's law is imposed, God's law is a test of behavioral obedience, that God uses His law to keep track of our misdeeds and then God imposes penalties upon His children by using His power to inflict pain, suffering and death – have accepted the changes to the law done by the false system and continue to promote the false god concept.

I am suggesting that the message which lightens the world for Christ's return is the truth about God's character of love, and the test is whether we will love others more than self! Thus true Sabbath keepers have the law written in the heart and it becomes the living expression of the character of God reproduced in the believer.

Read last paragraph, "In both cases..." thoughts?

Do we agree that the false power will resort to violence in order to get that worship, which means it will punish those who won't worship it?

What do some say God will do to those who refuse to worship Him? Who can punish more severely, the beast or God? Do we then worship the one we fear can hurt us the most? If you believe God will punish those who don't worship Him and can do it more severely than the beast power, than who is ends up more beastly?

What did Satan allege about God?

In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. **Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan;** and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. DA 761

Satan alleges sin has to be punished – does it? This allegation comes from Satan’s attempt, the beast’s attempt, to change God’s law from the law upon which life is built, to an imposed set of rules which requires imposed punishment. Does the law require sin to be punished? Or does the law require sinners to be healed? Will God use His power to inflict punishment?

This quotation was sent to Uriah Smith, editor of the Review, in the 1890’s he didn’t know what to do with it so he filed it and it remained in the R&H files until the 1950s when it was published in the SM. Consider what it says about the law and the idea of punishment:

The **law** of ten commandments **is not to be looked upon as much from the prohibitory side**, as from the mercy side. Its prohibitions are the sure guarantee of happiness in obedience. As received in Christ, it works in us the purity of character that will bring joy to us through eternal ages. To the obedient it is a wall of protection. We behold in it the goodness of God, who by revealing to men **the immutable principles of righteousness, seeks to shield them from the evils that result from transgression.** {1SM 235.1}

We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The sinner brings the punishment upon himself. His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. **By choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the**

channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death. {1SM 235.2}

The law is an expression of God's idea. When we receive it in Christ, it becomes our idea. **It lifts us above the power of natural desires and tendencies, above temptations that lead to sin.** "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Psalm 119:165)-- cause them to stumble. {1SM 235.3}

There is no peace in unrighteousness; the wicked are at war with God. But he who receives **the righteousness of the law in Christ is in harmony with heaven.** "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Psalm 85:10).--Letter 96, 1896. {1SM 235.4}

Thoughts? What kind of law is being described? What happens when we break this law? What happens when we are in harmony with it? Do you see how the beast system has changed the law? And do you see how this beastly idea of the law has infected our thinking about God?

What is the first lie told in Eden? You will not surely die? How is this lie repeated today?

- We have an immortal soul/spirit
- The wicked burn forever in hell
- We reincarnate from one life to the next eternally
- Or, how about this – God *must* use His power to kill the wicked in the end. What does this by definition mean? You will not die, therefore I will have to kill you. Did God say in the day you eat I will be required to kill you, or you will die? When we say God must kill not only do we make God out to be the source of death, we support Satan's original lie that sin does not result in death.

Satan twisted everything – he twists the reality that sin, which is lawlessness, being out of harmony with the law of love upon which life is designed to operate, result in death and instead

spins it around and teaches sin is not the problem, the problem is God, who gets upset when His law is broken and His anger and wrath must destroy those breakers of the law, unless something can be done to deal with God.

WEDNESDAY

Read second paragraph, “Yet, as often is...” thoughts? What do you hear?

Then from the last paragraph we read, “Again, though obedience cannot save us (it is way too late for that), there is no such thing as salvation without it, regardless of how flawed our obedience tends to be.”

Do you notice the tension they have with the role our obedience has in our salvation? Our obedience is not a means to salvation, yet we can’t be saved without our obedience?

How would you explain it? Does our understanding of the sin problem make a difference in our ability to understand where obedience fits in?

If we understand sin as a legal problem, then we have this unnatural tension where Christ did it all in His perfect obedience to accomplish salvation by paying our legal debt, and no amount of obedience we can do can provide proper payment. But, even though we accept His perfect payment, we can’t be saved without our obedience, even though our obedience adds nothing to the payment. This is why some Christians have no expectation for obedience, while others, doubt salvation if their obedience fails at a particular point – have I asked forgiveness and gotten my latest sin paid for?

If you have the healing model, and understand sin as an actual change in the heart, mind, character of the intelligent being, where the principle of love has been replaced by fear and selfishness. Then we understand no human could fix this situation, therefore Christ came to procure remedy, a remedy that we cannot add to because it is completely perfect in

Christ. But once the remedy to our condition has been perfectly procured by Christ, we still must participate, take the remedy, as Jesus said, “eat my flesh and drink my blood” or it does us no good. This requires our active participation, i.e. obedience, following the doctor’s prescription.

When we follow the doctor’s prescription we still don’t heal or save ourselves, we merely, by our freewill choice, accept the application of that remedy to our hearts and minds. Like taking an antibiotic, we take it but it does something in us we cannot do for ourselves.

TUESDAY

Read Haggai 1:5-12

What does it mean? Why does the Lord speak this way to them?

The people of Israel are as stubborn as mules. How can I feed them like lambs in a meadow? Hosea 4:6

So, why does He speak to them this way? Is it out of hate, dislike, disgust, or love, to warn and protect a people who don’t otherwise listen to gentle words?

When you read such language do you hear a God of anger or a God of love?

What is the lesson of this story? What conclusions do we draw from the fact that all their energy to promote themselves was coming to nothing as long as they failed to attend to building the temple?

- Does it mean if you don’t do what God wants He will ruin your plans?
- Is this an object lesson? What does the Temple symbolize? You and me, and what then would the lesson be? What happens when we spend our energies trying to get rich, power, good times, or whatever, while we neglect

- the care of our spirit temple? Can we grow healthier, can we experience in our lives God's blessings if the spirit temple is neglected? Why? Is it because God refuses to bless or is it because we, by abusing the spirit temple, close the channel to receive His blessing?
- Can we have healing of our spirit temple outside the law of love? Thus when we focus on selfish advancement we cannot prosper.
 - Does it make a difference in how you read the meaning of the text?

THURSDAY

The lesson turns our attention to Nehemiah, what did he and Ezra do?

I rebuked them and called curses down on them. I beat some of the men and pulled out their hair. I made them take an oath in God's name and said: "You are not to give your daughters in marriage to their sons, nor are you to take their daughters in marriage for your sons or for yourselves. ²⁶ Was it not because of marriages like these that Solomon king of Israel sinned? Among the many nations there was no king like him. He was loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel, but even he was led into sin by foreign women. ²⁷ Must we hear now that you too are doing all this terrible wickedness and are being unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women?"
Ne 13:25-27

Ezra the priest stood up and spoke to them. He said, "You have been faithless and have brought guilt on Israel by marrying foreign women. ¹¹ Now then, confess your sins to the LORD, the God of your ancestors, and do what pleases him. Separate yourselves from the foreigners living in our land and get rid of your foreign wives." Ezra 10:10,11

Thoughts? Is there any evidence these wives were cheating with other men? Why then the instruction to get rid of them?

What were they alleged to be doing? Corrupting the priesthood, how?

Is there an object lesson here? Who is the priesthood today? Does this have any bearing on marriage and divorce? Should a Christian “put away” a spouse who is unconverted and constantly tempting the spouse away from the Lord?

EGW gave advise to a man who was head of a mission in Chicago and had married an immature, unconverted wife, who was subject to hysterical acting out if she didn't get her way. There is no evidence or record of the woman being involved with another man. The letter EGW wrote is quite long, but here is one paragraph:

His best course with this child-wife, so overbearing, so unyielding, and so uncontrollable, is to take her home and leave her with the mother who has made her what she is. Though it must be painful, this is the only thing for him to do if he would not be ruined spiritually, sacrificed to the demon of hysterics and satanic imaginings. Satan takes entire control of her temper and will, and uses them like desolating hail to beat down every obstruction. Her husband can do her no good, but is doing himself incalculable harm, and robbing God of the talents and influence He has given. 16MR page 305.

Thoughts? What is the reason cited for this action? Is this in harmony with what Ezra and Nehemiah instructed the priests of Israel to do? Should we do this today? Why or why not?

FRIDAY

Read second paragraph, “There is constant...” thoughts?

What does this look like? Are we talking electric guitar, drums, power point? Or perhaps is the real problem conforming to the world's concept of who God is regardless of worship style?

Does our worship style promote the idea of unity, equality of fellowship, or hierarchy, authoritarian leadership, relational disengagement, and undermine the service of member to member in the body of Christ?

Read and discuss questions 2,3,4